

Akut and Hera- if only you were as beautiful as us...

By [Susan Buchanan](#) • May 25th, 2009 • Category: [Visual Arts](#)



Photography by Nicholas Alexander. Jasmin Hera and Falk Akut, with Nicholas (curator).

If you Google "Redflagg Herakut opening", you will undoubtedly be directed to a number of art forums, each with multiple frantic posts from Herakut fans stunned that they hadn't heard about the opening party Thursday night that kicked off the Herakut installation at the RedFlagg Gallery. Personally I was a little miffed when Scallywag called me last minute to cover it, as Thursdays are generally reserved for happy hours and pre-weekend prep parties.

But the lack of publicity buildup was no mistake. The German duo, **Jasmin Hera** and **Falk Akut**, made the decision to wait until the day of to release the press statement for very specific reasons. *"It's just so much pressure, you know?"* explained Akut with his wonderfully German accent. *"We don't like the pressure of having a show, being part of this high society art world, acting like we are so great, you must come and see us, you know? We enjoy what we do very well, we enjoy other people enjoying it, this is why we are here in New York. We like to be spontaneous!"*

This free-spirited sentiment perfectly sums up the feeling of their work. They seem like complete opposites: Akut is male, Hera is female; Akut is from a small town, Hera's from a large city; Akut is from East Germany and Hera's from the West. Even their artistic styles are very different. Hera creates large, gestural paintings of human figures with slightly unrealistic proportions that somehow make them incredibly sympathetic and moving. Akut's art is hyperrealistic and stands in stark contrast to Hera's instinctual pieces. For the most part, they use spray paint and markers. Together they've created a stunning installation at the RedFlagg Gallery, with many of the pieces painted directly on the walls.



Each piece contains elements from both of the artists, combined to tell a story or express an emotion. One of the largest pieces in the installation takes up an entire wall and is dominated by a grief-stricken, slumping figure with eyes flowing from its head and down its back like a gruesome wig. A small girl comforts it, standing in front of it and stroking its face. The differing styles of the artists give the piece a collage-type feel. It's representative of the entire installation in that all of their pieces are unassuming but powerful in the emotions they inspire. *Above our heads, cut-out cardboard clouds spin slowly and serenely, hanging on strings from the ceiling.*



The opening party was going strong when I arrived, and the gallery was packed full of enthusiastic young art lovers from every walk of life. I saw dirty-haired hipsters in rompers, young professionals still in their suits, *creative-types in ethnic dress, and skaters that looked more likely to create their own street art in a back alley than to buy someone else's in a gallery.*

The attitude of the party was distinctly democratic. There were no art snobs there, only people filled with a pure enthusiasm for creative expression. Even the artists were happy to speak to anyone with a question or autograph request. While I talked to Hera on the ephemeral nature of their work, a large, sweaty fan boi came over, put his arms around my friend and me, and drunkenly told us that Hera is a gorgeous woman not of this world, with talent and beauty to spare. She graciously thanked him, and we waited awkwardly while he shook her hand for an uncomfortable amount of time and then lumbered off. *"You were asking how audiences are different?"* she said, laughing. *"That's how! People in the US and New York are not afraid to say what they think, whether it's a compliment or a complaint. In Germany, they may think that if they don't have something smart to say, they should just be quiet and bite their nails and keep it inside, but in the US, we get a lot more feedback."* And neither Hera nor Akut is a stranger to that particular type of "feedback." Each of them spent most of the night surrounded by the opposite sex, fans hanging off their every word. *"It doesn't hurt that they're both so good-looking,"* remarked Rosa, acting photographer of the night.

On the way to the after party at the GATES, I was intrigued to ask Akut why he feels compelled to create, *"Why? Why does any artist or musician or writer do what they do? We are like a screaming child! We have to let our parents and the whole world know, 'I am here!'"*



Herakut. Red Flagg, 638 West 28th Street, NYC, May 21 – July 3, 2009,