

CONCEPTUAL FINE ARTS

BACK

Six comforting steps to cover the London contemporary art week

by Stefano Pirovano - October 8, 2016



Anthea Papadopoulos, at Supportico Lopez.

Yesterday we heard a couple of Swiss collectors complaining about the fact the Regent's park's art fair had released too many vip cards this year, and that the so called "first choice" is no longer an opportunity for professional collectors to buy the best pieces of art at the fair. But if that was intended to help the market with more potential buyers we would say the Frieze's team was definitely right this time. Official data is not available yet, but our feeling is that contemporary dealers are doing pretty well and despite the bitterness that the Brexit may have left behind, European collectors are happily spending their money in London, also for the pound has become relatively more

convenient for them. The City is still very expensive, but what psychologists call “optimism bias” is most likely making us thinking that after all it is less expensive than past years. So people have started buying again, perhaps not looking at contemporary art as a profitable short-term investment, but possibly following more economically healthy tendencies and needs.

Unfortunately this is not valid also for antiques. The promising flirtation between contemporary art and fine arts that has been taking place at Frieze Masters since day first has clearly come to a deadlock. At the point where we are now, to hang on the same wall a primitive painter and a modern master is no longer enough, and the lack of top galleries exhibiting classic, Medieval, Renaissance or tribal art shouldn't be underestimated. Started three years ago as a potential competitor of armoured institutions such as Art Basel, Tefaf or Parisian Biennale des Antiquaires, Frieze Masters is still underway to find its own identity, despite the three monumental Picasso's on sale at Nahmad gallery or the outstanding Francis Bacon's Man in Blue VII (1954) at Robilant + Voena stand. And also despite Christie's and Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary art evening sales going beyond the expectations. In this case to welcome more visitors doesn't seem to be a winning option to help the dealers indeed.

Following these thoughts, we focused on emerging artists and did our best to select an handy number of names and works among the many talented artists and desirable pieces presented in London this week. Starting with the “green” part of the main section we had a very good impression while looking at the cov

section, we had a very good impression while looking at the cosy, small environment dedicated by Supportico Lopez to Greek artist **Athena Papadopoulos** - the booth's two furry chairs and the brass side table are from the artist's studio. And we felt very engaged also while visiting Gregor Steiger's solo presentation of British artist **Rachal Bradley**, whose pale green moulds randomly placed on the stand floor address the always problematic relationship between our male side and female one. She is exhibiting two further pieces at the Sunday Art Fair (TG gallery, Nottingham). The one titled Simple Life is made by hessian jute and epoxy resin, and is extremely well executed - the smooth surface literally speaks about what the title is only suggesting. Whether you like songs in minor key or not, this piece is a convincing invitation to enquire about the artist.

If, on the contrary, you are into the meditative pieces, you should stop by at Barbara Wien booth and dedicate a few minutes to the simple brass frame by **Nina Canell** exhibited here. Compared to the new complex sound pieces the artist is currently presenting at the elegant Ms. Wien's gallery in Berlin, it may seem a quite easy minor piece. But the mesmerizing sweetness of her poetry is here perfectly represented by the delicate fingerprints left by the artist on the surface while treating the metal with fire; and, did you know she will represent Sweden at the next Venice Biennial?

Both the two pieces by **Kasper Bosmans** at Marc Foxx Gallery have been sold during the opening to a Brussels-based collector. She may like to know that one them, the small painting titled Legend (Effort), is referred to the recent Sol Lewitt exhibition at the SMAK Ghent and was executed as a contribution to our "At

the show with the artist” section.

One of the other two artists that we would like to recommend is **Neil Raitt**, who is having a solo presentation at Sunday, with Anat Ebgi gallery. A fake palm, a deck-chair chair, a carpet of real sand and a small cabin bearing paintings. Or, to put it in other words, irony may win over prejudice. As his small format painting proves, there are many things still to be said about his interpretation of the Primitive Figural number eight: repetition, rhythm and orderliness (thanks to Professor Ramachandran).

The last artist we would mention is to be found at 1:54 Contemporary African Art fair at the Somerset House. His name is **Leikun Nahusenay** and he is represented by Addis Fine Arts, a gallery based in Nairobi that last year was included in the pivotal section dedicated by the Armory Show to contemporary art from Africa and the African diaspora. Like Nigerian painter **Njideka Akunyili Crosby**, who is currently having a fantastic solo show at Victoria Miro, he is the evidence that figurative painting may have found in the Continent some new virgin sources, at least with regards to the visual outcome of the work - please note that both Corby and Nahusenay work on paper. It may be that on another side, that of the related information (once called the content), these works are not as sophisticated as those by contemporary masters such as Freud, Bacon, and Hockney, or by another under-40 very talented artist such as **Sanya Kantarovsky** - who is having a convincing solo show at Stewart Shave Modern Art. But the works by virtuoso artists such as Crosby and Nahusenay are a signal that the time for revival of the figurative art announced at the end of 2015 may finally have come, under the influence of

the emerging Continent.

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