

Art Basel 2010

By Lauren Hasty

The week of Art Basel has proved productive as the galleries are packing up and are, believe it or not, already getting ready for December's states side event, Art Basel Miami. There was much to see, learn and discover this week as the art fair, which is comparable to a giant traveling museum - where everything is for sale- was underway. The show was incredible, and as **Richard Armstrong**, director of NY's **Guggenheim Museum** stated "It feels healthy, there is geographic and aesthetic diversity: dealers are making a big effort." In many cases, there were complete walls and stands dedicated to artists such as New York's **Cheim & Read** who devoted half of their booth to the recently deceased French artist **Louise Bourgeois**. There were walls and walls of Warhol, Picasso, Basquiat, Hirst, Calder's and more...Despite the majority of the work being from big named established artists, a few galleries such as Chicago's **Richard Gray**, who displayed works by the relatively unknown artist **Jan Tichy** and says "he wants to give promising artists a platform", among his other modern and post modern work which is worth millions. NY/Brussels based gallery **Barbara Gladstone** did the same by showing the Swedish artist **Celia Edefalk**, who'll have her first show in the gallery in September. All of Edefalks works on display at Art Basel, which sell for a modest (by Basel's Standards) 10,000 Euros were sold.



Louise Bourgeois at New Yorks Cheim and Read Gallery



Anish Kapoor and Damien Hirst installations at London's Paragon Press

While the dividers were laden with priceless works of art, the walkways were overloaded with dealers, collectors and celebrities on the prowl for rare and fantastic works. Among those spotted were collectors such as **Roman Abramovich**, **Bianca Jagger**, **Val Kilmer**, and various members of the English royal family.

After last year's slump, the hungry crowd was a welcome change for high spirited gallerists. **Andrew Richards**, the director of **Marion Goodman's** NY gallery affirmed that the "market's much better" and NY collector **Doreen Bassin** noted "the gallerists are happy when they are selling, and they are selling". Regardless of the sales, **Tobias Meyer**, Chairman of Worldwide Contemporary Art at **Sotheby's** affirmed that "there's not the impulse buying there once was, new buyers are coming here as much to gather information as to collect. " Perhaps the golden age of art buying is definitively over, but there were vast quantities of people taking pictures, making notes, and asking questions about unknown works as it is reasonable to suppose that if a gallery makes it to Art Basel, and offers well known artists, then perhaps the lesser known artists offered for lower prices on the stand could be solid, lucrative investments for the future.



Art Basel socialites, German artists Eva and Adele

Buying and selling aside, the fair is so much more than just an artshow. There are guided tours throughout the town of artworks especially created for the event, films, book signings (one visitor, was bold enough to ask **Paul McCarthy** for a drawing after his book signing and walked away with a personalized work appraised at between £20,000-£30,000!), conferences, parties and expositions. There is also a section dedicated entirely to über-talented emerging artists and new concepts: **Art Unlimited**. This vast area comprising videos, large installations and fresh ideas is where most of the curators and museum directors, always on the lookout for new and exciting talent spend the most of their time. **Jill Sterrett**, director of collections at **MOMASF** liked the piece *Organi* by Italian artist **Massimo Bartolini**, which consists of a pipe organ made from scaffolding which plays the song *Cheap Imitation* by John Cage but said she saw the biggest crowd of the day gathered around a television to watch the last of the German World Cup soccer match.



Jean-Michel Basquiat in his studio at the Great Jones Street, New York, 1985. In front of *Untitled*, 1985, Acrylic and oilstick on wood, 217 x 275,5 x 30,5 cm (detail) Private Collection, Photo: Lizzie Himmel©© 2010, ProLitteris, Zürich

This year's fair was dedicated to **Ernst Beyler**, the renowned art dealer and founder of Art Basel who passed away last February. At the foundation named in his honor, an elaborate collection of works by **Jean Michel Basquiat** was organized for what would have been the artist's 50th birthday. The Beyler Foundation launched the exhibition in conjunction with Art

Basel, and hosted barbecues and lively parties throughout the week to celebrate the exceptional first large showing of the artist's work ever held in Europe, which comprises over 100 works on loan from renowned museums, galleries and European and American private collections. The exhibition lasts until September and will travel to **Paris** in October where it will be shown at the **Musee d'art Moderne** .

Still hesitating about becoming a collector? Do you like art but are afraid your opinion might not be good enough to seek out a future investment or rather you question whether taste matters at all? Check out the artwork by **Mario Garcia Torres** : *How to Collect Art*, on display at the Belgium gallery **Jan Mot**. The humorous work consists of a large silk screen print explaining the step by step process of staying true to yourself while making the perfect choice. As he states in the end, all you have to do is "GO FOR IT"!

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