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LOOKING BACK

The White Columns Annual

White Columns

320 West 13th Street, West Village

Through Dec. 21

The art world acquired a welcome new tradition when Matthew Higgs inaugurated the White Columns Annual last year. The second installment of this idiosyncratic year-end roundup has been organized by Clarissa Dalrymple, an independent curator, consultant and art world personality. With fewer than 20 artists, most culled from Chelsea, it is hardly comprehensive — but then, the Whitney Biennial is only a few months away.

The Annual requires only that the art have been seen in New York in the past year. To jog your memory, a bulletin board near the entrance holds cards from some of the shows that made an impression on Ms. Dalrymple — among them, “Just Kick It Till It Breaks,” at the Kitchen in Chelsea, and a Blinky Palermo survey at Zwirner & Wirth on the Upper East Side.

Ms. Dalrymple favors the muted abstract paintings of Julian Lethbridge, Mark Barrow and Paul Bloodgood. The subdued, even gloomy atmosphere extends into other mediums: Shannon Ebner’s black, white and gray streetscapes; Adam Helms’s wall of photographs of dead insurgents; and an engrossing Beckettian video by Richard Maxwell (better known for his theatrical work). Dave McKenzie’s dangling aluminum letters, which spell out “Tomorrow Will Be Better,” end the year on a more optimistic note.

In any case the Annual is less about trend forecasting than playing catch-up. If you missed Andrew Lord’s ceramics at Gladstone, for instance, or Sadie Benning’s videos at Orchard, you’ll be grateful for the second chance. KAREN ROSENBERG