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ARTNEWS

‘Did I Sell it?’ Frenzied Collectors Storm Opening of NADA

By Nate Freeman Posted 12/03/15 2:10 pm



The New Art Dealers Alliance fair, which opened Thursday morning to VIP collectors, is the much more modest counterpart to the behemoth that is Art Basel Miami Beach, but it is not immune to displays of outlandish wealth. For instance, take the scene at the coffee stand next to the fair minutes before it opened: a Swiss collector got in a scuffle with the barista who didn't want to break a one hundred dollar bill, when all the dealer had was a stack of one hundred dollar bills. Then there was the inside of the fair itself, with work selling out within minutes of opening.

"If I could freeze time, I would have done four rehangs by now," said James Michael Schaffer, a dealer at James Fuentes, which was showing work by John McCallister, Noam Rappaport, and Tamuna Sirbiladze. He estimated the booth had sold \$200,000 worth of art at a fair where the average price of a work hovers around \$10,000. It was 11:00 in the morning.

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In Miami each year, collectors who might balk at a high price tag at Art Basel think nothing of dropping \$20,000 on a canvas here at NADA (perhaps hoping it could be resold for ten times that at a later date). It's always been the best-received of all the



satellite fairs, and a change of locations to the Fontainebleau instead of the Deauville in North Beach can only help. And unlike Art Basel, where collectors show up a little after the champagne reception and then like to take a lap or two before perhaps putting something on reserve, collectors arrived at NADA at 10:00 on the dot, ready to buy.



“Did I sell it? There was a fight,” said dealer Rachel Uffner, after being asked if she had sold a Sam Moyer work that was going for \$32,000. “Two people said ‘I’ll take it’ at almost the exact same time. Which is like a nightmare and a dream.”

Olivier Babin, owner of Clearing, said he had no problem off-loading works by Calvin Marcus (\$22,000) and Harold Ancart (\$35,000), both of whom turned heads with pieces in David Kordansky’s booth at Art Basel. An enormous abstract work by the talented Flora Hauser at Ibid. Projects, which has galleries in Los Angeles and London, was a steal at \$12,000. “A great deal for a young painter,” said a dealer there, as Hauser is 21 years old.

Speaking of deals: at one point someone explained the difference between Art Basel and NADA by saying, of the latter, “It’s like Target.”

The only contingent that may suffer in what’s otherwise a boon for dealers and collectors are the artists. One dealer lamented that the curatorial element once encouraged at NADA has been tossed aside in favor of a more market-driven grab-bag approach: show the best two works of your

best artists to encourage the booth to sell out quicker. But that line of thinking overlooks the many pleasures of this fair, from the vibrant Katherine Bernhardt paintings at CANADA to the full-booth makeover of luscious red works that the artist known as JPW3 provided Martos Gallery.

Plus, there’s a chance you might actually see an artist at NADA, an unthinkable scenario at Art Basel, as an artist coming to that fair would be akin to a cow taking in the entertainment of a slaughterhouse. At one point at the Feuer/Mesler Mesler/Feuer booth—which sold two paintings by Henry Taylor, one for \$70,000 and one for \$55,000—a collector inquired about a work by Jon Rafman, just as Jon Rafman was walking into the booth.

“This is very rare that you get to do this!” said dealer Joel Mesler, as he introduced the collector and the artist. Rafman then started talking to the collector about his work, *You are now standing in an open field (Roman ruins)*, explaining that the collage of crushed grape soda cans and chip bags and plastic takeout utensils set against a backdrop of crumbling Roman antiquity was “very Miami.” The collector nodded. Not that any of this mattered, though. The painting had already sold a while ago.

