

NW SATURDAY

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STEVE RINGMAN / SEATTLE TIMES

Ian Ingram's painting "Evidence" at the space of West Hollywood, Calif.'s 101/Exhibit gallery at the Seattle Art Fair on Friday.

Shattered glass, happy gallerists at Seattle Art Fair, Day 1

By MICHAEL UPCHURCH
Special to The Seattle Times

Plenty of hobbing and copious amounts of nobbing commenced the minute the Seattle Art Fair opened at 11 a.m. Friday. As the crowds flowed in, CenturyLink Field Events Center grew as busy as any museum blockbuster.

Gallerists greeted collectors. Friends greeted friends. And art-lovers repeatedly were stopped in their tracks by works that were either knockouts or head-scratchers. (If you've seen one gaudy anime-inspired painting, frankly, you've seen them all.)

The crowd was mostly Seattle-casual, with a few willowy, exotically dressed creatures looking as if they'd just sauntered down from some exalted aesthetics-sphere.

Seattle's Greg Kucera Gallery was back for its second year, and Kucera was enthusiasm personi-

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fied: "Opening night last night was just gangbuster business for us. We sold a dozen works of art, all by local artists." Buyers were both local and from out of state.

This year's fair, he added, is 20 percent bigger than last year's. "I think the quality is better too." (The fair hosted a benefit for Seattle Art Museum on Thursday evening, and then the doors opened for three hours to the public; 4,000 attended, according to fair organizers.)

The only conspicuous non-returnee, Kucera shrugged, was New York's Gagosian Gallery. But other major NYC galleries, including Pace Gallery and Paul Kasmin Gallery, are back with a vengeance.

Work by artists of international renown popped up everywhere. From booth to booth, you could see paintings by David Hockney, silk-screens by Andy Warhol and holograms by James Turrell (luminous blades of light projecting from a picture frame).

Andrew F. Fabricant of Chicago's Richard Gray Gallery noted it's his gallery's first year here.

"It's an experiment, to a degree," he said. "August is sort of down time for us ... and it's prime time here, so



STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Claire Oliver of the Claire Oliver Gallery in New York with artist Beth Lipman's installation "Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads" at Seattle Art Fair.

we thought this would be an opportunity to at least explore. Also, it gave us an opportunity to reconnect with so many people that we know here."

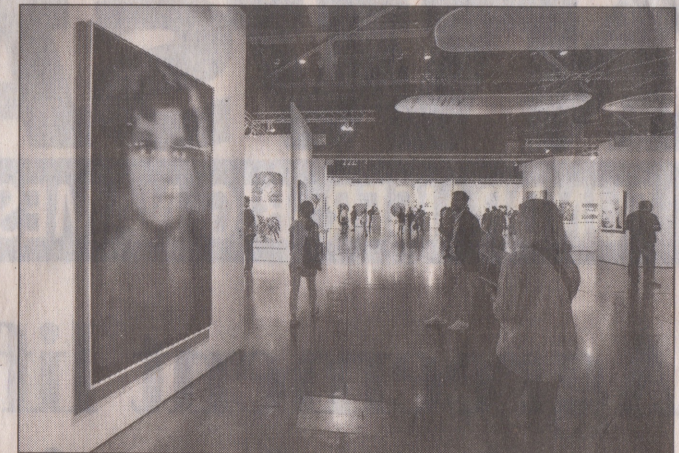
That includes Eastside collector Barney Ebsworth, who donated Jaume Plensa's "Echo" to the Seattle Art Museum a few years ago. (Fabricant has some gorgeous Plensa sculptures for sale that would actually fit in your living room.)

Another newcomer, New York's Claire Oliver Gallery, was drawn by two factors: "We have a big fan base, a big collector base, here — and they all encouraged us to come. ... We also want to support the fair organizer [Max Fishko] who does other fairs. He's fantastic and easy to work with."

One of Oliver's installations — Beth Lipman's spectacular "Laid (Time-) Table with Cycads" — definitely

needed friendly local cooperation to be practicable. It's a tabletop phantasmagoria of shattered crystal that, after being packed into 138 boxes, was reassembled by the artist herself. Even with a "road map" of what goes where, Oliver said, it takes Lipman three days to reconstruct it.

London's Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery was enjoying a major sales surge as I dropped by, with Phil Shaw's digitally created photo-



STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

A wet-plate collodion photographic print by Halim Al Karim at the space of Robischon Art Gallery in Denver at the Seattle Art Fair.

“This is the fair where I find the people so engaged, and with a genuine enjoyment of art, not wandering around going, ‘Oh, I bought one of these last year — it’s gone up in value,’ etc.”

REBECCA HOSSACK
Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery

graphs of deeply eccentric bookcases being a hot item. "It's our second time at the fair," said Hossack, who does 22 art fairs a year. "We absolutely adore it. ... This is the fair where I find the people so engaged, and with a genuine enjoyment of art, not wandering around going, 'Oh, I bought one of these last year — it's gone up in value,' etc."

IF YOU GO

Seattle Art Fair

11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, noon-6 p.m. Sunday, WaMu Theater, 800 Occidental Ave. S., Seattle; \$20-\$50 (seattleartfair.com).

Half the fun is eavesdropping on conversations — from the older visitor stoutly declaring her local art allegiances ("I still like Northwest a lot better than anything else") to the kid running down the aisle shouting, "I want to buy it! I want to buy it!"

The fair continues through Sunday.

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