

Our 11 Favorite Works from the Dallas Art Fair

Emerson Rosenthal — Apr 22 2016



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, Perfect Baby Showroom, 2014. Installation with wallpaper, baby dolls, extension cords, metal, acrylic, wood, neon light, foam, cotton fabric, LED lights, cereal. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery, New York/Dubai

As electric as was this year's Art Basel Miami Beach, no doubt the biggest challenge for art lovers was intimacy. But if Basel was speed dating, the Dallas Art Fair was a several-course meal, complete with palate-cleansing digital artworks and the ever-sumptuous pigmentary soufflés that are the high-performance market-movers of Richter, Lowman, Gillick, and Meese. It was nearly a week of facetime—not facades—new and old, and the kind of impassioned, one-on-one evening art convos that really only happen with a captive audience. (Not that being put up at The Joule, which lives up to its homophone in *degrees*, is any kind of captivity I'm against.) It was also the inaugural year for the Dallas Art Fair Foundation Acquisition Program, a fund that promises a thunderous future for all things contemporary at the Dallas Museum of Art.

As far as this list goes, it's by no means comprehensive; Oculus Rift artworks by Rachel Rossin at Zieher Smith & Horton have to be experienced in person, and Chul-Hyun Ahn's infinite mirror boxes at Grimaldis Gallery could make Michael Heizer weep. All in all, it's impossible to deny: big things are happening in the Big D. Here were some of our favorites:

1. Rachel Lee Hovnanian's *Perfect Baby Showroom*



Rachel Lee Hovnanian, Perfect Baby Showroom, 2014. Installation with wallpaper, baby dolls, extension cords, metal, acrylic, wood, neon light, foam, cotton fabric, LED lights, cereal. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery, New York/Dubai

Babies are weird and gross, magical little sacks of soft bones, and mostly jelly. They're some of the most beautiful, intentional things people can make, making them an awful lot like art. This is why Rachel Lee Hovnanian's array of sculpted infants, seen above, was right at home on the first floor of the Fashion Industry Gallery building, ready to be picked up (and Instagrammed), provided you donned a smock and some hand sanitizer. Good art makes you engage with it physically; great art makes you worry it'll barf down the back of your shirt. This was both.

2. Takashi Murakami's *Ensō: Zen, White and Black*



Takashi Murakami, Ensō: Zen, White and Black, 2015. Acrylic on canvas mounted on aluminum frame / Acrylique sur toile montée sur châssis en aluminium. 55 1/2 x 47 1/4 inches / 141 x 120 cm. © 2015 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

Courtesy Galerie Perrotin

Everything about this suggests an evolution of the "superflat" master's practice—not least the fact that it isn't really *flat* at all. You might not be able to tell it from the image above, but the entire surface, beneath the black, Zen Buddhist circle, bursts with Murakami's signature cartoon skulls. I'm hesitant to call it "you have to see it in person" art, only because if you see it in person, say goodbye to your life savings.

3. Rinus Van De Velde at Tim Van Laere Gallery



Rinus Van De Velde, *Its All About Rescheduling My Desire*, 2015. Charcoal on canvas, artist frame. Courtesy the artist and Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp. Thumbnail: Rinus Van De Velde, *You are so dangerous, she told me*, 2015. Charcoal on canvas, artist frame. 200 x 200 cm. Courtesy Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp

Raymond Pettibon meets Robert Longo meets *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* on the massive, fully covered surfaces of Van De Velde's charcoal on canvas works. Getting home to one of these would be like watching *Eraserhead* every night, without having to fast-forward through all the gooey bits.

4. Elsa Zambrano's *The Imaginary Museum*



Elsa Zambrano, *Jeff Koons*, 2014. Assemblage. 31 x 45.5 x 10 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Beatriz Esguerra, Miami & Bogotá

Entire worlds await in Zambrano's *Imaginary Museums*, shoebox-sized assemblages replete with wallet-sized masterpieces. Each one is a hermetically-sealed spectacle, meticulously crafted in a way that makes me hopeful for Rick Moranis' triumphant return in *Honey, I Shrunk the Koons*.

5. Val Kilmer's *Godblock*



Val Kilmer, *Godblock (black)*, 2014. Acrylic paint on six wooden boxes. 72 x 12 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist and James Kelly
Contemporary, Santa Fe

One time Val Kilmer showed up at my dad's office wearing a head-to-toe chicken suit to surprise one of his friends on their birthday. He's probably the only actor in the world who could have shown the piece

above, in the middle of the Dallas Art Fair, and had it looked at as contemporary art (and not just some hobby). He should have been in *Highlander*.

6. Nick Lobo at Gallery Diet



Nick Lobo, Bio-foam Aluminum pour (Natural Ice version 1) 2015. Aluminum, Bio-foam 58 x 41 in. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Diet, Miami

What I said above about "great art making you worry it'll barf down your back" also rings true in the amorphous-but-deadly-looking wall sculptures of Miami artist Nick Lobo. There's something at once familiar and uncanny in these "aluminum pour" works, something that makes me think about the alchemy intrinsic to earwax, or that gunk you scrape off the bottom of your sneakers. These are like the visual equivalent of chewing on aluminum foil; revolting but you just can't look away.

7. David Hockney's *First* through *Fourth Detail*



David Hockney (Clockwise from left), Third Detail March 25th, 1995. Digital Inkjet Print, edition 14/45. 35 x 43.75 in (88.9 x 111.13 cm). Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York. Fourth Detail March 25th, 1995. Digital Inkjet Print, edition 14/45. 35 x 43.75 in (88.9 x 111.13 cm). Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York. First Detail March 25th, 1995. Digital Inkjet Print, edition 14/45. 35 x 43.75 in (88.9 x

111.13 cm). Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York. Second Detail March 25th, 1995. Digital Inkjet Print, edition 14/45. 35 x 43.75 in (88.9 x 111.13 cm). Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York

Pure aesthetic mastery radiates out from these prints of an installation Hockey photographed back in the 90s. A little Picasso, a little Kandinsky, a little de Saint Phalle, a whole lotta' love.

8. Faig Ahmed's *Restraint*



Faig Ahmed, Restraint, 2015 Woven rug. 150 x 200 cm / 59 x 78.75 in. Courtesy of the artist and Sapar Contemporary, New York

The woven glitch textiles of the Azerbaijani artist Faig Ahmed elevate an ancient craft tradition to the internet age, but that's not just why I'm including them. Whether dripping onto the floor or bubbling out of their surfaces, they're *really* well-made, fine art as much as simply beautiful objects.

9. Nabil Nahas' *Untitled*



Nabil Nahas, Untitled, 2015. Acrylic on canvas. 152 x 121 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai

This was sort of like the blacklight-reactive *VICE Magazine* cover bioartists Coral Morphologic made back in 2014, but with so much surface to pore over that you could gaze at it for days and still notice increasingly fine details. Plus, they're paint, so you don't have to worry about keeping them alive with a delicate pH balance.

10. Rebecca Ward's *X (green and yellow)*



Rebecca Ward, X (green and yellow), 2015. Oil and dye on silk, 60 x 45 in / 152.4 x 114.3 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Ronchini Gallery, London

This particular fair featured far less studio-to-collector-style hybrid painting-sculptures than most, making color and shadow-based contemporary artworks like the above *X (green and yellow)* all the more enticing. Each piece is one-of-a-kind, the end result of a time-hardened process that fixes a feeling in physical space. If that's not something to invest in, to get to watch mature, I should probably go to business school.

11. Jonathan Monaghan at bitforms



Jonathan Monaghan, French Second Empire, 2014. Inkjet print on Hahnemuhle photo luster, Dibond. 57 x 43 in / 144.8 x 109.2 cm, framed. Edition of 3. Courtesy of the artist and bitforms gallery, New York

It was a pleasure to see the wickedly ahead-of-the-game bitforms gallery in the fair's midsts, not least because of the techno-utopian, Fabergé-meets-*Black Mirror* amalgamations of Jonathan Monaghan. Something innately *forward* about these prints makes them subversive, and few who passed by the young

gallery's booth could resist getting up close. If everything's bigger in Texas, I can't wait to see when they'll start building mechs.

What were your favorite works at the Dallas Art Fair? Let us know on Twitter @CreatorsProject or in the comments below.

<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/11-dallas-art-fair-favorites>