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Le Monde

Armory Show: the old lady has concerns



In New York, in March, it is still snowing, but the world of art as the Armory Show welcomes the arrival of spring. The contemporary art fair, which ends March 10, gives the signal that must swap his winter boots against his sunglasses and prepare arty credit card. The excitement far exceeds the Armory Show and 65,000 visitors. It also speaks of "Armory Week", as the show brings with it, a whole week, a variety of artistic events: openings in galleries, museum exhibitions, studio visits, debates, performances, watered evenings flaming alcohol sponsors. Not to mention the satellite fairs whose numbers have exploded in 2013, there are more than ten, big or small, wise or crazy, sometimes very sharp, and competitors. Some galleries, supreme luxury, attend several shows at once.

Along the Hudson River, on piers 92 and 94, these piers that once hosted the transatlantic ships, the Armory Show is easy to spot thanks to the comings and goings of taxis and limousines that dump art lovers. Thanks also to the huge sculpture in wooden letters said, without elaborating: "I need to go see a shrink." During the opening, a young and trendy crowd rushing to see the art ... and buy. T-shirts for employees Armory blue firecracker clearly display color. You can read on their backs the income level (334,000 dollars) of visitors to the fair or the average price of a stand (\$ 24 000).

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This operational truth is actually biting the work of a young artist hired by the fair - which is a little fingers bitten. Liz Magic Laser, that is his real name, has designed invitation cards ugliness worthy of a bank and invented all VIP badges and gold foils. She even bought shares of real estate investment funds owner of the fair, Vornado, before the coach, then sell ... "They invested in me, I invested in them," she says.

The Armory Show celebrates 100 years

The Armory this year celebrates its 100th anniversary. Several galleries have the opportunity to pay homage to Duchamp, who was so shocked in 1913 when the first edition. There is a contemporary version of the urinal, not very subtle at Pierogi Gallery - The flush is triggered automatically at the start of the visitor. Francis Naumann Gallery preferred to bring together artists who were inspired by the *Nude Descending a Staircase*. The artist Kathleen Gilje has reproduced the scene in a painting, but it took a dummy model for androgynous Andrej Pejic, the face of a woman and man sex, "to approach the original scandal."

With 214 galleries, divided into two sections, there is much to see at the Armory. However, the young director, Noah Horowitz, reduced wing this year. Probably in response to competition from Frieze fair in London that has established a new subsidiary in New York in 2012. Shareholders of the Armory Show have also tried in January to sell their fair slowing the Canadian Louise Blouin, owner of several art magazines, including *Art + Auction*

"The Armory became indigestible," says the director, who also wanted to bring order into the stands tote. Efforts have paid off: the French Laurent Godin has dedicated his stand, including furniture, at work falsely naive American David Kramer. And at David Zwirner, there is in all and for all three works: videos of Diana Thater at 150,000 dollars apiece, and sold the first day. "The business is doing well," says its director Ales Ortuzar. Proof: flooded during Hurricane Sandy, Zwirner gallery is not only present in two shows, but it has opened additional space in Chelsea, as big as a museum.

The Armory Show has always struggled to recruit the heavyweights of New York galleries why they would rent a small booth on the show when they have huge spaces to throw? We find these rather large fish in another fair held in the same period as the Armory Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA Art Dealers Association of America). Here, the atmosphere is quite different: old walls steeped in history, and public dim light of a certain age. The ADAA has long been considered tacky before becoming a serious

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competitor. "The Armory attracts hast thou seen from Brooklyn, laughs a gallery there, we were the old rich Manhattan!"

The trend is for "blue chips", that is to say, the sound values, but recently, the fair is open to more contemporary art and the works are first: a set Tacita Dean at Marian Goodman , works by Mona Hatoum at Alexander and Bonin, a Rhine Thomas Ruff at Pace MacGill - a work which has reached 2 million dollars at auction.

A Fair in the heart of independent galleries in Chelsea

To see more experimental works, we must go further. And that there is plenty of choice. Some galleries have deserted the Armory as too commercial to join the Fair independents. At the heart of galleries in Chelsea, it is free to the public and recruit exhibitors invitation only. The result resembles a large group exhibition that blends emerging galleries and confirmed. After climbing a flight of stairs, we come across a young woman who dances topless - it's a performance. Then two men who watch works playing Yo-Yo - this is not a performance. British gallerist Maureen Paley are among other exhibits Gillian Wearing, famous for his works, which blend fiction and intimate: "I participate in the fair since its inception, the gallery said. Ago freshness here that is good - and sales follow! "

In the same neighborhood, a huge warehouse illuminated houses a fair dedicated to the moving image. You can not miss the installation worrying Ted Victoria, an American who built a greenhouse inhabited by monstrous creatures. But when you toured this cave of Plato only contains tiny shrimp, whose shadow is projected on the walls.

A few blocks away, a beautiful installation of paper airplanes Shusuke Ao covers a white ceiling: New City only fair that brings Japanese galleries. They drink sake in square glasses wearing bunny ears. This does not preclude paintings Kazuo Shiraga, which exceed 100,000 dollars, from like hotcakes - it must be said that the artist included in an exhibition at the Whitney Museum dedicated to the Gutai movement.

Of these proposals, the more crazy is probably "Unfair", a group exhibition a few blocks from the Armory. An artist squat lift in order to give performances, and you can eat ice cream (the sponsor is called Ben & Jerry). There is little masterworks, just this artistic vitality that blows across the city.