



CRITIC'S VIEW: In a Strong Art Fair, Six Booths Not to Miss at Art New York & CONTEXT New York

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by Pat Rogers

Art Miami brought its A-Game to its presentation of two art fairs at Pier 94 in New York City. Set in two distinctive areas that shared entrances, Art New York and CONTEXT New York are both fairs worth attending. In fact, Art New York conjured Art Miami so strongly that it felt as if towering palm trees, balmy weather and a row of art fairs waited outside instead of lines of taxis and concrete stanchions dividing the pier's entrance from the roaring West Side Highway and its heavy traffic.

Despite occupying the same pier, each fair has a distinctive vibe. Art New York is decidedly Modern art and established contemporary with CONTEXT New York presenting the edgier side of contemporary art. Art New York was a strong show with gems easily found. This possibility was set up early with the wall-wide installation of *The 99%: United We Stand* by Jason Myers, 2014-17, presented by Long-Sharp Gallery (Indianapolis, IN and New York).

Consisting of 99 abstract portraits with each a uniform size of 11 1/4 by 16 1/2 inches as framed, the work demonstrated the power of many versus the few. For me, the beauty of the work and the grit of individualism was found by examining the portraits up close. Each was distinct in both color and pattern with text integrated as part of the composition. All featured the shape of a head as an anchor. Had time permitted, it would have been enjoyable to investigate each of the 99 to discover all the unique works that contributed to the single work presented as a grid.



Detail of "The 99%: United We Stand" by Jason Myers, 2014-17. Installed at Art New York; exhibited by Long-Sharp Gallery. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Another noteworthy wall installation (and crowd pleaser) was *Counter Current Flow XXXL Copper* by MARCK, 2015. The video work (mixed media with electronical performance) portrayed a woman treading and drifting in a pool inside an open-ended cube set in an intimate space framed by wood. The video work was riveting by the sheer realism it captured and by the suspense created in the

mystery and futility of the woman's efforts to seemingly find exit.

Video sculptures by [MARCK](#), a Swiss artist, were presented by Galerie von Braunbehrens (Stuttgart, Germany) and Licht Feld Gallery (Switzerland), who presented another one of MARCK's crowd pleaser, *Clockwork*, 2015. In this video work, a woman scampered on the edge of a short platform, avoiding a pendulum which swung periodically. Too fraught with tension for my taste, *Clockwork* was nevertheless compelling and remained with me long after I walked from the booth.

Overall, the 2017 edition of Art New York rivals its Art Miami counterpart. Smaller in scope, Art New York was a hit among visitors at the preview on May 3, 2017. After interviewing a handful of gallery owners who were returning exhibitors to Art New York, all said separately they were pleased with the overall quality of the art, fairwide, and agreed it was the strongest edition to date presented by the three-year-old fair.

I also found the fair to be a strong one and was especially enjoyable due to the familiar and trusted Art Miami feel infused into this edition. The booths that caught my eye were those presented as curated exhibitions or presentations featuring a combination of artists in conversation that could have easily been found in a gallery show. I found the following five booths noteworthy while visiting Art New York. My sixth pick was found at CONTEXT New York, with my reporting of the fair immediately following Art New York's.

ART NEW YORK

1. Vallarino Fine Art (New York)

Presenting a focused booth of hard edge abstraction, [Vallarino Fine Art](#) of New York made it easy for viewers to perceive the work was installed as an exhibition with the title "Hard & Edgy" presented beneath the gallery name in the front of its booth. Featuring paintings by Abstract Expressionism artists working in the hard edge tradition in the 1960s and 1970s, each work was installed in a single horizontal line with plenty of space among each art work, making it easy to see and appreciate. Exhibiting artists included hard edge pioneers Ilya Bolotowsky, Al Loving, John Stephan along with artists who became associated with the area of abstract expressionism including Larry Vox, Charles Green Shaw, Frederick Hammersely, Helen Lundenberg, Jay Rosenblum and others.

The emphasis is slightly unusual for the gallery as it more broadly presents abstract expressionism works, said gallerist Vincent Vallarino. Noting the gallery was acquiring a sub-concentration of hard edge paintings, they decided to present a focused and dramatic show at Art New York that reveals a survey of work available at the gallery, he said.



Vallarino Fine Art presents "Hard & Edgy" at Art New York 2017. Image courtesy of the gallery.

Each painting was a winner and contributed to booth that was difficult to walk away from. My favorite was the sweeping geometric painting *Windblown* by Helen Lundenberg, 1964. Identified as part of the California hard-edge painters, after she left surrealism-influenced work behind, *Windblown* has an unmistakable lightness and seems to foreshadow later works that more closely incorporate references to the landscape into her geometric abstract paintings.



“Windblown” by Helen Lundeberg, 1964. Oil on canvas, 40 x 60 inches. Exhibited with Vallarino Fine Art at Art New York 2017. Courtesy of the gallery.

2. Casterline | Goodman (Aspen)

Positioned in the front of Art New York, [Casterline | Goodman](#) of Aspen presented a mini-exhibition of works curated as “The Art of the Car” as part of its overall booth. Dramatic in presentation, “The Art of the Car” presented a sculpture by John Chamberlain (*Boy Spotwelder*, 2004, painted chrome steel), paintings on metal by Chuck Springer and mixed media works by Danielle Procaccio. Tied together through the theme of cars, the recent contemporary art complemented the older work of John Chamberlain.

Chuck Springer’s aged paint on metal abstractions seem to speak directly to [Chamberlain](#)’s use of various types of paint applications, layered lacquers and sandblasters. The pop art by Procaccio added a touch of fun and lightness which connected with whimsy that might be found in Chamberlains crumpled and painted chrome steel sculptures which he is best known for. Together, they made a trio that was enjoyable to see.



“The Art of the Car” exhibited by Casterline | Goodman Gallery at Art New York 2017. In front is “Boy Spotwelder” by John Chamberlain, 2004. Painted chrome steel, 28 x 46 1/2 x 41 inches. In rear left are aged paint on metal works by Chuck Springer. On right is “Hollywood Inn” by Danielle Procassio, 2015. Mixed media, collage, oil and resin on canvas. 70 x 45 inches. Photo by Pat Rogers.

3. Pontone (London / Taichung, Taiwan)

[Pontone Gallery](#) of London and Taiwan presents a booth that is difficult to walk by without stopping by for some quality time. Standing out the strongest were paintings by Malcolm Liepke and Matteo Massagrande. Diverging as far as two painters could be, Matteo Massagrande's paintings are contemporary realism focusing on compositions that combine former living spaces, often on the way to decay, with the natural world.

Malcolm Liepke presents expressive portraits of glamorous or confident women whose stares (and attitudes) seem to invite willing participation into their worlds through either confrontation or conversation instigated on the part of the viewer. Rendered with oil in a bold painterly manner, the brush strokes feels sensual in its expressive texture and feature a color palette that is as unselfconscious as the women he portrays. Favoring electric hues of orange, blue, lilac and pink, Liepke's use of vibrant colors accentuates skin tones not intended to conjure realism but, instead, help to reveal a natural femininity and vulnerability that sophistication, attitude and pose striking cannot mask.



“Girl in the Chair” by Malcolm Liepke. Oil on canvas, 20 x 20 inches.
Courtesy Pontone Gallery.

In Matteo Massagrande's paintings, there is an unsettling serenity in compositions that pair architectural interiors with small glimpses of natural settings that seem boundless and just beyond view. The paintings are devoid of life but evoke implications of lives that were bound to be busy at an earlier point in the scene's history. Haunting and set in a series of detailed empty rooms, corridors or terraces, the eye is none-the-less drawn to glimpses of nature which take the form of open seas with sparkling waters or lush woods with sun dappled trees. While the juxtaposition between manmade elements and the natural world is compelling, it is the way Massagrande handles light and adds a cinematic perspective help make the works special. Pushing the paintings beyond recreations of scenes is the sensation that the places depicted may not actually be real but are a memory or fantasy of sorts, despite the realism that prevails the work.



“Il mare D’Inverno” by Matteo Massagrande, 2017. Oil and mixed media on board.
12.5 x 15 inches. Courtesy Pontone Gallery.

4. Cernuda Arte (Coral Gables, FL)

[Cernuda Arte](#) presents a crash course in Cuban art in a series of three booths at Art New York. Taken together, a timeline of Cuban art from historic to modern to contemporary can be gleaned. Representing the contemporary side included tropical landscapes by Tomas Sanchez. On the historical side, there was a special emphasis on the paintings of [Wifredo Lam](#) (1902-1982) who is associated with the surrealists.

Lam's work had many influences over the course of his life including Matisse, Picasso, African Tribal art, Cubism, Caribbean art and an exploration of mythical images. Among Lam's paintings presented by Cernuda Arte, many of them radiated with the brooding tone his work is known to possess along with other paintings with a more hopeful tone, rendered in a light color palette.



"Composition (Composicion)" by Wilfredo Lam, 1973. Oil on canvas, 21 5/8 x 18 1/8 inches. Exhibited with Cernuda Arte at Art New York 2017. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Of special note in the Cernuda Arte presentation is an exhibition of works by the group "Los Once" (The Eleven) in existence from 1953 to 1955. The group rejected figuration, which was prevalent at the time, in favor of abstraction. The curated group show by Cernuda Arte presented a nice range of work from vibrant and brash paintings by Guido Llinas to a series of subtle ethereal paintings by Juan Tapia Ruano. Also in the exhibition were artists who were inspired by the group including contemporary painters Jorge Luis Santos and Reynier Ferrer.



"Black Painting (Pintura Negra)" by Guido Llinas, 1993. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches. Exhibited with Cernuda Arte at Art New York 2017. Photo by Pat Rogers.

5. Catherine Edeleman Gallery (Chicago)

[Catherine Edeleman Gallery](#) is known for its program of exhibiting both prominent contemporary photographers alongside new talent coming up the ranks. It was no surprise that the gallery's booth was one of my favorites at Art New York. Grabbing me from the aisle was photographs by Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison. The images are made by a husband and wife duo who joined forces to combine photography with choreography. Their images are constructed to depict man's effect on the

landscape and feature Robert in front of the camera and Shana behind it.

The images on view at Art New York were an interesting twist of the bizarre with the ordinary, if it wasn't taken out of context. Catherine Edelman explained their work presents the subversiveness of people wanting to do the right thing for the earth but end up causing more harm than good. The pair have focused on the subject for the last 20 years but the reveal of the power of nature with humankind's actions upon it are especially timely right now, said Edelman.



“Riverview” by Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison, 2015.
Photograph. Courtesy Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago.



“Logic of Spring” by Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison, 2015. Photograph. Courtesy Catherine Edelman Gallery.

Also catching my eye was graphically dramatic photography by Serge Najjar and subtle black and white images by French photographer Laurent Millet. Curiosity about the subjects in the simple black and white images by Millet kept me gazing for some time. In an age where flash and pizzazz abound, Millet's work feels like an anecdote and a harbinger of peaceful contemplation. Like Robert & Shana ParkeHarrison, Millet also constructs environments to be photographed but his work leads viewers to question objects and the way they occupy space and as a way to light the imagination to take flight.



“Petite Machine Littorale du 13 Mai II” by Laurent Millet, 1997. Photograph.
Courtesy Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago.

CONTEXT New York

Context New York has its own distinct vibe from Art New York that was easily discernable. Presenting contemporary art, most of the work had an edge and provided a unifying presentation for the fair.

Like its Miami counterpart, CONTEXT focuses on galleries that present emerging artists or those by newer galleries that may be emerging on the worldwide art scene as a whole.

Drawing me into the art fair was a dual presentation of work by Craig Alan. At first glance, Alan's work appears to be photography that might have been constructed through the use of collaged material. Up close, it was a shock to discover the works are paintings with the details made up of tiny people in mid-motion. Together, the details create a single portrait made up of an intricate entwining of lives in motion. Alan's work was represented by both [Connect Contemporary](#) of Atlanta, Georgia and [Heitsch Gallery](#) in Munich.

Walking deep into CONTEXT New York, I particularly enjoyed the installation *Jellyfish* by Amarilys Gonzalez & Yailyn Gonzalez, 2016. Presented by Acacia Gallery of Cuba, the suspended art work was made from organza silk and plastic, the work was a welcome surprise to the lines of booths and a fun way to enliven one of the resting areas at the art fair.

My favorite booth at CONTEXT New York was a two-person show at bo. lee gallery of London and makes up my sixth selection for booths not to miss at the art fairs presented by Art Miami.

6. bo.lee gallery (London)

Following shortly on the heels of seeing *Jellyfish*, seeing a row of tiny portrait paintings set in wood frames by Bobbie Russon stopped me in my tracks and created my favorite art-viewing moments at CONTEXT New York. Her work is presented as part of the two-person show "Seek + Hide" with botanical-inspired sculpture by Patrick Haines. Both are based in the U.K. and their work explores the contrast between what is hidden and what is revealed, said gallerist Jemma Hickman.

Haines art questions assumptions on closely held beliefs by comingling the natural world with the manmade one. Bobbie Russon paintings captures the state of being an adolescence or adults in transition when nothing is clear except feelings of vulnerability and being in a period of transition.

Russon's portraits are dark and almost drab in tone. Expressions range from the angry to the pensive to the miserable to the resigned to the ridiculousness of the situation. Far from being depressing, these works feel especially touching and offer a way to explore tender and uncomfortable moments in the journey of being human while knowing we (the viewer) is safe on the other side.



Installation of Bobbie Russon paintings. Exhibited by bo.lee gallery at CONTEXT New York 2017. Courtesy of the gallery.



Painting by Bobbie Russon. Exhibited by bo.lee gallery at CONTEXT
New York 2017. Courtesy of the gallery.

BASIC FACTS: Art New York and CONTEXT New York are presented from May 3 to 7, 2017 at Pier 94, located at 12th Avenue at 55th Street, New York, NY 10019. A VIP Preview takes place on May 3, 2017 from 2 to 5 p.m. Immediately following, the fairs open to the public from 5 to 8 p.m.

For details on Art New York, visit www.artnyfair.com.

For details on Context New York, visit www.contextnyfair.com.

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