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Inaugural Dallas Art Fair draws crowd of thousands

BY CATHERINE FLAGG

More than 5,000 Dallas art collectors, aficionados and novices gathered Feb. 6-8 at the Fashion Industry Gallery in downtown Dallas to experience the inaugural Dallas Art Fair.

More than 35 exhibitors from across the nation gathered to help make the Dallas Art Fair a resounding success, including prominent Dallas and Fort Worth dealers Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Valley House Gallery and William Campbell

Contemporary.

"I was excited by the positive response the galleries had to participating in and being part of the first Dallas Art Fair," said art dealer Chris Byrne, co-founder of the Dallas Art Fair. "Galleries from San Francisco to New York knew and respected Dallas as a vibrant cultural center and wanted to be a part of the burgeoning art community here."

Along with co-founder and Brook Partners CEO John Sughrue, they envisioned giving those attending the fair an experience one usually has to go to Art Basel Miami or London's Frieze Art Fair to find.

"I was delighted that the community embraced the Dallas Art Fair as much as they did. The Dallas Arts District has become an international cultural destination due to the excitement and support Dallas has given us and cultural centers such as the Nasher Sculpture Center, the contemporary art collection at the Dallas Museum of Art and the opening of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts," Sughrue said. "We look forward to making the Dallas Art Fair an annual event."

Dealers gave ticket holders the chance to not only purchase art but delve into the minds of those in the know about what they look

for in their art. Several key events went on throughout the weekend to enhance the fair experience, such as the Preview Gala on the evening of Feb. 5 benefiting Booker T. Washington School for the Performing and Visual Arts where art patrons could get the first look of the art before the fair opened to the public.

The Dallas Art Fair also debuted an art-centric Symposium Series, with presentations Saturday and Sunday morning featuring panel discussions with notable art figures such as Dallas art patron Marguerite Hoffman, former Whitney Museum of Art curator Klaus Kertess and American Vi-

sionary Art Museum founder and director Rebecca Hoffberger.

Groups scheduled tours throughout the duration of the fair, led by artists exhibiting at the fair acting as docents, giving the tour groups an insider's perspective of the Dallas Art Fair.

"The Dallas Art Fair was an engaging and enjoyable experience," said John Berggruen, founder of the John Berggruen Gallery in San Francisco. "I have been doing this for 30 years, and this was one of the good ones - especially for the first year."

Catherine Flagg handled publicity for the Dallas Art Fair.