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NADA NYC, at Basketball City, includes, from left, Meg Cranston's "Emerald City," at Newman Popiashvili and Fitzroy Galleries; paintings by Mira Dancy at Night Gallery; and Debo Eilers sculptures at On Stellar Rays.

A Roving Art Fair Finds a Home Court Advantage

The roving NADA art fairs have set up camp at some distinctive places, including an oceanfront hotel in Miami Beach and a former factory in Hudson, N.Y. But they have found their best

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home yet on a set of basketball courts on the Lower East Side. On Thursday, a day before the fair opened to V.I.P.'s at Basketball City, a complex on Pier 36, gray carpet covered the hardwood, and white wall-board had been erected to create neat grids. The scoreboards were still up, but that somehow felt right in this packed week of fairs, shows and events.

The new setting makes sense for logistical reasons: It's convenient to the Frieze Art Fair, the week's main destination on Randalls Island, and to many of the Lower East Side member galleries of the New Art Dealers Alliance, known as NADA, a nonprofit collective

that's been active since 2002. The location separates NADA NYC from fairs of similar size, like the Independent and the Outsider Art Fairs (both in Chelsea, in the building used by NADA last year). And it gives the 75 exhibitors room to spread out, with nice, wide corridors for works that benefit from a little more openness.

Not everyone seems to want, or need, the space. The booths come in two sizes: single and double. Accordingly, the works tend to be as small as a laptop or as big as a sofa; there isn't much in between, which might be said of the New York gallery scene in general now.

Among the petite objects of fascination are glaze-splattered ceramics by the talented abstract painter Joanne

NADA NYC runs through Sunday at Basketball City, Pier 36, 299 South Street, at Montgomery Street, Lower East Side; newartdealers.org.

Greenbaum (at Kerry Schuss), Polaroid landscapes evoking sounds by Stephen Vitiello (at American Contemporary) and a tiny reproduction of Munch's "Scream," poised atop a pedestal, by Lisa Kirk (at Invisible-Exports).

Collectors with a little more square footage may covet Mary Weatherford's Frankenthaler-meets-Flavin paintings at Brennan & Griffin, with bars of neon laid over multicolored stains; or the frenetic assemblages of Debo Eilers at On Stellar Rays, Rauschenberg combines for the Tumblr set. David Brooks's "Stress Tests," suspended roof fragments extracted from a bigger homage to Gordon Matta-Clark, is among the large installations commanding the aisles.

The variation in scale disguises some of the conformity that's crept into art fairs at every level. Mira Dancy's Expressionist-style nudes in violet and black with touches of gold glitter, at

Night Gallery, stand out because they dare to invoke the figure. So do the bewitching paintings by Michael Berryhill at Kansas, which depict Picasso-esque perversities in sunny palettes like Bonnard's. Far more prevalent, however, are cerebral, cautious-looking abstractions, albeit with interesting textural twists, along the lines of Ruby Sky Stiller's grooved plaster reliefs at Nicelle Beauchene, or Molly Smith's cones and wall collages of handmade paper at Kate Werble.

Adventurous processes distinguish some otherwise safe works, like the fuzzy-looking wall drawing by David Scanavino at Klaus von Nichtssagend (made by patting pigmented paper pulp directly onto the booth wall) and the delicate graphite shadings of Marsha Cottrell's ominous interiors at Petra Rinck (which, it turns out, come from a laser printer.)

Projects like these assert that fabrica-

tion is for the big fairs: There may be enough art here to fill several basketball courts, but at least there are still artists making things without layers of factories and assistants.

A more powerful reminder of NADA's scrappy-upstart origins is a memorial to Daniel Reich, the art dealer and early NADA member who committed suicide last December at 39. Inside a small booth, portraits of Mr. Reich in his signature oversize glasses hang on bright yellow walls. Here too are writings by his former gallery artists Paul P and Christian Holstad, as well as wall text alerting viewers to a public memorial on Tuesday, a few blocks away at the Abrons Arts Center on Grand Street.

Mr. Reich's personal, eclectic touch and his way with small spaces are sorely missed. You hope that his approach will continue to guide NADA as it transitions from pickup games to the big leagues.

40 Nations And 1,000 Artists

From First Arts Page

This year around 180 galleries from nearly 40 countries are showing works by some 1,000 artists in all mediums, including performance. Some of the galleries are blue-chip, some are newbies (or art fair neophytes) that tend to be grouped in a section called Frame; most are in between. Nearly all have shown up with art that is several notches above last year's offerings and not nearly as many big, shiny things. The stylish surroundings seem to have encouraged a rise in uncluttered displays and curatorial thought.

There is much to see: new artists of all ages to discover and others to get reacquainted with. Leo Xu Projects, from Shanghai, is featuring work by Liu Chuang, a young Chinese artist first seen in the "Younger Than Jesus" generational show at the New Museum in 2009. One piece, "Love Stories," recently completed, consists of a table stacked with small, worn-out pulp fiction novels, some open, some closed. They were once part of a rental library, whose users frequently annotated them with comments, letters and Post-its. The sappy cover illustrations, together with the printed and handwritten Chinese characters, telegraph a poignant sense of isolation and longing.

There are blasts from the past. The Almine Rech Gallery, of Brussels and Paris, has one of Frank Stella's "Exotic Bird" aluminum reliefs from 1976, which shows this American painter on the verge of a flamboyant new style. Sfeir-Semler, a gallery split between Beirut and Hamburg, is displaying "It Can Be Made Accessible," a flat-footed yet oddly hopeful series of phrases typed on 16 index cards by the Conceptual artist Robert Barry in 1971. And there are works that may expand the past, like a display of pieces in stone, rope and newspaper, from the late 1950s to the early '80s, by Seung-taek Lee, a Korean artist whose sensibility relates to Arte Povera, at Gallery Hyundai, from Seoul.

Some artists look especially good. The stands of Esther Schipper and Maureen Paley have between them three examples of a sliding door by Liam Gillick, made of vertical slats of colored metal — like a Donald Judd version of beaded curtains — that successfully fuses his interest in Minimalism and design. At the Modern Institute, Eva Rothschild, whom I associate with off-putting slick black sculpture with sharp points, is showing a sculpture made of a tangle of rebar, punctuated by cylindrical segments of cast concrete and colored pebbles; set on a tall pedestal, it suggests a cheerful Brutalist monument to the atom.

Other sculptural tangles to consider

Frieze New York continues through Monday on Randalls Island; friezenewyork.com.



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An installation by Bjarne Melgaard is among the works featured at Frieze New York, which is less cluttered this year.

are a slightly crazed example by Abraham Cruzvillegas at Regen Projects (involving more rebar, as well as feathers, fabric, chain, beer bottle caps and dried

meat), and a much more delicate one made from yarn, wire and wood, by Matthias Bitzer, at Kadel Willborn.

The numerous booths devoted to sin-

gle artists contribute to the show's uncluttered look. Lühring Augustine has a wonderfully spare display of Tom Friedman's sculptures, enlarged yet exqui-

site renditions of comfort food (pizza, bread and a trio of Hostess classics), that looks from a distance like a carbo-loaders fantasy. At Gavin Brown's Enterprise, Bjarne Melgaard, who never met a taboo he didn't like breaking, has painted the walls deep lavender, piled the floor with brightly colored blankets printed with drawings and texts, and topped it all off with his indelible wooly portrait paintings. It's all kind of comfy and womblike until you read the blankets and realize that the subject is Theresa Duncan, an artist who committed suicide in 2007.

At Galeria Elba Benitez (Madrid), Carlos Bunga has fashioned parts of large cardboard boxes into paintings, installation and reliefs, all involving airy, monochrome pastels for a pleasantly low-tech effect. At Kaufmann Repetto next door, Lily van der Stokker uses nearly the same palette to create a tableau of cartoonish and flowery domestic bliss made of a painting, an armchair and a small cabinet.

Some parting tips on attention-worthy art: at the L&M Arts stand, Barbara Kruger's "You Look Good," presenting that compliment of choice for people of a certain age in big white letters on black; Huma Bhabha's big, ravaged assemblage figures at Salon 94 and drawings on photographs at Stephen Friedman Gallery; Andrea Bowers's agitations on paper at Kaufmann Repetto and cardboard at Susanne Vielmetter (along with Nicole Eisenman's paintings); two ambitious sculptures by the brainy Isabel Nolan at Kerlin Gallery; Helene Appel's small painting, "Absorbent Cloth," a sweet portrait of a dishrag as formalist picture plane at the Approach; and Naama Tsabar's sarcophagus of fluorescent light tubes and thick, perforated black rubber mats at Dvir Gallery, the sarcophagus causing the mats to emit a bit of light and heat and a mild, not unpleasant odor. Did I mention that the efforts of female artists look particularly strong throughout the fair?

Also exceptional is a brief performance piece that Tino Sehgal, ephemeralist extraordinaire, has orchestrated at the Marian Goodman Gallery's stand. It brings to living, breathing, if not entirely human life a digital creature created by two other artists and fosters another of the concentrated, engulfing, brain-twisting experiences for which Mr. Sehgal is known, one that makes the essence of art tangible without making it concrete.

Other attractions at Frieze include an outdoor sculpture park, the centerpiece of which is Paul McCarthy's "Balloon Dog," an 80-foot-tall red inflatable sculpture, a fatter, more eroticized and much enlarged parody of Jeff Koons's work of the same title. It is an impressive spectacle if a rather ludicrous work of art. Among the commissioned projects found in and around the tent is a re-creation of Food, the artist-run restaurant from SoHo's long-ago, supposedly golden age, a time before the mixed blessings of mega-galleries and art fairs.

Using Darkness, With Enlightenment in Mind

The Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas has written several works to be performed in pitch darkness, including "In Vain," his hourlong masterpiece for chamber orchestra. With artificial light everywhere, "we do not have any night in our modern life," he said in an interview in 2011. "But I think our body and our souls

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desire night, and I give this in my art."

The American conductor Paul Haas (they are not related) aimed to use darkness to offer listeners a dreamlike experience at the Church of the Ascension. The lights were turned down low for "Ascending Darkness," the title of the program he led with the Sympho Orchestra on Wednesday evening.

Mr. Haas creates innovative concerts that place music in varying contexts. He

Sympho Orchestra

Church of the Ascension

often links works of disparate eras and styles in multimedia events in unusual locations. For "Ascending Darkness," Mr. Haas chose operatic excerpts by Rameau, opening with the "Scène Funèbre" from "Castor et Pollux." Other

Rameau selections were woven alongside pieces by Arvo Pärt, Grieg, Messiaen and Mr. Haas's own music.

Mr. Haas hoped to use the darkness, in his words, "to transport the audience into an altered state of awareness." He added that "the result should be a one-of-a-kind evening of glorious music."

The music was indeed enjoyable, played with polish and spirit by the ensemble. Mr. Haas was visible only as a silhouette. Most of the music was performed by the ensemble at the front of the church. Although a lighting design-

er was mentioned in the program notes, there were minimal lighting effects. More creative use of lighting would have added to the dramatic arc and flow of the evening.

For me, it merely felt like music performed with the lights dimmed low, instead of the "quest for heightened consciousness and revelation" sought by Mr. Haas. But while the experiment didn't quite work in terms of transporting a listener to altered states, it certainly offered an alternate means of listening to music in a concert setting.