

# Flash Art

MIAMI 2007 GLUT BUT NOT RUT

Gae Savannah

Few could claim that they had taken in all the fairs this past week in Miami. Judgment of a pecking order became as subjective as the evaluating of art itself. With Art Basel Miami Beach the anointed Sun God nonetheless, the warehouse fairs, Nada, Scope, Pulse, and Aqua Wynwood stood in as disciples, with some of the smaller hotel and other fairs just towel boys. Visitors scrambled to scrupulously select which venues to hit sooner rather than never.



Art Basel Miami Beach - Anselm Reyle L & M Arts, NY (Untitled 2005)

Art Basel Miami Beach Positions - Jennifer Nocon - Tracey Williams, NY

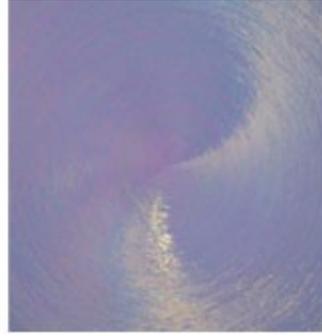
Though not without entries from the stinting school of mediocrity, including some lackluster SuperNova grades, the cash-gushing convention center hummed with diversity and color. At OMR (Mexico City) Thomas Glassford's bright metallic-hued stripes of anodized aluminum transformed industrial found materials into pseudo painting. At \$38,000, it was still available on Wednesday afternoon. Nearby, patterned Franz West chairs of thatched plastic strapping, sisters to those in New York's New Museum café, at Galerie Barbel Grasslin (Frankfurt) lent a twist to the fair's surrounding all-important, austere art-rectangles. On the heel of recent blazing auction records, with whipped up purple mylar and treasure-trove turquoise glimmer, Anselm Reyle dazzled, selling in both Gagosian (NY) and L & M Arts (NY) booths at quoted prices of \$150,000 and \$250,000. Also rumor had it at L & M, the now not-so-renegade Takashi Murakami sold his tall mushroom sculpture for \$875,000. At Metro Pictures (NY) upcoming Whitney Biennial participant, trickster Olaf Breuning sold a droll fancy Chinese junk of pasta for \$12,000. Trumping the new materials game, Kori Newkirk hung a superlative screen of lavender plastic pony beads priced at \$65,000 at the Project (NY) while Kendell Geers installed a seductive ultra violet light piece *Fucking Black Heart* going for 95,000 euro at Stephen Friedman, (London). Not to be over-provoked, at Konrad Fischer (Dusseldorf) Gregor Schneider replicated a Guantanamo Bay cell complete with closing doors which physically conjured up the horror of a system with white torture and few egresses for some, but not others. Accordingly, a passing blonde fair attendee quipped, "I'll never go in there." The piece was listed at 160,000 euro. Next, on the beach, the Positions had two surprise hits this year: Jennifer Nocon's homespun felt vessels at Tracey Williams (NY), and Ara Peterson's laminated wall medley of technological textures at John Connelly Presents (NY), where the use of a mirror along one whole side greatly amplified the Container's normally claustrophobic space.



NADA - Alison Schotz Derek Eller iridescent mirrored dicroic acrylic



NADA - Rob Voerman 'Desk' 2007 Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam



Scope Noh, Sang-Kyoon Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, NY Another End #70901 - rainbow

### **MOSTLY SUNNY - the WAREHOUSE FAIRS**

With a few clouds brought in by sporadic crassly commercial, facilely trendy, or been-there-done-that selections, in general the big fairs delivered good conditions. In relation to the cluster-fuck of other fairs, the sparseness of NADA, undisputed second in line to the Basel throne, did not go unappreciated. Upstream Gallery (Amsterdam) touted an organic, multi-compartmental "Desk" with red glass accents, which sold for 50,000 euro. Eschewing the sometimes-icy NADA grayness, iconoclast dealer Derek Eller (NY) displayed a splashy iridescent dicroic acrylic sculpture by Alyson Schotz running at \$30,000, while The Apartment (Athens) exhibited the confectionary tableaux of Emi Avora.

Next Scope had sizzle and sales. Sensuous whirlpools of sequins at \$20,000 by 2000 Venice Biennial Korean artist Noh, Sang Kyoon greeted viewers from the walls of Bryce Wolkowitz gallery (NY), and at Sacco Gallery (Miami) architect Robert Swedroe's technicolor cyberscapes, also curated by Kim Marrero into the floor of the Sagamore Hotel, teased at \$5-\$10,000 each. Here, at the first art fair to unroll its towels in Miami, stories abounded. Lynn del Sol had just gotten off the plane from the Istanbul Art Fair 5 hours earlier when one of 5 inquirers, a Saatchi curator, asked her to de-install the Guerra de la Paz piece which the curator had just purchased for \$42,000. Later, in mid de-install, marching up to the Creative Thriftshop booth (Williamsburg) another advisor asked, "Is this the thing that Saatchi just bought? What's going to go in this spot?" Del Sol stammered, "Well,—do you want to see it?" The consultant said, "Just put a hold on it, and if it is under 50 (thousand) I'll take it." The next day the advisor bought the de la Paz "Family" for 60 K. Making her annual sales goal in the first two hours of the preview day, Lynn had to re-hang her booth 3 times during the fair. Likewise, though with a more commercial caliber of work, Dean Project sold out most of the gallery's offerings. Of Timothy Berg's slick pop ceramic editions of 5 *Creamsicles* Ice Cream Sandwiches, and *Pink Penguins*, with each edition going up in price at hefty increments, only one penguin was left on Thursday afternoon. Hence, short-lived was any initial pain over the \$20,000 price tag on the booth itself and \$5,000 for VIP zone location.



M\*A\*S\*H curated by Nina Arias and Paco Barragan

Tim White Sobieski 4 channel DVD/video (detail)

Hosting a gang of mostly West coast dealers, Aqua Winwood looked fresh and airy, somehow reminding one of the L.A. New York fair up during the 2007 Armory show. Despite a wiggly floor plan with galleries 3 deep without aisles to navigate with any kind of system, there were some nice surprises; yet this new venue seemed to be one of the victims of the fair glut, as attendance was low. Standing out were Penelope Umbrico's *Honeymoon Suite*, stacks of travel brochures blown up and pixilated into sunset haze at P/M Gallery (Toronto.)

The highest priced of the five editions were \$9,500. Then at Pulse, to start with, the Xtra-hyped Gesai was disappointing with novelty for novelty's sake not only not novel but not well done or even interesting. Overall, if a little light on the sparkle, Pulse was consistent in the level of market-savvy contemporary art. Here, a trustee of the Portland Museum of Art bought a pink vinyl/blue Styrofoam Andrea Cohen sculptural interpretation of a Chinese landscape painting from Walter Maciel (L.A.)-- at \$15,000, they chose well.

### **PARTLY CLOUDY WITH SOME DRIZZLE—the Hotel Fairs**

Lower on the food chain were the hotel fairs with the endearing Aqua, however, offering the hot spot menu with open sky garnish on every plate. In general, though less at Aqua, the problem with the hotels was quantity. Overall, umpteen small works became a cacophony which forced the fairs, including even some of the better rooms and artworks, down to level of the lowest common denominator. That said, for the knowing eye and tenacious scavenger there were gems to be mined, and sometimes even an artist unavailable at big venues was on tap in a lesser known gallery at an attractive price. At Aqua, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary (London) displayed lambda prints by Heather and Ivan Morison on the bed, (an amenity which other dealers had had removed for the sum of \$500-\$1,000.) The Morisons' layered photos shot at New York's Museum of Natural History with digitally drawn crystalline forms recalling meteorites. The caribou editions of 25 sold out for an easy \$550 per photo. At Taylor De Cordoba (L.A.) Melissa Manfull's sensitive drawings of minarets were priced at \$1,400. Western Project (L.A.) sold Jason Adkins' large square hot pink and green pallet sculpture for \$9,500 to the Weisman Foundation of L.A. But the 5 stars go to current resident of the Isabel Stewart Gardiner Museum in Boston, Cliff

Evans, for his witty 5 channel video object --edition of 5, \$5,000 each, *Curator's Office* (Washington DC). Resembling a shooting gallery game, to eerie futuristic soundtrack, rings of paper-doll-flat booth girls cycle up on escalators to the front while yellow armored vehicles wrap around in vertical circles amidst storm troopers --all seeming to be orchestrated from an underground bunker. The piece sheds light on the subterfuge that corporations and the government use to control us without our knowing.

Finally, at the remaining fairs, one saw legion non-descript realistic and abstract art from a miscellany of suburban and urban milieux, which clearly served a more conservative clientele. One wondered whether the hotels were curated or whether galleries just signed up for participation. Though the Catalina is charming and the catalogue looked good, as previously, Bridge was mixed fare. Prices ran the gamut, starting at \$250 for teeny lowbrow paintings by Nick Deakon, Garden Fresh (Chicago). Current Shanghai MOCA artist Eric Michel's rhythmic light sculptures at Vanessa Suchar went for \$3,800 each. Then another room that transcended the overstock.com mentality was Brenda Taylor gallery (NY), which exhibited solo the light sculptures of Christine Desiree, \$8,500 – \$14,000. At Flow, though the waxy transparent Susan Dory paintings at Winston Wachter (NY) were worth a second look, much there appeared to be art for the home --so the rooms' green and brown paisley wallpaper enhanced the presentations. Then, despite Red Dot's name and curatorial waffling, there were some solid contemporary citizens such Melanee Cooper's (Chicago) Jeremiah Ketner, and Eileen Braziel Fine Art's (Santa Fe) collaborative Keep Adding. Luminous orchid abstraction formed of layers of vellum in a top of the line LED lightbox *Remnants* sold for \$7,000. Finally, Gosia Koscielak's and Gallery 415's artists, especially Richard Garet's glowing fujiflex prints rose above partly schlock shop Art Now's offerings.



Aqua Wynwood Penelope Umbrico "Honeymoon Suite" P/M Gallery Toronto  
Scope - Robert Swedroe at Sacco Gallery, and Sagamore

### **BLUE SKY AND DREAMY SUN ALL WINTER LONG -- AROUND TOWN**

Not to be missed were the special exhibits around town. Among limited art projects in the design district, the "Expanded Painting" M\*A\*S\*H show curated by Nina Arias and Paco Barragan jumped ship from straightforward painting to swim in a turbulent ocean of sculpture, installation and new media. Tim White Sobieski's 4 channel DVD/video meshed animated algorithms of natural phenomena such as smoke, light refraction in water and crystalline structures to an ambient music score. Trance-inducing, the continuously regenerating layers of organic patterns evoked inorganic material such as textiles and interior design treatments as well as untold other cultural references, making it difficult to walk away from the nature-culturescape. Nearby, in reaction to modern design and media's distancing us from disasters, dirt and useful clutter, Mike Meire designed a kitchen where goats and pigs live in pens off the side so we see that food doesn't just come from the supermarket and the untidy but authentic substances of life do not have to be retouched or hidden in cabinets.

Near the Collins fairs, in a house for sale on Drexel Avenue, ArtHaus produced by Ethan Cohen, **Renee Vara** and Juan Puentes of White Box (NY) featured artwork predominantly from Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia selected by 6 curators. With multiform work ranging from Vicky Tamako's *Bag Monsters* in

the bathtub and sink, (\$300 each) to Wojtek Ulrich's cross of satellite TV channels fed live from 48 countries (\$80,000), the Haus proved a popular alternative exhibition forum with the added bonus of late hours. Drama at the Haus included wrangling when a young Chinese artist suddenly decided that he wanted \$35,000 for a video that a day before was priced at less than \$2,000, with the dealer trying to reign in the insanity. Sales included that of sculptor Olek's wearable sculpture of hand-crocheted latex balloons in Vara's room that sold to a SFMOMA board member for \$5,200.

Finally, The Margulies collection at the WAREHOUSE touted some superlative recent sculpture and video. Besides Saska Olde Wolbers video of transfixing underwater netherworld, Anthony McCall's *You and I Horizontal*, previously seen in the "Into the Light: the Projected Image" show at the Whitney Museum, was installed in a specially constructed 35 x 35 x 19 foot room. Here two massive migrating cones of light, with mist machine spouting extra swirling cornstarch particulate over them, continually reconfigured themselves into strange tunnels, parabolas and flattened triangles, with viewers participating in the ethereal geometry. The McCall piece will be up through the spring. Without a doubt, the Wynwood galleries, short shiny dresses, glam hotels, cleavage, --the white everything-- add up to damn perfect excuses to do the Miami madness thing all over again next year.