

ARTCAT

Brent Burket on Miami 2008, Part I

By Brent Burket | Features | December 10, 2008

Among the dozens of international art fairs dotting the map today, the quality of the art might vary, but one song remains the same at each: the sound of rich people who want you to overhear their declarations. In other words, when attending, there will certainly be entertainment included in the price of admission. The first art I came across in my recent trip down to Miami was outside SCOPE, an elegantly painful performance by artist Madeline Stillwell. About 15 seconds after I stopped to watch...



Howard Hodgkin at Hackett-Freedman, ArtMiami 2008.

...Friday got off to a fun start when I was walking down Collins Avenue to the Aqua Fair and came upon the chalk outlines of my neighborhood hero Ellis G. I've said it elsewhere, and as I'll repeat here: it's easy to think of Ellis G. as a one-trick pony, but it's one hell of a trick and the dude has an unstoppable hand.



Ellis G. at Aqua Fair, Miami 2008

I had a relatively negative view of what a hotel fair could be, but Aqua absolutely reversed that. No darkly lit hallways to walk down and tentatively peak into the rooms to see if entrance is wise. Instead what I found were two floors and an open courtyard with the best vibe of all the fairs. It all felt like a small town. The first gallery I came across there was Black & White sporting its soon-to-be mergerhood with 31 Grand. Bucheon Gallery from San

Francisco always utilizes their space well

when they're in a hotel fair, and this time was no exception. They totally tricked out their bed with a sculpture covering and hanging over it. Staying on the left coast, I think that I can officially say that I'm a huge fan of Western Project from Culver City in LA. I knew it was them before I even looked at their placard, after seeing Jason Adkins' color-on-fire pallet sculpture. I hadn't realized until then that one of the gallery's artists is Eric Freeman. I've been a huge fan of his work since seeing it at Mary Boone. I'm always thrilled to see his paintings, and with this one he splits up the visual work for the viewer. It's an exhilarating challenge for the eye, heart, and mind. That's how Aqua rolled this year. There weren't too many rooms I didn't want to enter. This is how you raise the bar for hotel fairs.

Next up? The mother of all art fairs, Art Basel, to be covered in Part 2.



Eric Freeman at Aqua