

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



MIAMI ART FAIRS 2011

**REBEKAH DRYSDALE AND CARMEN WINANT
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The December art fairs in Miami are always a blurred craze of viewing art and people, fascinating and often horrifying. This year, as in years past, DailyServing sent a few writers to Miami to look for the most interesting projects among the fairs, local galleries, and outdoor exhibitions and events. We came back with a mix of work that includes the recent wave of mirror art, design projects from Design Miami, and perhaps some of the more interesting painting to grace the public walls of Wynwood. While nothing can give you a comprehensive view of the Miami art fairs – not even attending the exhibitions – DailyServing contributors Rebekah Drysdale and Carmen Winant share their opinions of a handful of the highlights from 2011.

By Rebekah Drysdale:

At the entry of the Design Miami tent, an impromptu atelier welcomed visitors to the installation performance created by Elisa Strozyk and Sebastian Neeb. Fendi, the Italian luxury fashion house, provided the opportunity for these artists to showcase their work. Fendi also provided the leather that was woven into the 18th century furniture on display.

The simple workspace was surrounded by decorative objects and antique furnishings which the artists had modified using the materials at hand. Strozyk's sewing machine seemed to be a very early model, reinforcing an awareness of the historic continuity of methods, techniques, and materials in noble crafts. Strozyk and Neeb's collaboration achieved an elegant, subtle exhibit.

Retna's distinct, over-sized calligraphy graced numerous surfaces throughout Miami. His mural at Wynwood Walls was poignant and precise. The L.A. artist (real name Marquis Lewis) began painting murals in the mid-1990s and has since had many highly acclaimed gallery exhibitions, most notably his 2010 exhibition at New Image Art.

Visually influenced by writing from around the world, Retna invented his own alphabet. His calligraphy recalls Old English and Arabic scripts, drawn with an oversized brush as if with a nib. The artist encourages viewers to interpret their meaning and clarified in a recent interview, "They all say something." Retna's installations transcend the street artist vs. gallery exhibition debate. His imagery and symbolism are eloquent and exacting.

By Carmen Winant:

Across the fairs — though predominantly at Basel and Nada — mirror art loomed large. From **Brock Enright** at Kate Werble Gallery, Heather Rowe at D'amelio Terras, Douglas Gordon at Dvir Gallery, and Sam Durant at Sadie Coles...the list goes on and on. I spoke to one gallerist who believed that mirror art was so popular this year because artist finally caught on that collectors just want to see *themselves* reflected back. I'm not sure if she was kidding or not, but the speculation is telling. If that is the case, what they saw reflected was strange and fragmented; the mirrors tended to be scratched, burned, painted over, rubbed and otherwise sanded away, obfuscating — and perhaps refusing — a desperate view back onto the spectacle around them.

San Francisco's Silverman Gallery gallery took an unconventional route this year with their booth featuring the work of Hugh Scott-Douglass, Susanne M. Winterling and Christopher Badger. The booth was quiet and strong, not overcrowded. Good thing, because the series of large, blue abstract cyanotypes on muslin, and, elsewhere, delicate cutaways made directly in raw, stretched canvas required some contemplative space. I stayed in the booth for some time, and found the

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work to be delicately mesmeric, undulating before my eyes.

The entire booth was also considered — a welcome trend, catching on with some galleries this year — as Silverman considered not only the work on the walls, but the ground beneath our feet. The booth's floor was covered in neat, slightly foamy, white tiles to walk upon. It was three sides of the perfect white cube, and the effect made the booth hard to walk by.

Did you know that you can smoke in bars in Florida? That part was not a highlight, and my eyes are still burning from the smoky experience. However, converging in one place with so many friends (and friends of friends) from near and far was exciting, and could only happen in a place, and event, like this. The drinks were overpriced, the music was pretty bad, and there actually was sand on the floor. But somehow, it was all perfectly fitting with the aesthetic hedonism down here, the total playful, if expensive, abandon of that this place offers its annual visitors. This is my second year in a row here. I loved it, and I think I'm never coming back.

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