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**ART****In the Flower District, Galleries Bloom**

BY KAT HERRIMAN

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An installation view of "Haris Epaminonda: Vol. XVII," currently on view at Casey Kaplan gallery in the flower district. Credit Dawn Blackman, courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

Slotted between the wholesalers, flower peddlers and midrange hotels, a new crop of galleries have sprung up in New York's flower district. They're in the area for various reasons, but they share one thing in common — a love for their neighborhood. "We decided to move into the flower district and Tin Pan Alley because it has history and personality, like our gallery. It's a part of a New York that exemplifies what this city used to be like," says Galeria Nara Roesler's artistic director, Alexandra Garcia Waldman. Waldman oversees the Brazilian gallery's recently opened outpost on Tin Pan Alley — the stretch of 28th Street between Sixth Avenue and Broadway — but this is not the curator's first time in the city; she went to school here and has been back and forth ever since. This April, Waldman promotes the films of Cao Guimarães, one of Brazil's most prolific artists of the 1980s. As Guimaraes's first solo show in New York, the exhibition exemplifies the gap Nara Roesler hopes to fill in the cultural landscape.

Turn right out of Galeria Nara Roesler and you'll see the neon of Planthouse, an independent gallery that takes its name from its first home, a wholesale florist on 27th street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. When their previous landlord told Planthouse's owners, Katie Michel and Brad Ewing, that their gallery would be demolished, they scored a second-story space across the avenue. Both printers by day, Michel and Ewing rely on outsiders for curatorial direction. Their upcoming show, "Dark Star: Abstraction and Cosmos," curated by Raymond Foye, looks at the universe through the eyes of eight artists including Jordan Belson, Tamara Gonzales and Sally Webster. While Ewing and Michel love the industrial feel of the area, they really chose it because of its proximity to their day jobs at Grenfell Press. "It was really convenience for us," says co-owner Ewing. "I've been commuting here for 11 years. When we found the flower shop, it just felt right."

A block away, the veteran dealer Casey Kaplan just celebrated his one-year anniversary on 27th Street. The gallerist moved to the neighborhood in 2015 after finding an ideal space for a white cube among the mostly commercial offerings. "I had been looking in Manhattan for about a year," Kaplan says. "When I saw this space, I believed it was a place the gallery could inhabit for the next 10 years." The current show, "Haris Epaminonda: Vol. XVII," makes use of the space's refurbished architecture with references to display and structure. Epaminonda's sculpture vignettes, made of pedestals, vases and models, bring to mind the eclectic amalgamation of purveyors and manufacturers right outside the gallery doors. Familiarizing themselves with the area, Kaplan and his team are continually discovering new hole-in-the-wall shops. "I didn't set out to be here, but I like the neighborhood," Kaplan admits. "It's very much real New York."