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First view

Economic downturn prompts stand-out booths

Less commercial climate results in "curated" presentations

As dealers struggle to stand out in the shrinking art market, increasing numbers are presenting single-artist exhibitions at the Armory Show, which opens in New York to invited guests on Wednesday, and to the public on Thursday. Others are presenting themed and curated group shows instead of unrelated selections from the gallery roster.

For some, this is clearly a response to the dire financial situation: while dealers struggled through Monday's snow storm to hang their booths, the Dow Jones index plummeted to its lowest mark for 12 years. Paris dealer Frank Elbaz, of the Galerie Frank Elbaz (P94/973), will show the sculptor Gyan Panchal. "Due to the economic situation, we're not expecting to do much business, so I'd rather make a beautiful and coherent booth. The main purpose of my presentation is to meet curators and collectors," he said.

One of the most striking solo shows is devoted to Hans Josephsohn, a late-blossoming 89-year-old sculptor whose massive, archaic bronzes greet arrivals near the fair entrance in front of the large stand taken by Hauser & Wirth of Zurich and London (P94/601). "We could have brought some discreet paintings and sold them easily," said associate director Joel Yoss. "But we don't like to do things the easy or the obvious way. We like to take risks—and hopefully we will sell some things at this fair." The largest Josephsohn works are on sale for \$210,000, but smaller wall reliefs are on offer at \$10,000, reflecting the tactic adopted by most galleries at this year's Armory of offering works at lower price points.

London dealer Simon Lee (P94/1504) has shifted to one-artist shows at fairs in the past two years. "Sales volumes are lower, but one feels somehow more satisfied," he said. "It is so unsatisfactory to show one of this artist and one of that—it can end up looking like a dog's breakfast. Fortunately I don't depend on art fairs for sales. I am more interested in them being extensions of the gallery." At the Armory Show he will present a stand devoted to New York-based painter Gary Simmons.

Some dealers say they have



Solo shows: Gary Simmons at Simon Lee (top), Hans Josephsohn at Hauser & Wirth

opted for solo shows for straightforward commercial reasons. London dealer Max Wigram (P94/708) believes he has an excellent opportunity to sell his exhibition of monochrome oils on board by James White, priced at about \$16,000 to \$25,000. "These are beautiful paintings—new and fresh to the United States, but an artist who is already well supported by collectors in Europe, and by some in New York who collect emerging artists."

Wigram believes a solo show can have real impact at a fair. "The market is not going to play such a big role any more, which means people will have to look in depth. My gallery represents a generation of artists who have nothing to do with the tomfoolery of the last few years."

Scott Speth of Western Exhibitions, Chicago, (P94/740) also believes in making a strategic impact. "We're a young gallery with young and emerging artists. There are so

many well-known national and international artists here, so we figured the best way to tell our story was to have a one-man show." Western Exhibitions is showing John Neff, a 34-year-old photographer.

Galerie Eigen+Art of Berlin and Leipzig (P94/1051) is presenting a one-man show for the third year running at the Armory, convinced that it is the best way to introduce emerging artists to the US market. This year's artist is Matthias Weischer; two paintings were already on reserve to collectors who had seen them via jpeg before the show even opened, at \$160,000 and \$38,000 each, according to gallery director Gerd Harry Lybke.

Other single-artist shows include Christine Hill at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts of New York (P94/951); Dasha Shishkin at Zach Feuer of New York (P94/1151); Eva Berendes at Jacky Strenz of Frankfurt (P94/743); Maria Finn at The Apartment in Athens

(P94/966); and Anton Henning at Galerie Bob van Orsouw of Zurich (P94/900).

Museum-style group shows include Paris space Galerie Lahumière's (P92/312) presentation "Paris 1950-60—the Roots" in the new modern section on Pier 92, featuring geometric abstract art; Sicardi of Houston (P92/353), showing Latin American kinetic art of the 1960s; and a group show of small works by women artists including Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Kiki Smith by New York dealers Amy Wolf and Marianne Elrick-Manley (P92/346). Studio la Città of Verona (P92/230) hired curator Marco Meneguzzo to direct "Italy Post-Contemporary", featuring nine artists led by Morandi and Fontana. Gallery owner Hélène de Franchis said: "I wanted to present a less commercial show with high-quality work representing the 40-year history of my gallery." Bruce Millar, Brook Mason, and Charmaine Picard

New Pier 92

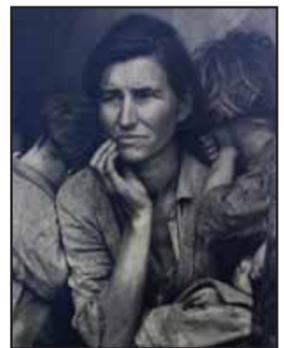
Art of the Depression... ...the 1930s, that is

Collectors hoping to leave the deepening recession outside when entering the Armory Show's new modern Pier 92 today will find themselves confronted by a number of booths showing art from the Great Depression. Works include social realist paintings and photographs created under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other programmes initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal of 1933-39.

At Forum Gallery's booth (P92/328), dealer Robert Fishko has a selection of WPA-era works by artists such as Reginald Marsh, Ben Shahn and Philip Evergood. One piece by James Daugherty, *Study for Hartford Armory Mural*, around 1920, was a draft of a proposed—and never executed—painting for a WPA building; two other 1920s works by obscure WPA artists Henry Arthur Miller and Samuel Woolf depict, respectively, an anti-war rally and a political convention (both \$15,000 or less).

"This art is something that people can always identify with—and maybe at this moment in a special way—and that's why we decided to focus on that aspect of our programme," said Fishko.

At Alan Koppel Gallery's booth (P92/444), which also features Yayoi Kusama and Gerhard Richter, one of the signature pieces from the WPA era is on display: Dorothea Lange's iconic photograph *Migrant Mother*, 1936, here as



Migrant Mother, 1936

an exhibition print for her 1965 MoMA show (priced at \$175,000). Dealer Bruce Silverstein (P92/240), who is also showing two works by Lange, said he thought the works might appeal to collectors as a not-so-funhouse mirror of the present moment.

Michael Rosenfeld (P92/237), who is showing Charles White's *Study for Chicago Public Library Mural*, a beautiful and moving WPA-era painting from 1940, said the period may be especially attractive to collectors, both for its historic resonance and the abundance of works still available for purchase—or undiscovered. "People are definitely taking notice of it again and there are a lot of great works out there," he said. Of course, just because they were made during the Depression doesn't mean they're cheap. White's painting is going for \$450,000. **Andrew Goldstein**

It's not just the Armory that has a taste for the modern

He may be one of the world's most expensive living artists but when it comes to spending his own millions, Jeff Koons turns to the classics. The New York-based artist has been revealed as the owner of this 1969 Picasso painting, *The Kiss*,



currently on loan to the National Gallery in London as part of its exhibition on the Spanish artist (until 7 June). Koons bought the work at Sotheby's New York in May 2008 for \$17.4m. Inspired by a Henri Rousseau self-portrait and a portrait of his wife, both of which were owned by Picasso, it is one of the master's final depictions of lovers in a passionate embrace. Other works recently bought by Koons include a large limewood carving of St Catherine, dating from around 1505, by the German 16th-century sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider (acquired at Sotheby's New York for \$6.3m in January 2008) and an 1866 Gustave Courbet nude purchased at Sotheby's London in June 2007 for £1.64m. C.R.

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