Aqua exhibition

AQUA

Aqua used the most convenient venue in downtown Miami Beach — the Aqua hotel — with exhibitions showcased in suites, on beds and even in bathrooms. Two stories of the hotel were occupied with galleries mostly from the West Coast (the fair organizers, Jaq Chartier and Dirk Park, are both from Seattle) and a smattering from other U.S. cities, like Boston or Dallas, with more peripheral art scenes. The fair guide was a tactile cross between a 'zine and a group of Artforum ads, highlighting the strange middle ground occupied by the fair, which was surprisingly busy. In the end, Aqua produced the same dizzying oversaturated sensation as the larger fairs, where all the work blends together in an kaleidoscopic swirl.

The quality of the work was hit or miss and often tongue-in-cheek. Noteworthy was Claire Johnson's series of donuts at the artist-run SOIL gallery. Cheerfully referencing all of pop art with a single sugar-coated swoop, her work sold like, well, hotcakes. Often, Aqua elicited involuntary musings on presentation. Western Projects was an example of how the Aqua gallery used all of its available space, resulting in a haphazard display at once immediate and off-putting, with a piece on the bed and others leaning on the floor or up against walls, salon-style. In contrast with the big fair, where hallowed objects are surrounded by walking tours and *catalogues raisonnes* proudly displaying their provenances, the work at Aqua was more accessible, and the presentation thick, immediate and intimate. The public at Aqua and other smaller rule-breaking fairs like Pool were cheating on the protocol of the big fair, sidestepping the trappings of establishment yet still participating in all the brouhaha. This alternative experience was based more on necessity than concept, as funds are a little tighter down the totem pole. But the cliché that says necessity is the mother of invention rang true because, in the end, this satellite fair held its own. Visit AquaArtMiami.com.

Aqua courtyard

Aqua photographs by **ADAM L. WEINTRAUB.** *Artists include (from left to right) Jo Jackson, Andrew Jeffrey Wright, Tauba Auerbach, Ed Templeton, Chris Johanson & Jo Jackson, Jung Hong, Neck Face, Date Farmers and Megan Whitmarsh; on the bed: Kimmie Buzzelli, Caroline Hwang and Jenny McKinnens.*