

Doran, Anne and Andrew Russeth. *Fair's Fare: Highlights From NADA New York*, ArtNews, March 3, 2017, online

ARTNEWS

Fair's Fare: Highlights from NADA New York

BY Anne Doran and Andrew Russeth POSTED 03/03/17 1:33 PM



Thomas Kovachevich at Callicoon Fine Arts, at NADA New York 2017.

NADA New York runs at Skylight Clarkson North in Downtown Manhattan through Sunday, March 5. On opening day, March 2, Anne Doran and Andrew Russeth perused the fair's aisles, selecting their favorite works. —The Editors

ANDREW RUSSETH

Though I miss shooting hoops outside Basketball City, I am a fan of NADA's new location. It's almost comically spacious—there's room to breathe, and there are long sight lines. It is so big, in fact, that it feels like the booths should be bigger.

The art? It's a mixed bag, as it is at every art fair. One of my favorite quotes comes from Alex Katz, who once said, "If we only wanted to look at masterpieces, we'd spend all our time at the Frick." It's true! We go to the fairs to see what working artists are cooking up, and what enterprising dealers are trying to draw attention to—or at least trying to to sell. Most of what is shown won't survive 10 years, much less 100, but it's always a pleasure to wade through it all.

A strong contender for best in show was a suite of **Thomas Kovachevich** paintings that New York gallery Callicoon Fine Arts presented in a booth with black walls. Kovachevich, who appeared in Documenta 5, back in 1972, and who then spent decades working as a doctor in New York, has been on the rise in recent years, with stunning shows of elegant and unabashedly beautiful post-minimal works that he makes with tape, Post-It notes, and other types of paper. In these new paintings he is going big and exuberant, painting what seem to be mysterious underwater creatures—plants, maybe, or undiscovered species of jellyfish—on black corrugated plastic. We could be deep beneath a fantastical sea, or reveling in a psyched-out lost scene from *Fantasia*. They radiate light. They astound.

Paintings keep getting fatter and denser and heavier. One of these days they're going to fail off the wall and become sculptures, but that day has not quite arrived. The Lower East Side's 247365 Gallery has **Brian Belott** paintings festooned with impressive mounds, plus the odd calculator or bouquet of glowing fiber optics. At ADA Gallery of Richmond, Virginia, **Whitney Oldenburg** has impressively volumetric paintings that she's loaded up with rocks and paint. In the most dramatic case, she has combined a bunch of beachballs covered with pacifiers to make something that resembles a cluster of naval mines and painted the whole thing black and white so that it suggests a sad Felix the Cat. She has managed a rare feat: a painting that is both menacing and funny.

The 247365 gang also has a remarkably overwrought (I mean this as high praise) science fair-like wall piece by a three-person collective that goes by the name **Bobo**. It's filled with stuff—two small screens flashing text that tells stories about adventures on the open ocean and on the surface of Mars, collages with all sorts of wild digital characters, and vitrines harboring whimsical little sculptures made with everything from clay to canned coffee. Ashley Bickerton would approve. There's a lot going on here, and even more going on behind the scenes. Bobo is also a band, I was informed, and it used to be a gallery in Baltimore about a decade ago. What's next? I have no clue, but I suspect you could stare at this thing, with equal parts delight and repulsions, for quite a while.

I second Anne's enthusiasm for **Paul McMahon**, an under-sung macher of the Pictures movement. The display of his mordant, wild appropriations of found images from the 1970s and '80s was a superb surprise at the booth of Brooklyn's 321 Gallery. As Jefferson Beauregard "Jeff" Sessions III clings to power in Washington D.C., it was an especial pleasure to see an image of the Washington Monument scrawled with DIRTY/FILTHY/SLOPPY/SCUM. Someone give McMahon a proper museum show!

The tiny project booths are not easy to deal with, but the young New York-based artist **Sydney Shen** nicely handled the one belonging to Toronto gallery Roberta Pelan, setting up a concise display that has at its center a piano bench whose top has been opened to reveal a maze sized for mice. Messages have been carved into the seat. PUNISHMENT, it says in one place. MetroCards punched with holes litter the ground, looking like cheese. The back wall has two takeout containers that have been turned into clocks, each filled with bread, which will presumably grow moldy over the next few days. Systems of order—of time, of movement—are rotting here, and perhaps being replaced by something darker.

Over at the booth of the reliably freethinking Shoot the Lobster (of New York and Los Angeles), another young artist, **Athena Papadopoulos**, of London, kept the abject, horror-movie mood going nicely, stringing up with chains cushiony blood-red sculptures that recall fine cured meats, each emblazoned with all sorts of patches, including one of a rather frightening spider. They're great for aficionados of charcuterie and extreme bondage and, believe it or not, painting—their surfaces are very attractive. Papadopoulos also has a warm-looking coat made of fluffy swaths of pink, red, and blue, and hulking keychains that you can sling over your shoulder.

And Company, which is based in New York, has thrilling work by Raúl de Nieves, who had a show at the gallery last year and recently staged [a masterpiece of an absurdist performance at the Kitchen](#). Among its offerings are a craggily totem, adorned with every color of effervescent fake pearls, and a wall piece, made of painstakingly arranged fake jewels. In the latter work, a man in a beret-like hat is pushing a giant flaming cross—a religious symbol, a slice of orange, a sun?—into the sky. Its look suggests the effortless splicing together of medieval art and the dance club. Near the bottom of the work, it bears a single word, DILIGENCE—a good message to impart to viewers in a week overflowing with art.