

ARTNEWS

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GONE TO TEXAS: THE ART WORLD FLOCKS TO DALLAS ART FAIR FOR A LITTLE LONESTAR HOSPITALITY

By Hunter Braithwaite

Now in its seventh year, the Dallas Art Fair is held in the booming downtown Arts District, near the Dallas Museum of Art, designed by Edward Larabee Barnes; the Nasher Sculpture Center, designed by Renzo Piano; and the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, designed by I.M. Pei. The fair, however, is located in the Fashion Industry Gallery, a two-story space with a line of storefront windows that make it an unexpected choice for such an event. It's a tenuous trade off: lose a wall, gain natural light.

But they afford a view of the local collectors lining up to get into the fair. "There is a genuine sincerity to the looking in Dallas that you don't find in other fairs," said Jessica Silverman, the San Francisco dealer who has a window booth. Among other artists, Silverman was showing Hugh Scott Douglas, whose work went to the Dallas Museum of Art several years prior, when it was first presented.

Across the way, John Riepenhoff of Milwaukee's Green Gallery noted that while some stereotypes hold true—"Dallas hospitality has been consistent every year"—the scene is quickly evolving, growing, and looking outward. "Collectors are very current, very present," Riepenhoff said. "Their tastes are more expansive than the coasts in some ways." His booth responded to this flexibility, split between artist and curator Michelle Grabner (priced around \$22,000) and Peter Barrickman, whose drawings of the view from a plane window were priced at a thousand dollars each.



Ian Wallace, *In the Studio (Work in Progress) I & II*.

COURTESY JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

Two towering examples of those expansive tastes? Mike Womack's tower of Cheetos coated in resin at Zieher Smith & Horton, and Tony Matelli's similar edifice of beer cans, solo cups, playing cards, and more bachelor-pad debauchery at Marlborough Chelsea Gallery.

This year, there are more than 90 galleries in the fair, a slight percentage of which are from Dallas and the surrounding area. Rippling out, there are galleries from New York and L.A., and then Europe and Asia. Hong Kong's 10 Chancery Lane packed their booth with Chinese blue chip, including an elegant group of sculptures by Wang Keping. A frieze by the Stars-affiliated sculptor was priced at \$90,000.

“The art fair brings people from all over, last night at our opening we had a really diverse crowd, more than we're accustomed too,” said Justine Ludwig, the Director of Exhibitions and Senior Curator at the Dallas Contemporary. “It wasn't simply Dallasites, it was people from all over.” The night before, her institution had ushered in art week with an exceptional set of exhibitions from David Salle, Nate Lowman, Anila Quayyum Agha, and Friends With You.



Work by Josh Reames at Johannes Vogt Gallery's booth.
COURTESY JOHANNES VOGT GALLERY

Although these artists are scattered across the globe, Ludwig points out that her institution keeps a balance between local, national, and international artists, and the fair does the same. “It's amazing that this fair has galleries from other countries right next to other galleries based in Dallas. And Dallas galleries are really given prominent positions within the fair.”

Two Dallas standouts are Zhulong Gallery and Barry Whistler Gallery. The first, an arts and media gallery, presented five artists, including Mark Tribe and Rene Cox. The second was a solo booth of the young Dallas artist Nathan Green. His paintings referenced both Photoshop (via layers of hand-painted gradients) and home improvement (via the Great Stuff spray foam which was worked into the picture plane). When I spoke to the gallery they had sold two.

L.A.'s Various Small Fires and New York's Johannes Vogt both had works by Mernet Larsen. The paintings are both blocky and liquid, informed by the 75-year-old artist's classical education and what only can be described as Gameboy aesthetics. She lives in Tampa.



Work on view at Canada Gallery's booth.

All of the dealers conceded that Dallas is a slow boil, with collectors happy and able to come back several times, to chat and look, before laying down their money, though Johannes Vogt moved the work quickly. "We sold work from all the artists," he said, "but that was in the pre of the preview."

Adrienne Rubenstein, of Canada Gallery, located on Manhattan's Lower East Side, was relaxed as well. The gallery, which has "been coming [to Dallas] longer than most people," sold much of their booth early on.

"Our artists have a following here, and we have long-standing relationships," Rubenstein said. "It's like coming to see friends." As Dallas Art Week continues through Sunday, more friends will likely be made.

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