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Art Basel Miami: Pulse Beats Sophomore Slump

By Margery Gordon



"White Paint" (2006-7)
Ben Weiner; from the Mark Moore Gallery

MIAMI, Dec. 9, 2006—The auspicious debut of Pulse Miami last year quickly pushed it into the top tier of must-see fairs, and its second outing only added to its favored status.

With 60 exhibitors from 13 countries, the fair has increased its diversity while maintaining a manageable size. Before its launch in 2005, director Helen Allen described the concept as an intimate, thoughtful space for viewing art with more context than other fairs offer.

"This started as a way to mix high-end and more emerging galleries to create something different," Allen said. "There's a whole world of galleries out there that just don't have the right fair to represent them."

The recipe is even more appealing this year, with ambitious installations set amid first-time and repeat exhibitors displaying work made with unusual materials and techniques. Many booths sold out quickly—even with the intermittent power outages that occasionally plunged varying sections of the grid into darkness.

"Last year was the best fair we've ever done here in Miami," said Mark Moore, who had shown at NADA in 2004. In the first three hours on Thursday, Moore sold 90 percent of his booth. "We have gone through additional works we brought, and we're figuring at some point, we'll be just display-only."

One of Moore's first big sales was \$16,000 for Science, one of Ben Weiner's hyper-realistic paintings. "It's the first art fair he's ever been to," Moore said. He noted that almost the entire show Weiner will have at the Santa Monica gallery in May is already sold, based solely on photographic studies for oil paintings.

Moore's upcoming show of Todd Hebert's dreamy, blurred landscapes will also be completely spoken for when it opens on Jan. 6—Herbert's work sold based on digital images on his laptop computer. He even referred collectors to the Pulse booth of Jack Shainman, Hebert's dealer in New York, who sold all the paintings displayed there too.

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"Everyone is selling so much," remarked independent curator Jocelyn Adele Gonzales, who was working in the booth of Barcelona's Galeria Senda. "We didn't expect [it]." Senda scored with Oslo painter Bjarne Melgaard and photographs by Anna Malagrida and Roger Ballen.

This was the first fair that Galeria Fucares had attended in Miami since Art Basel's arrival, and Enrique Tejerizo said the Madrid gallery was pleased with the public interest and would gladly return.

Jutting out from the wall of Fucares' booth was Spanish artist Isidro Blasco's New York scene, *Street Name*, a C-print splintered and mounted on an angular wooden armature for a jarring perspective. It sold on Saturday for \$11,000.

Vivid underwater landscapes by Kim Keever, C-Prints of dioramas constructed in a tank filled with 100 gallons of pigmented water and shot with a large-format camera, captivated collectors at Feigen Contemporary. The New York gallery sold several large and small prints in editions of three for \$11,000 and \$6,000, respectively.

Michelle Tillou said that some of Feigen's biggest hits were the intimate mixed-media works on vintage papers and found book covers by Edwina White. The Australian artist's drawings include eccentric narratives of burlesque performers, children playing Blind Man's Bluff and character studies of types from a butcher shop and a bookbinder.

On Thursday morning, 15 of White's pieces went for \$1,100-\$2,400 to major Miami and New York collectors as well as trustees from Hartford's Wadsworth Athenaeum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Richard Levy Gallery attracted interest in paintings by William Betts (\$4,000-\$7,500), an emerging Houston artist with a high-tech background. Betts has devised a computer program that deposits small dots of color according to the precise color values of each pixel in stills of surveillance videos from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Albuquerque gallery also sold several suspended sculptures with constellations of carved and curved plastic bottles by Aurora Robson for \$500-\$2500. Robson hires homeless people to collect the vessels strewn on Brooklyn streets. "She's turning something discarded and unwanted into something aesthetically pleasing," said director Viviette Hunt.



"Science" (2006)
Ben Weiner; from the
Mark Moore Gallery



"Bubbles and Snowman" (2006)
Todd Hebert; from the
Mark Moore Gallery



"Street Name"
Isidro Blasco; from
Galeria Fucares



"Ocean 26" (2006)
Kim Keever; from Fei-
gen Contemporary

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Found materials also figured prominently in several other installations. Jade Townsend of Priska C. Juschka Fine Art stacked whitewashed furniture into an escape tower leading up to an open window. Travis Somerville turned the booth of the Ojai, California-based Nathan Larramendy Gallery into a wood-paneled cabin complete with dirt under partial floorboards, tchotchkes propped on shelves made of vintage books and a large caricature of disgraced FEMA director Michael Brown proclaiming, "I love black folks."

But the most colorful back story was mined by Duke Riley, who hung the outer wall of New York gallery Magnan Projects' booth with burned wooden shelves and racks filled with singed garments ostensibly designed by the fictitious fashion mogul Paul Pierce.

Wall text related that the charred beams and studs came from the remains of an abandoned warehouse in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Greenpoint that by 2004 housed 16 squatters, who tagged the walls and hawked the clothing left behind by the original occupants. After a massive fire destroyed the structure, Riley recovered some of its remains by boat at night.

The project's history fascinated Trinidadian security guard Johnson Guevara, who encouraged Riley during his arduous installation. "I admire his patience and his courage," Guevara said. "This is what you really call living art."



"Blindman's Bluff" (2006)
Edwina White; from Feigen Contemporary



"01:58:31" (2006)
William Betts; from the Richard Levy Gallery



"I am not Spock (from The Jungle)" (2006)
Aurora Robson; from the Richard Levy Gallery