

ART WORLDS: BUENOS AIRES TO LONDON RETURN

TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 2008

ArteBA: Buenos Aires Contemporary Art Fair

Buenos Aires - Every year Buenos Aires holds its contemporary art fair in La Rural, the new and sprawling conference centre/complex. ArteBA lasts for 5 days (May 29 – June 2), and I went to the opening night party but also returned a couple times to take in the huge amount of work being shown. Opening nights are always difficult to focus on the art when the crowd takes your attention. Add to that many bottles of Chandon and a nasty film of cigarette smoke in the air and you get an environment not conducive to (and perhaps pointless to attempt) concentration.

Nevertheless I did leave that first night feeling overwhelmed by the quantity of the work and underwhelmed by the variety or the impact. However, taking into account that the numbing quantity of works on display might be a drawback of all art fairs (and the nature of the beast), I was certain to return to give the galleries and the work a second chance.

I returned Sunday to crowds that seemed even larger; a testament to the success of the fair. But again, I did feel, while on the whole good, not much of the work really stood out and grabbed me. In an art fair environment, the dealers really have to step it up and provide at least some dramatic impact. For better or for worse, when you're displaying cheek to jowl, it inevitably becomes about image and impact. That said, Appetite Gallery's stand was always busy with its chaotic rec room atmosphere – almost an extension of the San Telmo gallery's physical location. And Del Infinito's display of Alejandra Tavolini's toy stuffed pig (cut in half, a la Damien Hirst) was a small but hilarious piece with affect, and it deserved its attention.



But when one of the most conservative galleries at the fair makes the biggest impact, I think something's gone a bit wrong. Daniel Maman Fine Arts occupied one of the largest stands, but it was their use of that space, their museum quality installation of museum quality art, that was flawless. In particular Juan Batlle Planas' untitled 1963 painting – a serious piece of real estate measuring 16' X 12' – loomed stunningly in the low light.



And painting there was. A lot of painting. In common with a lot of it today, much of the painting favoured subtleties, the small gesture. And that works really well when you stumble off a busy street into a quiet gallery. But an art fair environment just isn't conducive to showing that kind of work. There were exceptions: testament to their beauty, Remo Bianchedi's tiny paintings on wood grabbed me from the aisle and drew me into Galeria Jacques Martinez's stand. I'll return to their gallery on Avenida de Mayo to look at his work more.



There was some photography, but not as much as I'd hoped for. Not much explored new territory and not much had a really strong impact. But there were some videos and installations that grabbed me more, interestingly all part of the curated sections. I'll detail those in the next post.

Nathan Tichenor

POSTED BY NATHAN TICHENOR & LIZ BRUCHET AT 8:46 PM

LABELS: ARTEBA, BATLLE PLANAS, BIANCHEDI, TAVOLINI

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WHO WE ARE

NATHAN TICHENOR & LIZ BRUCHET

LIZ BRUCHET is an independent Curator living in London. She has an MFA in Curatorial Studies from the University of British Columbia. NATHAN TICHENOR is a collector exploring Buenos Aires and its art world. He has a BA in Art History from the University of British Columbia. Two friends DIALOGUE between two art worlds as Liz and Nathan report back and forth what art each is discovering.

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