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Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Trendspotting at Pulse 2011

by Kyle Chayka

Pulse 2011, a fair more oriented towards emerging national US galleries than the Armory, ADAA or Independent, took place in a well-lit, pleasant space on West 18th Street that had more in common with a high-end mall than a convention center. Wooden floors throughout gave the fair a cohesive feeling and gallery walls were never too close together. Unfortunately, most of the art on view was just as anodyne as the space itself.

One of the clear dominant trends of this fair season is the marked return of figurative, emotional painting. Pulse was utterly dominated by two-dimensional works, from paintings on canvas to tiny bijou drawings on paper and massive photos. There were nice pieces in every media, but this year's Armory certainly kept things more exciting in terms of diversity. The work on display was very slick, easy on the eyes and easily imagined hanging above your couch. While that's not really a bad thing, nothing really hit me very hard in terms of artistic impact.

For more (on the spot) impressions of the fair, check out the podcast Hyperallergic editor Hrag Vartanian recorded with me and art writer and historian Rachel Wetzler while we were hanging out in the Pulse lobby. Topics covered include masturbating Vito Acconci figurines, inflatable heads of your mom and a garage-style painting installation.



I liked this Luca Pizzaroni (best name ever) photo at Fred Torres Collaborations. The shopping cart in the woods is a tried-and-true subject but this big print really had visual punch and presence.