



Rob Pruitt's '2010 Art Awards'

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By Chris Bors

While in line for the coat check at Webster Hall, where 500 guests were attending Rob Pruitt's 2010 Art Awards to raise money for the Guggenheim Foundation and White Columns, one reveller commented, "It's not as dingy as I remember", perhaps referring to the East Village club's 1980s incarnation, when it was known as the Ritz. Pruitt has described the event, conceived as a performance-based artwork modelled after a Hollywood award show, as "like a company picnic", admitting that "when people pointed out the competitive element, I was a little surprised". Considering that 12 of the 15 awards were nominated and voted on by a pool of 1,000 artists and arts professionals, complaints from artists that the awards are just an insider game sound a bit like sour grapes. But clearly the show boosts Pruitt's stature, and perhaps for that could be considered self-serving. Of course, most artists complain about shit like this until they are involved, and then they say it's great.



Rob Pruitt's *2010 Art Awards*, 8 December, Webster Hall. Photo: Roger Kisby. © The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

A beaming Jerry Saltz, who won for Blogger or Critic of the Year, dedicated his award to fellow writers and gave a shout-out in his speech to a new group of critics whose writing is, by his lights, more lucid. Other guests in the Grand Ballroom included Paddy Johnson, who seemed surprised to find herself seated at the same table as Gavin Brown after panning Rob Pruitt's recent *Pattern and Degradation* show at Gavin Brown's Enterprise and posting that 'Gavin Brown is not the next Jeffrey Deitch' on her *Art Fag City* blog. Johnson described the table, which included Nate Lowman and Elizabeth Peyton, as "the loudest and with the most wine", although it's possible she was referring to Saltz's Facebook page too.

Others watched the happenings from the balcony, including curator Omar Lopez-Chahoud and artist Franklin Evans, whose cocurated *Lush Life* exhibition was nominated for Group Show of the Year. It seemed a shoo-in: ambitiously spread over nine Lower East Side galleries, and following the narrative of Bronx-born Richard Price's critically acclaimed 2008 novel of the same name. Yet it lost to Tim Nye and Kristine Bell's *Primary Atmospheres: Works from California 1960–1970*. Perhaps a clue to how the evening was going to go for these four competitors was to be found in the food: only appetisers for the balcony; a seated feast served up by Roberta's of Bushwick for those downstairs.



James Franco and Kalup Linzy, at Rob Pruitt's 2010 Art Awards, 8 December, Webster Hall. Photo: Roger Kisby. © The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York

Scripted theatrics were led by writer Glenn O'Brien, who found himself squeezing, Abramovic-style, between two live nudes, marvelling: "Can you believe Playboy has a curator? When I worked there in the '70s, the curator was the one who shaved the Playmates." Such semi-bawdy anecdotes kept things semi-entertaining. Collector and Guggenheim trustee Amy Phelan greeted the crowd with "What up, bitches?" before presenting the Artist-Educator Achievement Award to artist Marilyn Minter. Rumours that Phelan has asked Snoop Dogg to curate a show at the Guggenheim are unconfirmed.

Like many such events, the *2010 Art Awards* ran long and the musical interlude with jack-of-all-trades James Franco and artist Kalup Linzy 'dragged' on, but as confetti filled the room, all seemed in good spirits – the only real downer being the cash bar afterparty.

Rob Pruitt's 2010 Art Awards were held at Webster Hall, New York, on 8 December