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The Armory Show "Actually Makes Me Feel Really Gross"



Anyone who has noted the glitz and rampant commercialism of the average art fair, and the VIP programming, signature cocktails, luxury sponsors and mass of extremely shiny art works that come with it, will smile (or cringe) at The Armory Show's official merchandise this year.

The fair, which opens to the public tomorrow, commissioned local performance, theatre and installation artist Liz Magic Laser to create bespoke art work for the show and design the show's merchandise and other paraphernalia. The result? Tote bags that carry the slogan, "An average size booth at The Amory Show costs \$24,000 and that comes with customized walls, lights, paint and carpeting". T-shirts carry stats about attendees at the art fair, including the fact that their average household income is \$334,000. My favorites are the cards for VIP attendees that state that they are one out of a not-so-elite group of 12,365.

The film specially produced by Laser for the fair is made up of footage from a series of focus groups of art experts discussing what the official look of The Armory Show should be. The trailer is here. Asked what the Armory Show means to them, various participants contend that it's "the granddaddy" of art fairs, "a trade show" and "a trophy day", while one focus group member simply reports that "it actually makes me feel really gross".

It's fun, particularly when participants are asked to envision what the official invitation should smell like, and shows that The Armory Show's organizers also have a sense of humor about the event and the global industry that art fairs have become. Of course, it will probably help them to sell a few more catalogs and other official products too.