

Hybrid Art

By Jane Bell

As the summer heat shimmers in to stay and enervate, dealers and curators roll out to sea—to the Hamptons, to the Vineyard, to Europe—the luckier artists drifting in their wake. Of course, New York's museums are always open; but what to do if the Big Four begin to pall, or if you're simply thirsting for a fix of new art?

If you've been jabbed by contemporary sculpture at MOMA, haunted by George Segal's plaster friends at the Whitney, glutted by Kremlin Treasures at the Met, and dizzyed by the Guggenheim, there are alternatives. About a dozen of the newish art spaces—a.k.a. "alternative spaces"—will be surprisingly active throughout the summer. These are the hybrids of the '70s: cooperative galleries run by artists; performance centers; organizations that float, literally and figuratively; archives that also exhibit objects and provide a lively forum for poets and performance artists; and anti-institutional institutions that began as "halfway houses" for unknown or emerging artists whose work was not safe enough to handle elsewhere. Although some are well on the way to becoming Institutions, most function as first-run showcases off-off West Broadway, where artists get their newest acts together before taking them on the road. Some artists don't, of course; but part of these shows' appeal is the element of risk. Visiting them is like watching live television in real-time—unpredictable but engaging.

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International art of a different feather—in varying shades of ideological red—is now at **Artists Space** in a show called "Art from the British Left," continuing through Bastille Day, July 14. This is the first in a series of specifically political "manifestations" organized by critic Lucy Lippard. The theme is struggle: that of the third-world artist versus British culture, the Irish troubles, woman versus the s&m-inspired fashion trends, and the perpetual tug-of-war between agit-prop and upper-case Art. In startling contrast, the gallery is simultaneously showing William Leavitt's installation tableau, an uncanny interior of a nightclub against a backdrop of a city square.