

## The New York Times

### Art & Design

ART IN REVIEW

#### 'Wooster Enterprises, 1976-78'

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Published: August 9, 2012

*Churner & Churner*

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205 10th Avenue,

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Through Aug. 18

Artist-generated entrepreneurship used to be more modest in scale and more inventive in scope than it tends to be now, as the work in this historical show demonstrates. Wooster Enterprises, conceived as a

combination design studio and retail outlet, mostly for paper products, was established in SoHo in 1976 by two

smart (and still active) multimedia artists, Jaime Davidovich and Judith Henry, with an enthusiastic assist from the Fluxus founder artist George Maciunas and the Fluxus fellow travelers Geoffrey Hendericks, Yoko Ono and Robert Watts.

Wooster Enterprises was a highly Fluxian endeavor: an incorporated business that sold utterly loopy, "who would ever buy that?" goods — mad things produced, in theory, for a mainstream market. These included photographic postcards of navels, place mats printed with images of garbage, pre-crumpled writing paper, aprons decorated with diagrams of the human gastrointestinal system; masks of horrific faces; and "I Hate to Write and I Have Nothing to Say" notepads.

The show gets the combination of commerce and kookiness just right: some of the merchandise is in store display cases and some is attached directly on the wall, as are dozens of yellowed purchase receipts to prove that the company did brisk business for a while, though the boom was short. Despite Wooster Enterprises' high hopes, Bloomingdale's didn't bite big time, and the business went under.

It's good to see this material again, first, because it's clever and funny, and second, because it's a reminder of where so many recent art-as-commodity ideas that are touted as fresh and radical came from. The Yayoi Kusama and Takashi Murakami partnerships with Vuitton, for example, might be worth critical consideration if they weren't just cash-cow retreads of art-related enterprises established in a genuinely subversive spirit many years ago.

A version of this review appeared in print on August 10, 2012, on page C27 of the New York edition with the headline: 'Wooster Enterprises, 1976-78'.