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Soho Galleries: From Josef to Jason

by **Susan Yung** :: no comments | [Leave a comment!](#)



A sampling of galleries in Soho last weekend showed some very different trends and traditions, and some intriguing coincidences. At Peter Blum is Josef Albers' *Formulation : Articulation*, 1972, a suite of 127 silkscreens paired off in folders. Essentially an overview of his body of work, it is displayed in vitrines that line the gallery's walls. Most familiar are the three nesting squares in varying shades of one hue, alongside organic shapes emphasizing positive/negative, and his powerful interlocking grids of bars and squares.

Down Wooster Street is *Premonitions*, a show of Jules de Balincourt's paintings at Deitch Projects. These colorful oils range from representational scenes that feel either post-apocalyptic or celebratory; to some more akin to symbolism or propaganda posters. A bunch of people on motorbikes exit a huge tunnel—escapees? participants in a race?; nearby are temporary tents like the kind set up for galas, and an out-of-place modern apartment house. In another, crowds of people line a beach. Are they recent evacuees? Clambake partygoers? The potential dual narratives are fascinating. (I don't know when Deitch turned into a wannabe "Gossip Girl" location shoot, but one painting in particular, *Power Flower*, became the contemporary art equivalent of sticking your face in a cutout hole over Superman's body, with a line of people waiting to have their picture taken at the painting's exploding center. Vanity amid apocalypse, why not.)

Speaking of vanity, I had expected such crowds to be overflow from the Ryan McGinley show at Team, on Grand Street, but to my surprise the gallery was empty. I'd heard the mob at the opening was ridiculous. But maybe everyone who needed to say they'd seen the show was there that day. He has photographed 150 subjects, nude, in his studio, in black & white; a selection is installed at Team. Most of the subjects look to be in their teens, but, charmingly, there is one baby with a snake around its neck. Stripped of their clothes and any sort of defining social context except for tattoos and piercings, there is a forced sweetness and vulnerability to the portraits, but that doesn't negate the mutually exploitative feel of the show (but for the baby and the snake).

Ronald Feldman's first show of work by Jason Salavon, titled *Old Codes*, blends science and art in intriguing ways. A digital rendering of a mammal skull is actually a hypothetical blend of several species, listed by percentage; it evolves over the course of four hours, and is accompanied by some hyper-crisp stills of other species combos. He has taken the Ikea catalogue, purportedly more widely distributed than the Bible, and stripped it of content, leaving only structural blocks. A series of primarily abstract composites of portraits by four masters reduces the central subject to a flesh-toned visage floating amid the bronze chiaroscuro. In another series, he analyzed the color palettes from Baroque and Impressionist painting and created concentric squares representing each color value. The ghost of Albers was clearly in the gallery, perhaps wishing he'd had the technology available to Salavon.



Image: Jason Salavon, *Baroque Painting*, 2010. Archival ink on paper, 59"x59", ed. of 7. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

A variant of a graph—the bands represent Rubens' palette and the frequency with which he used each color.