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ART REVIEW

Smooth and Safe at Pier 94

By ROBERTA SMITH

These days contemporary-art fairs tend to travel in franchised packs. A large successful fair spawns parasite copycat fairs, and before you know it, you’ve got an art-fair fair.

New York is having one this weekend. The Armory Show, now in its 10th incarnation, is back, accompanied by nine younger, smaller, less prestigious fairs, the most ever. Those who make their way through all of them should be honored — like the seven-summits climbers who scale the highest peak on each of the world’s continents — or medicated for obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Given a downwardly spiraling economy that no doubt will affect all aspects of the art world, fairs included, this situation may be temporary. But even without the falling dollar and nervous hedge funders, there is a point at which critical mass fosters inertia.

There is nothing wrong with art fairs that fewer of them wouldn’t cure. Once, they were finite tribal rituals. Dealers around the world who didn’t see one another often would set up camp for a few days, experience the hive mind, exchange information (and goods) and network. The public came, first the frenzied-shopping few and the informed observers, then the general audience.

But these days, with so many fairs, dealers now see entirely too much of one another. They often spend most of their time at fairs or preparing for, or recovering from, them. And the fairs now run like clockwork, almost in their sleep, you could say.

The Armory Show on Pier 94, for example, is in top form. It lacks the stylish comforts and city-wide branding of the Frieze Fair in London, but at least it is now being held under one roof, on one pier instead of two. And there’s always Chelsea, the world’s biggest nonstop art fair 30 blocks to the south. The Armory doesn’t have the balmy weather and exposed skin of Art Basel Miami Beach, but, hey, it is happening in March, not February — this year anyway. And while it lacks Art Basel’s older European dealers, with their booths full of choice modern masters, a sense of maturity seems to have settled upon the place.

This year’s Armory should take as its motto a recent poster (unfortunately not at the fair) by Mads
Lynnerup, a Danish-born artist based in San Francisco. It reads: “If you see anything interesting please let someone know immediately!” This polite elongation of the paranoid counterterrorism campaign mounted by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York (“If you see something, say something”) promotes the art world’s oldest information highway: word of mouth. But the anxious tone suggests that things of interest have lately been too few and far between.

And so it is that the Armory Show goes down very smoothly, not unlike the Whitney Biennial or last summer’s Venice Biennale. An air of orderly professionalism pervades; outrageously of any kind is rare. There are no cringe-inducing moments, although the cluttered, quasi-Rauschenbergian installation cooked up by Assume Vivid Astro Focus for the exterior of the V.I.P. Lounge comes close. And there is almost nothing that makes you stop in your tracks. Yes, there is the annual tape-’n’-things sculpture by Thomas Hirschhorn. This one, “Tool Table,” is, for a change, bloodless and cerebral: a sea of mannequin hands clutching de rigueur books (Nietzsche, Sartre, Thomas More) or tools (hammer, saw, trowel). It proves how much Mr. Hirschhorn’s work needs some form of sex or violence.

The show’s smoothness extends to the layout, which is surprisingly nonhierarchal, with more- and less-established dealers in larger and smaller spaces mingled throughout. Some booths are like large vitrines; you can see everything from the aisle. Others are like small galleries; you can walk in, browse and admire the furniture, which is sometimes as interesting as the art. If things seem a bit more crowded in the shorter arms of the fair — which is laid out in a giant capital T that you enter at the crossing — they also feel nominally looser and more playful, like an earlier version of the fair.

The attraction of any art fair is that many kinds of art all talk at once, randomly, democratically, in a relatively direct way, unedited by museum curators, magazine editors, international exhibition commissioners or even art critics. Still, it is possible to string together different conversations. One concerns the persistence of painting or paintinglike surfaces, something that few museums seem willing to broach these days. If you want to call this market-driven, fine. Paintings are portable and salable. But, like the novel or the love song, the medium is also wonderfully mutable and susceptible to physical, emotional and symbolic variation.

At Galerie nächst St. Stephan, the different concepts of painting all but come to blows, what with Imi Knoebel’s update of Russian Suprematism in beams of bright, anodized aluminum; Adrian Schiess’s wall-size, iridescent, lyrical abstraction (based on a photograph and printed by ink-jet); Helmut Federle’s wispy little abstractions, the result of time spent in Japan; and Adam Adach’s rough rendering of trash compactors hanging on a wall covered with newspaper front pages from around the world, each neatly shorn of images. Bjarne Melgaard’s parody of Neo-Expressionism snarls forth from several booths, while Jonathan Meese’s equally satirical version — more colorful than usual — chews up the carpet at Contemporary Fine Arts.
At Modern Institute, Anselm Reyle, Cathy Wilkes, Katja Strunz, Jim Lambie and Victoria Morton pursue different pictorial languages, from flat to sculptural, on the wall, on the floor and free-standing. (For more free-standing color, try Meschac Gaba’s knit hats as architectural models at Michael Stevenson, and, at Jack Shainman, Jonathan Seliger’s towering rendition of an Hermès shopping bag in car enamel on aluminum.) At Canada, Joe Bradley presents the fair’s most stripped-down, to-the-point painting: four panels of unpainted beigey vinyl titled “Bread.”

At Blum & Poe, Chih Aoshima abandons her usual high-gloss surfaces to create a soft, cartoony, urban wrap-around mural on paper, melding photography and digital manipulation with clouds as old as Japanese screens. At Patrick Painter, Ivan Morley reiterates a mildly Abstract Expressionist composition (middle-period Guston) with thread, while Tim Berresheim uses inkjet to print a frazzled, linear, computer-derived motif on wood. At Rivington Arms, John Finneran is painting stacks of things like trash cans and free-floating lips on metal with panache and humor, conjuring a camaraless Warhol.

The nonpainting conversation is, of course, vociferous. At Bellwether, Daphne Fitzpatrick’s rawwood ramp and gigantic copper-lined shoe create their own strange world, aided by Anne Hardy’s ambitious set-up photograph and Chihcheng Peng’s “Shadow Your Man,” a series of hilarious digital variations on a short sequence from Buster Keaton’s “Sherlock Jr.,” in which shoes figure prominently.

At Murray Guy, a dozen large images by the German photographer Barbara Probst show the same woman photographed at the same instant from all angles, stretching one second into three-dimensional space, like Cubism.

The galleries of Foxy Production and Marc Foxx have landed across the aisle from each other with large, competing sculptures by Sterling Ruby in vandalized white Formica.

Another conversation concerns one-person shows. Some are little retrospectives, like the surveys of Eleanor Antin (Ronald Feldman), Adrian Piper (Elizabeth Dee), Martin Creed (Hauser & Wirth) and Jenny Holzer (Cheim & Read).

Other solos feature new, unfamiliar names. One of the best is at Hotel, a London gallery, which has devoted its small, black-walled booth to the elegantly goth paintings and also the sculptures of Michael Bauer.

Also outstanding is Eigen & Art’s presentation of Maix Mayer, an artist from Leipzig, Germany, who, unbelievably, is not a painter. Mr. Mayer’s subject is the failure of the future, recounted in photographs of derelict modernist buildings in Taiwan and the former East Germany and in short films shot in and around them. The booth is covered with wallpaper in patterns based on these
structures, creating a total environment in which banality and tragedy conspire.

Nearby, at the Derek Eller booth, the manic master draftsman Dominic McGill also meditates on modernism past and future, while adding collage to his arsenal in “Moloch.” In this enormous, new, volcanic drawing-collage, the words of Baudrillard, Santayana, George W. Bush and many others collide and combust around a fiery newscast-like cluster of magazine images, all red. Their shape is based on the flailing monster at the center of Max Ernst’s “Fireside Angel,” which was inspired by the rise of Franco. Mr. McGill has mustered a commensurately apocalyptic tone. He makes the end seem near, and for much more than just art fairs.

Here is information about the art shows this weekend in Manhattan. Unless noted, all run through Sunday.

THE ARMORY SHOW, Pier 94, 12th Avenue at 55th Street, Clinton; thearmoryshow.com.


DIGITAL AND VIDEO ART FAIR, (DiVA) 2008 New York, White Box, 525 West 26th Street, Chelsea, and in shipping containers throughout the West Chelsea gallery district, 20th to 26th Streets, between 10th and 11th Avenues. (212) 604-0519; divafair.com.

LA ART IN NY, Altman Building, 135 West 18th Street; laartfair.com.

NEW YORK ART AND DESIGN FAIR, Park Avenue Armory, Park Avenue at 67th Street; www.newyorkdesignfair.com. Through Monday.

POOL ART FAIR, “Meet Me Here,” Hotel Chelsea, 222 West 23rd Street; poolartfair.com.

PULSE ART FAIR NEW YORK, Pier 40, 353 West Street, West Village; pulse-art.com.

RED DOT NEW YORK CITY, Park South Hotel, 122 East 28th Street; reddotfair.com.

SCOPE NEW YORK, Scope Pavilion, Lincoln Center, Damrosch Park, 62nd Street and 10th Avenue; scope-art.com.

VOLTA NY, 7 West 34th Street, (646) 641-8732; voltashow.com.
The Armory Show at Pier 94 includes the Bellwether booth with work by Daphne Fitzpatrick, Anne Hardy and Chihcheng Peng. Credit...Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times. By Roberta Smith. Those who make their way through all of them should be honored — like the seven-summits climbers who scale the highest peak on each of the world’s continents — or medicated for obsessive-compulsive disorder. Given a downwardly spiraling economy that no doubt will affect all aspects of the art world, fairs included, this situation may be temporary. But even without the falling dollar and nervous hedge funders, there is a point at which critical mass fosters inertia. There is nothing wrong with art fairs that fewer of them wouldn’t cure. Once, they were finite tribal rituals. Pier 94 will host the fair’s main gallery sections, while Pier 90 will be entirely dedicated to special thematic presentations organized by leading curators Nora Abrams, Jamillah James, and Anne Ellegood. As far as I understand, Pier 92 will be renovated, but it’s still to be determined when that happens. Armory Show director Nicole Berry told artnet News. In the meantime, the fair is playing it safe and sticking with the more recently renovated Pier 90. (Both Piers 90 and 94 have been checked to make sure that they’re structurally sound, she confirmed.) The shift will likely mean slightly Pier 94 is located in New York City. Chapter 2 - The Iso Effect: Mission 4 - Mean People. Chapter 10 - Chaos Circle: Mission 3 - Stormy Weather. Chapter 11 - Mutant Mayhem: Mission 4 - Underground Resistance. Chapter 9 - Signs of the End: Mission 3 - The Better of Both Worlds. Special Operations - Long Live the Queen: Mission 2 - Sentinel. Special Operations - Cry Havok: Mission 3 - Cosmic Forces. Special Operations - Symbiosis: Mission 2 - Search for the Cure. Although small, these wetlands at Pier 94 provide rare and valuable habitat in this highly industrialized portion of San Francisco’s shoreline. In 2006, the Port completed wetland enhancements funded by the Port, the San Francisco Bay Natural Resources Trust, and the California Coastal Conservancy. Pier 94 offers valuable wildlife habitat but few public amenities. The Port, along with the Golden Gate Audubon Society, will continue to protect and preserve this wetland area. In support of the Port’s and the Golden Gate Audubon Society’s (GGAS) shared goals of preserving habitat and encouraging public access and education, the GGAS has adopted the wetlands at Pier 94, including hosting regular volunteer work days and wildlife viewing events. #edm #pier 94 #krewella #gareth emery #seven lions #pier of fear #get wet #raves #lightshows #family. 7 notes. This remix has been blowing up since Avicii’s New Years Eve set at Pier 94 in New York. And I mean blowing up because when I go to search the original of this song, I can’t find any posts that aren’t Avicii’s remix. It’s one of many unreleased Avicii tracks that will come out over the next few months, continuing his reign as God-incarnate among his fans.