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WASHINGTON'S FREE WEEKLY

## ARTS DESK

### Conner Contemporary to Launch (e)merge Art Fair in D.C. in 2011

Posted by Kriston Capps on Dec. 2, 2010 at 2:00 pm

It's news that will fall by the wayside this week, owing to the National Portrait Gallery controversy and the fact that everyone who cares is in South Beach for Art Basel Miami, but it's big news nonetheless.

Leigh Conner and Jamie Smith, cofounders of Conner Contemporary Art in Trinidad, and Helen Allen, former director of the PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, are launching an art fair in D.C.: (e)merge.

So how will (e)merge improve on artDC, the failed 2007 effort to launch an art fair in the District? It's hard to say this far out, particularly without knowing any of the galleries involved. At a glance, however, (e)merge improves on several factors that contributed to artDC's failure.

For starters, it's organized by Conner, meaning it's likely to find some purchase with local galleries: At least, those who participate are unlikely to feel ripped off and out of the loop, as many reported feeling during artDC.

But far more importantly, (e)merge, which will take place Sept. 22–25, has the support of Don and Mera Rubell. Here is another example of Mera Rubell expanding her footprint in Washington. Allen, Conner, and Rubell can draw the international and blue-chip galleries who balked at a D.C. art fair the first time around.

Plus, the fair will be held at the Morris Lapidus-designed Capitol Skyline Hotel, which may answer a logistical question that hampered artDC. People who frequent art fairs are used to cushy hotel packages; there's no great hotel options nearby the Convention Center downtown that were willing to provide block rates for artDC. You can be assured that Mera Rubell knows this and is ready to deliver.