

Interview

HOW THE DALLAS ART FAIR TAKES YOU IN

By RACHEL SMALL



Ben Weiner, *Passages*, 2012, oil on canvas, 28 x 54 inches. Image courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City.

Artist Ben Weiner used to assist Jeff Koons—and, we're told, has a piece in an eminent museum by his own hand, under Koons's name. The experience made Weiner pledge not to use assistants in painting his labor-intensive photorealistic images. He produces about eight annually. But his works—like this one of a paint dollop close up—are worth the wait.

"A Guide to This Week's Dallas Art Events That Aren't at the Dallas Art Fair," read a local newspaper's headline earlier this week. Below conceded a photo caption, "OK, this piece is at the Dallas Art Fair." They backed off further—the listings were not "necessarily" part of the Fair. But in truth, all "necessarily" exist because of the growing six-year-old event's gravitational pull.

It's the star of Dallas Arts Week, which kicked off with Dallas MTV re:Define auction and benefit last Friday. Peripheral art performances, installations (like Adam Ball's DNA piece on-site), and openings (George W. Bush's diplomatic portrait series debuted here last week) proliferate by the day. The parties alone could keep you occupied. The Preview Gala was Thursday; The Joule Hotel's Eye Ball, named for Tony Tasset's Eye across the street, is Saturday. Like in Miami and New York before it, the local art fair is beginning to engulf its home.

Though something is particularly gracious in its reception. At the VIP preview Thursday, guests walked slowly from booth to booth. Gallerists, who'd be flurried and red-eyed at Basel, spoke calmly at length about their showcases. Room was left for an expression strangled out of larger fairs: sincere curiosity. "People are more jaded in New York," said **Hilarie Moore of Los Angeles's Mark Moore Gallery**, who's been on the fair circuit for a quarter century. "Here people are more excited, actively interested, and [still] educated." In the spacious Fashion Industry Gallery venue, visitors can take it all in.

The art scene in Dallas isn't emerging out of its big blue skies (though the fair might be a sign it's reached a pinnacle). The downtown Arts District contains a number of venues, several barely a few decades old. At 111 years old, The Dallas Museum of Art was first, and now holds one of the nation's top permanent collections. Newer, and with a trailblazing mentality, is Dallas Contemporary, which, founded in 1978, is younger than many established artists. Among those are Richard Phillips and Julian Schnabel, who both have solo shows on through August. With powerhouse collectors like executive Kenny Goss, partners with singer George Michael, and philanthropist Deedie Rose, who throws DMA's benefit ball, the scene flourishes with Texan flair.

It's also people like Rose and Goss who heighten the fair's international profile. Goss, for instance, is "friendly" with Hus Gallery, a promising new space in London's elegant Mayfair neighborhood. This year's staging sees almost one hundred international and national galleries, up from last year's 83 exhibitors. Many are from New York and Dallas, but others journeyed from Berlin, Geneva, Bogotá, Milan and Seoul.

We picked our favorites on view through Sunday at the Fashion Industry Gallery. Click through the slideshow to find out more.

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