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Critic's Notebook: The L.A. Art Show

January 22, 2010 | 5:15 pm



Except for specialized work like photographs or prints, art fairs seem to do best when at least one of two factors is present: The host city has a modest or meager gallery life, or the display venue is unusual. In both cases an art fair becomes distinctive -- an event with a special quality and style.

Neither factor is in play for the [Fine Art Dealers Assn. 15th Annual Los Angeles Art Show](#), which is about halfway through its four-day run at the cavernous L.A. Convention Center. Toss in a tough economy and abysmal weather, and the

moderate crowds I encountered in a few hours at the fair on Friday are no surprise.

The L.A. Art Show is hosting about 90 galleries, plus a dozen that specialize in fine art prints. There are also some curated shows -- graduate students from area art schools, for example, or a citywide documentary photography display on video monitors, sponsored by a local foundation.

The main show includes an abundance of traditionalist dealers, who sell plein-air landscapes and genre paintings, such as the sentimentalist picture of a Millet-style peasant girl by 19th century Philadelphia painter Daniel Ridgway Knight (at Rehs Galleries). There are also the expected gimmicks -- gigantic celebrity portraits made up of tiny pictures, such as one of Andy Warhol composed from a grid of thousands of little Mao Tse-Tungs (ChinaSquare Gallery).

Generally, the quality at the fair is disappointingly low. But if you poke around you can find some things to like. Here are a few that caught my eye:

A mustard-colored 1968 Minimalist abstraction by Robert Mangold is painted on Masonite, its quarter-circle subdivided into triangular shapes. Vivid physicality marvelously contradicts the work's strange, tertiary color. (Gana Art) Meeson Pae Yang has suspended a galaxy of moss-covered spheres, perhaps 80 or 100, each one dangling a delicate watering system of plastic tubing and little globes. It's Pandora indoors. (Gallery 825)

Uruguay is the "guest country" highlighted at the fair. "Dusk," a looped video projection by Pablo Uribe, focuses on a nattily dressed, middle-aged man



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on a darkened stage executing a series of exotic bird calls and animal sounds. Whether or not they are authentic is hard to say -- until you realize that the queer music he is making is plenty real enough. (Uribe represented Uruguay at last year's Venice Biennale.)

Charlotte Park (b. 1918), a little-known Abstract Expressionist painter from New York, has been enjoying a resurgence of interest in her works of the 1940s, '50s and '60s. A large selection of muscular, often chromatically brilliant paintings on canvas and paper show why. (Spanierman Modern)

The undated "Clivia," probably from the 1930s, by Henrietta Shore (1880 - 1963) shows the stem, leaves and flowering pink blossoms isolated against an empty field of color, crisply painted and severed from any context other than art. Shore's best paintings strip floral painting from its Romantic moorings, injecting it with a Modernist clarity associated with her friend and fellow artist, photographer Edward Weston. (Redfern Gallery)

The Los Angeles Art Show continues at the Convention Center through Sunday. A full list of participating galleries is [here](#).

-- Christopher Knight

Photos: Meeson Pae Yang, "Dispersion" (2009) and Pablo Uribe, "Dusk" (2008); Credit: Christopher Knight/Los Angeles Times

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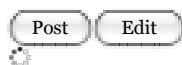
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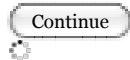
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