

Print Article



Scope Hamptons at the East Hampton Studios



Inside Scope Hamptons on Friday



Marilyn Manson
Deutsche Kämpferin
1999
Galerie Brigitte Schenk

FAIR FLIP-FLOPS

by Ben Davis

Scope Hamptons, which held its third annual installment this last weekend, July 27-29, 2007, has its own kind of pace. "We don't want to disrupt vacations," Scope fair president **Alexis Hubshman** told Bloomberg news recently, putting an appropriately laid-back spin on his ongoing effort to bring contemporary art to the Long Island leisure community. Scope proceeds, therefore, not with the cackling commercial frenzy of fair behemoths like **Art Basel**, **Art Basel Miami Beach**, **Frieze** and the **Armory Show** -- in which Scope has participated via satellite fairs -- but instead at the slightly dotty rhythm of the very rich on summer holiday.

A case in point: On the first day of this year's fair, the traffic consisted of folks in flip-flops, journalists and occasional dogs being walked in the airy halls of East Hampton Studios. It was even deader than last year at the same time. At her booth, German dealer **Brigitte Schenk** was still relaxing, and said that she heard from other dealers that sales were "up and down," but that she was waiting for the action to get going on the weekend.

So, on the one hand, a holding pattern. On the other, Schenk had already sold a large watercolor at the preview the night before by '90s Goth rocker **Marilyn Manson** -- depicting **Adolf Hitler** with breasts and an exposed penis -- for an impressive \$105,000. An apt symbol for unpredictable taste. Schenk was also selling Manson-branded bottles of absinthe as art objects for €500 a pop. (More interesting were **Klaus Fritze's** wall-mounted boxes in the spirit of **Joseph Cornell**, featuring assemblages incorporating different obsessive newspaper clippings. The price: \$1,600 each.)

Scope Hamptons has a lot of gallery turnover from year to year, with only 20 of last year's 50 booths returning, a 60 percent turnover. Overall, sales are sporadic, with some galleries selling well and others doing "just OK" or worse. But some dealers do come back for more. Among the returning galleries are **Rare** (which Hubshman co-founded), **Moti Hasson** and **Jack the Pelican** from New York, **Marc de Puechredon** from Basel, **Galerie Andreas Binder** from Munich, **Galerie Schuster** from Frankfurt and **Lincart** from San Francisco. Other dealers come to Scope Hamptons by way of the other Scope fairs, as part of a package deal.

Perhaps the unpredictable clime suits Hubshman -- founder, president and the man with the final say over it all -- who seems to operate his dynasty according to impulse rather than plan. Scope seems perennially understaffed and under siege, from the fire code violations that marred the opening of Scope New York in 2006 to Scope producer **Jordan Adams** somehow ending up personally operating the Art Basel shuttle in Miami last December [see "[More On Miami](#)," Dec. 18, 2006].

The Scope franchise makes something of a retreat this fall, with Scope London going MIA for Frieze Week in October, while at the very same time expanding to Basel in June with the first Scope Basel. Last year, Hubshman was musing on the possibility of cloning the



Dealer Brigitte Schenk with Marilyn Manson brand absinthe



Sandra Bermudez's *Beautiful Cunt* (2007) at Spinello Gallery



Dealer Katherine Mulherin with works by Drue Langlois



Abelardo Morell
Santa Maria Della Salute in Palazzo, Venice
2006
Danzinger Projects

Hamptons luxury-destination model, bringing "that rare beast, the emerging artist" to Monaco and St. Moritz. This year, such talk is forgotten and he speaks of investors for the launch of Scopes in Dubai (where there is an art market but no native art scene) and Beijing (where there is an art scene but no native art market).

Nevertheless, it is tough to separate Scope's weaknesses from its strengths. Scope's idiosyncrasies give the fair an endearing, home-grown quality. It genuinely treasures its cast of recurring characters, like the dorky-cool **Perpetual Art Machine**, an installation of user-selected and -contributed video art that finds a place in every installment. This year's Scope Hamptons seemed to have less frills than past iterations -- but it was still shot through with oddball ideas, like letting **Creative Time** co-sponsor a lemonade stand with **Christiania** vodka (a commentary on the commercialization of public art?), and ceding the lawn in front of the fair to a day camp for underprivileged kids run by **Socrates Sculpture Park** -- yielding the happy sight on opening day of art critics dodging rambunctious water-gun fights.

Miami art dealer **Anthony Spinello** has participated in all three Scope Hamptons installments, though in changing guises. He first came with a gallery called **Liquid Blue**; his second time was with his own **Red Dot Gallery**, which doubled as his apartment; and now he runs the eponymous **Spinello Gallery**. Spinello has genuinely benefited from Scope's unconventional priorities. Once upon a time, Hubshman cut him a deal and rented him booth space at a reduced rate. Now, Spinello is opening a storefront in Miami's happening Wynwood district. The artists he has championed, like **Santiago Rubinow** with his absorbing ink drawings on found paper, have also benefited -- Rubino recently had a solo show at **Merry Karnowsky Gallery**, influential L.A. champion of Miami taste, and has another scheduled at **Jack Shainman** in New York.

This year, Spinello also showed large photos by the Korean artist **Susan Lee-Chun**, self-portraits that depict the artist dressed in an Oppy plaid dress and posed against matching wallpaper. Also on view were outsized silver charms by **Sandra Bermudez** (the kind Hamptonite **Sarah Jessica Parker** sported on *Sex in the City*). One of Bermudez's works was \$9,200 -- not bad for a giant trinket trumpeting the word "Cunt."

Several dealers said that they had brought less edgy work to the Hamptons, based on feedback from past fairs. But the unpretentious vibe is not unappealing, and plenty of stuff was interesting to look at. Smart Toronto dealer **Katherine Mulherin** offered a wall full of small dolls by Winnipeg-based **Drue Langlois** (formerly of the **Royal Art Lodge**). Each of the creatures, from a squinting hammerhead-shark-man to a fish with a burger for a head, had a little tag explaining its story. They were \$300 a piece, a bargain.

The booth of Chelsea's **Danzinger Projects** featured a black-and-white photo by Cuban-born **Abelardo Morell**, a work that combines classical visual lyricism with a process-oriented approach. The piece is from a series for which Morell rented various hotel rooms in different international locations, sealed them to form a camera obscura, then photographed the results. The image at Scope Hamptons showed a hotel room wall overlaid with a ghostly upside-down image of the dome of Santa Maria Della Salute in Venice. It was \$11,000.

More in-your-face was a hypnotic "video altarpiece" by **Cliff Evans** at Washington D.C.'s **Curator's Office**, made of a large screen with four smaller ones appended, approximating predellae. It was playing a kaleidoscopic montage alternating scantily clad women with *Star Wars* storm troopers, which dealer **Andrea Pollan** pitched -- in one



Cliff Evans

Bare Life: Booth Girls and Storm Troopers: Accumulation [detail]
2007
Curator's Office



Andrei Molodkin

Human Rights + Iraqi crude oil in the form of a dollar
2006
Daneyal Mahmood Gallery



Works by Suntag Noh at Janet Oh Gallery

of those art-statements that seem so charming at commercial fairs -- as a commentary on "the soft fascism of consumerism" (judging by the success of the Manson-Hilter pairing, Scope Hamptons could use a bit more of this "soft fascism"). It was \$4,500. "I think it's a deal," Pollen said. "The equipment alone is worth \$1,500!"

In a similar vein of social criticism, the popular and eye-catching "oil sculptures" of **Andrei Molodkin** stood out at New York's **Daneyal Mahmood Gallery**. One work featured the word "human rights" carved into a slab of Lucite and filled with inky black crude oil, connected by snaking tubes to a large dollar sign, also filled with oil. Subtle.

Last year, the talk at Scope Hamptons was of a vague spike in sales of secondary market work. This year, the only name on view was a piece by **Barbara Kruger** at Seoul's **Janet Oh Gallery**, which otherwise was featuring tiny metal trees by Israeli artist **Zubok Ben David** and large colorful photos of North Korean mass rituals by **Suntag Noh**. Instead, center stage could go to artists who were actually "emerging," in the full sense -- not just that they are unknowns but that they are moving towards wider recognition. **Dean Projects** had a hit with rising star **Reinaldo Sanguino**, whose photos of drag queens, and sculptures of crowns made from black ceramic (\$5,000-\$6,000 here), are also spotlighted in the **Museo del Barrio's** just-opened biennial.

Otherwise, if this year Scope Hamptons had a trend, it was the increasingly dominant presence of scrappy art collectives and alternative spaces. Southampton's **McNeill Art Group** -- a consulting and acquisition company founded by **Beth McNeill** -- offered **Tyrome Tripoli's** likable sea creatures made of found plastic objects (\$6,000 for *Red Plastic Form*). The "nomadic art space" **Grizzly** dedicated an entire booth to a strip of Polaroids by **Lilah Freedland**, showing the artist doing various wacky things after breaking into her friends' houses.

But best of all was the enigmatic Brooklyn-based group the **Bruce High Quality Foundation**, highlighted as a special invited project. According to its website, BHQF was founded to "provide an alternative to everything" and offered photos and a film of young people wrestling on top of New York publicsculptures, as well as staged performances -- standing with a sign that proclaims "RENT STRIKE!" -- that look to be examples of activism contextualized as art.

So, plenty of personality. For offbeat, sometimes-random personality, Scope cannot be beat. But does the Hamptons vacation set want "an alternative to everything?" Or just an alternative to the creeping emptiness of the space above the mantle? As Bloomberg news noted, before Hubshman helmed an art fair franchise, he was inventor of the "Wedgee," a device that allows people to modify rollerblades to become a kind of platform shoe that you can walk in -- an odd hybrid. Scope Hamptons is also an odd hybrid, which makes it interesting, even if, like the Wedgee, it seems like it might be a bit unstable.

BEN DAVIS is associate editor of *Artnet Magazine*.



Works by Reinaldo Sanguino at Dean Projects



Tyrome Tripoli
Red Plastic Form
2006
McNeill Art Group



ArtReview's Nicola Crockett explores works by Lilah Freedland at Grizzly



Bruce High Quality Foundation
Rent Strike!
2007



The design for the Wedgee