

# The New York Times

SPRING GALLERY GUIDE

## 10 Galleries to Visit Now on the Lower East Side



Bodies and art literally intersect in works by the Brooklyn-based performance artist Narcissister, including "Untitled Participatory Sculpture," at Participant Inc. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

**By Holland Cotter**

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Galleries, small and midsize, are having a rough ride. Rents keep climbing. So do art-fair fees. And certain people who might help pay the gallery bills — collectors, big-museum curators — keep not showing up except at a handful of spaces with social cachet and publicity machines. Plus, a sizable portion of the art audience has taken to doing its looking online, raising the question: Why have physical galleries at all?

Because they're the only places where you truly see new work, experience it. Scale, texture, light, air, mood; all that changes when you're physically present, shifting positions, moving in close, backing away, hearing noise from the street. Most of the galleries on the Lower East Side are still storefront-size, scaled for shopping, and open on Sundays. They put you in intimate contact with objects, sensations and ideas so you can examine them, stay with them, make them your own.

**PARTICIPANT INC.** through May 6; 253 East Houston Street, [participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org). Bodies and art literally intersect in collages by the Brooklyn-based performance artist of African-American and Moroccan descent, who goes by the name Narcissister. Her [résumé](#) emphasizes performance: She trained at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and completed the Whitney Independent Study Program while working nights in burlesque clubs. So the dozens of collages at [Participant Inc.](#) on East Houston Street come as a surprise, both for their intimate scale and their precise, often ingenious melding of pornography and art. True, many of the artists chosen are familiar auction stars — Picasso, Pollock, Hirst, Koons — but with Narcissister’s stimulative editing they look pretty sexy here.

