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Media Circus

Brooklyn

On Saturday evening, walking along a desolate stretch of Morgan Avenue in Brooklyn, I could hear music washing over warehouses and empty lots several blocks before I found my way to BAPLab, a daylong—or, more accurately, nightlong—festival of new media and new music. Local nonprofit Bushwick Art Project ("We did not move East of Williamsburg. . . . We are and will forever be Bushwick") organized the busy affair, the second in their series of benefit events designed to draw attention to the creative efforts of those stationed more than three L-train subway stops outside of Manhattan. Despite spreading across twenty thousand square feet of space at 3rd Ward, a huge, newly renovated building that offers production facilities to this very community of artists, the jammed-together crowd at the door—young, white, artfully dressed—was jammed together throughout.

I wandered among video projections, unspooled film reels and videotapes, homemade robots, and digital displays brought together by about a dozen curators overseen by BAP's Ruth Garon and R. J. Valeo. Garon described the event as "highlighting the organic overlap" between these disciplines, and the entrepreneurial promoter, who arrived in New York from Israel only a year ago, hopes to grow BAPLab into a multiday festival à la SONAR or MUTEK, twin anchors of the experimental electronic music scene. Independent curator Ashley Colgate, who selected a number of the room-size new-media installations, offered casual theories about the "reformed hippie" aspect of a large segment of the new-media population, and I couldn't help but picture LoVid's Kyle Lapidus, who had performed earlier in the evening and was at that moment roaming the hallways in a jailhouse-orange jumpsuit and two pairs of 3-D glasses.

As with any event involving almost one hundred artists, the quality of the work varied. Recognized names like Guy Ben-Ner, who represented Israel at the 2005 Venice Biennale, and Douglas Henderson, who has exhibited at the Whitney, stood out, but Geoffrey Bell's Musical Chair: A Game for One and projects by a number of current students at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program, which were scattered along hallways, also impressed. Unlike previous new-media festivals I have attended, everything here worked, even if one could complain that much of it worked in similar ways. (The favorite: Manipulate an unexpected element—water, dust particles, etc.—to create unexpected change in sound track or on nearby screen.)

—Brian Sholis