

Miami Day 2: Aqua Art Miami

December 5, 2014

by Pat Rogers

Day Two of Miami Art Fair Week (Wednesday) had us feeling ambitious. Art fairs were everywhere...how do we juggle work and seeing anything? A plan was hatched: go to the opening of Aqua, go to the Bass Art Museum for the opening of their new exhibition and experience, while there, art performances scheduled to unfold among a temporary sculpture park installed on the front lawn as part of Art Basel's Public sector. Good plan, right? Miami Beach traffic and parking problems had other intentions. (More on that later).

Heading to Aqua, we found parking in a nearby parking garage and walked through the door with new blue wristband bling. By 6:30 p.m., the place was hopping. Set in the Aqua Hotel, an art deco motel that conjures the fifties, the setting screams Miami. The outdoor courtyard is lined with palm trees; all the entrances to rooms in the two-story motel look to the courtyard. Adding drama is a white painted railing in a bold geometric pattern lining the second story walkway. The motel seemed designed for fun with hanging out with other guests and friends a big part of the plan.



Atmosphere shot of Aqua Art Fair. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Guests gather at bars located on the ground and second floor; chairs and benches encourage lounging. Meanwhile, light spilled from every room allowing a glimpse into art installed in hotel rooms vacant of the usual motel accouterments. Every room featured works presented by a different gallery. Fairwide, the art was contemporary and mediums varied: drawing, painting, video, installation, mixed media and photography were all represented. It was a fun place to see a fair and the art was much improved over last year (This is the second year Aqua is produced by the Art Miami fair group).

Art performances were a new feature for the fair with inspiration drawn from psychic readings, mediums who can speak with the dead, Alcoholic Anonymous meetings plus a party game gone wrong (strip poker meets hide-and-seek bread crumb trails); all adapted for artists. The bread-crumbs inspired performance left a string of blue crepe paper for people to tangle their feet upon on already uneven surfaces. Not cool.

Weaving between people in the aisles in the upstairs rooms, I turned my attention from the setting to the art. I hit the jackpot—I fell in love with a gallery presentation by Victori Contemporary (New York). Glazed ceramic donut sculptures by Jae Young Kim and painted tape paintings by Julian

Lorber were eye pleasers and easy to like. I loved a room-installation of art by Joe Nanashe. Dramatic and well-presented, center stage was occupied by *Quartet (On Low)*, made up of four keyboards emitting soundscapes. On the walls were his drawings featuring text and studies for *Quartet (On Low)* and *Quartet (On High)*.



Installation by Joe Nanashe (bottom). Exhibited with Victori Contemporary. Photo by Pat Rogers.

A few doors down, I was enticed by a series of figurative bearlike sculptures that alternated between strange, fun and menacing. After entering the room presented by EJM (Seoul, Korea), a smile erupted after spying rings of colorfully-painted bears made by Im Jibin. Each figure is identical but the colors differed. They appeared hand painted, maybe ceramic, I thought. Further investigation revealed they were made of car paint on plastic.

The artist was there and explained (in part through a translator) that the installation *How are you feeling today?* was based on the color wheel and the piece linked moods and emotions with color. The installation allowed for the chance for self-reflection (How *am* I feeling today) and maybe the

chance to change into a happier state of mind.

The artist explained his earlier work was dark and reflected people's attraction toward consumerism, designer items and surface pursuits in our contemporary society. In between working to support his art, time spent making it was his own and a decision was made: happy was better than negativity. Im Jibin's *How are you feeling* reflects this: we each have our own choice on how to live and the attitudes we hold and share with others.



Im Jibin with his installation, "How are you feeling today?" 2014. Car paint on plastic, variable installation. Photo by Pat Rogers

Elsewhere in the fair, I enjoyed seeing Carol Sears work exhibited with Coagula Curatorial of LA (Sears's work was exhibited in The Hamptons earlier this year with Lawrence Fine Art), a fun painting by David Hollier (Cookie Monster) with Imago Verbosa (Gloucestershire, UK), and figurative fantasy character paintings by Vonn Sumner at Morton Fine Art (Washington, DC).

Time flew by and too soon we had to leave to try and catch the opening at the Bass Museum of Art and scheduled performances held on its lawn as part of Art Basel Miami Beach's Public section. Miami traffic, parking problems and a very long line to get into the museum had other plans for us. Lingering longer at Aqua would have been a better option. We had already beat the art fair line that formed while we were inside.

To see images from Aqua, view our slideshow:

[View Slideshow](#)

NEXT UP: [Miami Day 3: NADA](#) and a run through [Art Basel Miami Beach](#).

BASIC FACTS: Aqua Art Miami takes place from December 3 to 7, 2014 at the Aqua Hotel. The Aqua Hotel is located at 1530 Collins Ave, Miami, FL 33139. www.aquaartmiami.com.

Hamptons Art Hub will publish continual coverage of Art Basel Miami Beach and Miami Art Fair Week. Check back for daily dispatches.

Pat Rogers is the publisher of Hamptons Art Hub and an arts journalist.

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