

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CHARLES DESMARAIS *Art*

Fog fair has a bright new competitor

We will have to see whether the art fair called Untitled, Art can translate its Miami success of the past five years to San Francisco. Something of a latecomer to the December madhouse of such events in the Florida city, the Untitled fair quickly gained a reputation as both more serious in purpose and more fun to look at than most of the myriad ancillaries to the main event, Art Basel Miami Beach.

Untitled, Art will now for the first time go head to head with San Francisco's Fog Design+Art, with both running Jan. 12-15. Both will be at the waterfront — Untitled at Pier 70 in the Dogpatch neighborhood, Fog returning to the Festival Pavilion pier at Fort Mason.

Fog, by the standards of big-city fairs, is smallish, and has signaled it will stay that way. That is to the good: It has an easy, party vibe rather than the dreary pall of a business trade expo that hangs over most such events. It is run for the benefit of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, giving it a gala fundraiser feeling rather than that of a market hall.

The best fairs curate their shows, rather than renting booths to anyone who will pay. And all fairs like to have top dealers from around the world, balanced by galleries well known and respected in their local markets. That equation gives an event two essential kinds of credibility.

The 2016 Fog show attracted a number of international big names. And from its inception in 2014, it has had the support of many of the Bay Area's most venerated and important art dealers, including **John Berggruen**, **Rena Bransten**, **Jeffrey Fraenkel**, **Cheryl Haines** and **Anthony Meier**, as well as some of the best of the next wave (**Altman-Siegel**, **Hosfelt**, **Silverman**, **Ratio 3's Chris Perez**). (Fog also includes design, not currently

in the purview of Untitled, which additionally limits the number of art exhibitors.)

That leaves Untitled with the task of luring galleries from elsewhere to an exciting but still unproven market. Even more difficult, though, may be getting the best locals to switch (ain't gonna happen — apparently they all make money at Fog), persuading them to run booths at both fairs (unlikely, given that brick-and-mortar spaces also need to be maintained) or landing good galleries that can't make the cut at the impacted, exclusive Fog. Untitled seems, necessarily, to be pursuing the third route.

Another strategy, which holds great promise, particularly for those of us likely to look more than buy, is to enlist nonprofit art organizations. A number of them have been invited to put on exhibitions and events, without paying for booth rental. Among the participants will be 500 Capp Street Foundation, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Headlands Center for the Arts, Kadist, the Lab, UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive and Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art.

Switzerland in San Francisco: Piers, clearly, are being reborn across the Bay Area as cultural resources. Now the wharf just north of the Exploratorium has become home to Switzerland at Pier 17, a suite of offices housing the Swiss Consulate and related agencies. Among the new facilities, at Suite 800, is substantial new exhibition space — 2,360 feet — for Swissnex, an art research program and gallery that has played an active role on the San Francisco scene for some 15 years.

On Nov. 4, Swissnex opens an exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of what organizers call “the birth of Dada at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich.” (Others might argue



Nate Bennett

The Lab will present performances on a boat by artist Constance Hockaday as part of the Untitled, Art fair. “Better Wall Than a Window” was part of an earlier Hockaday floating performance.

that **Marcel Duchamp** founded the movement slightly earlier in New York, but no matter.) Swiss and Bay Area artists — including **Jonathon Keats**, **Tony Labat** and **Jenny Odell** — have been asked to “remix” classic works from Swiss archives.

Also of interest is a program called Dart17, for which local artists and other “creatives” can apply, which will provide access to tools for experiments in augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics and other new technologies (learn more here: www.swissnexsanfrancisco.org/initiatives/dart17).

Birds of a feather: If it seems to you that the gallery scene in the Bay Area has picked up in the past 18 months or so, I think you're right. One reason for that, surely, is the launch of new and expanded efforts meant to take advantage of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's reopening. There are also dealers' hopes that all the tech money sloshing around may be attached to an educated audience ready to become a sophisticated market — or, at least, that the new wealth implies a lot of new empty walls.

But it's not just the sense of expanding gallery square footage. There is an increasing willingness among gallerists to make financial gambles on art that itself embraces risk. That's growth of the best kind.

My job is to focus on ideas and images. But it stands to

reason that if there's no market for challenging art, there will be fewer opportunities to engage with it outside museums and other nonprofits — which have their own limitations. That's why I have great respect for how the galleries here have newly committed to work more collaboratively, and to educate themselves and each other on best practices in the field.

The vehicle they have employed is a reinvigorated San Francisco Art Dealers Association, founded in 1972 and now with a membership of 51 galleries, plus eight retired associates. Among other trade organization-type activities, they've held discussions on such subjects as “how to strategize about art fairs” and “how to work with museums,” and mounted a two-day law and art business forum.

Wendi Norris (inset), whose eponymous gallery has rapidly become sharper and more intellectually provocative over its seven-year history, stepped down last Thursday, Oct. 20, from the presidency of the dealers group. The new president is **Mark Pinsukanjana**, co-owner of Themes + Projects; executive director is **Petra Schumann**.

In case you missed it: Guerrero Gallery has been in its new home just south of the Dogpatch-Bayview line since early

summer, but I had not made a visit until last week. That's a mistake I plan to redress. A visit to the gallery is, in itself, one of the more surprising and invigorating viewing experiences in the Bay Area.

Tucked around back of another business, the extraordinary Living Green Design warehouse, the space is reached via a winding path through towering plants and potted trees, past imposing geological and sculptural curiosities. That dark jungle expedition ends at a brightly lit, double-story white box inserted into a steel-beamed industrial space.

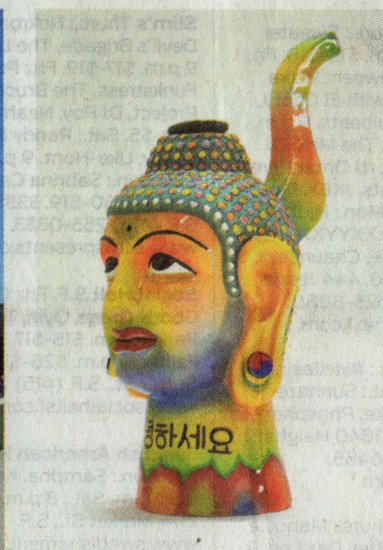
Andres Guerrero had maintained a constant but low profile since closing his popular Mission District space in 2013. Now he's back with a smart and colorful show that plays teasingly virtuosic paintings by **Terry Powers** against masterworks of neo-Pop ceramic sculpture by **John DeFazio**. On a central wall, a fulcrum of two new paintings made for the exhibition by **Taravat Talepasand** brings it all into balance, as she lovingly interprets and pays tribute to the other artists.

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Bruce Damonte / Swissnex

A Swiss clock monument, designed by Olivier Chetelat, marks the entrance to the new Swissnex Gallery on Pier 17.



Guerrero Gallery

John DeFazio, “Korean Buddah Bong” (2013).



Guerrero Gallery

Guerrero Gallery opened this summer in a warehouse in San Francisco's Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood.