



AFC New York Art Fair Ratings



Paul Pfeiffer, Morning After the Deluge, 2001,
Video Projection loop Image copyright Thomas
Dane Gallery

I have a number of “final” observations about the art fairs before we get to our final ratings, but given the amount of coverage we've already published on this blog I'll be very brief. First, I assume this comes as a surprise to no one, but the exposure of New Media art over the last weekend seems to be limited to animated films and Make-like projects. This kind of art is okay, but it represents a limited vision at best of the medium. I noticed Rhizome did not participate in any fairs this year, a decision I have to commend them for because at present there are no venues that adequately address the specific requirements of the medium. In theory, DiVA, who's focus lays primarily in digital and video art would fill this void, but their exhibitors performed poorly this year, and their choice of local continues to be a problem. If Scope threw out their curatorial programming in exchange for a few good New Media pieces, they might become a more viable venue, but as long as Gabe Martinez is suffering the cold in the name of art, there's really no point in institutional participation.

Also not surprising but noteworthy none the less; while I have certainly seen good and bad art addressing the Iraq war, I find it slightly disturbing to observe that almost all of it has been filtered out for this occasion. I understand that collectors may not want to have this kind of work on their walls, but given the amount of bad transgressive art that made its way into the fairs you'd think there might be at least some market for these pieces.

Regardless of all of this, the fairs remain a good way to see a lot of art in a small amount of time. Assuming you don't lose site of the fact that painting and photography represent only a portion of the field of art making, you'll be fine. Keeping this in mind, here are this years art fair ratings listed from best to worst.



1. Pulse

Clinching the number one position for the second year running, Pulse offers virtually everything you would desire in a fair. Good art, good viewing conditions, and tasty beer. Make blog has an excellent flickr set of this fair.

2. The ADAA Art Show (Art Dealers Association of America)

Observe unparalleled quality in art at the ADAA art fair (notwithstanding emerging artists.) It also wins the top prize for best lit booths.

3. LA Art

Ultimately having the space to view art trumps what fairs like the Armory have to offer; primarily size. Also, the work exhibited was very strong.

4. The Armory

Well, it's big. Good for trend spotting.

5. Scope

Probably the fair with the biggest heart. But I hate art-with-its-heart-in-the-right-place. It's almost always bad.

6. Red Dot

Featuring the smallest hotel rooms I've seen in my 7 years of art fair attendance Red Dot boasts the title of largest temporary storage space for bad paintings.

7. DiVA

A lot of bad art featured in obscure locals. Sadly, it's generally not worth your time.

8. Fountain

Too small to evaluate on the same terms as the others, though it does provide an unexpected mix of coffee shop art and conceptual art. See t.whid for more on this fair.