

The New York Times

'Young, Sleek and Full of Hell'

'10 Years of New York's Notorious Alleged Gallery'

Printed Matter

535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea

Through May 21

It's a little hard to believe that something as off-center as Alleged Gallery actually existed in well-groomed Chelsea. But it did, from 1999 to 2002. And the Printed Matter show — a dense installation of posters, postcards, photographs, letters — is a souvenir of its manic life and times, which began on the Lower East Side.

In fact, part of what made Alleged so distinctive in Chelsea was that it brought the spirit of its former life with it. The gallery was started by Aaron Rose in 1992 on Ludlow Street. There, it functioned as a combination of exhibition space, crash pad and rehearsal studio for bands, and gained a reputation as a center for skateboard culture.

While Alleged did, indeed, show the skateboard star and artist Mark Gonzales, the range of his work was broad. So was the gallery's. It embraced graffiti, sculpture, music, design and book publishing, and gave a start to figures like Rita Ackermann, Susan Cianciolo, Sophia Coppola, Brendan Fowler, Phil Frost, Kim Gordon, Chris Johanson, Margaret Killgallen, Ari Marcopoulsoos, Barry McGee and Steven Powers, to name a few of the artists who branched out from there.

Several of them write candidly about their Alleged experience in a new book (published by Drago and distributed by D.A.P.), from which the show takes its title. Compiled by Mr. Rose, and made up largely of pictures with memoirlike texts, it documents the mix of anarchy and utopianism, street smarts and naïveté,

generosity and ripoffs that made the enterprise tick like a time bomb until it relocated to Los Angeles and quickly closed.

What it took with it was a multidisciplinary, art-into-life, make-it-up-as-you-go aesthetic and management style; it is one that it shared with another, older gallery, Colin De Land's American Fine Arts, also briefly of Chelsea, also now defunct. What it left behind was an impressive array of artists, a version of "alternative" that seems less tenable by the month, and Mr. Rose's atmospheric time capsule of a book, which tells an exciting art-world story, of a kind that should be happening in one form or another in New York all the time, and is barely happening at all.

HOLLAND COTTER