

# ARTFORUM

## Commercial Flair

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Left: Steve Martin with artists T. J. Wilcox and Elizabeth Peyton. Right: Dealer Lorcan O'Neill with Whitney Biennial curator Stuart Comer. (All photos: Linda Yablonsky)

**THE COMMERCIAL CONFLAGRATION** that is Armory Arts Week always begins with promise. This year—perhaps predictably, given the conservative profile of most art fairs—the nonprofit zone delivered on it first. The appetite whetter was MoMA's Robert Heinecken retrospective, a revelatory show curated by Eva Respini. It gives overdue, East Coast recognition to the influential Left Coast proto-appropriationist and UCLA photography department founder—an artist's artist if ever one was.

The Monday night opening sent paroxysms of pleasure through a photo-centric crowd that included collectors Michael and Eileen Cohen, photographers Susan Meiselas, Mitch Epstein, and Paul Graham, International Center of Photography curator Carol Squiers, and Paris Photo director Julian Frydman. As Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin was quick to note, the show travels to her institution next.

"It's really fantastic," said Marc Selwyn, who represents the Heinecken estate in LA, in collaboration with Mary Cherry. "It's fantastic," echoed Freidrich Petzel, who shows Heinecken in New York. "I worked with Robert in 1976," veteran photo dealer Janet Borden recalled. Evidently she knew something that a lot of other people didn't know, but it didn't take long for first-nighters like Phil and Shelley Aarons or former *New York Times* photo editor Philip Gafter to see that Heinecken's photocollages and magazine interventions anticipated the Pictures Generation strategies by twenty years.



Left: Artists Laura Owens and Emilv Sundblad. Right: Dealer Lisa Snellman and artist Jacob Kassav

With history thus nipping at our heels, I joined uptown art congregants the following evening for the forward-backward experience of the twenty-sixth annual Art Dealers of America "Art Show" at the Park Avenue Armory. Audiences here tend to be very pearls-at-the-neck, diamond-brooch-at-the-breast, and a generation or two past the lemmings streaming into the Whitney Museum that same night for the opening of this year's biennial—the last to take place in the Marcel Breuer building before the Whitney decamps for new headquarters in the meatpacking district, designed by Renzo Piano. (What, him again?)

The Park Avenue crowd always brings a certain decorum to the ADAA show. Unlike the Whitney Biennial, it's one that everyone loves to love. On Tuesday night, it actually felt more like a curated group exhibition than most biennials, which appear increasingly more like art-fair feeding grounds.

The modest size of the booths, and a generational shift that has turned what was a stuffy, modern/Old Master fair into an elegant contemporary one, prompted many of the seventy-two, all-American exhibitors to install one-person shows of recent art. Directly opposite the entrance, Sperone Westwater showed a knockout new group of Charles LeDray's tiny, handmade clothing, including a rack of women's dresses, and a delicate, daisy-chain necklace carved from human bone.



Left: Writer Julie Ault with Semiotext(e) editor Hedi El Kholi. Right: Lorraine Weinberg with Whitney Museum director Adam Weinberg.

A moment later, ADAA president Dorsey Waxter waxed ecstatic about Petah Coyne's plastic flower and stuffed peacock installation at the Lelong stand—if looks could talk, a crowd-pleaser—and told me not to miss Ann Hamilton's live portrait studio at Carl Solway's booth, where the artist was photographing volunteer subjects behind a translucent membrane. "Is this your art?" inquired the art lawyer John Silberman. "You are my art!" Hamilton replied. In the adjacent booth, Jacob Kassay had installed a group of shaped paintings on tan MDF board that was as cohesive a visual statement as he's made since his dipped silver paintings. "It's like a 1920s salon," dealer Lisa Spellman said of the fair. "But contemporary."

In the aisles I spotted MoMA director Glenn Lowry, art consultant Alan Schwartzman, Christie's Bret Gorvy, and artist Philip Taaffe (who was featured at Luhring Augustine). Visiting dealer Jay Jopling, his cell phone glued to his ear, helped himself to the delicious hors d'oeuvres that are always an attraction of this fair's gala preview, a benefit for the Henry Street Settlement, as Dallas collector Howard Rachofsky strode past and collectors Peter and Jill Kraus huddled with dealers Paula Cooper and Steve Henry. "We tried to go to the Whitney," Kraus said, "but the line was backed up to Park Avenue—and this was just after seven o'clock."

Personally, I was happy to keep looking around here. At Yancey Richardson's stand, I discovered Zanele Muholi's striking photographs of lesbian and transgender women in her native South Africa—resplendent in this refined environment. Sara VanDerBeek's photos looked beautiful at Metro Pictures, as did Dana Schutz's big charcoal drawings at Petzel, but the ten small portraits by Jeronimo Elespe, a former assistant to Sean Landers, sold out at Eleven Rivington before I could focus on a single one.



Left: Artist Bjarne Melgaard with Sam Kraus. Right: Novelist Colm Toibin.

The hall was filling with sharp suits and trophy jewelry when Marianne Boesky attracted a full deck of distaff collectors—Artsy LA’s Haley Rose Cohen, Art Cart founder Hannah Flegelman, and the cheerful Amy Phelan—to her booth, which presented an unknown, ballpoint pen–drawing side of painting-machine, mushroom-sculpture artist Roxy Paine. Blum and Poe continued its tasty rollout of Mono-ha works; Alexander Gray promoted early abstraction by Jack Whitten; and Stefania Bortolami put up a handsome fourth wall to support shiny stripe paintings by Daniel Buren, with Richard Aldrich paintings behind it.

With their Gaston Lachaise–Louise Bourgeois twofor, Chelsea’s John Cheim and Howard Read materialized as very smart uptown dealers, as James Cohan was invoicing Spencer Finch’s Scotch-tape cloud drawings. Laurie Simmons arrived at the Salon 94 booth just as collectors Anita Zabludowicz and Wendy Fisher were admiring her “Walking Objects” photographs, three of them never exhibited before. “I used to feel funny about the big tomato, because I was afraid it would be taken as antifeminist,” she said. “Now I don’t care. I love it.”

There were two lines of shivering contenders for the door when I arrived at the Whitney, and a long snake of a queue for the coatroom in the lobby, where director Adam Weinberg was the official greeter. Relieved from biennial duty, Donna De Salvo and Scott Rothkopf also mingled with the waves of people pouring in to see the first biennial curated totally by curators from outside institutions—the better to leave Whitney staffers free to figure out what to do with the museum’s new building.



Left: Justin Vivian Bond and Participant’s Lia Gangitano. Right: Artist Ei Arakawa.

Michelle Grabner's top floor was a veritable fun fair of art, an obstacle course of riotous color made even more impassable by all the people—so many, I wondered how there could possibly still be so many waiting outside. (It was too dark out for Zoe Leonard's camera obscura inside the Whitney's Cyclops window to reflect the street.) Many of those present were artists. Some, like Amy Sillman, Dawoud Bey, Alma Allen, Karl Haendel, Joel Otterson, Laura Owens, and Sterling Ruby, were in the show. Others—Rachel Harrison, Robert Longo, Lorraine O'Grady—were just visiting ghosts of biennials past. Phil Vanderhyden stood by his expert redo of the late Gretchen Bender's forty-two-foot-long *People in Pain*, for my money one of the strongest works in the show. "There were eight feet I couldn't fit on the wall," Vanderhyden said, as former Stedelijk Museum director Ann Goldstein sidled up, recalling her own installation of the work in her seminal 1989 "Forest of Signs" exhibition at LA MoCA.

That must have been a better year for art than this one. Despite all the color and variety that Grabner brought to the floor, I had doubts that much of the work would have the Bender's staying power if installed in a different context. Meanwhile, it was a lot of fun to negotiate the fourth floor and just enjoy the sights: Uri Aran roaming with his identical twin; Joel Otterson as delighted with his Bill Erlich diamond-and-sapphire brooch as he was with his handmade "transgender" tent of vintage gazar silk for girls; Jerry Saltz having his picture taken with Steve Martin, who said he came to the opening "just to see."

It was so crowded that most people didn't notice this special Oscar winner, just two days after the Oscars. But the stars here were the artists, who included a number of writers and publishers. Complaints of having to read too much were loud and perhaps not too serious, it was hard to tell. I'll be the first to claim literature as an art, but it's not an especially visual art and generally not one well suited for collective viewing. Yet dealer Lorcan O'Neill reported, "We've been getting high in the Semiotext(e) room," evidently a covert clubhouse for pot smokers as well as a hangout for the press's Sylvère Lotringer, performance artist Penny Arcade, and Tony Award-winning playwright and novelist Colm Tóibín.



Left: Artist Laurie Simmons, Performa founder RoseLee Goldberg, and collectors Anita Zabludowicz and Wendy Fisher. Right: Dealer Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn.

"I like the mix of cool and uncool," said Houston's Contemporary Art Museum director Bill Arning. "Dealers are confused. They're saying, 'You mean we're supposed to be showing this stuff?'" That would have made Stuart Comer laugh. "Museums are in crisis," the curator of the Biennial's third floor said—trapped between box office-pleasing market favorites and marginalized but culture-shifting ideas.

Guards chased us out of the museum before I'd even reached Anthony Elms's second floor, but I followed the fleet to the Carlyle Hotel, where the poet and Triple Canopy supporter Tom Healy was hosting a cocktail party to celebrate the collective's participation in the biennial. Among the famished diving for sliders and lining up for cocktails were biennialists Julie Ault and Emily Sundblad, as well as musician-artist-collector Michael Stipe, who held down a table with the English singer-songwriter Robyn Hitchcock, who just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

"We're going to the Toolbox," said transgender performer Justin Vivian Bond. "You know it's going to be trashy and ugly, and the drinks will be cheap." Would that it could be as easy to predict where history will situate this biennial. All we can guess is that the celebrants of the next edition, downtown, will have to give up the Carlyle to settle for the Standard. Like many works in the show, it too is now for sale.

— Linda Yablonsky



Left: Artist Carroll Dunham and Whitney curator Scott Rothkopf. Right: Artist Frances Stark.



Left: Dealer Alexander Schroeder and curator Pati Hertlino. Right: Artist Jeronimo Elesoe.



Left: Dealer Tim Blum. Right: Collector Peter Kraus, dealer Paula Cooper, collector Jill Kraus, and dealer Steve Henry.



Left: Artists Lorraine O'Grady and Jane Dickson. Right: Artist Peter McGough.



Left: Dallas Museum curator Jeffrey Grove and AXA executive Christiane Fischer. Right: Collector Ann Tenenbaum.



Left: Dealer Richard Edwards, consultant Abigail Asher, and dealer David Nolan. Right: Artists Jonas Wood and Shio Kuzube.