

Aipad's Photography Show Grows Up

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Some art fairs evolve; others have growth spurts. This year the Photography Show has moved to Pier 94 on the Hudson from the Park Avenue Armory, its home for the last decade, and more than doubled in size. Steroids may have been involved.

Founded in 1980 by Aipad, or the Association of Independent Photography Art Dealers, the fair, in its latest incarnation, presents 130 participants from across the United States and around the globe, and initiates a new section for book publishers and magazines devoted to photography. Yet it has room to spare, with broad aisles and a general spaciousness enhanced by light gray carpets and walls.

There are 51 new dealers, including Tasveer Gallery from Bangalore, which is mixing hand-painted photographs from the first half of the 20th-century with more ironic, contemporary ripostes, and Ibasho from Antwerp, Belgium, which has a survey of images by Japanese photographers and by others working in Japan.

With images from the mid-19th century to now, the Photography Show sweeps through the history of the medium, culminating with contemporary photographers and artists who don't necessarily call themselves photographers. That mind-set was initiated by Conceptual Art, solidified by the Pictures Generation and still going strong.

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The displays have great contrapuntal rhythms, between past and present, between color and black-and-white, and among sensibilities guided by burning social consciences, the drive to experiment or a joyful embrace of the medium's idiosyncratic possibilities.

Sometimes all of this can be found in one eclectic presentation. At Edwynn Houk, for example, one of Robert Frank's insightful images of Americans shares walls with Lillian Bassman's innovative fashion photography and Abelardo Morell's playful new still lifes, notably a scene of domestic catastrophe created for the camera from plywood, a ceramic pitcher and a plethora of flowers. In contrast, there's the tailored survey of recent photography at Steven Kasher titled "21 Artists, One Straight White Male." It begins with Phyllis Galebo's great "Los Americanos, Mexico" (2012), whose masked revelers mock Uncle Sam, and includes work by Mickalene Thomas, Marilyn Minter and Jimmy DeSana.

Many booths are elegantly arranged and give works room to breathe, and others are jammed to the gills, sometimes fetchingly, sometimes with homey bins of photographs to browse through. Established dealers sometimes subdivide large booths into separate rooms, like the one that Contemporary Works/Vintage Works has devoted to 12 vintage prints by the versatile 19th-century genius Gustave Le Gray, whose subjects here range from the great public vistas of Paris — the Place de la Concorde in 1859 — to modest harbor scenes. Next door, the Robert Koch Gallery has only one Le Gray, a stunning print of beach, ocean and sky in three simple, vibrant bands that is among the fair's highlights, as well as a luminous abstract "photogram" that Laszlo Moholy-Nagy made in 1943 using one of his own Lucite sculptures. Another 19th-century masterpiece can be seen at William L. Schaeffer/Photographs: Carleton E. Watkins's 1867 "Cape Horn Near Celilo" — with its memorable progression from looming butte to curving railroad track and silken riverbed — a print that is considered by many to be Watkins's best and priced accordingly.

Less established dealers are in the Discovery section, where small booths encourage one-, two- or three-artist shows. Arnika Dawkins is concentrating on images of civil rights protests from the 1960s by Builder Levy, who also shot in Appalachia.

Tiwani Contemporary is showing the lush color poetic-political images of Dawit L. Petros, born in Eritrea and now based in Chicago. In "Untitled (Distance), Cap Spartel, Morocco," a black man carrying a large tote is disappearing over the horizon, having perhaps traversed the beautiful but treacherous bed of cactuses that fills the foreground like a rising tide. At Elizabeth Houston, the standouts are Mark Lyon's color photographs, taken from inside single-car garages with the doors open to the street. The deep, narrow space suggests a boxy, walk-in telephoto lens; the subject is pure postwar Americana. And De Soto is presenting the late-Surrealist portraits by Alma Haser in which the addition of prismatic paper structures multiplies the sitters' eyes, suggesting physical deformity, geometric cosmetic surgery or mental disorder. They are part of her Patients series.

The expanded quarters have allowed for three special exhibitions devoted to the holdings of the collectors Martin Z. Margulies and Madeleine P. Plonsker and, most impressively, the Walther Collection, which has organized "Structures in Identity," a large, museum-quality show of typologically inclined photographers, including Karl Blossfeldt and August Sander, early documentarians of plants and humans; J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's 1970s photographs of the extraordinary architecture of Nigerian women's hairstyles; and Accra Shepp's portraits of some of the participants in Occupy Wall Street in 2011 and 2012. Nearby, at Kopeikin, Nina Katchadourian fashions self-portraits using paper products from in-flight restrooms.

In some stretches the show is dominated by black-and-white photographs, with occasional color. This is especially the case along the aisle that begins with a display of early photographs at Hans P. Kraus Jr., which has more Le Grays; works

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by William Henry Fox Talbot, a grandfather of photography; and Séeberger Frères' 1909 color still life of apples that hovers stubbornly between hand- and machine-made. Howard Greenberg has spreads from the maquette — and a vigorous drawing of the cover — for Dave Heath's "A Dialogue With Solitude" (1965), in which he effectively paired his photographs with quotations from poets and writers; some of the elegant street photographs of Tokyo from the 1930s by Michiko Yamawaki, who studied at the Bauhaus; and two large color photographs with which Edward Burtynsky, whose industrial landscapes pay tribute to nature and the ways it is used and mostly abused by humans.

The challenge of a photo fair is that you can't zip down the aisle casting your eye left and right until something catches it. There is something worth seeing in every booth, but many images are small and comprehended only close up: a wall of images by the great Danny Lyons, tucked slightly out of sight at Etherton Gallery; the soft "Twilight, Yosemite Valley" from around 1907 by William Dasonville, a California pictorialist, at Barry Singer or Steve Schapiro's astounding "CORE 'Stall IN,' New York World's Fair 1964," at the Monroe Gallery of Photography, which documents a vehicular protest of racism.

Photography's images are often small, but its reach is as big as life itself.