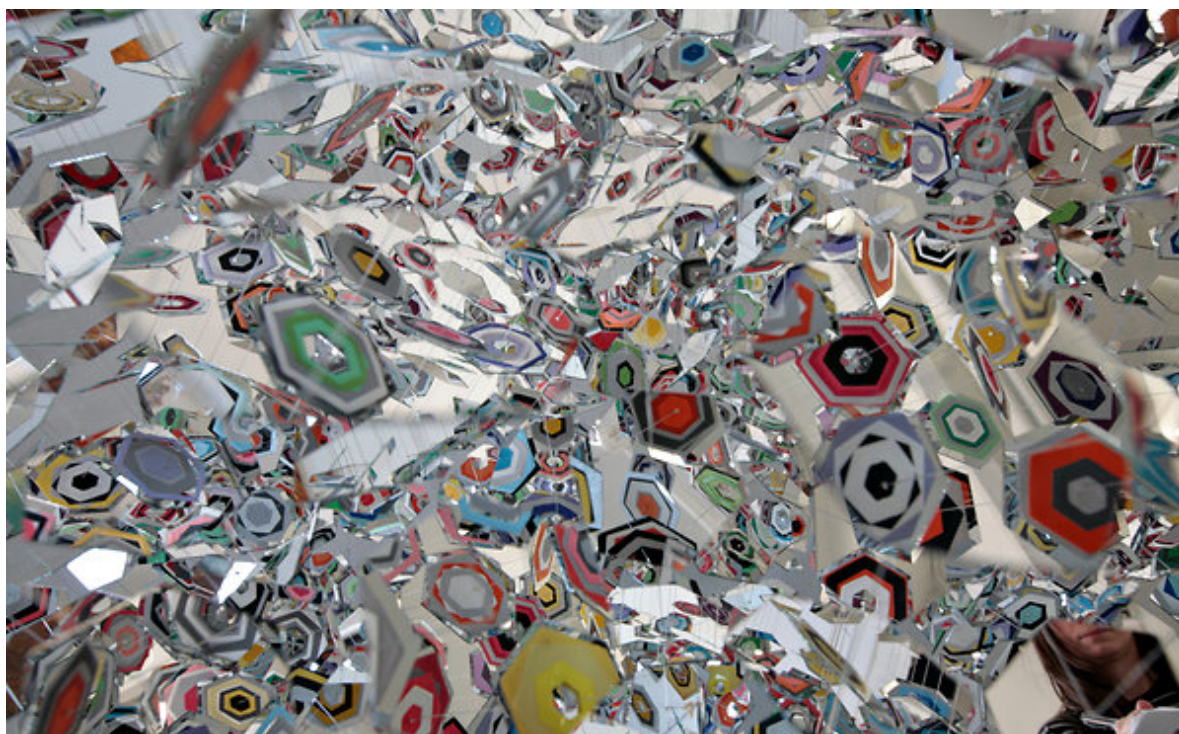


The New York Times

ART REVIEW

Promising Tyros Join an Art Fair Club

The Independent, an 'Exhibition Forum' in Chelsea



The Independent Pae White's installation "Professional" at this art fair in Chelsea.

By [ROBERTA SMITH](#)

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In its third incarnation, [the Independent](#), perhaps New York's most exclusive, self-consciously hip contemporary-art fair, continues to disdain that term. Once more, it calls itself a "temporary exhibition forum," as if it were some kind of seminar. It is, however, more of an art fair than ever, more professional, more dotted with small, framed, salable works. The playpen-like obstreperousness of its two previous incarnations has quieted.

Still, it remains the New York art fair whose edge most deserves to be called cutting, the one where you stand to learn the most about promising new art, albeit of a rather attenuated, hermetic sort. With around 40 participants, it is also the most pleasantly manageable of all the city fairs. It is arrayed, as before, on an open plan, with little in the way of formal booths or even aisles, on the three upper floors of a building once owned by the Dia Center for the Arts on West 22nd Street. The airy, white-cube architecture of the interior, so redolent of artistic seriousness, continues to be a boon. I can never quite decide if the Independent is intimate or just clubby, but in this it is probably an apt reflection of the art world: basically, it is both.

As usual, nearly two-thirds of the participating galleries are from elsewhere and — also as usual — they are responsible for the bulk of the new information. Over all, the artists tend to be young and fairly obscure.

An exception, at the Paris gallery GB Agency, is the American Conceptual artist Mac Adams, now nearly 70. His “Blackmail,” a noirish 1976 installation of a violently disturbed dinner for three, suggests a very physical argument, if not an actual crime. Clues are abundant; not for nothing was Mr. Adams’s brand of Conceptualism called Story Art or seen as a precursor to Cindy Sherman’s “Untitled Film Stills.” Another exception to the general youthfulness, at Susanne Zander, are the tenderly lascivious drawings of scantily clad women by Miroslav Tichy (1926-2011), the Czech outsider artist [known for surreptitiously photographing his subjects](#), using homemade cameras.

Among the new participants, the Third Line, a gallery from Dubai, is introducing the work of Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, an 87-year-old Iranian artist whose handsome glass and mirror mosaics are grounded in Islamic interpretations of numbers and geometry. Another newcomer is Labor, a gallery from Mexico City that is

featuring Pedro Reyes's "Surplus Reality," a double narrative that presents, in storyboardlike form, a photo-novella about the struggle for land reform in Brazil and also recounts the censoring of that work when it was displayed there.

If this year's Independent has a prevailing look, it centers on stylishly abject variations on Post-Minimalist abstraction, played out in lots of small, often appealing, if rather mute, sculptures and several spare installations that are frequently by women largely unknown and unshown in New York.

On the third floor, at Sprüth Magers, Thea Djordjadze has assembled a meditation on blue in the form of a huge piece of smooth synthetic carpet that climbs from floor to wall and is flanked by several scrappy sculptures, including Plexiglas volumes that echo the hue in atmospheric terms. At Meyer Riegger, a young Czech artist, Eva Kotatkova, takes a darker turn, painting a corner black and festooning it with shelves displaying altered vintage books, cutout collages and paper sculptures.

This result, titled "Re-education Machine," conjures a compartmentalized, overanalyzed, possibly totalitarian environment where young minds are assiduously molded. Ms. Kotatkova joins a tradition of deft image recycling that begins with Hannah Höch and continues to the Polish artist Goshka Macuga. At Freymond-Guth, Tanja Roscic, also Czech, commands a wall with a diamond grid that frames contrasting colors and textures and several very robust collages.

At Andrew Kreps, a raftlike hanging sculpture by Andrea Bowers draws the eye; it is colorful, almost decorative, so it takes a minute, and a look at the label, to realize that it is a functioning tree-sitting apparatus, outfitted with buckets, bottles and a hammock and ready to be hoisted up an endangered redwood.

Nearby at Jack Hanley, the DIY spirit is echoed in “Archipelago (Seq 14),” a large sculpture by a young artist named Marie Lorenz, who is known for building small boats that she uses to explore New York Harbor. Here she combines the decaying hull of a boat she found with a fresh white Fiberglas cast of it. Placed upright, they suggest an improvised shelter and also a monument (maybe to Bruce Nauman).

As for the smaller, more abstract excursions into Post-Minimalism mentioned earlier, I recommend the objects of Michael Dean at Supportico Lopez, Isa Melsheimer at Jocelyn Wolff and Katinka Bock at Wolff and Meyer Riegger. For contrast, drop by the Modern Institute to take in the efforts of Nicolas Party, a young Swiss artist who selects largish rocks and paints them to resemble pieces of fruit, steak and Brie.

Painting breaks out here and there. At Neue Alte Brücke, Will Benedict, an American artist who lives in Vienna, is making his New York debut with a series of hybrid works that set small, [gestural](#) semi-abstract canvases into lightly painted panels collaged with nearly life-size cutout photographs of a man and a woman having tea or drinks. The pictorial disjunctions are visually intriguing and evoke those developed in the 1980s by David Salle, who has a painting at Maureen Paley on the second floor.

At Stuart Shave/Modern Art, a young, London-based artist, Oscar Murillo, has merged studio and gym, combining a partly mirrored wall; stacks of roughly scratched, graffitiquesque paintings; and a low-lying sculpture.

At International Art Objects (which has just changed its name from China Art Objects), J. P. Munro is displaying “Battle of Issus,” a crowded, densely worked landscape, three years in the making, in which the mixture of Classical beings and wild creatures adds up to a form of 21st-century Symbolism. (Two very different works by the

inimitable Pae White, each making ingenious use of paper, also deserve attention here.)

Back at Kreps, Padraig Timoney is showing “Meepmeep Popup,” an imposing canvas whose patchy images (including portions of Wile E. Coyote) suggest a deteriorating billboard while mustering a compressed, kaleidoscopic energy. At 47 Canal, Trevor Shimizu contributes a large, new untitled painting of a nude that, in homage to de Kooning, he is calling a “late work.” Uncharacteristically substantial, it suggests that the future should begin now.

At Richard Telles, Richard Hawkins’s latest layerings of appropriated photographs, collage and painting are better than either the collages or the paintings he has in the Whitney Biennial. At Telles, the large set-up photographs, also collaged, of a young artist named Dan Finsel make an impression, whether or not you know that they riff on the sculptor Keith Edmier’s strange collaboration with the actress Farrah Fawcett a decade ago.

At MD 72, the project space of Galerie Neue in Berlin, you’ll find a painting by the ever-subversive Merlin Carpenter — a portrait of Craig Scanlon, a guitarist for the Fall, from the 14-work “Heroes” series — that comes with an interesting story. When Mr. Carpenter first exhibited the series at MD 72 last fall, it was behind locked doors, available for viewing only to people who paid 5,000 euros for the privilege. (Two did.)

Everyone else, including collectors who purchased the works, had to be satisfied with looking at [reproductions in the form of playing cards](#). Now this competent, colorful but otherwise unremarkable painting can be looked at free, through Sunday, and you can consider whether its former exclusiveness affects your experience of it in any way.

The Independent runs through Sunday at 548 West 22nd Street, Chelsea; independentnewyork.com.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 10, 2012

An art review on Friday about the Independent contemporary-art fair, at 548 West 22nd Street in Manhattan, misspelled the surname of an artist whose work is displayed on the third floor. She is Thea Djordjadze, not Djordhadze.