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THE RADAR

ART Signatures required! The inaugural Dallas Art Fair prepares to wow collectors and the public with a top-notch collection of fine contemporary art from 30 prominent galleries around the country 48

THE RADAR | ART



Art Major!

Is the Dallas Art Fair one more sign that the city is coming of age as a cultural destination?

| By Steve Carter | Photography by Nick Prendergast |

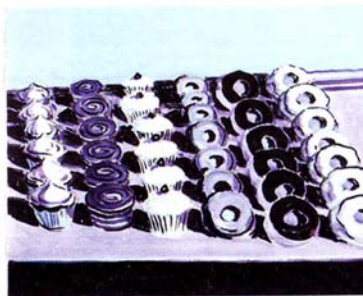
Think art fairs, and you're going to be thinking *elsewhere*, cities like Basel (Art Basel), New York (The Armory Show, ADAA), London (Frieze Art Fair), Miami (Art Basel Miami Beach), Madrid (ARCO), Berlin (Art Forum Berlin), Chicago (Art Chicago) and many others. But in just a few days, Dallas will be joining the ranks when the first annual Dallas Art Fair has its run from Friday, Feb. 6 through Sunday, Feb. 8; (an invitation-only preview gala takes place on Thursday the 5th.) With 31 prominent contemporary and modern art dealers exhibiting, representing a panoply of works by everyone from Joan Mitchell to David Bates, Damien Hirst to Deborah Grant, Chuck Close to legendary Outsider Henry Darger, the DAF will be making an auspicious splash in its year one. The fair's co-founders, art dealer Chris Byrne and John Sughrue, CEO of Brook Partners and the Fashion Industry Gallery in the Arts District, where the event will be held, have been friends for 20 years, and

plotting this project for the last three of them. Interviewing the two simultaneously proved to be a pinballing tag-team event, with their individual enthusiasms bouncing off each other in rapid fire—it's impossible to imagine the Dallas Art Fair, or the city itself for that matter, having better advocates. "We're hoping the Art Fair has the energy of our conference calls," Byrne says with a laugh. Sughrue adds, "We're the audience, so why is there not an art fair here, we wondered. So we put one together."

Galleries from all around the country were invited, and the final cut hail from these 12 cities: New York, San Francisco, Dallas, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, Charlotte, Fort Worth, Austin, Houston, Chicago, Baltimore and St. Louis; the lion's share of the exhibitors are from New York. Paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, photographs and site-specific installations, all by post-war artists, will be on view, with too many highlights to name. That being said, Byrne is especially excited that "Andrew CONTINUED..



ART 'N STROLL Top: Chris Byrne, left and John Sughrue, co-founders of Dallas Art Fair, photographed at Dallas Art Fair offices in front of a mural originally designed by Dallas artists for the city's former Southwestern Life building. Above: *Yellow Poppies*, May 5, 2002, by Donald Sultan, Meredith Long & Company, Houston. Below: *Donuts and Cupcakes*, by Wayne Thiebaud, 2005, John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco.





BRUSHES WITH FAME *Top to Bottom: Freight Car*, by Arthur Dove, 1937, from Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, NYC; *Barbara Mullen, Blowing Kiss*, by Lillian Bassman, c. 1950's, Peter Fetterman Gallery, Santa Monica, Calif.; *Untitled, (The Subway)* by Mark Rothko, Meredith Long & Company, Houston; *Element de la table 'La Promenade des Amis'*, by Diego Giacometti, 1979; Thomas Segal Gallery, Baltimore.

...CONTINUED Edlin Gallery in New York is bringing Henry Darger works—I think this is unbelievable. And Jill Weinberg [Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., New York] is going to have a 1958 Joan Mitchell painting, and you don't see those all the time...we're just going to have a really nice range—the dealers, the exhibitors, the tightness of the show, there's going to be a lot of variation." While 30 exhibitors isn't a huge number, compared to the scale of many of the world's great art fairs, both of DAF's founders feel that it's a good place to start, and growth is on the agenda. "With the scale of our fair there will be a lot of opportunities for interaction," Byrne continues. "We're manageable enough that people can go to the symposiums, they can come to the fair, they can come to the gala, and there will be many opportunities to meet the dealers. That's exciting, and I do think that sets us apart. You can't do this if you have 200 galleries."

"If you look at what's happening right now, there's King Tut over at the DMA...and there was the J.M.W. Turner exhibition just before it; I think the time is right. And with the two new performing arts centers coming online, it's like adding gasoline to the fire."

As the winds of growth fan the Arts District at large, Sughrue feels the timing of the first-annual Dallas Art Fair couldn't be better. "If you look at what's happening right now, there's King Tut over at the DMA, with a million people coming to the Arts District for that," he says, "and there was the J.M.W. Turner exhibition just before it; I think the time is right. And with the two new performing arts centers coming online, it's like adding gasoline to the fire..." Sughrue observes that only a few years ago an art fair in downtown wouldn't have been feasible; he maintains that the advent of the Nasher served as a major catalyst. "Over the last five years downtown Dallas has transformed itself in a remarkable way, and we really have a world class urban neighborhood, with the Arts District and Uptown and over to Victory," he continues. "We've recreated ourselves, it seems like, every five years and we're in the process of doing that again..." As creator of DAF's hosting venue, the Fashion Industry Gallery, (he calls it "Dallas' version of the Armory on Park Avenue"), the fit of event to facility is ideal.

There are three local galleries taking part in the inaugural Dallas Art Fair: Dallas' Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, and Fort Worth's William Campbell Contemporary Art. A veteran of many art fairs in other cities, Valley House Director Kevin Vogel has high praise for DAF. "It's really exciting," he says. "The promoters of this show are doing it absolutely

correctly—they're going out and being very proactive in getting groups in to come and see the fair, including doing outreach to the museums around the region."

What does the arrival of DAF say about Dallas? "I think it speaks to the strong interest we have in contemporary art in Dallas and Fort Worth," suggests Talley Dunn, co-owner and co-founder of Dunn and Brown, who has exhibited worldwide. "It grows through the leadership of the really extraordinary museums that we have here, through the Fort Worth Modern Art Museum, the Nasher, the DMA, the Kimbell, and then filters down to the collecting community, with the incredible private collections and interest here. We really have a major voice in the national and international contemporary art world, with collectors, museum professionals, artists, and dealers—a dialogue with people within the

contemporary art matrix all over the country and internationally as well."

Most, if not all, of the out-of-town galleries already have established relationships with area collectors and museums; Byrne mentions that in the past, San Francisco's John Berggruen Gallery hosted the DMA Junior Associates Circle, and one of Lennon, Weinberg Inc.'s artists, Mary Lucier, has the first ever video installation at the Amon Carter Museum, continuing through Feb. 15.

"It's going to be fun and lively," Byrne raves. "We're not trying to mimic anyone—we're trying to have the right fair with the right people who have a grasp on this community." Sughrue has the last word, adding, "This art fair isn't some rarefied experience where you're opening a glass door into this pristine box where everybody's looking at you and vetting your résumé to determine where you fit into the art world. I think art fairs can democratize the process of gaining access to art, and they provide great educational value. We have every reason to believe that what we've put together and packaged for the Dallas Art Fair will be a success year one, and in future years." ■

The Dallas Art Fair will be held at the Fashion Industry Gallery, 1807 Ross Ave. Hours are 11AM to 6PM Feb. 6-7, and noon to 5PM on Feb. 8. For all the details, including a full list of exhibitors, seminar speakers, topics and ticket information, check dallasartfair.com.