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## SCENE &amp; HERD

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Kate Sutton at a symposium celebrating sixty years of Documenta

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## Newest Headlines

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Frick Collection Adds Three Members to Board of Trustees

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art Appoints New Director

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Lance Kinz (1951–2015)

Sonoma Valley Museum of Art's Executive Director Steps Down

Charles Goldstein (1936–2015)

Winner of Chicago Architecture Biennial's Lakefront Kiosk Competition Announced

Andrew Edlin Gallery Postpones Event as Wall Collapses Next Door, Injuring Two

Given \$10 Million to Create Affordable Studio Space, New York Nonprofit Eyes Two Bronx Sites

## Sleepless in Seattle

SEATTLE 08.05.15

Left: Vulcan senior curator Greg Bell. Right: Spencer Finch's *Sunset* ice cream truck. (All photos: Dawn Chan)

**IF YOU'RE FROM SEATTLE** (I am), you're apt to think that the city is home to people who springboard from abject scrappiness straight to global domination. You can start in a garage, without a major label deal, or without any venture capital, and your two-tailed mermaid can end up on every street corner in the world, and teens in Japan will wear flannel because you did.

The week reaches highs of nineties as the Seattle Art Fair—the first in many years—gets underway. Mount Rainier looms portside, like a mutant white meringue, as we touch down in SeaTac. The fair's venue: the WaMu Theater, which sits in the shadow of the Seahawks' stadium at the foot of downtown Seattle's glass-and-steel towers. There, dealers catch their breaths at booths they've managed to install in just over twenty-four hours. The night before, the Zwirner team hosts a cocktail event for about eighty in the Queen Anne district. Blocks away, organizers of the artist-run alternative fair Out of Sight gear up for a big bash later that evening. At the main venue, food trucks park at an indoor-outdoor space, serving Paleo, Thai, and vanilla ice cream the color of sunsets. The ice cream is free, thanks to *Sunset*, a project by artist Spencer Finch that combines elegant conceptual underpinnings with family fun. (The work's also made appearances in Saint Louis and New York.)



Left: Curator Leeza Ahmady. Right: Catharine Clark Gallery's Anna Bunting and dealer Catharine Clark.

SeaFair's taking place this weekend too. It's a sixty-year-old tradition: A hydrofoil race shuts down Lake Washington, and Blue Angels fly in formation, ear-splittingly low. A collector friend from California cringes, "It sounds like a war zone." Among the booths, though, there's a refreshing lack of bloodletting. Catherine Clark, for instance, is approached by a supporter worried that New York's Forum Gallery is showing Al Farrow, whom Clark represents. Laughing, the San Francisco dealer promises that there are nothing but good feelings. "We loaned them a piece!" (The two galleries host a joint talk Sunday about Farrow's work.)

As many have noted, Microsoft mogul Paul Allen is one of the driving forces behind the fair's revival. Allen's venture, Vulcan Inc., has announced several recent initiatives to inject the Seattle art scene with more capital and energy—"to bring attention to the Northwest and the great art scene here," as Mary Ann Prior, the director of art collections at Vulcan, explains.

Curiously enough, one of Allen's recently revealed initiatives—a contemporary art center named Pivot Art + Culture—will be stationed within Allen's Institute for Brain Science: a world-class research headquarters

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tasked with mapping the human mind. As we sit on a bench at the fair, Prior, a London native, says that, in part, the juxtaposition will “engage the audience that we have down there, which is primarily e-commerce, tech, and biomed.” Pivot thus far has been billed as a nontraditional art center: “We’ll probably be more inclusive than just having flat things against walls.”



Left: Dealer Elizabeth Leach. Right: Gagosian’s Graham Dalik, Andrea Pemberton, Deborah McLeod, and Candy Coleman.

On opening night, Prior and Greg Bell, Vulcan’s senior curator, are among those circulating the aisles. Seattle’s mayor turns out too, and apparently Starbucks executives. Of course, Allen himself stops by. The place is a mass of several thousand visitors, trays of beef carpaccio and mushroom arancini, and a free-flowing bar. The curated portion of the fair, organized by Leeza Ahmady, features works like Ho Tzu-Nyen’s *Cloud of Unknowing*, a portrayal of cloud spirits that mixes campiness and poetry.

Over at Gagosian Gallery is a team culled from his outposts around the world: Rysia Murphy from New York, Graham Dalik from London, and the powerhouse seller Deborah McLeod from LA. They’ve brought an ambitious group: Chris Burden, Thomas Houseago, and a Frankenthaler that McLeod bills as “probably the most beautiful and important thing in the building.” At Paul Kasmin, a paper-towel-and-resin motorbike by Will Ryman becomes “a photo op,” in the words of one bystander. Zwirner brings work ranging from eight thousand to two million dollars, says director Robert Goff, and by Friday, their Oscar Murillo work has already found a buyer.

Ann Hamilton photos and sculpture are highlights at the booth of Portland dealer Elizabeth Leach. The affable Leach starts spreading news about a new Portland art event, Converge 45, that sounds like it’ll handily complement the city’s popular TBA festival. Launching next year, the new not-for-profit festival will also be supported by Vulcan through the fair’s organizers. Said Leach, “It’s along the lines of Prospect, or Münster, or even aspiring to be like Documenta in the sense that we’ll hire a nationally known, internationally known curator who’ll set a theme, and then there’ll be exhibitions all over the city in nonprofit spaces.”



Left: Dealer Greg Kucera. Right: PDX Contemporary Art director Jane Beebe.

At the center of the fair, Greg Kucera, a longtime Seattle presence, has installed his signature asymmetrical walls. He sells a beaded sculpture by Sherry Markovitz and one of several William Kentridge pieces—which prompts him to remove the remaining ones in alarm. (He has to make sure he has enough artwork left for the Kentridge show he has planned this fall.)

Kucera is one of five dealers on the fair’s committee. The others: Eric Gleason of Kasmin, Clark, Mariane Ibrahim-Lenhardt (whose offerings include lovely work by ruby onyinyechi amanze), and James Cohan—who takes his role seriously enough to come in from the East Coast and man a booth hung with art by Spencer Finch, Tabaimo, and Fred Tomaselli. How did Cohan get involved? “We’re very good friends with the people at Vulcan,” he says, adding, “As no gallery wants to be an outlier, forming a strong dealer committee made it easier to attract a solid group of galleries.”

Dealers talk about seeing the weekend as an educational opportunity of sorts. Elizabeth Sullivan, director at Pace, points to an array of monographs they’ve set up as library–reading room. (The gallery finds buyers for some animated videos by Japanese collaborative teamLab, which Sullivan says they’re bringing to the West Coast for the first time.) Similarly, Cohan mentions, “If we meet new people and connect with our old friends in the area, it’s a win for us.”

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Left: Pace director Elizabeth Sullivan and sales assistant Justine Chausson. Right: Dealer James Cohan and James Cohan Gallery director Laura Pinello.

It seems like galleries offering art at lower price points are doing particularly well, as are local galleries: Winston Wachter has sold five pieces by David Brooks favorite Dustin Yellin. Otherwise, as one New York gallery confesses, "We've sold a little, but it's not overwhelming yet."

Still, everyone trusts, or at least suspects, that the art market could boom in this city. It should be rich enough to patronize contemporary art, and progressive enough to appreciate it. (Take, for example, the compost bins throughout the fair.) So if there are long stretches of silence between the ding of cash registers, everyone's taking it in stride. One gallery representative comes back from eating the best oysters of her life. Another runs to grab a food-truck lunch, and then contemplates getting some Finch ice cream. "It's like a bright orange," he says.

"It's the color of sunsets," I say.

"It was the exact color of my Thai food," he responds.

I make my way to the truck: The woman in the cart greets me with a warning: "You have to understand: It's an art project first, and an ice cream truck second. So sometimes it comes out a little soupy."

— Dawn Chan



Left: Seattle Art Museum curator Catharina Manchanda. Right: Seattle Art Fair director Max Fishko.



Left: Ameringer | McEnergy | Yohe director Miles McEnergy. Right: Negar Farajani's *Made in China*.

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