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A ROVING ART FAIR FINDS A HOME COURT ADVANTAGE NADA NYC Art Fair at Basketball City

The roving NADA art fairs have set up camp at some distinctive places, including an oceanfront hotel in Miami Beach and a former factory in Hudson, N.Y. But they have found their best home yet on a set of basketball courts on the Lower East Side. On Thursday, a day before the fair opened to V.I.P.'s at Basketball City, a complex on Pier 36, gray carpet covered the hardwood, and white wallboard had been erected to create neat grids. The scoreboards were still up, but that somehow felt right in this packed week of fairs, shows and events.

The new setting makes sense for logistical reasons: It's convenient to the Frieze Art Fair, the week's main destination on Randalls Island, and to many of the Lower East Side member galleries of the New Art Dealers Alliance, known as NADA, a nonprofit collective that's been active since 2002. The location separates NADA NYC from fairs of similar size, like the Independent and the Outsider Art Fairs (both in Chelsea, in the building used by NADA last year). And it gives the 75 exhibitors room to spread out, with nice, wide corridors for works that benefit from a little more openness.

Not everyone seems to want, or need, the space. The booths come in two sizes: single and double. Accordingly, the works tend to be as small as a laptop or as big as a sofa; there isn't much in between, which might be said of the New York gallery scene in general now.

Among the petite objects of fascination are glaze-splattered ceramics by the talented abstract painter Joanne Greenbaum (at Kerry Schuss), Polaroid landscapes evoking sounds by Stephen Vitiello (at American Contemporary) and a tiny reproduction of Munch's "Scream," poised atop a pedestal, by Lisa Kirk (at Invisible-Exports).

Collectors with a little more square footage may covet Mary Weatherford's Frankenthaler-meets-Flavin paintings at Brennan & Griffin, with bars of neon laid over multicolored stains; or the frenetic assemblages of Debo Eilers at On Stellar Rays, Rauschenberg combines for the Tumblr set. David Brooks's "Stress Tests," suspended roof fragment extracted from a bigger homage to Gordon Matta-Clark, is among the large installations commanding the aisles.

The variation in scale disguises some of the conformity that's crept into art fairs at every level. Mira Dancy's Expressionist-style nudes in violet and black with touches of gold glitter, at Night Gallery, stand out because they dare to invoke the figure. So do the bewitching paintings by Michael Berryhill at Kansas, which depict Picasso-esque perversities in sunny palettes like Bonnard's. Far more prevalent, however, are cerebral, cautious-

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looking abstractions, albeit with interesting textural twists, along the lines of Ruby Sky Stiler's grooved plaster reliefs at Nicelle Beauchene, or Molly Smith's cones and wall collages of handmade paper at Kate Werble.

Adventurous processes distinguish some otherwise safe works, like the fuzzy-looking wall drawing by David Scanavino at Klaus von Nichtssagend (made by patting pigmented paper pulp directly onto the booth wall) and the delicate graphite shadings of Marsha Cottrell's ominous interiors at Petra Rinck (which, it turns out, come from a laser printer.)

Projects like these assert that fabrication is for the big fairs: There may be enough art here to fill several basketball courts, but at least there are still artists making things without layers of factories and assistants.

A more powerful reminder of NADA's scrappy-upstart origins is a memorial to Daniel Reich, the art dealer and early NADA member who committed suicide last December at 39. Inside a small booth, portraits of Mr. Reich in his signature oversize glasses hang on bright yellow walls. Here too are writings by his former gallery artists Paul P and Christian Holstad, as well as wall text alerting viewers to a public memorial on Tuesday, a few blocks away at the Abrons Arts Center on Grand Street.

Mr. Reich's personal, eclectic touch and his way with small spaces are sorely missed. You hope that his approach will continue to guide NADA as it transitions from pickup games to the big leagues.