

GalleristNY

Miami Projects Arrive, by Andrew Russeth

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“A few years ago this place was all garbage,” a taxi driver told us earlier this week as we sat in traffic in Midtown Miami. It had been about 10 minutes since we had moved one inch. Once rundown, the area is now home to fresh new apartment buildings and streets lined with restaurants and shops offering craft beer, craft cheese and so forth. Come Basel time, it is also home to a handful of large tents that house many of the week’s largest fairs—Art Miami and its new emerging-art fair, Context, Red Dot, Scope, Art Expo, Art Asia Miami and, this year, another new entrant, Miami Project, from fair partners Max Fishko and Jeffrey Wainhouse, who also run ArtMrkt Hamptons, ArtMrkt San Francisco and Texas Contemporary in Houston.

Miami Project included about 65 galleries, almost all from the United States. The quality of work on offer varied considerably, but the two gentlemen did manage to attract some strong galleries for an inaugural outing, no small accomplishment in the fiercely competitive Miami market, and they built a fair that was remarkably spacious. On the Friday evening we visited, the mood was laid-back, even tranquil. That’s a treat for visitors, but could be a worrisome sign for dealers; however, every gallery we spoke with reported some success in the sales department.

Right at the front of the fair was the sizable booth belonging to Chelsea’s Fredericks & Freiser. A large, gorgeous photorealistic Robert Overby painting of a woman with her face painted half black, half white hung outside. Inside, Andrew Freiser was offering up work by gallery artists, like Keegan McHargue and David Humphrey, whose new show just opened at the gallery. It’s been a rough few weeks for Fredericks & Freiser, which was hit badly by Sandy. “We just spent the entire month of November digging out from the flood,” Mr. Freiser said, “so it was really nice to come here.” It had been a number of years since they had done a Miami fair. The highlight of the booth, without question: three John Wesley drawings, including *Woodrow Wilson Crossing the Delaware with Seascouts* (1976), a portrait of the president and a team of sailors standing at attention.

Wilson was also on offer at Los Angeles’s Cirrus Gallery in the form of a print by John Baldessari that shows a \$100,000 bill bearing the president’s face and the

words, “The first \$100,000 I ever made.” A gargantuan version of the work was shown on the High Line in New York just about exactly a year ago. Jean Milant, who founded Cirrus back in 1971, had also taken a break from Miami, for two years, but seemed happy to be back in town. He’d sold work to collectors visiting Miami from out of town, and was presenting prints from the past few decades (“I’m showing here what we’ve done,” Mr. Milant said), by Guy de Cointet, William Leavitt, Mark Bradford and Jonas Wood.



President Wilson was absent from the booth of East Hampton’s young Halsey McKay Gallery, but there was a handsome display of work by mostly young artists, like Patrick Brennan, Joseph Hart (a large abstract drawing on paper), concrete vases and drawings by Denise Kupferschmidt, a painting with oil and bleach on bedsheets and other fabric by Lauren Luloff and paintings on MDF by Elise Ferguson. Gallery partner Hilary Schaffner had just pulled out a small painting by Mr. Hart from underneath the white tablecloth covering her front table to show a collector.

Other highlights included David Weinberg of L.A., which was rich with historical works (including a nice formica wall piece by Richard Artschwager), New York’s Gary Snyder, which had an alluring, crusty Ralph Humphrey painting, and Quint, of La Jolla, Calif., which was presenting a recent light piece by Robert Irwin.

Judging by dealers’ comments, Miami Project has established itself as a viable choice for galleries looking to participate in a Miami satellite fair. The true measure of its performance will come next year, though, when it presents the roster for its second edition.