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Mixing +aRt, CARNIVORA and commerce in West Chelsea

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+aRt luxury condominium located in the heart of West Chelsea's gallery district.

Photo: Courtesy of Medishop PR

The fall 2010 season of the New York modern art scene has swung into full gear with a slew of innovative exhibits opening recently in West Chelsea's gallery district. One of the most notable is the world premiere of visual artist Jason Covert's CARNIVORA. A multi-media feast, CARNIVORA is currently being shown in a pop-up gallery owned by +aRt, the sizzling new condominium development located at 540 West 28th Street.

This provocative exhibit, running from September 16 through October 8, represents the burgeoning collaboration between the art, luxury real estate and retail worlds that inhabit the vibrant West Chelsea cultural orbit. +aRt (www.540w28.com), a stunning architectural contribution to the neighborhood, Chashama (www.chashama.org), an organization that transforms donated retail storefronts in New York City into art exhibitions, and Cannery Works (www.canneryworks.org), a non-profit arts catalyst that supports debut projects, have partnered to present a two-part exhibition series this fall. CARNIVORA is the first exhibit of the series, with the second slated to open at +aRt on October 22.

Ekstein Development, one of the developers behind +aRt, donated 1,800 square feet of ground floor retail space to Chashama for the exhibitions. The objective of the collaboration was to fill the building's retail space with art that would benefit the community while simultaneously attracting buyers to the residential project. +aRt has been built in deference to the artistic narrative of Chelsea's most important artists, architects, and poets, establishing a sophisticated and elegant presence in this chic West Chelsea enclave. The 13-story new construction building is being exclusively marketed and sold by Halstead Property Development Marketing. It features 91 exquisitely designed condominiums that are located in direct proximity to the High Line and West Chelsea's cultural heart.

According to Erik Ekstein, principal of Ekstein Development, "+aRt was developed as an artistically inspired

residence, so having a gallery located in our retail space is the perfect complement to our residential building. It will provide a new, exciting exhibit to our neighbors and the greater art community of New York City.”

Since 1995, Chashama has supported thriving cultural communities by transforming temporarily vacant properties into spaces where art can flourish, a trend that has become even more prevalent as a result of the nation’s economic downturn. As the economy has struggled, Chashama has had access to underutilized, prime retail space that would have been otherwise unavailable in a more competitive climate. As a result, Chashama has been able to produce exceptional artistic projects in spectacular physical spaces to continuously growing audiences.

Visiting CARNIVORA at the +aRt condominium raises the question of whether there is social utility to merging artistic and commercial interests in the way it is being done at this venue. The economic forces that have necessitated joint ventures between the artistic and business communities and the subsequent flourishing of pop-up exhibition spaces, has provided New Yorkers with greater exposure to art and culture during the recession than ever before. This phenomenon is occurring while, at the same time, stimulating business activity in neighborhoods such as Chelsea and Soho where innovative artistic trends and ideas are being hatched. Many would view this as a positive outcome for the public, art and commerce. The successful collaboration among the +aRt condominium development, Chashama and Cannery Works will surely serve as a template for future synergistic relationships between art and luxury real estate.

CARNIVORA (www.jasoncovert.com/carnivora), the show currently situated squarely at the intersection of the artistic and commercial interests of West Chelsea, is a cross-disciplinary exhibition of photography, sculpture, painting, illustration, music, literature, masks, robes and jewelry. The concepts for artist Jason Covert’s work were inspired by the 2004 discovery of the “Sacred Texts of Carnivora” in Greenland.

Covert presents a transporting milieu for the viewer. He provides access to the secluded culture of a lost world by brilliantly interweaving fantasy and archeology. Covert intelligently questions civilization’s claim to know its own history and the representation of that history through cultural artifact. At the same time, the physical manifestation of CARNIVORA, the exhibit, in +aRt’s space reflects the growing interdependence of art with the commercial orientation of our urban society. Stepping into CARNIVORA at +aRt emerges us in the idea of a temporally remote land while also encouraging us to examine the values and moral architecture of the civilization we currently inhabit.

Taken from: <http://www.examiner.com/pop-culture-in-new-york/mixing-carnivora-art-and-commerce-west-chelsea>