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Annual New York Academy TriBeCa Ball Brings Out the Stars & Shines a Light on M.F.A. Student Work

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This past Monday night saw a long list of high-profile celebrities, artists, patrons, and gallerists come out to support the New York Academy of Art's annual TriBeCa Ball.

The New York Academy of Art (NYAA) -- a drawing, painting, and sculpting graduate school located in TriBeCa and co-founded in 1982 by Andy Warhol and other influential artists -- is known around town for its paparazzi-worthy party and benefit called the TriBeCa Ball. This annual fund-raiser, now in its 30th year, is organized by several of the academy's board members and attended by some of the top celebrities, artists, gallerists, philanthropists, and patrons in the city. The VIPs come out in droves to support the school's scholarship and public-programming funds, view the M.F.A. students' work and personal studios, and invest in the careers of emerging artists. With some of today's most recognized contemporary artists having trained or taught at the NYAA -- Jenny Saville, Odd Nerdrum, John Currin, Will Cotton, Vincent Desiderio, Steven Assael, Jean-Pierre Roy, Alyssa Monks, and Wade Schuman among them -- the academy has certainly earned the reputation of producing the type of artists worth watching. "We're seeing our graduates go into the best galleries in Chelsea and all over the world, and it couldn't be more exciting," said Eileen Guggenheim, the chair of NYAA's board.

This year's TriBeCa Ball took place on April 8, and, as usual, the academy's 19th-century loft building at 111 Franklin Street was jam-packed with attendees perusing five floors of students' studios, rubbing elbows with fellow artists and A-listers, and enjoying champagne and live entertainment. A night like this is many an aspiring professional artist's dream, and the TriBeCa Ball is just one of several annual events the NYAA organizes to ensure their students get the exposure they need to forge important professional relationships. More than 100 artist studios were open to attendees this year, displaying a wide variety of conceptually based figurative work from such M.F.A. students as Jessica Augier, Zach Brown, Adam Carnes, Jonathan Beer, Kristy Gordon, Aleah Chapin, Samuel Detch, Meg Franklin, Robert Fundis, Elizabeth Glaessner, Ivy Hickam, Nicolas Holiber, William Logan, Richard Morris, Alfred Rosenbluth, Gaetanne Lavoie, Christina Duarte, Elliot Purse, Nic Bandy, Grayson Ronk, Nicolas Sanchez, Yunsung Jang, Dave Wagner, Cory Dixon, Lily Koto Olive, Noelle Timmons, and many more.

Honoring Bob Colacello -- a distinguished art and society journalist and a longtime champion of the NYAA -- and presented by Van Cleef & Arpels, the 2013 TriBeCa Ball raised a record-breaking \$650,000-plus and was attended by such high-profile guests as fashion designers Diane Von Furstenberg and Carolina Herrera; international art dealer Larry Gagosian; TV personalities Matt Lauer, Chelsea Handler, and Joan Rivers; established artist Cindy Sherman; and editors Graydon Carter (Vanity Fair) and Glenda Bailey (Harper's Bazaar). In addition to the student work, there was also an impressive body of alumni work on display, featuring Randall DiGiuseppe, Janet Bruesselbach, Evan Kitson, Yupin Pramotepipop, Bonnie DeWitt, Benjamin Hengst, Loretta Mae, Dina Brodsky, Heidi Elbers, Lorra Jackson, Melissa Anderson, Benjamin Martins, Maggie Rose, Tyler Vourros, and Michael Meadors, among others. Judging from the talent, energy, and enthusiasm pervading this event, I have to agree with NYAA's dean of academic affairs Peter Drake's statement: "It feels like the beginning of something truly great is happening here."

This article was featured in Fine Art Today, a new weekly e-newsletter from Fine Art Connoisseur magazine.



Kristy Gordon, "Passing Through II," 2013,
oil on canvas, 96 x 54 in.