

Art Chicago 2002

CHARMAINE PICARD

Though predictions were uncertain for Art Chicago, now in its 10th year, the fair seems to have weathered the competition. Many of the top name New York galleries decided not to attend, yet their absence created space for alternative and lesser known exhibitors establishing a more international presence that included galleries from Moscow, Seoul, Toulouse, Ibiza, Davos, Toronto, and Hong Kong. A section called the "International Invitational" subsidized younger, cutting-edge galleries adding to the more diversified environment. In all, over 200 exhibitors presented artwork by some 2,500 artists—maintaining Art Chicago's claim as the largest art fair in the United States.

This year's fair was complimented by the inclusion of "Metropolis", a contemporary art exhibition curated by Peter Doroshenko exploring the idea of urban diasporic communities. The curatorial addition was an important supplement to the more commercial orientation of the exposition presenting artwork by twenty artists including Adel Abdessemed [Algeria], Sharon Balaban [Israel], Fernando Palomar [Mexico] and Priscilla Monge [Costa Rica]. Worthy of mention was Aaron Salabarrías Valle's installation incorporating inflatable wading pools and pink plastic flowers suggestive of the carefree activities of childhood and the exchange of his tropical Caribbean environment for the synthetic world of plastic consumer goods.

Another notable attraction was the special projects program, now in its second year. Nineteen gallery-sponsored installations were selected by a jury for the display of sculpture, video, and electronic media. Noteworthy spaces included Wu Shan Zhuan's installation *Today No Water, the Power of Ignorance*, a work which covers the walls and floor with political slogans and advertising logos demonstrating the contradictory impulses that exist within China today. Another highlight was a mural by Olga Chernysheva who created a frieze-like photomontage of various hand-woven rugs with traditional designs from Russia and the region. The richly colored mosaic of deep reds and burgundies wrapped around the walls, generating a warm and cocoon-like environment based on age-old customs and ethnic identities.

Video and installation art were mainly represented in the "Metropolis" exhibition and the project spaces while galleries concentrated on the exhibition of painting, photography and works on paper. Buenos Aires' gallery Dabbah Torrejón was one of this year's "International Invitational" recipients, bringing their talented roster of artists to Art Chicago for the first time. Trained as an architect, Dino Bruzzone photographically portrays constructed spaces using small-scale architectural models that simulate historic or existing sites. His series, *Parque de Diversiones* recreates *Itaipark*—a place of pleasure and memory that was once located in downtown Buenos Aires near the Retiro. Bruzzone's replicas are emptied of the human presence, creating an eerie and quiet environment imbued with a sense of playfulness and a wistful feeling of nostalgia. Painting was represented at the gallery by Manuel Esnoz who borrows the look of digital technology to create opaque canvases of pixelated color and light. More abstracted imagery was presented by Lucio Dorr whose elegant linear patterns on shaped glass form geometric volumes in space.

Another newcomer to the fair was Moniquemeloche Gallery presenting an interesting array of works by Laura

Aaron Salabarrías. *Heaven on Earth*, 1999. Mixed media installation. Variable dimensions. Galeria Jacob Karpio.



Artur Omar. From the series *Anthropology of a Glorious Face (O Apocalipse num Camaleão)*, 1998. Digital photography. Galeria Nara Roesler.



Ana Fabry. *The Transformed Little Branch*, 2000. Mixed media on canvas. 71 x 59 in. (180 x 150 cm.). Praxis International Art.



José Chao es el mejor artista del mundo

Fernando Palomar. *Rhodes*, 2000. Vinyl paint on wall. Variable dimensions.
Galería Enrique Guerrero.

Mosquera. Mosquera's paintings recreate the cool, aloof and often detached behavior of fashionable art world society. Working from photographs of parties and gallery openings, Mosquera isolates her characters from recognizable surroundings, inserting them into ambiguous space using broad areas of color and stylized designs. By isolating her figures she shrewdly focuses viewer's attention on behavior, body language, gestures, and dress. Mosquera's youthful pop culture sensibility, stylistically reminiscent of Alex Katz, provides a fresh approach to self-reflexivity in the art world, while avoiding the harsh cynicism often found in more conceptual and direct lines of attack.

Ecstasy was the theme of photographs by Brazilian photographer and experimental filmmaker Artur Omar at Nara Roesler Gallery. In his series, *Antropología da Face Gloriosa*, Omar obsessively photographed expressions of delirium, frenzy and elation, capturing a compendium of Brazilian faces experiencing some form of personal inspiration or transcendence. Also on view at the gallery were sculptural works by Artur Lescher. Better known for his large-scale works, Lescher's *Eliptica*—a beautiful and elegant piece that was installed on the gallery floor—had all of the formal purity of the larger works presented on a more intimate and refined scale.

Semi-autobiographical artworks were exhibited by artists Amparo Sard [Galería Ferrán Cano], Ana Fabry

Amparo Sard. *Dress*, from the series *Molecular Imbalance*, 2000. Dress with four sleeves made with cotton fabric and needles, photocopy with pin holes. Dress: 33 1/4 x 23 1/2 x 4 in. (86 x 60 x 10 cm.). Photocopy: 71 x 107 1/2 in. (28 x 43 cm.). Galería Ferrán Cano.



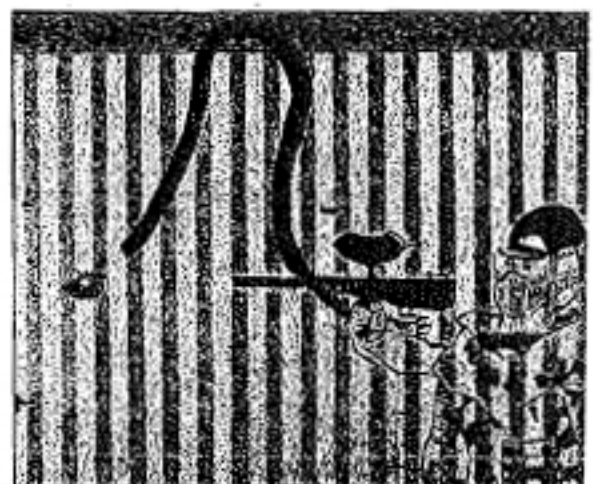
Dino Bruzone. *Itaipark*, 2001. C-print.
47 1/2 x 65 in. (120.5 x 167.5 cm.). Dabbah Torrejón.

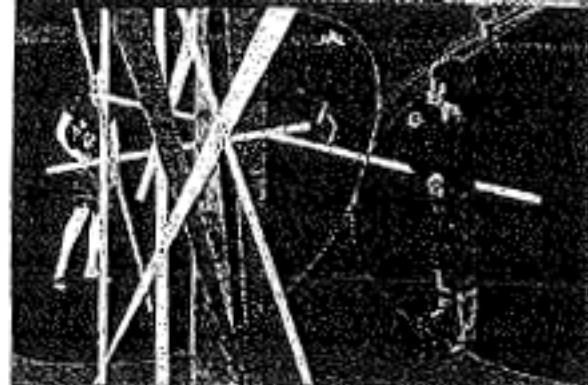
[Praxis International Art], and Laura Kina [Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts]. Sard's installation, *Dress*, from her *Molecular Imbalance* series displays a garment with four sleeves alongside photocopied drawings of arms perforated with countless pin holes producing a symbolic image of pain. The hybrid article of clothing is suggestive of issues surrounding gender identity, and according to Sard represents the struggles she has to consolidate different facets of her own personality within the confines of her body.

Equally imaginative were Ana Fabry's paintings of childhood and the ordinary experiences of domestic life in Argentina. Her cracked, weathered surfaces humorously reflect both the disappointments of life as well as more hopeful images of psychological liberation. Laura Kina's *Paintball*, pays homage to her younger brother who as "number two son" has a lower status in the family than the first born child. Kina's work integrates traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e prints and sumi ink paintings with Western abstraction and cartoon imagery in works that explore the weight and inheritance of cultural practice.

Also of interest at this year's fair was computer manipulated imagery by Lluís Barba at Jacob Karpis gallery. In his latest work, *Migration Deportation*, Barba focuses on contemporary politics provocatively depicting Al Qaeda prisoners superimposed upon a dining plate located on the coastline of Cuba. A barcode-

Laura Kina. *Paintball*, 2000. Mixed media on canvas.
70 x 62 in. (177.8 x 157.4 cm.).
Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts.





Laura Mosquera. *There's Something About to Happen Again*, 2001.
Latex, acrylic, enamel and glitter glue on muslin.
2 x 108 in. (5 x 274 cm.). Collection of David Manlow, Chicago.
Courtesy: Montquemelecho Gallery.

Barba's signature emblem representing encoded information—suggests the regulated and systematized control of the movement of people. His enigmatic imagery also implies the methods in which the US attempts to contain the enemy—be they Islamic militants, Cuban Communists, or anyone perceived as a threat. Barba's work looks at the dehumanization and alienation of the individual in contemporary society, and explores the ways in which technology in the hands of the powerful can regulate human interaction.

Conceptual photography by Santiago Sierra and Yoshua Okón was on view at Galería Enrique Guerrero. Earning a reputation as a bad-boy artist, Sierra's black and white photographs document public interventions testing the limits of human behavior through financial incentives. Among the many extremes of Sierra's activities the artist has secluded an individual for 360 continuous hours at \$10/hr behind a brick wall, and has paid prostitutes to be tattooed creating a straight line across the backs of six women. A more benign intervention consisted of paying a truck driver to block one of Mexico City's busiest thoroughfares for five minutes while Sierra documented the angry reaction to the traffic jam. Sierra's publicly staged works are confrontational and approach the limits of ethical behavior while simultaneously drawing attention to the lengths that people will go for financial compensation in our capital driven societies.

Yoshua Okón's artwork is equally irreverent, yet more lighthearted and humorous in its approach. In his video *Orillese a la orilla*, Okón asked Mexico City policemen to perform staged confrontations between individuals and the police. One such officer twirls his night stick and displays comical feats of machismo, becoming a caricature of himself and ironically allowing his own actions to become the vehicle through which authority is mocked. In another series, *Pelea de gallos*, friends of the artist—young middle-class girls—were asked to utter vulgar profanities and perform obscene gestures. The discrepancy between their educated and privileged position and the string of profanities the girls spew challenges the norms



Olga Chernysheva. *Messenger*, 2001. Color print, Edition 6.
59 x 39 1/2 in. (150 x 100 cm., each). Series of 9 photographs. Kirova Gallery.



Wu Shan Zhuan. *Today No Water, The Power of Ignorance*, 2001.
Mixed media installation. Variable dimensions.
Ethan Cohen Fine Arts.

of polite society and creates the kind of uncomfortable and amusing tension that Okón likes to display.

Although there was a good deal of new and interesting artwork on view, the fair seemed to be somewhat uneven in quality and could have benefited from a bit of pruning—bigger obviously does not always mean better. In spite of this, Art Chicago did profit from the increased number of international art dealers and young galleries—and this is an encouraging sign for the event which will have to create an identifiable niche during the coming year to ward off the competition. In fact, Thomas Blackman Associates themselves plan to open a new fair in Las Vegas later this year in addition to their existing San Francisco fair. Just how many of these events the public, collectors and curators not to mention the marketplace can sustain we will have to wait and see.

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