

## ART REVIEW

# *ART REVIEW; The Armory Show, Grown up and in Love With Color*

By Roberta Smith

Feb. 22, 2002

The Armory Show has survived its growth spurt. Last year it shot up to 170 dealers from fewer than 100, moved into two big piers on the Hudson River and experienced some moments of adolescent awkwardness. There were problems moving art in, getting it on the walls and finding a decent snack. Many dealers grumbled, but they seem to have been heard. The New York dealers who founded the fair, back at the Gramercy Hotel in 1994, have handed over its administration to full-time professionals, and much has been ironed out.

The walls are sturdier this year, the floors are carpeted, and reasonable nourishment is available. An unfamiliar sense of calm prevailed during the setting-up days earlier this week. The whole event feels and looks much more together, even adult.

The Armory Show's claim to be the "International Fair of New Art" is more or less fulfilled. Unless you spend your life jetting between European art capitals and international biennials, there is always new information to be gleaned from careful perusal of the fair's booths.

You can even make up for missed trips. For those who didn't make it to Sicily in June for the unveiling of Maurizio Catalan's full-size rendition of the "Hollywood" sign, there is a panoramic photograph at Marian Goodman that includes ant-sized

art mavens climbing the hill for a first look. For those who may miss the forthcoming Matthew Barney exhibition (there are rumors of difficulties at even the European museums that plan to show it now that the Guggenheim has had to cancel its show), the photographs from "Cremaster 3," the final segment of his film epic, can be seen at Barbara Gladstone, and they include a hirsute giant worthy of Wagner.

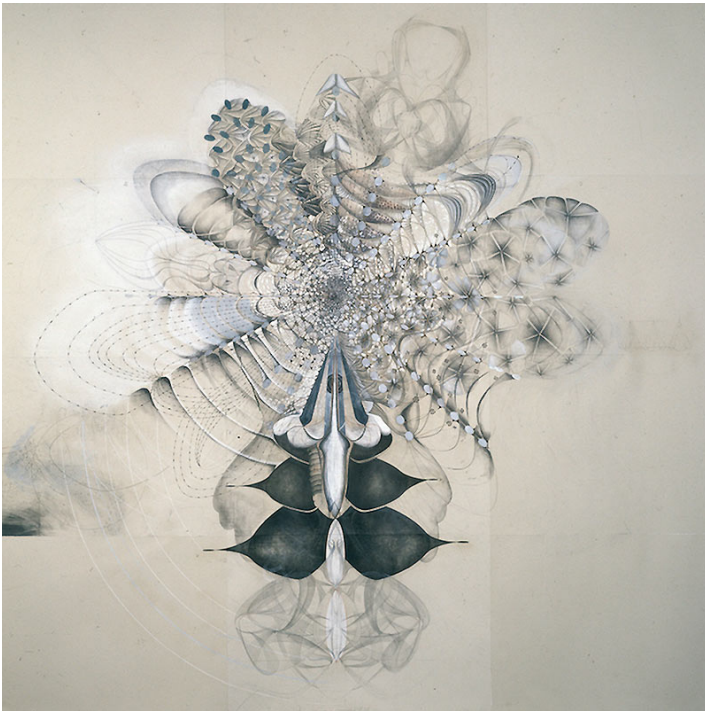
As usual, one thing is certain: pluralism is not dead and it is not dying. And this is based on what can be called only a partial world sampling -- that is, art from 173 galleries primarily in the United States, Europe, Australia and Japan, including almost 70 from New York. Galleries from Mexico City, Tel Aviv and São Paulo are also represented, but the fair can hardly be called global.

Nonetheless, excluding large festival works that only large corporations (including well-established galleries) and state agencies can afford, art's many mediums are all represented. Painting looks especially good, with abstract painting in noticeable abundance. The large photograph is showing no signs of abating. Paper is big, and sometimes really big. Video monitors are becoming nearly as plentiful as cell phones. Sculpture varies from the abstract to the functional, and a few intrepid dealers have taken installation pieces.

As usual, being confronted with thousands of artworks in a confined space that is not a museum can be great fun, as long as one is properly shod and hydrated.

It is always interesting to see who is popular. In terms of frequency of appearance, this would seem to be Alex Katz's year to play elder statesman: note the velvety new seascape at the Monica de Cardenas booth and the wall of small studies at Peter Blum. And it's Albert Oehlen's turn to be a reigning influence: his works are plentiful, including an uncharacteristically subdued grisaille 1997 tribute to Gerhard Richter (at Max Hetzler), but his manic mixture of Expressionism, graffiti and electric color can also be felt in the canvases of younger painters. These include those of Daniel Richter at Patrick Painter and Michel Mujeras at Friedrich Petzel, as

well as the Photoshop Expressionism of Markus Selg at Christian Nagel and the exuberant wall-sized papier collé by Peter Stauss at Aurel Scheibler.



*Heliosyntrophy, 1999*

Also at Aurel Scheibler, there is a corridor of portrait drawings and prints by artists ranging from James Ensor to Kai Althoff. Mr. Stauss's interest in unframed expanses of paper is ably seconded, in contrasting styles, by Nina Bovasso at Clementine, Amy Myers at Rhona Hoffman, Chris Johansen at Jack Hanley (an on-the-spot creation) and Paul McCarthy at Luhring Augustine.

Also relatively plentiful are paintings by Beatriz Milhazes, Lisa Ruyter and Sarah Morris, which share a preference for saturated color. An interesting measure of the return of color, abstraction and even Color Field abstraction is the beautifully florid stain painting by Morris Louis at Paul Kasmin. Its soft shapes and intense colors are echoed in Peter Zimmermann's bright resin-poured painting at Michael Janssen; Sue Williams's looping snakes of color at 303; a more subdued abstraction by Sergej Jensen, a young Danish-Yugoslavian painter, at Galerie Neu; Steven Charles's work at Pierogi; and Ugo Rondinone's big, fuzzy target at Sadie Coles, where the usual desk has been replaced by a new living unit by Andrea Zittel, complete with a functioning sink.

Similar substitutions can be seen at Petzel, where a bedroom set by Jorge Pardo has been pressed into service, and at Henry Urbach Architecture, where a pink heat-sensitive table and seating ensemble worthy of Austin Powers registers human contact. It is the work of a young German designer named Jürgen Mayer H.

By the time you get to Liam Gillick's bright orange room divider at Casey Kaplan, you may decide that the most interesting sculpture at this year's fair involves design

components. Rosemary Laing's big color photographs of meticulously carpeted stretches of Australian forest (think ABC Carpet meets Andy Goldsworthy), at Gitte Weise, could fit in here somewhere.

More bright color outside the bounds of painting include the intensely Rothkoesque clouds in James Welling's abstract photographs, shown in splendid isolation at Gorney Bravin & Lee. Other single-artist booths include Tam Ochiai's flippy cartoon images at Tomio Koyama -- a display of paintings that is also a drawing installation if you look closely at the walls; Robert Beck's "13 Shooters," a 21st-century tribute to Andy Warhol's "Most Wanted" paintings, in which the perpetrators are high school students; and Esko Mannikko's lush color-photo portraits of people and their living spaces at Galerie Nordenhake Morris.

Meanwhile, Mr. Welling's dialogue with painting continues at Donald Young, where he is showing four new abstract photographs that turn out to be color close-ups of his grandfather's much-used painting palette. Also noteworthy at Young: Hirsch Perlman's eerie, diaristic black-and-white photographs of serial improvisations in sculpture and installation -- all made of trash in his studio -- and Josiah McElheny's "Sweden White," a vitrine of 1950's-style transparent-and-white glass vases that pay tribute to the Scandinavian sensibility and climate, not to mention modernist purity, in one of the fair's most beautiful moments.

Other impressive attempts at show-stopping include Takashi Murakami's giant mushroom at Marianne Boesky, Pipilotti Rist's video-pocked installation at Luhring Augustine, and a wall of Jeff Koons's white porcelain puppy-vases at James Cohan. (If glazed ceramics are your thing, there are three vases by Grayson Perry at Nicole Klagsbrun.)

Few of the videos were up and running when I was previewing the show, but "Parallel," an ultra-sophisticated (and well-made) double-screen narrative at Jay Jopling/White Cube by Runa Islam, a young British artist, made a definite impression. So did Carlos Ferrari's "Michigan Parallel," another compressed narrative, this one in the form of a homemade movie trailer, at Florence Lynch.

But please don't think that figurative art, painted or otherwise, is in abeyance. Note the decadent gentleman in 18th-century attire in J. P. Monroe's "Permanent Death" at China Art Objects, and the German painter Neo Rauch's latest foray into mysterious Neo-academicism at Eigen & Art. At Entwistle, there is "Riesenrad" (Ferris wheel), a painting by Rosa Loy, a young German artist interested, it would seem, in the work of Balthus; and, at Spencer Brownstone, Bernhard Martin's elaborately painted depiction of a stylish young woman that involves, surprisingly, no Photoshop. If all else fails, there's always Dawn Mellor's "Walk Tall" at Victoria Miro, a gruesome reimagining of Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise as Salome and John the Baptist, or perhaps Judith and Holofernes.

My advice is simply this: appraise your budget, measure your wall space, gauge your energy, and seek and ye shall probably find.

The Armory Show 2002 is at Piers 88 and 90, 12th Avenue between 48th and 50th Streets, Clinton, through Monday. Hours: Today through Sunday, noon to 8 p.m.; Monday, noon to 6 p.m. Admission: \$15. Information: (212) 645-6440.

***A correction was made on Feb. 28, 2002:** An art review in Weekend on Friday about the annual Armory Show of work by contemporary artists misstated the Guggenheim Museum's plans for an exhibition of the work of Matthew Barney, whose photographs were in the show. The Guggenheim did not cancel the New York showing of "Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle," which is to tour Europe this year; the museum rescheduled it from this February until Feb. 13, 2003, after the European tour.*