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Three to See

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Before the paintings come down this Saturday, go see Stanley Whitney's work at Team Gallery in Soho (83 Grand Street; NY, NY ; teamgal.com). I'm lucky enough to wake up to a Whitney every morning. Technically, it belongs to my girlfriend, not me, and I'm reminded of this constantly. The thing gets a lot of use: I stare at it every morning while I have my coffee and I connect with it every night before bed. It's a small piece, a succession of colorful blocks and lines on a canvas. It's playful and harmonious, but what I like best about it is how it deals with transition. I read it block to block and color to color, so what I get out of it is a sense that moving from thing to thing, from place to place, from moment to moment, can be easy, can happen with only as much tension as one can bare, can actually be a whole lot of fun. Yes: Fun! It's a good thing, I've learned, to be reminded of all this on a daily basis, and before even leaving the house. Whitney's pieces at Team are mostly much larger than mine—um, my girlfriend's—so they amplify that message even louder and perhaps generate even more joy.



Over at Tanya Bonakdar in Chelsea (521 W. 21st; NY, NY; tanyabonakdargallery.com), there's always some great, weird shit to look at in totally unexpected mediums and this week is no exception. In the back room of the upstairs gallery, a couple of French artists, Laurent Tixador and Abraham Poincheval, are showing a three-part installation that also comes down this weekend. It features a video of the two men digging themselves out a hole in the ground (they literally entombed themselves) and the tools they used to do it. I didn't pay the video much attention, but only because the tools were so exceptionally witty and smart and fantastic. There were two spades and a hammer, all three with excellent little scenes carved into their wooden handles: miniature men doing the work of digging and tunneling and, finally, sleeping. The diminutives, I was told, represent the two artists, doing what they did to emerge from their burrow, but what struck me as very cool was this comical/mythical idea that little men are living inside all of our tools, that there exists, at the gut-level, a micro-world of workers helping us to get the big stuff done. The carvings also seemed like a cheeky ghost in the machine joke made by a couple of Luddites, which made me laugh out loud—and that's not a sound typically heard in a Chelsea gallery. In that moment, I must have been interpreted as a performance piece myself.





The other great, great thing I saw this weekend was up at the Met (1000 5TH Avenue; NY, NY; metmuseum.org), and isn't being taken down any time soon. It's a Willem Claesz Heda still life from 1635 and, although I'm sure he was trying to say something about death and the darkening passage of time, I'll be dammed if this image isn't also exactly what I want my table to look like after my next dinner party: Broken glassware, fallen silver serving trays; the citrus peeled, glistening; the oysters sucked dry; the lights blown out; all the people in the room having left it behind in pursuit of continued wildness.

— *Howie Kahn*

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