

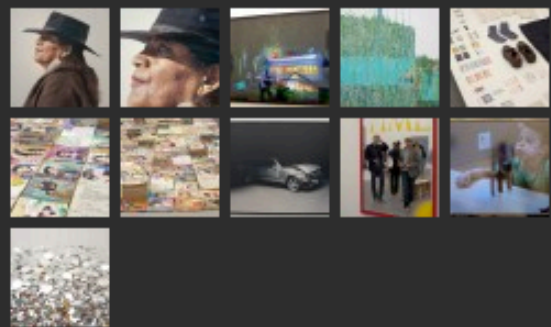
randian, *When New York Friezes Over*, text/ Casey Drake, May 27, 2013

randian 燃点

When New York Friezes Over

>> print

This year's incarnation of the **Frieze Art Fair** was palpably safe, featuring many stalwart galleries from around the world exhibiting tried and true works. Even the visceral grit of Katy Grannan's large format portraits was rendered sanitary by its introduction into a space of artwork du jour, an extension of Salon 94's previous exhibition of Grannan's work a few years back. And while an art fair may not be the best venue for galleries to strike out into the aesthetic unknown, even the work of David LaChapelle, perennial baroque satirist, barely managed to leap from the mass of blue-chip work that flanked visitors to the fair.



[See all photos \(12\)](#)

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Katy Grannan, "Anonymous, Bakersfield, CA 2011," 2011 [Salon 94]. Katy Grannan, 《匿名者，贝克斯菲尔德，加州2011》，2011 [Salon 94]。

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Too much work, too disorienting of a space, too few challenging endeavors. At least foreign galleries have a reasonable excuse for showing established artists, as transportation costs are much more of a limiting factor. Boers-LI Gallery managed to sell a piece by Xue Feng, entitled Background 28, while the terse stall employees of Long March Space assured me that they "had done very well." Leo Xu Projects brought a surprisingly sparse yet fairly interesting body of work by Liu Chuang. An ongoing project, "Buying Everything On You," features an arrangement of "found objects" which Liu acquired from migrant workers in Shenzhen. Collected and displayed along a flat table, pocketknives, train tickets, watches, and half-used teeth-bitten pens appear as historical artifacts, quotidian objects of a long-past time. One is forced to contend with the nature of detached personal items, an oscillation between empathy and physical distance. Liu Chuang and Leo Xu Projects were a welcome reprieve from the very polished work that surrounded them.



Liu Chuang, "Buying Everything On You," [Leo Xu Projects] 刘窗, 《收购你身上的每一件东西》, [Leo Xu Projects]

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Liu Chuang, "Love Stories," [Leo Xu Projects] 刘窗, 《爱情故事》, [Leo Xu Projects]

The general take away from the fair is that if you're not using a mirror as a canvas, then the contemporary art scene wants little to do with you. There was a surprising dearth of sculpture (aside from Paul McCarthy's massive inflatable balloon dog, an apparent jab at the Koonsian obsession that has afflicted the art world of late), and video pieces were virtually non-existent. Yet I did manage to find one looping piece by Mircera Cantor (D16 Gallery, Tel Aviv). A young boy ritualistically yet playfully stacks three knives on end in front of his face, then proceeds to deflate his puffed cheeks, blowing the standing cutlery over. Before the rattling has time to cease, the loop returns full circle to the boy brazenly standing the knives on end once again. Additionally, Tino Seghal's performance piece tempered the fair's general aesthetic with a certain visceral fluorescence. These pieces like Liu Chuang, and a few others, were few and far between (not coincidentally the products of smaller galleries), buried among larger galleries like Gagosian that were frankly, uninspired.



Mircera Cantor, "Untitled," [D16 Gallery, Tel Aviv]. Mircera Cantor, 《无题》, [D16画廊, 特拉维夫]

Overall, the venue was well-run, typical long lines for overpriced food, but the Bier Garten did manage a quaint Brooklyn-esq feel amid the sterility of white. Similarly an homage to the now extinct Soho restaurant institution FOOD appeared at the fair along with a randomly exclusive speakeasy, a sort of installation/performance piece by Liz Glynn. Even in its second year, Randall's island was an interesting location for Frieze NY, given that the usual visitors to this East River island are weekend softball leaguers and those visiting the mental institution on the south end of the island. Perhaps some of the insanity so often associated with great, avant-garde work could have been of service to the fair. Despite its general dullness, this thematically segregated endeavor did manage to bring far-flung galleries together for both aesthetic conversation and self-congratulation. Ticket prices and the inconvenience of its location kept the more casual art goer from attending; instead, one was treated to the artistically devout, the culturally topical, and those who managed free admission.

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Frieze Art Fair New York tent on Randall's (Wards) Island. 纽约弗里兹艺博会上在兰德岛 (Wards) 的帐篷

One could argue that art fairs have no democratic nor popular mandate. They are put on by the art community for the art community. With a few lackluster years tarnishing the once sterling reputation of the Armory Show, New York has few events like this left. Chelsea, as a gallery neighborhood, is well established and the barriers to entry are both financial and reputational. With Soho all but closed off to anything but flagship retail, and the Lower East Side yet to live up to its gritty name, Frieze offers a welcome annual infusion of international art to the city. To their credit, Frieze had an entire section "Frame" devoted to showcasing galleries established than six years ago, Leo Xu Projects included. While still an expensive undertaking, exhibiting at Frieze offers the less-known galleries across the world to have their artists heard, seen, felt, whatever their medium requires. There remains a certain pompousness to art fairs and their transparent commercial imperatives, but in the end, they are a necessary evil for the artists of galleries both big and small.



David LaChapelle, "Gas Am Pm," chromogenic print, 2013 [Paul Kasmin Gallery]. 大卫·拉切贝尔, 《Gas Am Pm》, 彩色印刷, 2013 [Paul Kasmin 画廊]