

Your Life

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FINE ARTS

All's fair in the art marketplace



Thomas Segal, who counted Patsy and Ramond Nasher of Dallas as clients, will fill his space with more than 150 works by artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns. STAR-TELEGRAM/STEWART F. HOUSE

A three-day event in Dallas attracts galleries from across the U.S.

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The trucks parked radiator to ramp along Akard Street in Dallas are usually disgorging racks of silks and spandex. Earlier this week, they were in their usual place, but what was coming off

the trucks were acrylics, oils and bronzes. The inaugural Dallas Art Fair was moving into the Fashion Industry Gallery, a multistory building of wholesale apparel showrooms next to the Dallas Museum of Art. The three-day fair of modern, post-war and contemporary art is scheduled to open at 11 a.m. today.

Despite the fall in art prices

at recent auctions and seismic tremors in the economy, 38 galleries from across the nation are betting there is money to be made selling fine art in Dallas. There are regional art fairs, national art fairs and the mega-fair, Art Basel, which began in 1970 in Switzerland. It became such a huge international event that Art Basel Miami Beach was

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Dallas Art Fair

- Fashion Industry Gallery, 1807 Ross Ave., Dallas
- 11 a.m.-6 p.m. today and Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday
- Tickets: one-day pass, \$15-\$20; three-day pass, \$30-\$40
- 214-220-1278; www.dallasartfair.com

Fair: People who buy 'art smart' may see return on investment

CONTINUED FROM 1E

launched in 2002. The location seemed to be magic—it attracted more than 250 galleries, the international art crowd, partygoers from many lands and, in a few short years, the December gathering became so bloated with ancillary festivities that it began to spin off its axis. It was too crowded, too big and with so many events, it became impossible to see or find the art.

The recipe of warm locale in winter, a fashionable setting and an unjaded public seemed ripe to Dallas entrepreneurs with an affection for art. John Sughrue, the Dallas-based developer of Museum Tower and Fashion Industry Gallery, and art dealer Christopher Byrne began talking three years ago about replicating Basel in Texas. They planned, they invited, they launched, and then the economy took a nose dive. They are undaunted. Sughrue says bringing the galleries to the audience is a better retail tool than waiting in the gallery office for customers to arrive.

The gallery owners seem to agree. They signed contracts months ago and none has pulled out of the fair. They are coming from New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, Austin, Houston, Dallas and Fort Worth.

The Thomas Segal Gallery in Baltimore signed on for two locations, one on each floor of the exhibition space. Segal says he packed up more than 150 pieces priced from \$1,000 to just shy of \$1 million, bearing names such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Joseph Cornell and Roy Lichtenstein. He's been in the art business for more than 30 years and has seen uncertain economies before. He's not worried; he says the best will always sell.

Dan Blagg, co-owner of Fort Worth's Artspace

111, has been to a number of art fairs and he, too, decided a trek to Dallas was better than sitting at home, even if the weekend demanded a five-digit commitment. He is convinced that there are buyers who would rather have a singular thing of beauty than invest in a generic stock certificate with a dubious return.

"If you buy art smart, from artists who have been working a long time and are committed to their work, in the long term you can turn some jack," Blagg says.

One thing a conclave of galleries offers is variety. Blagg says visitors can expect "subcompacts, some fuel-efficient vehicles and some luxury sedans. There'll also be some great stuff, some not-so-great stuff and some downright awful stuff. There will be everything, and that's the beauty. If you want to see a bunch of art, an art fair is the place to go."

Although the exhibition spaces are temporary, an art fair is not a souk. Haggling is considered bad form; it is OK to ask a lot of questions. The gallery personnel love talking about the art and the artists they represent. Knowing that there will be a number of first-time art fair attendees and experienced buyers, Byrne is adding events to enlighten both groups. There are two symposiums scheduled, and exhibiting artists will be giving tours.

Robert McAn, an artist from the stable of Fort Worth's William Campbell Contemporary, is scheduled to lead two tours Friday. "I'm looking forward to it," he says. "For once, it won't be about selling. I'll just be sharing my love of art. It'll be fun."

The artists and gallery owners are hoping that this is the first of what will become a yearly event. Sughrue and Byrne are way ahead of them; they have staked out the first weekend in February 2010 for the second Dallas Art Fair.

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New York's Pace Prints will bring a variety of artists' work including Kiki Smith's, above. PACE



Artists David Brown, left, and Bill Crowley assemble a George Rickey sculpture. S-T/STEWART F. HOUSE