

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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ARTINFO

**WELCOME TO ART COUNTRY: NADA HUDSON REPLANTED THE DOWNTOWN SCENE
UPSTATE FOR A BUCOLIC NON-ART-FAIR ART FAIR**

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HUDSON, New York— Route 9, which leads to the town of Hudson in upstate New York, meanders lazily past rolling cornfields, gaping vistas of distant mountains, and the occasional brown-cow-studded hilltop right out of Aelbert Cuyp. The drive acted as a bravura piece of scene-setting for NADA Hudson, the impromptu-feeling exhibition of art and installations from members of the New Art Dealers Alliance. The group, of course, is best known for its annual fair during Art Basel Miami Beach. Its member galleries — 51 of which were represented in the Hudson show — represent a large and voguish chunk of the emerging art world.

Rusticity is not the first thing that springs to mind when contemplating these galleries, among them such hip New York stalwarts as CANADA, Zach Feuer, Nicelle Beauchene, and Taxter + Spengemann. This contrast, indeed, was part of the show's allure. The two-day event, taking place in an expansive rehabilitated factory, was like a Fresh Air Fund retreat for the tattooed downtown art crowd.

That 12,000-square-foot factory, it might be mentioned, is owned by a small consortium of artists including Melissa Auf der Maur and William Stone, who is represented by James Fuentes Gallery (a participant in the exhibition). Conveniently accessible from New York City by an Amtrack line, Hudson has become a magnet for artists in recent years — Marina Abramovic is opening an art center there, and rising art stars like Xaviera Simmons have been holing up in the town's studio-ready vacant buildings. It seems that the new space is part of a larger back-to-the-land impetus on the part of artists lately. (Can a return of *plein air* painting be far behind?)

As for the show itself, it was an assemblage of the kind of rough-hewn, low-fi, aggressively deskilled fare one tends to encounter below 14th Street these days. A room of funky music-playing plants by artist Jim Krewson had a pleasant stoner vibe, and Valerie Hegarty contributed a messy smashed-watermelon sculpture (along with a few fake pigeons). There was also a group of hollow bat head sculptures by Kahn & Selesnick; peer through their eyes and you could see their glittering crystal "dreams" within. These were among the more memorable works on view. The overall display strategy, meanwhile, seemed to take cues from Independent, Elizabeth Dee's revolutionary open-plan non-art-fair art fair.

Speaking of which, NADA Hudson was an art fair? While it wasn't billed as such ("NADA Hudson is not an art fair, but rather a site-specific project"), clearly commerce was taking place on the floor, with some exhibitors putting price lists up on their walls. Perhaps not all gallerists got the memo? "It's my first art fair," Christopher Rawson of Brooklyn's Rawson Projects said proudly. Several dealers — the intrepid Rachel Uffner among them — walked away from the weekend with tidy sales under their belts.

Much of the crowd filling the event, however, was up there for fun, pure and simple. In that spirit, a "bounce castle" was erected outside the main event space, though it kept deflating (appropriately enough, since the blow-up attraction was sponsored by The Hole gallery). Visitors lounged on beach chairs in the sun — or paid \$35 for entree to the exclusive "Dynasty VIP" lounge, which was in fact a stretch Escalade limo parked out front, stocked with a full bar. The promotional video that artists **Rancourt/Yatsuk** made for this "lounge," which played on a loop inside, was spoof perfection. Even when in the countryside, it seems, the New York art world keeps its irony parked just outside the door.

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