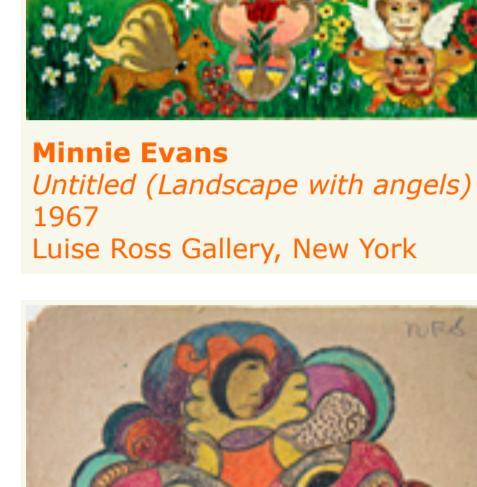


Minnie Evans
Untitled (Faces at Median),
ca. 1960
Luise Ross Gallery, New York



Minnie Evans
Untitled (Landscape with angels),
1967
Luise Ross Gallery, New York



Minnie Evans
Untitled (Floral design),
ca. 1963
Luise Ross Gallery, New York



Nick Cave, *Mating Season*, 2011,
installation view, Jack Shainman
Gallery, New York



Nick Cave
Soundsuit
2011
Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Nick Cave
Soundsuit
2011
Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Nick Cave
Drive-by (film still)
2011
Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



"Lee Bae: The Conceptual
Formalist," installation view,
2011, Nicholas Robinson Gallery,
New York



Lee Bae
Landscape
2000
Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New
York

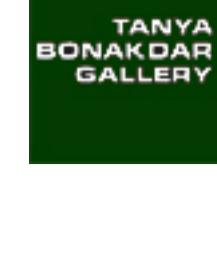


Lee Bae
Untitled
2000
Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New
York

New Art

MY NIGHT IN CHELSEA

by N.F. Karlins



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I think half of New York was making the rounds on Sept. 8, 2011, as hundreds -- or maybe it just seemed like hundreds -- of Chelsea galleries burst open for the start of the fall season. We could do without the humidity and the crowded, pokey elevators, but in the end it's all worth the trouble.

Especially exuberant is "Minnie Evans, Paintings and Drawings, 1938-1980," a survey of some of the best works by the self-taught master, on view at Luise Ross Gallery on West 25th Street. A black woman who only got to sixth grade before being forced to go to work, **Minnie Eva Jones Evans** (1892-1987) produced colored crayon drawings, such as *Untitled (Faces at Median)*, ca. 1960, with a richness of color and a complex spirituality and moodiness that has been linked to that of the Surrealists.

Minnie Evans even had a show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975. I keep hoping that the museum's current curators will give some attention to contemporary self-taught artists, who are now mostly ignored -- and since the American Folk Art Museum has sold its building, we need a lot more exhibition space for them.

In the wide-ranging show at Luise Ross, you can see works from early in her career, like a small, delicate colored-pencil abstract drawing filled with faces, flowers, and dot patterning all merged into an intriguing design from early in her career (priced at a bargain \$5,500) and later work like *Untitled (Landscape with Angels)* from 1967, with Biblical beasts, angels, flowers, a butterfly, stars, what may be a winged cross, and female faces merging the real with a spiritual dimension (the price: \$27,000).

A devout Christian, Minnie Evans had visions from an early age. Although she held several other jobs, she was principally a ticket-taker at a formal house and gardens in her native North Carolina, which exposed her to cultural traditions like Persian carpets and Oriental art. She skillfully combined all the artistic practices she had observed and studied with her own spiritual devotion to create something unique.

Evans could also turn out impossibly intense pure flower paintings, like her *Untitled (Floral Design)*, ca. 1963, in gold paint, oil, and ink on paper. They remind me of the otherworldly flowers of the Czech artist **Anna Zemánková**, who has several drawings in the current "Ostalgia" show at the New Museum, except that Zemánková often adds embroidery to her works.

Seeing the full range of **Minnie Evans'** work is one of this season's treats. Another is witnessing the Chicago artist **Nick Cave** (b. 1959) at the peak of his game. He has a new crop of lively "Soundsuits" on view at the **Jack Shainman Gallery** on 26th Street through Oct. 8, 2011, for the exhibition "Ever After," and another show, "For Now," on view at Mary Boone, Sept. 10-Oct. 22, 2011.

Cave, who is African American, makes a clear and convincing claim to New York art stardom with these two shows. His "Soundsuits" are intensely decorative costumes, many

incorporating headdresses that obscure the actual head of the figure, made with every imaginable technique and material, including satin, yarn, sequins, knitting, doilies, beads, fur and macramé, along with lots of glitter, buttons, organic material like twigs, and toys and metal objects.

The cultural citations are obvious, but no less effective for it -- West African dance paraphernalia, like Dogon masquerade costumes, Caribbean Carnavale get-ups, and runway glitz. Once he has created these joyous costumes, Cave uses them to costume dancers, which is only fitting, since he started out as a dancer and fashion designer. The starting price for a single costume, and many on the checklist are marked with red dots, seems to be \$85,000.

The long entry space at Shainman Gallery is lined with a row of pale, sleek-furred Wookie-like creatures, part of a Cave work titled *Mating Season*, 2011. With their bunny-like ears, these standing male mannequins are transformed into a line of fertility figures.

Elsewhere in the gallery is an installation of seven standing figures, all joined together by swaths of drapery covered by a skin of glistening black buttons. Instead of heads, each figure is topped by a shape resembling tuba bells. The drapery suggests a joint racial identity while the "mouthpiece" for a head suggests the need to speak out and be mutually supportive.

Nearby are still more Soundsuits, these covered with white buttons. But the most colorful and effervescent work at Shainman Gallery is Cave's new 16-minute film *Drive-By*, in which dancers wearing rainbow-colored fur Soundsuits move and interact against a white background.

Cave's retrospective, "Meet Me at the Center of the Earth," opened at the Seattle Art Museum in June, 2011, and also appeared in San Francisco -- but it has not come to New York. In addition to the show at Shainman, around the block at **Mary Boone Gallery** on West 24th Street is a companion exhibition of a few dozen more Soundsuits, which boasts an even greater range of this outstanding artist's work.

Down the block from Shainman, at the **Nicholas Robinson Gallery**, a completely different experience awaits. "Lee Bae: The Conceptual Formalist" is the gallery's first show by this Korean-born, Paris-based Conceptualist. His teacher is **Lee Ufan**, whose exhibition of paintings and sculpture is still up at the Guggenheim Museum and whose exhibition of ceramics at **RH Gallery** I have already covered.

A proponent of something called the "Monochrome Movement" in Korea, **Lee Bae** has used charcoal as his primary medium for two decades, but I prefer his sculptures to his black-on-white paintings. In them, huge chunks of charcoal are bound in elastic string. Free-standing, they seem almost primordial, yet they are obviously man-made. A compelling balance between nature and man is achieved in these works, though the measure of each is modulated by the angle from which each sculpture is viewed.

I was also struck by Lee Bae's shimmering two-dimensional pieces, created by assembling small, irregularly-shaped slices of charcoal and then attaching them to canvases hung on the wall.

Not a bad night after all.

"Minnie Evans, Paintings and Drawings," Sept. 8-

-Oct. 29, 2011, at Luise Ross Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001.

"Nick Cave: Ever After," Sept. 8-Oct. 8, 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

"Lee Bae: The Conceptual Formalist," Sept. 8-

-Oct. 22, 2011, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, 535 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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