

Artists to watch and notable trends and events in the market.

THE DRUTT REPORT: Artists to watch and notable trends and events in the market.



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This year's edition of Frieze Art Fair was augmented by the addition of a new fair, Frieze Masters, which offered a broad selection of classic, vetted works from Antiquity and Byzantium through elegant examples of contemporary art. Many visitors remarked that it was like a mini-TEFAF, the fair in Maastricht that showcases art and antiques each March and in recent years has crept slowly into the 20th century. Frieze Masters is not nearly as comprehensive as Maastricht, which is quite large in scale and runs for 10 days. But it did have the potential of stealing the thunder from FIAC, the fair in Paris that opens next week and is generally regarded as a showcase for less edgy, more timeless works of modern and contemporary art (though it is trying to be more hip; everything is changing). An unintended outcome of Frieze Masters, which opened on Tuesday of this week, may have been that by preceding the opening of Frieze by a day, it might have taken some of its sister fair's business away. More than a few dealers at Frieze's preview on Wednesday confided in me that they were experiencing an odd opening day, with a lot of early business followed by a long uncharacteristic lull. One thing is certain: its physical infrastructure, from carpeting and lighting to booth ceilings and more solid wall and floor construction, successfully capped Frieze Inc.'s overall improvement of fair layout that began earlier this year with Frieze New York on Randall's Island. That installment, which was generally deemed a commercial and experiential success, offered relief from the monotony of endless corridors by bending its long vistas slightly to create a serpentine effect that encouraged one to keep going.

Smaller in scale, and and darker in complexion, Frieze Masters had a more hushed, intimate tone to it, certainly encouraged by its less cacophonous audience and atmosphere, and perhaps further emphasized by its offerings, which are generally sober in character and modest in scale. Many stands had a very clear focus, eschewing the variety-store mentality that characterizes so many stands at Frieze (and other fairs). Exceptional presentations included Los Angeles' Blum & Poe, who had a beautiful installation of objects by 60s/70s Japanese artists from the Mono Ha group, while San Francisco's Anthony Meier Fine Arts had a phenomenal array of small masterworks by Agnes Martin (paintings), Gerhard Richter (works on paper), and Gilbert and George (a small photo grid from the late 60s). Bruce Silverstein from New York devoted an entire stand to Brancusi photographs, some of which were quite outstanding, as were many of the pieces found in Franklin Parrasch's mini-survey of John McClaughlin paintings. I also quite enjoyed Fergus McCaffrey's installation of William Scott's paintings. But my take



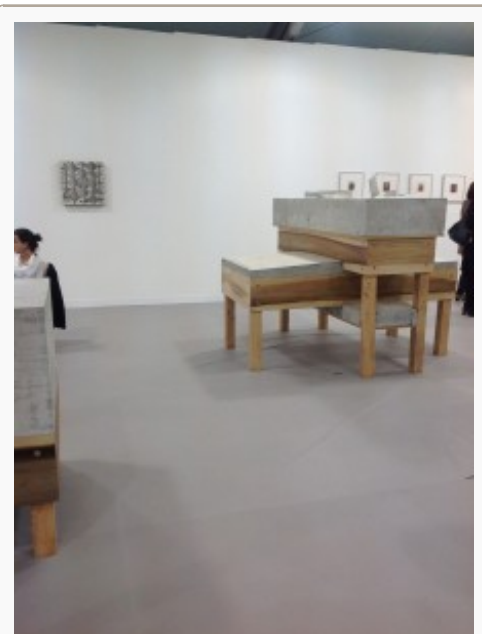
home object from the fair was Ubu Gallery's László Moholy-Nagy, SRho 1 (1936), a pristine example of the artist's rhodoid paintings, hard to come by in such good condition and outstanding composition.

The offerings at the main fair seemed generally underwhelming to me for the first time in a long while. I had the sense that the demand for content that both the number of fairs happening around the world and the surge of interest among new buyers has placed on galleries and their artists is showing through. It has happened at other fairs, and I know many who have cited this at Frieze in the past, but this was the first year that I felt this way. This is not to say that there weren't great works of note or memorable stands. Casey Kaplan devoted an entire booth to new works—clock sculptures—by Canadian artist Geoffrey Farmer, whose Leaves of Grass installation at Documenta 13 was one of the pieces that stole the show. Mexico City's Kurimanzutto Gallery demonstrated the curatorial prowess they have become known for with a stand dominated by Gabriel Kuri's new sculptures in wood and cement, juxtaposed with never-before-seen works on paper from 2004 by Gabriel Orozco.

At Galerie Meyer Riegger from Berlin/Karlsruhe, Henrik Håkansson stood out with an earth painting and a mobile from a series of three made with stuffed starlings culled at Turin airport in order to prevent engine stalls with jets taking off and landing there. They are eerily alive here, frozen in flight as though they are in some kind of organized landing pattern.

Konrad Fischer Galerie had numerous sculptural works of note, including a nice Carl Andre copper floor piece and a rusted corten steel Tony Cragg seen elsewhere at the fair in a putrid green patina, as well as a classic photo-grid by Bernd and Hilla Becher, which are always great when they are exceptional, which theirs was. The gem of the stand, however, was a small floor piece by Charlotte Posenenske, an almost forgotten Minimal and Conceptual artist active in Germany in the 1960s, who has been experiencing a renaissance recently, highlighted by a notable show at Artists Space in New York in 2010. Her steel sculptures made from ventilation ducts were meant to be reconfigured in modules to suit the specific space they inhabit and could go unnoticed as art works altogether.

I'm usually less than thrilled with paintings at art fairs these days. They're either 800 pound gorillas by Richter



Gabriel Kuri at kurimanzutto

days. They're either 500 pound gorillas by Richter, Twombly, and Warhol, or lackluster efforts by young artists trying to look bold; painting also suffers greatly from the crowded real estate and "grow-light" atmosphere at many fairs, especially Frieze. Someone who I can almost always count on, however, is Thomas Scheibitz, whose striking, colorful abstractions impress with their singular character, balanced structure, and clarity of scale and composition.

The above painting could be found at the stand assembled by New York's Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, always reliable for having great pieces by him and another favorite of mine, Olafur Eliasson. This year, while there were several works in different mediums available by Eliasson at Bonakdar's, what was most worth taking home to my mind were the gorgeous watercolors installed in the stand's closet. Delicate, in tone and geometry, they radiate controlled space and luminosity, barely a step away from his light installations that accomplish the same thing in three dimensions. It was hardly surprising that they were all sold out within hours of the fair's opening.

I also like Donald Moffet's work. A founding member of the 80s AIDS activist group Gran Fury, over the years he has made paintings that have tightly compressed political and formalist concerns, from reflective, textured monochromatic surfaces with video projected onto them to abstract whimsical objects that use zippers (take that Barnett Newman!) to delineate space and form, and extruded surfaces that turn color field painting into fields of grassy paint. A couple of years ago, he began making works that pushed his paintings even further into the realm of the sculptural object, in some cases reminiscent of Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg, with painted found wooden and metal objects incorporated into them or emanating from them onto the floor. A beautiful, small example of where this has been taking him was on display at Marianne Boesky Gallery, one of two US galleries who have really championed his work (the other being Anthony Meier).

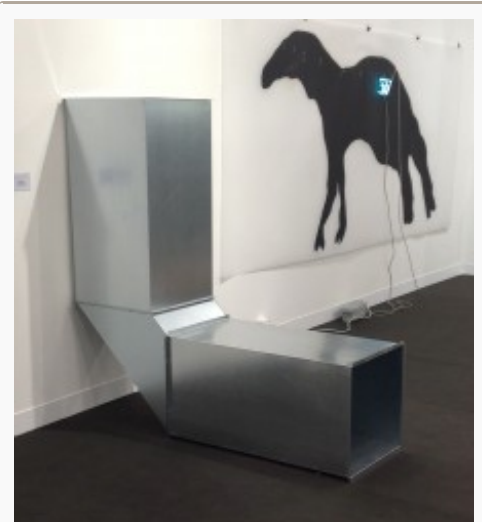
Back to sculpture for a minute, two works that both caught my eye and brought a smile to my face were on Galerie Yvon Lambert's stand. David Shrigley is known mostly for his drawings that can be silly, satirical, pathetic, childish, caustic, and hilariously mundane. His sculpture exudes these same qualities, leaving one sometimes wondering if he is a comic genius or about as funny as a one-liner over a beer. I think he is the former, someone whose deadpan style is a welcome relief from some of the more ostentatiously hyper intelligent art inhabiting fairs and galleries. He takes us down more than a few notches to a place where we have to laugh at ourselves before we die of sobriety. The sculpture below reminded me of the days when Marcel Broodthaer's works, which I love, could



Gabriel Orozco works on paper, 2004



Henrik Arkansan



be found at multiple stands at an art fair, radiating with Magritte-ian and Duchamp-ian semiotics of the object. In Shrigley's hands, however, the delicacy of *double entendre* gives way cave man humor, where "it is what it is, stupid."

In stark contrast to the obvious is the work of Jason Dodge, an American artist who has lived in Berlin now for many years. His work is what it is, which sometimes leads one to ask, "so what is it?" He has perfected an ability to construct a hyper narrative informed by myriad literary, historical, and artistic sources and moments, fabricated works that sometimes seem, and might be, composed of seemingly found objects. They are always impeccably articulated and designed, neatly displayed but sometimes so obtuse that they can be entirely overlooked, whether in an exhibition, home, or art fair stand. Sometimes, though not often, they are untitled, which can be a relief. The work below, a neatly bundled pile of finely knitted wool was identified on the label as follows: "Above the weather in Talin, Margot Marks wore woolen yarn the color of night and the length between the earth and above the weather." It is an incredibly beautiful and delicate work that sits on the floor like a pile of indigo woolen newspapers, with a story and context that none of us knows how to unpack.

Finally, I leave you with this large painting by the American artist Mark Bradford, which took center stage at the stand belonging to London's White Cube. Bradford has worked in collage, sculpture, video, installation, and painting with found and crafted materials, exploring issues of gender, race, and class. His work is poetic and powerful, yet seldom if ever heavy handed. The layers of his works—scraped down paintings and objects with different strata of material—are like archaeological sites, revealing past histories at each level. His painting at Frieze, a giant map-like composition of a familiar but unidentifiable site, exemplifies his prowess as a visual composer, someone whose works are intellectually engaging, visually compelling, and slowly revealing a new understanding of the many possible readings embedded in its fluid markings.



Charlotte Posenenske



Thomas Scheibitz



Olafur Eliasson



Donald Moffett



David Shrigley





Jason Dodge



Mark Bradford