



Chicago in Miami

By Alicia Eler

OVERALL MURMURS OF LOW ATTENDANCE ASIDE, Art Basel Miami Beach reported more registered collectors and cultural institutions than any previous year. The Miami Herald said that almost half of the galleries at Art Basel saw drops in sales, however, and after just two days into the fair, only sixteen percent of galleries at Basel and the satellite fairs saw sales growth. There are fewer visitors roaming the fairs than in years past, but the art world won't give up.

Of the three Chicago galleries at Art Basel Miami Beach—blue-chippers Richard Gray, Donald Young and Valerie Carberry—I noticed a sprinkling of red dots covering David Hockneys at Richard Gray. During an unstable time, art buyers will invest in artists whose names they already know and trust. Kavi Gupta Gallery led the way at the younger, more casual, Chicago gallery-populated NADA Art Fair, even positioning Tony Tasset's "Snowman" (2008) by the coveted fair entrance. Within the first hour of the fair, that piece sold for \$70,000, which "shocked" Gupta according to reports from Artinfo.com. Red dots covered works by Melanie Schiff—a 2008 Whitney Biennial participant—including her "Untitled" (2008), an exquisite play with light, shadow and circular lens-like mirrors and symbols that are curiously shaped like Schiff's nipples, recognizable in her other works.

Imperfect Articles represented a more affordable slice of Chicago's art world at NADA, selling t-shirts designed by Andrew Rafacz Gallery's Cody Hudson, among others. Nearby, Bridgeport-based Proximity Magazine and Pilsen-based Golden Age showed off their print goods. The West Loop's Western Exhibitions dedicated their entire space to the work of Chicago's husband art-team duo Stan Shellabarger and Dutes Miller, who are quickly becoming the gallery's art-fair darlings, and included a live knitting performance of their pink umbilical-cord-like tube, making early on a \$5,000 sale of a book filled with self-portrait silhouettes. Chicago galleries Rowley Kennerk and Shane Campbell Gallery also showed at NADA.

The West Loop contingent was further seen down the street at PULSE, where Monique Meloche Gallery's booth featuring L.A.-based emerging artist Kendell Carter sold a variety of his works ranging from \$1,700–\$12,000, including the space's wainscot wall installation, something that's certainly more difficult to sell than, say, one of the artist's shoelace drip paintings. Lake Street's Packer Schopf Gallery did Bridge for the past three years but switched to PULSE this year; owner Aron Packer says that Michael Dinges' paintings on deceased Mac computers and Steve Seeley's whimsical taxidermy drawings were "a hit." Tony Wight of Tony Wight Gallery smiled from inside his crisp white-walled space, which included a strong selection of work including abstract, kaliediscope-esque photos from NY-based Tamar Halpern's solo exhibition recently seen in Chicago.

Catherine Edelman Gallery, Douglas Dawson and McCormick Gallery brought work to Art Miami, another of the vast tent fairs. Chicago representation at the poppy young Aqua Wynwood Fair included Kasia Kay Art Projects and Thomas Robertello Gallery, who smartly curated works from Lily McElroy's "I Throw Myself at Men." In this series, the artist hand-selected men either from Craigslist or at dive bars in Chicago, and literally threw herself at them, toying with assumptions about male-female power dynamics.

The Chicago born-and-bred Bridge Art Fair led Chicago representation in Miami, bringing ALL RISE GALLERY, Accomplice Projects, Antena, GARDENfresh, Swimming Pool Project Space to the Miami location, and Aldo Castillo Gallery and Ryan Schulz Projects (of the recently closed NavtaSchulz Gallery on Lake Street) to the new Bridge Wynwood. Emerging artist Mathew Paul Jinks says "I'm seeing a lot of interest—my Web site stats peaked this week, and GRACE, a Brooklyn gallery, asked me to do a performance next year." Likewise, at Bridge Miami Beach, gallery co-owner Liz Nielsen, of the less-than-one-year-old Swimming Pool Project Space, saw two \$500 video-art sales of work by Latham Zearfoss and Aspen Mays.

Talk of sales was still on everyone's lips until Art Basel Miami Beach closed their doors on Sunday, December 7, at 6pm sharp. As the power went out on Donald Young Gallery's four-channel Gary Hill video piece, guests streamed out of the convention center. When the Art Basel Miami Beach closing party began at the newly renovated Fontainebleau Hotel at 41st and Collins, the food and wine flowed as if someone had just won the lottery and was treating thousands of close friends. Guests ate little slices of decadence, like grilled jumbo shrimp, succulent beef polenta, fresh cherry tomatoes and finger-food desserts of soft sweet cakes, rich chocolate morsels and creamy puddings. Free champagne, wine and mixed drinks flowed endlessly at the bars, some of which were crafted entirely from ice. And as the party meandered into the hotel's new LIV Lounge, where shiny stairs led the way into a lounge-like pit of sweaty bodies dancing against one another, Art Basel Miami Beach Co-Director Annette Schönholzer smiled, sliding alongside collectors and exhibitors. No one was thinking about unsold paintings needing to be shipped home.