ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y. — Forget about Hans Haacke unveiling the list of industrial magnates in the provenance of a famous masterpiece, or documenting the neglected tenements owned by museum trustees. The latest form of artists' scrutiny of museums — widely known as institutional critique — seems to be congenial entertainment. Turn museums into places where fun happens, and where making art as well as looking at it is a form of play, not much skill required. It may not get to the roots of things, but it undermines art's pretensions to seriousness, personal expression and permanence. Sort of.

There's quite a bit of fun to be had in the two summer shows at Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies and the center's Hessel Museum of Art, both overseen by Maria Lind, the new director of the center's two-year master's program, who has had a peripatetic career as a curator in Europe. Her debut shows at Bard present the viewer with monumental walls of bright paper to confront, newly built stairs to climb, unusual seating to try and art jokes to get. The two exhibitions feature five little-known, often interesting artists from Europe and deftly float some ideas about collaboration, irreverence and artists as curators. Luckily there is just enough seriousness to go around.

The main show is the languidly titled "Personal Protocols and Other Preferences: A Collective Exhibition With Works by Michael Beutler, Esra Ersoy and Kirstine Roepstorff" at the center. The show's contents and installation have been largely determined by its three young participants, all working in Berlin. They have also made loose attempts at collaborating on artworks, but their effort still reads as a series of slightly overlapping solo exhibitions.

Personal Protocols and Other Preferences/I've Got Something in My Eye Paintings by Paul McCarthy and sculpture by Thomas Schütte are in one of two new exhibitions at Bard College.

The most noticeable disruptions of museum business as usual are long, high walls built of big blocks of brightly colored paper, made on the spot by Michael Beutler, as indicated by rolls of paper, thin sticks of bamboo and two large work tables seen in one gal-

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Playful Exhibitions, With Just Enough Seriousness to Go Around

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The walls contradict the chiffly white barrenness of the center’s galleries with a blast of festi
dish decoration — suggesting the handwork of an extra-large child — but they also rather
quickly start to look bulky and poorly made.

Mr. Beutler’s other contri-
butions to the show work better be-
cause they have obid to do. Kir-
stina Roepstorff’s hanging some of
her large, transparent paper
and fabric collage wall hangings at the very top of the center’s tall
walls, and Mr. Beutler has built a stucco and walkway (across
one of his own walls) to afford a
better view of her efforts. Built
from fresh-smelling two-by-four
and planks, the structure has a
sturdiness that contrasts starkly with Mr. Beutler’s slovenly paper
walls.

Roepstorff, who had her first solo show in this country at the Drawing Center in Manhat-
тан last year, seems to have her own issues with slovenliness. Her
barely assembled pieces can be either large or quite large. Punctu-
ated by curious juxtapositions, such as a recurring imag-
ade of women reading newspaper
from a underground press, they
were between colored quilts of patch-
works of fabric scraps and pointed
wood or cathode-compositions of
black, white and silver. Mylar
and occasionally venture into three dimensions with met-
abiles standing structures.

Sticky and scattershot, these works hit all kinds of social and
esthetic issues and evoke an en-
couraging hands-on list of other art-
ists’ work.

There is plenty of ambition here, and there is nothing wrong with
Mr. Roepstorff’s evident
music for traditional crafts (art-
tistic and otherwise). But excep-
ting a large fabric collage titled
“The Self” and a series of large
black-and-silver collages, not
much of this work simply draws
itself out. Mr. Roepstorff is an art-
ist to watch, but her work would
benefit from more hard looking
on her part.

Mr. Beutler also built a large,
high platform for Ersa Ersen, the
artist in this show who is most
likely to hold your attention and
even take a piece of your
heart. Ms. Ersen specializes in
poetic yet socially probing doc-
umentaries, which she usually
presents in modest settings of
her own design. For example, for
the showing of the tapes “Broth-
ers and Sisters” and “This is the
Disney World,” Ms. Ersen de-
signed a unique and simple cat-
abiles to hold the thin
screens and arranged it all on a
painted plywood floor that by
incidence echoes Mr. Beutler’s
walls. You might almost be
watching the tape from the se-
curity of a well-maintained day

care center, yet they are all about
insecurity. “Brothers and Sis-
ters” surveys the hard lives of il
legal immigrants from Africa in
Turkey. “This is the Disney
World” interviews young Turkish
boys abandoned by their desti-
tinate parents who live by begg-
ing in the streets of Istanbul. As
you watch, the innocence implicit
in Ms. Ersen’s setting may begin to feel uncomfortably removed from
reality, all the more so because of
Mr. Beutler’s elevated platform.

Ms. Ersen’s two other pieces
are more recent and even better.
“Parachutist in Third Floor, Birds
in Laundry” is a three-channel
piece centering on interviews
with people who have immigrat-
ed to Sweden, mostly from Turk-
key (where Ms. Ersen was born)
but also from South America. As
the immigrants talk wistfully
about their lives, a second screen
shows close-ups of a woman
painting little scenes in the stair-
well of a dome at the feet apart-
ment building, as it is finished,

such scenes turn out to depict
something from the interview. On
a third screen two brilliant immi-
grant girls race side by side through
the hallways of another building,
posing to give rapid-fire inter-
pretations of the little landscapes
painted on its walls. You end up
hoping that their energy and
sharpness will never be thwart-
ished, and also a bit smitten by
the collaborative intimacy Ms. Ers-
en has orchestrated. The work’s
door-level screens can be viewed
from two tiny bleachers that re-
semble stairs.

And don’t miss “Growing Old
er (De) gracefully,” which cen-
ters on a lovely British writer in
her late 70’s, who submits at Ms.
Ersen’s request to a horrific
makeover that includes very
high heels. It speaks to some of
the central emotions of our time.

The second exhibition, “I’ve
Got Something In My Eye,” in
the Hessel Museum, has been or-
cchestrated by Liesbeth Bik and
Jos van der Pol, two humorously
inclined Dutch Conceptualists
who have worked together since
1975 as Bik van der Pol. As re-
quired, most of the works are
from the Hessel collection, with
the artists adding some of their
own pieces and a few loans from
the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhov-
en, the Netherlands.

Bik van der Pol’s own works
are negligible, excepting a heri-
itage to Yves Klein involving live
caravans. But the pair has put
gether a marvelous show. There
are revolting, often humorous
justifications — like training the
disapproving eyes of the big,
threatening terra-cotta busts that are Thomas Schutte’s “Dirty Dis-
tators” on other art — and some
corners of pure poetry. And on
view from the Van Abbemuseum
in Artur Zmijewski’s “Them,” a
video in which several groups
of people with sternly opposed
beliefs (patriotic Catholics, left-
ists and so on) are set up in a stu-
dio. They are given art supplies
and asked to make emblems of
their beliefs and then to “correct
the emblems made by the other
groups. No one dies, but things
get very heated.

Turning a museum’s collection
over to artists almost always has
interesting results.