

Solidary/Solitary: the Artist at Work

**Catalog Essay from exhibition at MAPSpace**

***Solidary/Solitary: the Artist at Work***

***February 16 - March 16, 2013***

*Artists:* Michael Torlen, Roxanne Faber-Savage, Rima Grad, Lou Hicks, Susan Manspeizer, Malcolm Moran, Susan Newbold, Jill Parry

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and Catalog [HERE](#)

### **Artist-Run Culture**

Artist-run culture may be a trendy new term, but it has been an enduring phenomenon in the lives of artists since the medieval guilds and beyond-likely wherever and whenever artists have gathered to work. Artists today practice an interesting map of strategies for living- a complex combination of utopian ideals, pragmatic strategies, hard work and little sleep. How an artist navigates the vicissitudes of everyday reality in order to maintain an authentic practice is a creative endeavor comparable to art-making- and in some cases, one that becomes an art practice itself. The need for dialogue balanced against the solitude of studio work is a challenge for which artists have always found unique solutions. Artist-run culture, or the creation of an artist-run, artist generated, artist-focused space that supports an art-making life, is a response to the particular needs of artists - a way to generate community, spark dialogue, to innovate and collaborate. These all feed a dynamic conversation that keeps art alive for artists and for the community at large.

Critique groups are one form of artist-run culture. Artists organize in formal and informal groups, in studios, classrooms, homes. They bring work to show, to workshop, to get serious feedback from a community of peers. Crit groups make better artists, better friends, and better communities. Michael Torlen's group began as an idea about furthering an artistic discussion in the gallery space, and has endured on its own legs to become a strong part of these artists' practice. This exhibition was in some sense drawn from a random group of artists, who joined this group independently, and found a community, one that has grouped, regrouped, organized and reorganized over the past seven years. Some artists came and stayed years, some came, got what they needed and left, some left and came back later for more. This exhibition is comprised of a core few that was there from the beginning, a few who've been around several years, and a couple who came in and out. I want to thank these artists for being willing to share their group with us, and to send a shout out to all the artists who have attended Michael's group over all these years, and possibly, years to come.

Artists always generate ways to make art exist in our world because they believe it is essential to themselves and to our human story. Artists are my complicated wonderful tribe. I work, play, discuss, argue, fathom, and

dream the world with them. As an artist, curator and educator, I want always to live in a world surrounded by art and artists. This is my utopia.

Patricia Miranda, *curator*

*February 2013*