

Art Fairs

At Untitled San Francisco, Dealers Chase Tech Money While Collectors Remain Circumspect

Photography is the medium of choice for collectors at the fair's third annual outing.

Sarah Cascone, January 18, 2019

Along the Embarcadero, overlooking the bay, the UNTITLED San Francisco fair has settled into its third home in as many years: Pier 35, a cruise ship terminal with a decidedly industrial chic vibe. No fewer than 55 dealers from 16 cities have made the trip, hoping to lure in wealthy tech elite and other local collectors.

Thursday's opening followed on the heels of [the gala opening at FOG Design+Art](#), now its sixth year. The two fairs "wanted to work together to create more of an art-fair week for San Francisco," UNTITLED's director Manuela Mozo told artnet News.



Jasper de Beijer, *12-26-2004 (from Mr. Knight's World Band Receiver)* (2014). Photo courtesy of Asya Geisberg Gallery.

If a fair's third outing is a make-or-break moment, Mozo is nothing but confident that UNTITLED, San Francisco, will succeed. "There's been a substantial uptick for registration and ticket sales," she said. "We've had overwhelming support from the Bay Area."

Photography in Focus

Trends can be hard to spot at art fairs, but there were a number of booths highlighting photography. “The history of collecting in San Francisco is traditionally more geared toward photography,” noted the Seattle-based dealer Mariane Ibrahim, who was showing exclusively photos by Ayana V. Jackson.

Jasper de Beijer’s photographs are the only record of his carefully constructed architectural models, which are about two-thirds the size of the final, larger-than-life images.

New York’s Asya Geisberg Gallery had already sold one of his works for \$10,000. “Jasper is actually the only photographer we have in our program at the moment,” said gallery manager Hanna Fruchtenicht, citing the medium’s popularity among the local collecting community.

A Good Bet?

Despite a great deal of optimism among dealers at both fairs, not everyone is convinced that San Francisco art fairs can be money-makers for galleries. One Bay Area dealer who has shown with UNTITLED in Miami Beach—reliably selling out the gallery’s booth—but has yet to commit to showing in their hometown, told artnet News that they weren’t sure they could sell enough in San Francisco to cover the cost of the booth.

“It is hard to invest the same amount in this city,” the dealer explained. “You have more enthusiasm than anywhere here, but they are a reasonable people. They’re not caught up in the hype that you see in New York and LA and of course Miami. They take their time, and the sale doesn’t necessarily happen.”

But if the market hasn’t totally caught fire, it is certainly on its way.

“Is this becoming a destination art city? Maybe,” said Robin Wright during a VIP tour of her art-filled San Francisco home. A member of the board of trustees at SFMOMA, she is also showing at UNTITLED’s new art book publishers section with RITE Editions. “The art collectors in San Francisco can sustain fairs in a way that they haven’t in the past.”

UNTITLED, San Francisco, is on view at Pier 35, 1454 the Embarcadero, San Francisco, January 17–20, 2019.