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The New York Book Fair at P.S.1, Oct. 2-4, 2009



AA Bronson, director of Printed Matter and organizer of the New York book Fair 09



The scene at the New York Book Fair at P.S.1, Oct. 2-4, 2009



Josh Smith's suite of 473 silkscreens in "Learn to Read Art" at the New York Book Fair at P.S.1, Oct. 2-4, 2009

BOOK PARTY by Deborah Ripley

P.S.1 art center out in Long Island City seemed to revert back to its previous incarnation as a public school this past weekend, when it was taken over for the first time by the latest incarnation of the annual New York Art Book Fair. The halls echoed with excited voices as if it were an art-world parent-teacher night, with artists, book publishers, art dealers and fair visitors filling the former classrooms, all for the sake of the "artist's book." The packed three-day event, Oct. 2-4, 2009, presented an incredible 205 exhibitors, a third more than last year, hailing from 26 different countries.

P.S.1 offered plenty of room on three floors, allowing Printed Matter, the fair's organizer, to present a simultaneous conference on contemporary artist books, a collaborative event with the Art Libraries Society of New York. The panel discussion "Is Print Really Dead -- Artists (Still) Making Books," for instance, was moderated by Whitney Museum art librarian Carol Rusk, while "The Classroom," a room organized by Museum of Modern Art librarian David Senior, promised "lessons of impromptu spirit" and offered informal talks by various exhibitors.

The book fair also boasted two special exhibitions. "Learn to Read Art: A History of Printed Matter" featured Printed Matter editions and materials from its inception in 1976, including one particular standout, a suite of 473 silkscreens done by **Josh Smith** in 2006. The other was "**Richard Prince**: Calling All Readers," an installation of books, posters and ephemera organized by rare book dealer and new Printed Matter boardmember John McWhinnie.

The John McWhinnie-Glenn Horowitz booth -- the team have been collaborating on cutting-edge art and publishing exhibitions for several years at venues in East Hampton and on East 64th Street in Manhattan -- was conveniently located nearby. A signed, vintage copy of Prince's *Menthol Wars* from 1980 was available for \$5,000; the book was also reprinted especially by Printed Matter for the fair and could be purchased for \$8.00.

The move of the book fair to P.S.1, which of course once was an abandoned New York City school, was the brainchild of artist and fair organizer **AA Bronson**, executive director of Printed Matter. Bronson is no stranger to the paranormal potential of abandoned structures -- this past June he conducted a séance in a dilapidated house on Governor's Island entitled the "Invocation of Queer Spirits." Bronson's spirit certainly permeated the book fair, since he appeared not only as the curator of "Learn to Read Art," but also as the artist responsible for a new edition entitled *AA through the Looking Glass* (2009), a set of 12 silver-leafed frames with different quotes that recall Lewis Carroll (\$20,000 per set, published by Michele Didier) as well as a the "pornographer" behind the 2009 reprint of his smutty 1970s novel *Lena* with a new cover design by Richard Prince.



"Richard Prince: Calling All Readers" at the New York Book Fair at P.S.1, Oct. 2-4, 2009



Red76 member Zefrey Throwell with artist Melissa Barrett



Bjorn Hegardt, editor of the Berlin-based *Fukt* magazine



Just a word about art and smut -- happily for this reviewer, plenty was on hand in the "Friendly Fire" section of alternative magazines from all over the world, always one of the most interesting features of the fair. I received a torn page from a naughty paperback with salient portions underlined from a member of Red76, an artist's collective whose mission is to sell used books and then employ the proceeds to publish free smut under their "Pop-Up Book" title.

First time exhibitor Bjorn Hegardt, the editor of the Berlin-based *Fukt* drawing magazine, was excited to connect with so many art librarians (there for the conference). Among the many gay zines was *They Shoot Homos Don't They*, *Butt* magazine (a return exhibitor), and finally *Pinups*, a publication that mimics 1950s muscle magazines, featuring hirsute and fleshy men, laughingly referred to as "Alternabears." Regis Trigano was pleased that fair-goers were snapping up the Summer-Fall 09 edition of his continuing erotic diary, entitled *For Lonely Adults Only*.

Just down the hall, installed on the deck of **Leandro Erlich's** *Swimming Pool* (a prior P.S.1 installation), was the stand of Electronic Arts Intermix. EAI director of public programs Josh Kline was directing fairgoers downstairs to see a great selection of classics from the EAI archives continually running in the P.S.1 theater.

Several publishers were debuting new works during the fair. Three Star Books publisher Melanie Scarciglia was showing a limited book edition *Object* with 61 hole-punched photos of **Haim Steinbach's** more well-known images (\$150). A further set of seven digital photos culled from the book, in an edition of 10, was available for \$10,500. Parkett had a new edition of Josh Smith mixed-media unique book collages available for \$3,300.

Upstairs, Carolina Nitsch had a new multiple published for the New Museum by **Ai Weiwei** entitled *Kui Hua Zi (Sun Flower Seeds)* -- a glass jar filled with 1,000 porcelain sun flower seeds, sculpted and painted by hand, available for the opening price of \$7,500. Brian Butler of Brain Multiples in Los Angeles was just finishing a catalogue with **Judy Ledgerwood** and was offering original gouaches by the artist for the special fair price of \$500.

For fairgoers on an austerity budget, there were low-priced multiples and even giveaways. Purchasers of a \$20 fair preview ticket received a signed limited edition **Tom Sachs** multiple *Six-in-one Screwdriver* (yes, a screwdriver), and the Spanish museum MUSAC had big posters by art world hotties **Elmgreen & Dragset** for \$30. Pointe d'Ironie, the French printed matter publishing concern funded by Agnes B and curated by Hans Ulrich, had new giveaways by **Walid Raad** and **Koo Jeong-a**.

Not only did the New York Art Book Fair do a service to all those involved with artists' prints, multiples and books, it also reminded the art world of something too often forgotten in the down economy: art fairs can be fun. Kudos to all involved.

DEBORAH RIPLEY is Artnet's print specialist.

Artist Haim Steinbach and Melanie Scarciglia at the Three Star Books stand, with Steinbach's *Object*



At Carolina Nitsch Contemporary Art, Ai Weiwei's new multiple *Kui Hua Zi (Sun Flower Seeds)*, published by the New Museum



Los Angeles dealer Brian Butler with a Judy Ledgerwood gouache