



Visual Diary - The Armory Show Modern

March 21, 2012

by Pat Rogers

DISPATCH - Mar 21, 2012 (8:57 a.m.)

NEW YORK, NY

The reports are in. The Armory Show drew over 60,000 visitors to the two-part art fair focusing on Modern or Contemporary art from Mar 8 to 11, 2012. All told, there were 226 exhibitors from around the globe.

The Armory Show is the centerpiece of multiple arts fairs that pop up for four days in New York City every March. Mapping a plan of attendance is tricky. I tackled the Modern at Pier 92 first.

The art was wowing even before getting through the entrance. A mixed media piece by **DOUG + MIKE STARN** pulled me from the entrance line. I knew the pair had installed a rooftop of art, made mostly from bamboo, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010. Having missed the installation, I was pleased to see a small part of it here:

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"Bbu Juju painting MV3" by DOUG + MIKE STARN (from Big Bambu Metropolitan roof and Venice Biennale installations), 2010-11. Unique work, Bamboo and rope, 108 x 192 x 35 inches (approx).

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There were more works by DOUG + MIKE STARN inside the art fair, courtesy of HackelBury Fine Art (London, UK) and Wetterling Gallery (Stockholm, Sweden).

After entering Pier 92, the show seemed more like a series of curated museum shows than an art fair. Here's a few of the artworks that pulled me from the aisle.

Figurative works by **Volker Stelzmann** continue to compel after multiple visits. Colorful, detailed and rendered by an obvious master, there were several paintings presented by DIE GALERIE of Frankfurt, Germany. The triptych below was beyond life size:

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“Station” by Volker Stelzmann, 2010.
2011. Mixed media on nettle on MDF,
80.70 x 39.40 inches (each
painting). Exhibited DIE GALERIE
(Frankfurt, Germany).

Stelzmann uses “subtle irony to explore social identity as well as the human characters – and all their modes of behavior – populating it,” according to Artnet.com. “Absent eyes gazing from exaggerated, puppet-like and voiceless faces reveal forlorn souls of society, offer a fascinating manifestation of Stelzmann’s merciless bit simultaneously humane image of humanity, and encourage philosophical reflection within the viewer.”

Two smaller works nearby demonstrated the consistency of Stelzmann’s artistic vision.



“Ecce Homo II” by Volker Stelzmann,
2011. Mixed media on nettle on MDF,
80 x 100 cm. Exhibited DIE GALERIE
(Frankfurt, Germany).

I drew a gasp of surprise upon seeing a painted face staring from the floor of the Christopher Cutts Gallery booth (Toronto, Canada). **Martin C. Herbst**’s sculpture, “Lena” had many people snapping photos on iPhones, BlackBerries and cameras. After waiting my turn, I contributed to the fray of flashing lights.



“Lena” by Martin C. Herbst,
2011. Oil and lacquer on steel
sphere, 29.5 inch diameter.
Exhibited Christopher Cutts
Gallery.

A tabletop sculpture by Herbst was presented nearby. Herbst was born in Austria and is based in Vienna.



“Lenissima 2” by Martin C. Herbst, 2010. Oil and lacquer on steel sphere, 11.8 inch diameter. Exhibited Christopher Cutts Gallery.

Sculpture exhibited by the Marlborough Gallery knocked me out. In fact, most of their art did.



“Standing Figures (5)” by Magdalena Abakanowicz, 2000. Bronze, 66.25 x 20.25 x 14.24 inches. Exhibited Marlborough Gallery.



“Bookcase” by Manolo Valdes, 2011. Wood, 110 x 55 x 12 inches. Exhibited Marlborough Gallery.



Detail from “Bookcase” by Manolo Valdes, 2011. Wood. Presented by Marlborough Gallery.

Rhonda Hoffman Gallery (Chicago, IL) presented “Blah, Blah, Blah” by **Mel Bochner**. Bochner was a sixties art trailblazer with his integration of language into the visual field, according to the gallery. Bochner’s art explores ways that color changes the purpose of text as a meaning-conveyor. In “Blah, Blah, Blah,” the phrase is used to explore how an object mixed with language functions as art.



“Blah, Blah, Blah” by Mel Bochner, 2011. Monoprint with engraving and embossment on hand-dyed Twinrocker handmade paper, 69 x 52 inches. Exhibited Marlborough Gallery.

I was drawn to the way **Kelly Reemtsen** handled paint and the conceptual contrasts. Thick and textured applications belied the girly dresses and titles that state the obvious or use puns. Her work was exhibited by David Klein Gallery of Birmingham, MI.

Reemtsen's exhibited paintings depicted an anonymous female (without face or head) in a vintage dress with an object that defies her outfit choice. According to a bio, "Kelly Reemtsen's paintings explore the paradoxical state of being female in post-feminist contemporary society."



"Heart Wrenching" by Kelly Reemtsen, 2011. Oil on panel, 36 x 36 inches.
Exhibited David Klein Gallery.

Vibrant colors radiating from a rustic frame coaxed me into DC Moore Gallery's booth. The intimate size of "Lit Horizon" by **Mark Innerst** brought me closer and made me want to keep looking. A solo show by Innerst will be presented at DC Moore Gallery from May 3 to June 8, 2012.



"Lit Horizon" by Mark Innerst, 2012. Oil on
canvas in the artist

Bold surfaces twisted into compelling shapes were found in **Albert Paley**'s sculpture, "Proscenium." The patina finish gave the appearance of a soft stained wood instead of sharp steel.



"Proscenium" by Albert Paley, 2009. Mild steel with natural patina
finish, 55.50 x 32.25 x 17.50 inches. Exhibited Gerald Peters
Gallery (New York, NY).

I learned a bit about Japanese avant garde art history at Whitestone Gallery (Tokyo, Japan). A dark abstract painting by **Kazuo Shiraga** (1924-2008) brought me into the booth. Shiraga only used his body to make his paintings, explained a gallerist. He was known to paint with his feet while

dangling from a rope suspended from a ceiling, according to Whitestone Gallery. His fierce movements and methodology were designed to release energy and impart exuberant into the art.

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“Hokei” by Kazuo Shiraga, 1992.
Oil on canvas, 162.10 x 130.30
cm. Exhibited Whitestone Gallery
(Tokyo, Japan).



Side view detail of
“Hokei” by
Kazuo Shiraga.

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Whitestone Gallery also exhibited artists from the Gutai Movement (and the Gutai Association).



“Circle” by
Jiro Yoshihara, 1971.
Acrylic on canvas,
17.90 x 20.90
inches. Exhibited
Whitestone Gallery.

The Gutai Association was part of avant garde art taking place in Post-World War II Japan. Members produced kinetic works of art and staged performance-based art like those employed by Kazuo Shiraga or by wrestling with mud, throwing paint bottles, breaking paper screens and the like, staged outdoors or on stages.

The Gutai Association embraced young artists who made art that kept true to the material used in their work.

Gutai encouraged experimentation and creating art in the now, according to a catalogue. Artists exhibited by the Whitestone Gallery were **Jiro Yoshihara** (1905-1972) and **Sadamasa Motonaga** (1922-2011).

Ceramic sculpture by Israeli artist **Varda Yatom** yanked me from the aisle. Art from her “Wedding” series were exhibited by Babcock Galleries in New York City. The series explores the symbolic possibilities within the Jewish wedding ceremony, according to her website. The works “explore the loss of identity of the individual within a group and the loss of personal identity within

contemporary society.” The wires and their placement demonstrated thwarted attempts to communicate.



Ceramics by Varda Yatom from her “Wedding” series. Exhibited Babcock Galleries (New York, NY).

Pace Prints had an expansive booth filled with great art. The work was diverse and every one seemed to be a winner. Here’s a small sampling of what was presented:



“Brown Branches” by Donald Baechler, 2011. Four stenciled pigmented handmade linen papers, 23.25 x 17.25 inches each. Edition of 10. Exhibited Pace Prints.



“Sitting with a Snake” by Kiki Smith, 2007. Digital acid-based inkjet dyes on silk charmeuse, 69.50 x 48.50 inches. Edition of 18. Exhibited Pace Prints.



“Untitled” by Yoshitomo Nara, 2010. A series of ten Ukiyo-e woodcuts, 16.50 x 11.75 inches each. Edition of 50. Exhibited Pace Prints.

Galerie ALFA from Paris, France presented drawings by several accomplished artists (among other works). Standouts were works by **Davor Vrankic** and **David Porchy**.



Pencil drawings on paper by David Porchy. On left is “Untitled,” 2012, 18.50 x 20 cm. On right is “Exit,” 2011, 87 x 50 cm. Exhibited Galerie ALFA (Paris, France)

BASIC FACTS: The 14th edition of The Armory Show was held from Mar 8 to 11, 2012 in New York City. There were around 228 exhibitors in the art fair that was divided between Modern and Contemporary Art, according to a release. The Modern presented 71 exhibitors from nine countries. The Contemporary had 157 exhibitors, which included 19 invited exhibitors for Armory Focus: The Nordic Countries. This year saw the premiere of Solo Projects edition. www.thearmoryshow.com/

HAMPTONS FOCUS: There were quite a few Hamptons artists spotted at the Modern edition. They include paintings by Alfonso Ossorio (1927-2011) (worked in Southampton) and Dan Rizzie (currently works in North Haven) and sculpture by John Chamberlain (1927-2011) (worked on Shelter Island).

Spanierman Modern booth's was dominated by painters connected to the Hamptons and the East End of Long Island. Their historic artist line-up included Willem de Kooning, James Brooks, Charlotte Park, Ibram Lassaw, Betty Parsons, Dan Christensen and others.

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