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NOTED AT THE ARMORY



Jeremy Blake's *Sodium Fox*, on view at Honor Fraser

Artist: Jeremy Blake
Gallery: Honor Fraser
Work: *Sodium Fox*

Like many galleries at the Armory Show this year, the Los Angeles gallery Honor Fraser devoted itself to a single artist, in this case a series of ravishing works by the late digital video artist Jeremy Blake (who tragically committed suicide in 2007). In addition to selections from Blake's "Winchester Mystery House" suite of videos, the gallery also featured a lovely photo frieze, *Every Hallucination on the Sunset Strip*, an homage to Ed Ruscha that points to the affinity between Blake's narcotic style and the dean of L.A. Pop's dark sense of irony. But the most ravishing work on view is certainly *Sodium Fox*, a video exploration of occult themes. It's \$55,000 in an edition of six.



Nancy Chunn
Chicken Little and the Garden of Fear
2005
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

Artist: Nancy Chunn
Gallery: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts
Work: "Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear" (2004-present)

Nancy Chunn's cartoon paintings suggest a mashup of Hunter S. Thompson and Hanna Barbara. Six wall-filling painted "scenes," each composed of multiple, brightly colored canvases, illustrate the voyage of "Chicken Little" who, in this version of her biography, is bonked on the head with a TV and haunted by specters of various cartoons representing the turbulence of post-9/11 America ("Scene III" from the proposed 11-part cycle has already been sold and is not on view). As a bonus, Chunn herself is on hand at the booth, and her personal tour of "Chicken Little and the Culture of Fear" is an experience you will not soon forget.



Works from Kota Ezawa's "Odessa Staircase Redux" (2009) at Murray Guy

Artist: Kota Ezawa
Gallery: Murray Guy
Work: *Odessa Steps Redux* (2009)

An inspiration from everyone from Francis Bacon to Roland Barthes, and referenced in movies from *The Untouchables* to *The Naked Gun 33-and-1/3rd: The Smell of Fear*, the wrenching "Odessa Steps" scene from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* has been analyzed from pretty much every angle imaginable. German-born artist Kota Ezawa, known for his digital animation of the O.J. Simpson trial, amazingly finds another way to approach it, turning it into a series of precise ink drawings, each isolating the first frame after every cut from the storied sequence. They are \$1,600 each.



Susan Hefuna
4 Women, 4 Views
2001
Galerie Grita Insam

Artist: Susan Hefuna
Gallery: Galerie Grita Insam
Work: *4 Women, 4 Views* (2001)

Germany-based Egyptian artist Susan Hefuna is known for works in a variety of media commenting on Egyptian culture, from traditional wooden screens manufactured so that they proclaim English words, to delicate drawings that resemble floor plans (some of which were featured in the 2009 Venice Biennale). Galerie Grita Insam offers a variety of pieces by Hefuna, the most alluring of which are large self-portraits like *4 Women, 4 Views*, taken with a pinhole camera, giving the impression that the artist remembering herself as part of another time and place.



Zilvinas Kempinas' *Serpentine* (2010) at Yvon Lambert

Artist: Zilvinas Kempinas
Gallery: Yvon Lambert
Work: *Serpentine* (2010)

Definitely worth a look is the new piece by the Lithuanian artist Zilvinas Kempinas at Yvon Lambert. The concept is pretty simple, employing the artist's customary medium of magnetic tape and air: A fan is set up to blow into a corner of the booth, and a series of delicate ribbons dance in place, suspended in the air column. The effect, as usual, is both disarmingly straight-forward and amazing.



Installation view of Philip-Lorca deCorcia's "100 Polaroids" at David Zwirner booth

Artist: Philip-Lorca diCorcia
Gallery: David Zwirner
Work: "100 Polaroids"

In still another one-person show at the fair, contemporary art photography maestro Philip-Lorca diCorcia has taken over the entire David Zwirner gallery booth. And, while some of his huge prints of pole-dancers and street scenes are highlighted on the stand's exterior walls, the main space has been dedicated to a display of 100 Polaroids taken as studies for his various series, a format that gives surprising intimacy to work by an artist known for cinematic splash. Priced at \$4,000 each, the Polaroids were going "like hotcakes" on Wednesday, according to the gallery's Ben Thornborough.



Photo from Chris Marker's "The Koreans," at Peter Blum

Artist: Chris Marker
Gallery: Peter Blum
Work: "The Koreans"

Peter Blum is featuring an amazing series of still photos from French filmmaker Chris Marker, of *La Jette* and *The Case of the Grinning Cat* fame. All of them, currently priced at \$2,800, were taken during a trip to North Korea in the '50s, and published as a book in 1959. Marker has written that the original work was rejected by both North and South Korea, as not Communist enough for the North, and not anti-Communist enough for the South. Regardless, the photos all have the lyrical, dream-like lucidity for which Marker is known, colored today by the tragedy of history. They are in an edition of three, with entire set of the first edition already sold.



Fernando Mastrangelo
LA SalvaMara (smile now, cry later)
2009
Mendes Wood

Artist: Fernando Mastrangelo
Gallery: Mendes Wood
Work: *LA SalvaMara (smile now, cry later)* (2009)

Here's an artist to watch, if only because he has an eye for the wicked, pokerfaced bad-boy gestures beloved of Pinaults and Joannous. Last year at Volta, he titillated with a George Segal-esque sculpture that claimed to be made of packed cocaine. This year, at the Armory, he is back with a series of large black tablets depicting tattoos from El Salvador's MS13 gang. They are actually quite nice to look at close up, carved in relief and shading from gray to charred black -- and then you realize that the medium is meant to be human ash, sent to the artist by family members of MS13 victims. Yours for \$16,000.



Artist John Reynolds with his work
1,001 Nights, at Starkwhite gallery

Artist: John Reynolds
Gallery: Starkwhite
Work: *1,001 Nights*

For Auckland's Starkwhite gallery New Zealand artist John Reynolds has assembled something that looks like a thin black staircase, tiled on each side with 4 x 4 in. canvases, arranged so that one side of the structure features text snippets from the *1,001 Nights* of Shahrazad, and the other side features quotes from *Independent* journalist Robert Fisk's anti-imperialist tome *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East*. The installation, according to Reynolds, was inspired by the combination of showing in New York and New Zealand's commitment of troops to Afghanistan. Individual works are just \$150 -- though the artist said that a purchaser of the whole staircase could probably get a volume discount.



Work by Xanti Schawinsky at Broadway
1602 Gallery

Artist: Xanti Schawinsky
Gallery: Broadway 1602
Work: "Faces" series

Amazing works by underappreciated modernist Xanti Schawinsky, at Broadway 1602 Gallery. Schawinsky was veteran of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, and a long-time chess partner of Marcel Duchamp -- you just do not get avant-garde credentials better than that! Among other things, Broadway 1602 is offering a series of pencil drawings from Schawinsky's 1940s-era "Faces" series, deftly conjuring a human visage from architectural fragments. Think Picabia-meets-Archimboldo. They are \$20,000.



Malick Sidibé

Ms. Bat et sa Famille

1976

Galeria Oliva Arauna

Artist: Malick Sidibé

Gallery: Galeria Oliva Arauna

Work: *Ms. Bat et sa Famille* (1976)

Malian photographer Malick Sidibé (b. 1936) is more popular than ever these days, having received a slew of lifetime achievement awards, including the Golden Lion at Robert Storr's Venice Biennale in 2007. And indeed, there is something incredibly fresh about his black-and-white portraits of middle-class life in Bamako in the '60s and '70s. The new prints of his old negatives at Madrid's Oliva Arauna gallery are reasonably priced at \$3,000. They are "not an edition," according to the gallery, since it is not known how many examples of each image exist -- but the works are freshly signed and dated by the photographer.



Artist Michael Vasquez with his painting
The High Flag Post, at Fredric Snitzer

Artist: Michael Vasquez

Gallery: Fredric Snitzer

Work: *The High Flag Post* (2010)

The works by Miami painter Mike Vasquez evoke Eric Fischl in their spidery realism, but the subject matter is all Vasquez's own -- gang life in St. Petersburg, Fla., which the artist experienced growing up. *The High Flag Post* (priced at \$28,000) has an insider's eye for detail, and depicts two young men, dramatically under-lit, gazing defiantly out at the viewer. One holds an immense gun with a red bandana tied to it. Asked what artists influenced his work, Vasquez responded, "My life."