

Trophy Art and Curated Booths at ADAA's Art Show

Plus, taxidermied peacocks, a portrait studio and an \$11 million Francis Bacon painting

BY ZOË LESCAZE, SARAH DOUGLAS AND MICHAEL H. MILLER 3/05 10:00AM

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START THE SLIDESHOW

There are few things the art world can agree on, but one is that the Tuesday night opening of The Art Show, the Art Dealers' Association of America's annual fair at the Seventh Regiment Armory, is the most civilized way to kick off Armory Week. (The week, somewhat confusingly in this context, is named for The Armory Show, on the west side piers.) There are million dollar paintings, a manageable number of booths (around 70,

less than half the number in The Armory Show) and delicious miniature pulled pork sandwiches. The fair's doors swung open to super-VIPs at 530pm, and despite the fact that this year, the fair, in its 26th edition, faced some competition from the simultaneous opening of the Whitney Biennial a few blocks uptown, the aisles quickly filled with the likes of Warhol collector Irving Blum, Calder Foundation head Sandy Rower, Italian collector Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guggenheim director Richard Armstrong, MoMA director Glenn Lowry (who appeared to have wisely forgone the long coat check line), Los Angeles collector Eli Broad, New York collector Mickey Cartin, and artists Tal R, Laurie Simmons and Dana Schutz.

"It's super disturbing but I love it," a man said, standing before Petah Coyne's highly baroque installation at Galerie Lelong's booth. It's called "The Unconsoled," after the Ishiguro novel. The booth's entrance is all but blocked by trellis-like walls covered with fake flowers, the blooms and vines of which are coated in wax. One taxidermied peacock perches on the top of the wall, another on the top of the black wax chandelier sculpture inside, while cockatoos and other birds emerge from the foliage. One portion of the wall is priced at \$350,000, another at \$325,000. The chandelier has an asking price of \$300,000. Ms. Coyne was standing outside the booth, in an Issey Miyake outfit that appeared to be color-coordinated with her artwork.

Next door, James Cohan's booth is as ethereal as Lelong's is elaborate. A series of Spencer Finch works on paper are made from strips of Scotch tape mounted on blue paper. From afar, the arrangements of tape look like cumulous clouds. At \$18,000 apiece, they sold out at the opening.

"It's Turrell-mania," declared dealer Marc Glimcher, standing outside Pace Gallery's bracket-

shaped booth, which is devoted to the Los Angeles light artist James Turrell. Inside, a suite of smaller holographic works by the artist, whose retrospective at the Guggenheim and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art recently closed, were selling for \$100,000 a pop. “This is not very PC of me to say,” said a woman wearing a chartreuse shawl, as she contemplated a green hologram, “but I feel like if you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all.” That aside, they were going fast: only four works were yet to sell at that time, about an hour into the VIP preview.

Dealer Alexander Gray just became an ADAA member last year, and he didn’t have to wait long to make it into the fair (dealer members are chosen by a committee). His booth is devoted to abstract paintings by Jack Whitten, made between 1971 and 1974, most of them priced between \$95,000 and \$350,000. One of them, *Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, was shown at the Whitney Museum in 1974. Mr. Whitten made these works by placing their supports on the floor, and applying paint with a rake-like squeegee.

Several booths away, P.P.O.W. gallery focused on the work of Martha Wilson, covering the exact same time period. Ms. Wilson, who was unmissable with her hair dyed half metallic red, half white, was on hand to talk about her work, made in Nova Scotia just after she completed an MA in English literature. She’d started her Ph.D, she said, but the professors weren’t interested in her thesis, which involved diagramming the novels of Henry James. “*The Princess Casamassima* is like a roof,” she explained. “*The Golden Bowl* is a carriage with one wheel missing. It’s rocky.” She abandoned the Ph.D and got a job teaching English grammar at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where her projects at the time were more at home.

Looking around the booth at her work, mostly self-portraits in various guises with text explanations typed onto them, she observed, “This work was not taken seriously because I was a girl.” Really? “My advisor said, ‘Women don’t make it in the art world.’ It made me mad. So I started doing this stuff.” “This stuff” includes a series of self-portraits in which she attempts to pass as a man in men’s bathrooms around town (she was unsuccessful, which she attributes to not having taped down her breasts). She got her boyfriend at the time to pose as Man Ray’s famous photograph of Marcel Duchamp as his female alter ego, Rrose Selavy (the boyfriend ended up dumping her for a roommate). After making the works in the booth, Ms. Wilson moved to New York, where she founded an all-girl band. “None of us could play instruments,” she said. It included Ingrid Sischy, who was editor of *Artforum* at the time. The band members had a sideline in impersonating famous women, mostly political figures. “I still imitate Barbara Bush,” Ms. Wilson said. “I’m the right age.”

It seems to be a new trend at this fair—the artist being present. At the next booth over, that of dealer Carl Solway of Cincinnati, Ann Hamilton was busy making photographic portraits of fairgoers, taken with them behind a sheet of translucent film. Subjects’ faces became visible when pressed against the film, the rest of their bodies remained ghostly. Having a photograph taken was free, and those who did so were emailed a photo of someone else who had it done. Call it vanity—the booth was consistently mobbed throughout the opening.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash boldly left their booth’s floor bare of carpeting, exposing the Armory’s uneven wooden beams. It looked like the floor of an artist’s studio, perfectly complimenting an elegant, colorful group of sculptures by Anthony Caro from the 1960s (and one from the 80s), priced from \$50,000 to \$350,000. Caro passed away last October and the gallery wanted take the opportunity of The Art Show “to show how current and contemporary his 1960s work still feels,” said director Robert Grosman.

David Zwirner’s booth was not only monographic but practically monochromatic, with a group of six paintings on paper by Ad Reinhardt from 1960 that haven’t been shown since 1966, when they were on view at the Museum Boijmans-van-Beuningen in Rotterdam. The paintings come directly from the Reinhardt estate, which Zwirner recently began representing; they are on reserve to a museum. The Art Show, Zwirner director Christopher D’Amelio said, “provides a forum for specialized, concise presentations.”

Matthew Marks offered up a large work by Ellsworth Kelly, recently ubiquitous in light of his 90th birthday, which sold during the preview for \$2 million. The booth also sported a dog etching by Lucian Freud, who often depicted his beloved whippets. This one, of Pluto aged 12, was

available for \$120,000.

A couple booths down, Marianne Boesky Gallery devoted its space to drawings and sculpture by Roxy Paine. The artist is crafting hi-tech machinery out of wood these days, and an intricate robot arm, painstakingly and anachronistically carved by hand, constituted the booth's focal point. This sculpture, standing about eight feet high with its tiered ziggurat of a plinth, was priced \$95,000.

Next door, Salon 94 was making its ADAA debut with a fleet of large photographs by Laurie Simmons, who has a show opening at the gallery's Bowery location on Friday. These works were printed in 1989 and 1991 and featured female legs topped off with unexpected, often humorous objects in the place of torsos, such as birthday cakes, tomatoes and toilets. The surreal figures appeared in front of inky black backgrounds, and in the dark glass, you could see the legs of dozens of striding fairgoers overlap with those of the women. Though the photographs were old, Ms. Simmons had not printed them back when she shot the film, and Salon 94 partner Fabienne Stephan said revisiting the old negatives was like opening "a treasure trove." The funny and somewhat subversive prints were paired with a smaller work from Ms. Simmons' new series, centered around discomfiting Japanese cosplay actresses wearing doll-like masks, and a few Barbara Krugers. "I am your immaculate conception," read one.

Cheim & Read presented a cohesive historical show of sculptures by Gaston Lachaise and Louise Bourgeois, who wrote an article praising Lachaise in a 1992 issue of *Artforum*. "Two lucky people went home with trophies," said partner Adam Sheffer, of two Bourgeois bronzes that each sold for around \$500,000. "Not everyone needs an Oscar."

At Blum & Poe, the Los Angeles gallery that will be opening a shop on East 66th Street, Tim Blum called the stitched cloth motor oil paintings by Kōji Enokura, "a symbolic gesture" towards the gallery he'll be opening around the corner from the Park Avenue Armory on May 1st. (The first show will be a retrospective of Mark Grotjahn's butterfly paintings, curated by Douglas Fogle.) "We're just doing what we do," he said. "And we're going to be doing things that aren't being done." For what it's worth, he already had prime real estate at ADAA, a corner booth near the front entrance with the original wood floors of the armory's drill hall exposed instead of the staid gray carpeting blanketing the rest of the fair.

The booth at Acquavella Gallery was swarming with people, and William, the patriarch of the art dealing family was more than a little distracted. Asked why he enjoyed this fair in particular, which is on his home turf, he responded, "Yeah we don't mind it...Daniel!" then retreated, presumably to the mysterious Daniel. His son Alex cut in, praising the fair's convenience and the way it gathers all their clients together in one place. Asked about the price of "Study for a Figure" by Francis Bacon, currently the record holder for most expensive contemporary artist, the younger Acquavella deadpanned, "Eleven million" with the practiced humility of a Harvard man saying he "went to college in Boston." By the time we left, the painting was still available.

"I'm very jealous of your wine," Stefania Bortolami told a potential client in her booth, which featured Daniel Buren and Richard Aldrich. The booth was given a kind of guarded white and gold entranceway built out by Mr. Buren, who Ms. Bortolami said "always gives the possibility of doing something in situ." This was her first year doing the fair, a kind of inauguration into the ADAA club. "It's a lot of people we don't get downtown," she said.

On that note, there was John McEnroe, weaving amongst the abundance of canes, walkers and wheelchairs (The Art Show attracts a lot of old money, quite literally) in a puffy jacket. As far as we can tell, he was the only person there wearing a backwards Knicks hat, and his presence slightly delayed our interaction with Sean Kelly, who announced, "The McEnroes are here!" upon the former tennis player's entrance. (Perhaps he alone is the intended audience for the inclusion of David Foster Wallace's handwritten questions for Roger Federer included in the Whitney Biennial.) Mr. Kelly was showing Kehinde Wiley portraits on wood frames covered with 22-karat gold leaf frames, each priced at \$75,000, each with a very specific art historical reference. "We asked him about a year ago to make work specifically for this," Mr. Kelly said. "Kehinde was interested in making paintings on Russian orthodox icons." Each featured a young black subject in an antiquated pose, like "Saint John, Great Variant," which featured Craig Fletcher, 26 year

old, from Jamaica, NY. Asked if any had sold, Mr. Kelly said “several” with a big smile.

Over at Richard Feigen, an Upper East Side old timer, Mr. Feigen gestured at a wall of Ray Johnsons in his booth and asked an employee to tell us the price range. They were for sale between \$32,000 and \$36,000. “He’s the only major artist whose prices are in that range,” Mr. Feigen said. A beat. “Because we control the estate,” perhaps a nod to the less responsible dealers in the room. He said that his gallery had exhibited in the Art Show “I think every year since it started.” Asked if he enjoys the art world’s abundant fair culture and its nearly obligatory participation, he said, “Do I enjoy it? No. I do not personally enjoy it.”