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NY CULTURE

Hop Aboard for Souvenirs—And a Cheeky Chelsea Tour

Jen and Paul's One Stop Shopping Souvenir City Is Part Tour Bus, Part Souvenir Shop

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By **ANDY BATTAGLIA**
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Artists Paul Outlaw and Jen Catron on top of their double-decker tour bus. *Cassandra Giraldo for The Wall Street Journal*

When the New York art world snaps back to action on Thursday, Chelsea's gallery district will be patrolled by a new mover on the scene: a bright blue double-decker bus.

Decorated with garish lightning bolts and giant vinyl stickers of such art-world luminaries as Jeff Koons, Marina Abramović and Chuck Close, the bus gets even more outlandish inside. This is where its creators, Jen Catron and Paul Outlaw, will be selling souvenirs—a "Richard Serra in a Box" make-your-own sculpture set, for example.



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Mike Kelley stuffed animals. *Cassandra Giraldo for The Wall Street Journal*

Dubbed "Jen and Paul's One Stop Shopping Souvenir City," the bus, which will offer tours, is intended by the two Brooklyn-based artists as a critique of the neighborhood's pricey gallery scene.

"There's a rift when you grow up and want to be an artist," Mr. Outlaw said. "You have your art heroes and this idea of what it is to make art, and then you see the dramatic difference between that



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and then bigger Chelsea galleries that are all market-driven. These art heroes are also commodities, not much different than selling anything else that is a collectors' item, like stamps or gold."

Ms. Catron agreed.

"Obviously there's something wrong with Chelsea," she said, "and there's something to being an artist and being able to address it in a new way that I think sheds new light."

As many Chelsea galleries prepare to open their first shows of the fall, Ms. Catron and Mr. Outlaw plan to park the bus in front of select storefronts over the coming weeks. In addition to the Serra-inspired souvenir, they will sell a do-it-yourself performance-art kit with accessories inspired by Ms. Abramović and James Franco, as well as a fake Damien Hirst piece featuring a goldfish in a shark costume submerged in formaldehyde.

New parents can buy packaged Mike Kelley stuffed animals or bibs printed with imagery from Jeff Koons's racy "Made in Heaven" series—some of the real works are on view at his Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective—and sentiments from Christopher Wool ("Sell the house, sell the car, sell the kids").



A build-it-yourself Richard Serra kit is one of the souvenirs that the two are selling. *Cassandra Giraldo for The Wall Street Journal*

For fun at home, a "Monopoliart" board game allows players to collect artists instead of real estate and features in-jokes —"Collect \$200 in investment dividends as you pass go"—galore.

"You can go to jail with [Ai Weiwei](#)," said Mr. Outlaw.

Gagosian, whose Chelsea galleries are among the neighborhood's best-known, didn't respond to a request for comment. David Zwirner, another prominent gallery that is a likely target for a tour-bus stop, declined to comment.

The merchandise will include 65 items made by the two artists in editions, all priced to move with tags between \$10 and \$100, most on the lower end.

Mr. Outlaw and Ms. Catron said with the tours and souvenirs, they hope to direct attention away from the Chelsea scene and toward the spirit of other artists, like themselves, not yet subsumed in the upscale-gallery system.

"The artists we know and like to see aren't in Chelsea," said Ms. Catron, who is 30 years old. "They're out in places doing things. The art world is quickly changing."

Mr. Outlaw, 34, is intrigued by that change: "It's funny. It used to be older artists that I

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Tongue-in-cheek souvenirs for sale include a mouse decorated to look like a Damien Hirst sheep.
Cassandra Giraldo for The Wall Street Journal

looked up to, and now it's the younger artists that I look up to."



Artists Paul Outlaw and Jen Catron inside their double-decker tour bus. *Cassandra Giraldo for The Wall Street Journal*

Mr. Outlaw and Ms. Catron have staged mobile spectacles in the city before, including "Jen-and-Outlaw's Fish Fry Truck and Crawfish Boil," which served Southern-style seafood in Brooklyn. Mr. Outlaw is working on earning a license to pilot a hot-air balloon for a future project.

For the bus tours, which will continue throughout the fall and can be [reserved online](#), the two artists will guide some of their own.

"It's going to be a little like TMZ-bus-style," Mr. Outlaw said.

There is much to send up, both artists said, but they are tempering some of their skepticism. Regarding the artists whose work inspired their souvenirs, "some of them I don't like, but some of them I love," Ms. Catron said, "so it's a careful line that we have to walk."

Mr. Outlaw expressed a sense of artistic solidarity.

"We're poking fun at Chelsea, but it's also kind of a love affair," he said. "A lot of our work has been about making fun of this system of art-world practitioners and elitist cliques that, at the same time, we want to be a part of. So we make fun of them and make fun of ourselves. The whole thing is a big circle."

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