

ARTINFO

Strong Selection Sets Mood at ADAA



Photo by Rudolf Bekker

An overhead view of the ADAA Art Show, at the Park Avenue Armory

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NEW YORK— The 22nd rendition of the **Art Dealers Association of America** annual "Art Show" had its gala preview last evening at the historic Park Avenue Armory, drawing a finely tailored, Upper East Side crowd. Twenty-six galleries were chosen to mount either solo or two-person shows in the relatively small stands, providing a kind of easily navigable intimacy rarely present at art fairs.

The mood was decidedly upbeat — especially compared to the gloom-filled, funereal atmosphere of the 2009 edition — with well-coifed guests sipping champagne and chomping down on canapés. "I think things will sell," said John Cheim of Chelsea's **Cheim & Read** gallery as he hovered near a wall of 25 striking red ink gouaches of flowers and pregnant figures from the 2009 series "Les Fleurs," by the nearly 99-year-old artist Louise Bourgeois. He had reason to be optimistic — eight of the Bourgeois works on paper had sold already "as we were putting them up," Cheim said, going for \$65,000 and \$75,000 (with the pregnant-women pieces falling on the pricier end of the spectrum).

The gallery also sold *Djinn* from 1962, a beautiful abstraction by the late Milton Resnick, for \$250,000 to a New York collector. The work resided on a wall opposite a \$4 million **Joan Mitchell** painting from 1958, and the gallery was also offering a work by Jean-Paul Riopelle from the Joan Mitchell estate for \$65,000. (Riopelle and Mitchell were longtime lovers.)

Across the way, San Francisco's **Fraenkel Gallery** devoted its booth to the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto, presenting a mini-retrospective of black-and-white works dating from the photographer's first 'theatre' picture, *Radio City Music Hall, New York*, 1978, to his fantastic new *Lightning Field 128*, created from the impact of 400,000 volts of electricity hitting a negative. (The work is part of the artist's latest series, which will debut at **PaceWildenstein** in the fall.) Prices range from \$20,000 to \$400,000, the latter for the Sugimoto seascape, **Lake Superior, Eagle River**, 2003.

Turning a corner to **Acquavella Galleries**, the tableau changed dramatically courtesy of a regal Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Countess Karoly*, 1865, for \$1 million. The painting of a seated Hungarian princess, pictured against the sea of Deauville, was one of the few Courbets executed for the upper class denizens of the day, according to Eleanor Acquavella.

"We figured for this fair, you can bring good quality and older things," she said. "I think people are interested in buying art right now and are not as hesitant as a year ago. They're more relaxed, so I think things will sell." The booth also sported an impressive Georges Braque piece of collage and mixed media with corrugated card board, *Bouteille et Instruments de Musique*, 1918, for \$3.8 million.

One of the biggest, most impressive works at the fair was hanging prominently at **L&M Arts**, drawing stares but no bites as of the opening for **Willem de Kooning's** *Untitled III*, 1983. The asking price is \$6.2 million, reflecting the recent result for another de Kooning of the same late period that sold at **Sotheby's** London last month. Xavier Fourcade, de Kooning's last dealer during his lifetime, "hand-picked it and took it out of the studio and showed it in 1984," said gallerist **Sukanya Rajartnam**. "Everyone is drawn to it."

The wares at San Francisco's **Anthony Meier** gallery were decidedly newer, hallmarked by Teresita Fernandez's two-panel graphite and pencil abstraction, *Nocturnal (Horizontal)*, 2009, priced at \$45,000. When asked of his expectations, Tony Meier cracked, "lots of sex," then regained a serious air, saying, "it seems to be if dealers had a choice of offering resales versus primary, it's definitely

going to be primary."

He added "everything here is primary and of the grisaille variety."

Standing within earshot was Oliver Barker, Sotheby's London contemporary department rainmaker, who was bemused by some of the double-takes he was attracting, as if the auction specialist had been caught red-handed in the enemy's camp. "Dealers take a funny look at auction house people at events like these," said Barker, uniformly cool in a bespoke suit. He, on the other hand, was on the look-out for Zero Group pieces, on the heels of the standout result from the Lenz Collection sale last month at Sotheby's in London, and glided off toward **Sperone-Westwater**.

New York's David Nolan had a flurry of tiny red dots decorating the wall labels of Martin Kippenberger's mini-show, with six works on paper having sold in the \$30,000 range, including the collage *I love Betty Ford Klinik*, 1985, and a wood sculpture, *Kippen Seltzer*, 1990, at \$14,000. "Almost all of the buyers so far have been American, and we're really pleasantly surprised," said gallery director Katherine Chan.

Caught in the aisles of handshakers and back-slappers were New York museum directors Richard Armstrong of the **Guggenheim** and Adam Weinberg of the **Whitney**. "I was in your museum today," gushed one Art Show visitor, pumping Armstrong's hand. Smiling with diplomatic patience, Armstrong turned to this reporter and said of the booths, "I think this is a real treat. I look at these like a beautiful country terrine, there's always something delicious." He added, "you can't say no to the market and this one is especially comfortable: big rooms, big prices, big people." As if on cue, Adam Weinberg turned to greet a well tailored couple who oozed well-heeled élan. "Hi Liz, Hi Rob," beamed Weinberg, "come and see the Biennial anytime, and I'll give you a private tour." So went life on the Upper East Side at the opening of week's bluest-chip art fair.