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Lisa Levy performing outside of East Hamptons Studios for Scope Hamptons, 2006



Henry Darger
At Jennie Richee, Escape
1955-60
Ricco/Maresca Gallery



Gallery owner/director Anthony Spinello
in front of *Ladies* by Adriana Farmiga

SCOPE HAMPERED?

by Ben Davis

For an art fair in New York's most exclusive resort getaway, **Scope Hamptons 2006**, July 14-16, 2006, seemed awfully far from the beach. The second annual installment of the event traded last year's cozy headquarters at Southampton's Hampton Hall [see "**Un-Hampered**," July 19, 2005] for the more remote, much larger East Hampton Studios -- a hanger-like space located off of a wooded back road, about an hour's walk from the water, to accommodate an expanded roster of exhibitors, growing to 56 this year.

On the first day, traffic in the big hall was pretty limited. Waiting hopefully were scrappy local spaces (like **Fireplace Project**), forces to be reckoned with from Chelsea (like **André Schlegel**, **Temporary Inc.**, **Danzinger Projects**, **Gasser & Grunert**, **Julie Saul Gallery**, **Sixtyseven**, and so on) and Williamsburg (**Dam**, **Stuhltrager**, **Jack the Pelican Presents**, **Metaphor**), several dealers from other U.S. cities (including **The Happy Lion** from L.A., or **Lemon Sky** from Miami) and a handful from Europe (like **White Trash Contemporary** from Hamburg, **Galerie Schuster** from Frankfurt, or **t1+2** from London).

Arriving at the venue, the public face of Scope was provided by two "special projects" that kept with the lovably funky vibe that the one-time hotel fair franchise is known for: performance artist **Lisa Levy**'s goofy act, covering the weekend's events in the persona of an air-headed TV correspondent (the results are available as a special DVD from **Moti Hasson Gallery**); and our old friend **Eric Doeringer** at a stand by the entrance, with his increasingly thin shtick of selling cheap knock-offs of works by famous artists (prices are now up to as high as \$200 for a bootleg that requires more work on his part).

Inside the fair, on the other hand, there was a growth of blue-chip art on view -- surprising for a fair that prides itself on "searching out that rare beast, the emerging artist," as a plaque at the entrance trumpeted. Though he is a rare beast indeed, **Henry Darger** (1892-1972) is no unknown quantity, as the \$80,000 price tag for a cool and strange canvas depicting an army of little girls with bayonets prodding two captive men at **Ricco/Maresca Gallery** attests. Elsewhere, it's hard to get less "emerging" than works on paper by **Willem de Kooning** and *Vogue* photos by **Annie Liebowitz**.

For some, there's synergy in all this, and enough big spenders seemed to come in over the weekend to make most of the dealers content. Despite the light traffic on the first day, the booth of Miami's **Red Dot Project**, run by the personable **Anthony Spinello** (who says he plans to change his space's name to the **Spinello Gallery** soon) sold through most of its inventory by the time it was all over. Collector **Nancy Portnoy** picked up a word painting by **Lou Laurita**, as well as two works from the booth's highlight, a series of charcoal and ballpoint pen drawings by 27-year-old Argentine artist **Santiago Rubino** -- very much in keeping with Darger's autistic esthetic. Rubino obsessively returns to images of wide-eyed, dark-haired, coolly alien female faces. The fact that the works are executed on yellowing antique paper enforces a feeling of looking into someone



Works by Santiago Rubino at Red Dot Projects/Spinello Gallery



Kyong Jeon
On Marriage
2005
The Proposition



Ginna Triplett
Bite
2005
curcioprojects



Work by George Stoll at Lightbox

else's distant world (and gives the works a very real haunted quality -- Spinello happily rummaged through a folio of unframed works to show off found pencil sketches of orgies inscribed on the backs of Rubino compositions). They were selling for \$600-\$950.

At **The Proposition**, Jersey-born **Kyong Jeon** pulled off a similar personal cartoon world in 2005's *On Marriage*, a rectangular composition featuring two wedge-shaped armies of dark-haired boys and girls facing off, in yellow and lavender underpants, respectively, on offer for \$4,500. At the booth of **curcioprojects**, a Brooklyn space founded by **Robert Curcio** to promote figurative work, **Ginna Triplett**'s flashe paper on canvas works brought together a combination of imagery drawn from Victoria's Secrets catalogues and kids cartoons, inspired by the artist's conflicting experiences as a young mother, run together into a near-abstract chaos. 2005's large, pink-and-black *Bite* was \$6,500.

Elsewhere, a decorative kind of post-minimalism played on the posh beach resort esthetic, as in the work of **George Stoll** at L.A.'s **Lightbox**. Stoll offered a shelf of what appeared to be plastic cups, arraigned by color. On closer look, the pieces are made of molded wax, cast from common Tupperware, given a jittery, hand-crafted look. The set was \$18,000. At Moti Hasson, **Shirley Shor**'s work made from two interlinked silver triangles, each with a screen in the center playing an ever-shifting array of colored triangular sections changing dimensions, brought new media art to the space above the fireplace. It was \$16,000, and sold on the first day.

Less clearly destined for conventional display were the works at **Sara Tecchia Roma New York**. These included **David Fried**'s *Self-Organizing Still-Life* (2006), a small black platform with five white spheres of varying sizes with sensors in them that respond to sound, causing them to move around and bump into one another in the presence of noise, forming unpredictable configurations, on offer for \$15,000 (just keep this form of art away from the cat!) Still more quirky were the salt-based works by Brit **Clement Price-Thomas**. The most ambitious of these employed salt crystals laboriously built up around curled neon tubes to form something that resembled a pulsing heart. The sculpture was shown in a wooden case, with clamps and exposed wire in evidence, and had a strait-from-your-dad's-shop look that was charming. It was \$12,000.

Also vaguely unconventional was the "shopping cart" project of Buffalo-based **Julian Montague**, a regular at New York's **Black and White Gallery** (the artist is due for a solo show at the gallery's new Chelsea space soon). Montague's large color images of carts, found discarded at locations all over the U.S. and sometimes beautiful in their wreckage, were \$2,500 each -- though it's an additional \$3,500 for the professional, color-coded "system chart" that outlines the typology that Montague worked out, carefully indicated by labels in the bottom corner of each picture. The project manages to be at once bohemian and all about slick packaging.

Such a delicate balance also characterized the promising **Patte Loper**, a professor at the **School of the Museum of Fine Arts**, Boston, whose small video was shunted to the bottom of a wall near the floor at the stand of New York's **Lyons Weir Ortt Contemporary**. It displayed a short, hand-drawn animation of a deer, combining the most guileless of nature imagery with a look of being intensely worked-over and processed (the image is, in fact, appropriated from a **David Attenborough** nature documentary). The strangely mournful work was called *Goodbye 20th Century*, and was \$100, in an edition of 100 -- a notably nimble piece of art amidst the deadening atmosphere of much of the rest of the fair.



Shirley Shor
See Saw
 2005
 Moti Hasson Gallery



Clement Price-Thomas
Camberwell Beauty
 2003
 Sara Tecchia Roma New York



Julian Montague
System Chart
 2005
 Black & White Gallery



Patte Loper's *Goodbye 20th Century* at
 Lyons Weir Ortt Contemporary

This feeling seemed to stem from some growing pains on the part of Scope, with the franchise caught doing two things at once: it began as a series of satellite fairs for galleries left outside of the big commercial extravaganzas (**Frieze** in London, the **Armory Show** in New York, **Art Basel** in Miami), yet now Scope mastermind **Alexis Hubshman** seems to be positioning the franchise to target the establishment taste of luxury resort super-collectors, with talk of new Scopes in Monaco (!) and Saint Moritz (!!). In interview, Hubshman comes a hair's breadth from dissing his stalwarts in his enthusiasm at bigger players coming on board. Yet given the global glut of fairs, whether the luxury locale turn is a good idea is up for debate (**Joao Ribas** notes in the *New York Sun* that Scope Hamptons merely broke even this year, while last year it actually lost money.)

The perfect symbol of this strain came in the form of a special curated show by **Lee Wells** titled "(future perfect)," intended to give Scope Hamptons the prestige of a non-commercial injection of cutting-edge art. The mini-show's concept -- focusing on avant-gardes that haven't even formed yet -- was a bit much, yet **Hackworth Ashley's** vomitously tacky paintings of half-dressed celebrities shooting rays of laser light from their wee-wees -- one especially notable image featured a crouching **Mary Kate Olsen** with a penis, groping two giant gems -- provided a highlight to the fair, of sorts.

Yet organizers literally stuck this show to the side, in a narrow service corridor -- throwing the "future" in with trashcans and unvacuumed carpet. Whether this gesture proves prophetic remains to be seen.

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Hackworth Ashley

Mary Kate

2005



Critic and curator Joao Ribas explores
"(future perfect)"