

Contemporary art fair on tap for Dallas in 2009

BY KATHERINE CROMER BROCK | STAFF WRITER

For years, Dallas developer John Sughrue has been lamenting with his friend Chris Byrne, a notable local art dealer, about the lack of an art fair in the city.

After three years of planning, 30 contemporary art dealers from 12 cities will come to the first Dallas Art Fair in February.

"The city at this point in time is going through an incredible transformation," said Sughrue, a partner with Brook Partners, which for two decades has been involved in a number of developments at the intersection of Dallas art and commerce, including Fashion Industry Gallery and the Magnolia Theater. "That we're having a meaningful national art fair is a reflection of us becoming more cultured, more

sophisticated, more dynamic."

The fair's major sponsors are Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, Neiman Marcus, *Modern Luxury Dallas* and Sotheby's.

Sughrue and Byrne declined to disclose the dollar amount of the sponsorships, or the projected cost to put on the fair, but said the tab will be "significant."

The 30 artists chosen as exhibitors are from across the country and were hand-picked by the organizers. They all have had their work shown in local galleries and sold by local dealers, Byrne said.

The exhibits will include a variety of media and include high-dollar finds, with some works priced above \$1 million. The event is not a festival, like outdoor art fairs, and will not include food vendors.

Sughrue said that in addition to local art

PAINT THE TOWN

NAME: Dallas Art Fair
BUSINESS: Exhibition of contemporary artists
LOCAL ADDRESS: Fashion Industry Gallery, 1807 Ross Ave., Dallas 75201
OWNERSHIP: Private
TOP EXECUTIVES: Chris Byrne and John Sughrue
PHONE: 214-220-1278
WEB: www.dallasartfair.com

fans, the fair will attract museum groups, dealers and art fans from across the Southwest.

The Contemporary Art Dealers of Dallas has held its own art fair for the past couple years, focusing mainly on local galleries.

"Other people from out of town have tried

this," said Lisa Taylor, with the Dallas Art Dealers Association. Taylor said she was hopeful that the art fair would bring positive economic impact and attention to the local arts community, but questioned whether the focus of the fair will truly spur interest in the Dallas art scene.

"There are so many art fairs all around the world," she said. "Why would I come to Dallas? I'd rather go to Switzerland or New York or Miami."

Art fairs are a "major undertaking," said Linda Blumberg, executive director of the Art Dealers Association of America.

"It takes a while for an art fair to gain traction," Blumberg said. But after hearing the list of exhibitors for the Dallas fair, she called it "impressive."



ART SMART: Developer John Sughrue, left, and art dealer Chris Byrne have organized the first Dallas Art Fair, scheduled for Feb. 6-8.

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