

Vice, *Is a Gallery-Sharing Model the Answer to Art Fair Fatigue?*, Text/Saul Anton, July 11<sup>th</sup> 2017.

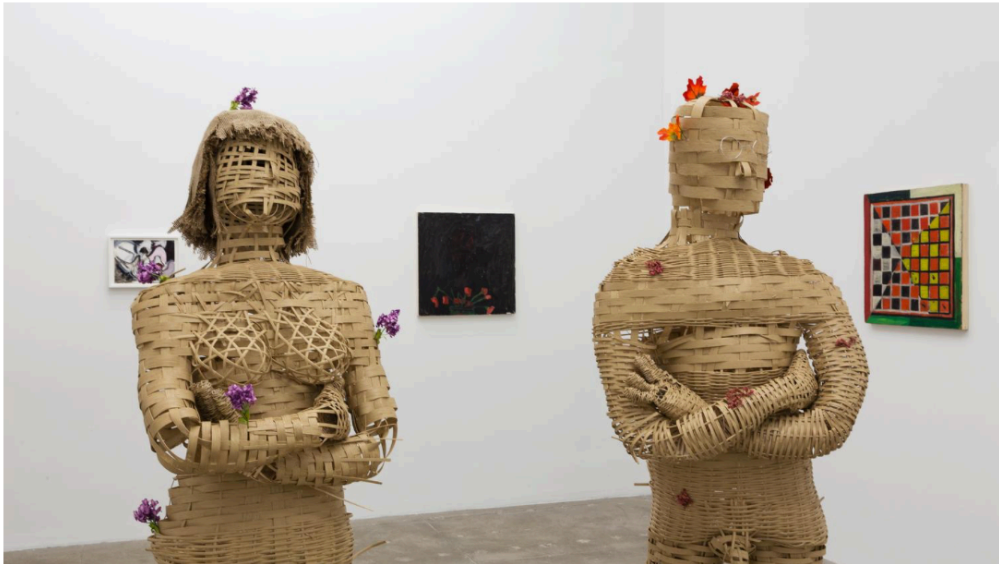


# Is a Gallery-Sharing Model the Answer to Art Fair Fatigue?

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Installation view: What Pipeline at Andrew Kreps Gallery. Courtesy Andrew Kreps Gallery and What Pipeline

**Saul Anton takes the tour of this year's Condo New York, a joint venture from Lower East Side dealers Simone Subal and Nicole Russo that sees Manhattan galleries share their spaces with colleagues from around the world.**

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*Manhattan art galleries aren't closely identified with a spirit of share-and-share-alike—square footage remains at a premium as all but the wealthiest fight for their clean, well-lighted spaces—but this summer's Condo New York sees sixteen New York dealers throw open their doors to twenty international counterparts. Sidestepping the overstuffed art fair model, these pioneers have found a different way to use what they have. Saul Anton plotted the common ground.*

Starting on June 29 and running through the end of July, a handful of mostly Lower East Side New York galleries are doing something one might not expect of supposed competitors: they're getting together. Condo New York is a cooperative exhibition program in which out-of-town galleries are invited to exhibit work in the spaces of their Manhattan cousins, and is the handiwork of Lower East Side gallerists Simone Subal and Nicole Russo. After taking part as a guest in the second installment of Condo London, organized by Vanessa Carlos of Carlos/Ishikawa gallery, Subal approached Russo to see if she'd like to help her put together a New York edition.

Together, they reached out to friends and colleagues, ending up with sixteen New York galleries who have invited twenty out-of-town galleries to show in their spaces. The list includes Chelsea's Metro Pictures and Andrew Kreps Gallery, who are hosting galleries from Shanghai and Detroit, respectively, as well as Bridget Donohue, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Bureau, Simon Preston Gallery, Rachel Uffner Gallery, and Callicoon Fine Arts, which are hosting an array of galleries from Berlin, Dublin, Glasgow, Guatemala City, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Paris, San Juan, and Vienna. One of the appeals of the cooperative format, says Russo, is that it offers smaller and mid-sized galleries support in challenging times. "This is an opportunity for galleries to work together to become stronger, realizing that we all have the same goal of putting together strong exhibitions and programs," she explains.

According to *The Art Market 2017*, a report produced by Art Basel and UBS, sales of postwar and contemporary art have dropped by 18% since 2014, the greater proportion of that decline happening at the lower end. This is hardly news to most participants in Condo. Gallerist Mitchell Alkus puts it succinctly: "It's much easier to sell one work for \$20,000 than twenty works for \$1,000." In 2016, sales for dealers with turnovers under the million-dollar mark declined, while the converse held true for their higher-end competitors. Unsurprisingly, a number of well-regarded galleries have closed over the past two years, including New York's CRG Gallery, Lauren Gitlen Gallery, and Murray Guy, Los Angeles's ACME and Culver City Gallery, and London's Vilma Gold.



Mary Ann Aitken, *Untitled*, 1989. Oil on masonite, 16 x 24 inches. Courtesy What Pipeline

But a dip in sales isn't the industry's only current challenge. Over the past decade or so, the precipitous expansion of international art fairs has changed the habits and the mindsets of collectors young and old. Once upon a time, to see contemporary art, you had to go to New York or, in a pinch, London or Zürich, where you were obligated to visit galleries over an extended period in order to learn about artists and their work. You needed to read—or at least flip through—magazines such as *Artforum*, *ARTnews*, and *frieze*, and show up again and again at openings until a gallerist trusted you to honor the reputation of one of their artists.



No longer is any of this the case. Nowadays, the art world follows the money. Art Basel has events in Miami Beach and Hong Kong. This past March, New York hosted the Armory Show and Volta New York, The Art Show, and a cluster of satellite fairs, including the refined Independent and scrappy Spring Break. Many gallerists shelled out for booths at two or even three fairs in the hope of snagging those collectors who increasingly forego visiting galleries altogether, preferring the one-stop shopping experience of a "curated" selection featuring a mere hundred-plus galleries.

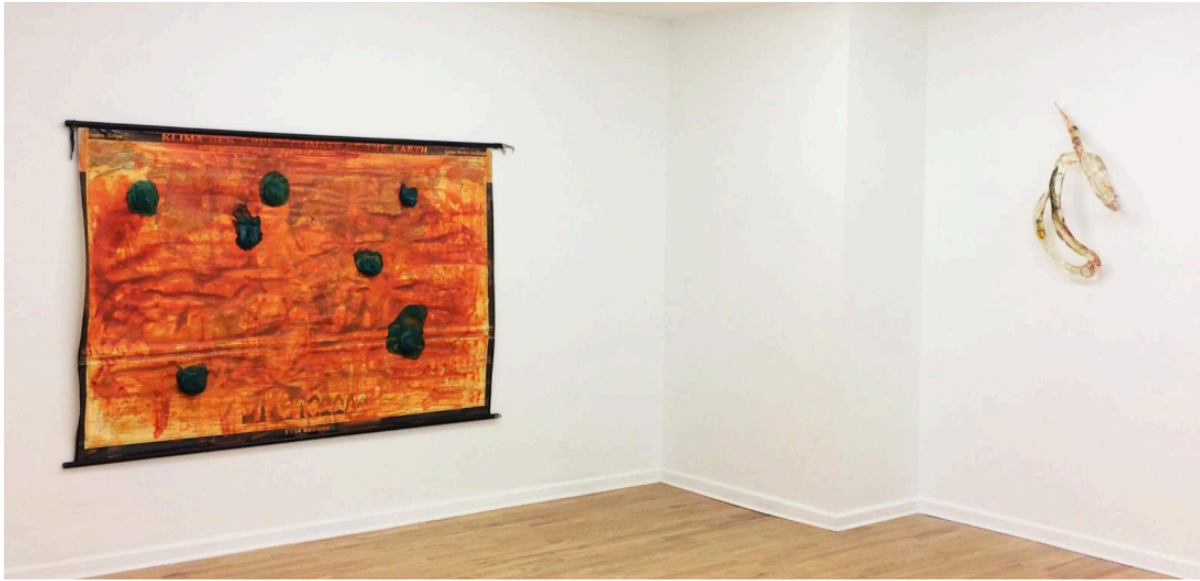
But according to *Artforum* publisher Charles Guarino, artists aren't well served by fairs: "If you were an artist, would you rather your work be seen in a riotous art fair, awash with work of every kind, or in a gallery, where every consideration for your work, especially its dignity, is a given?" New York gallerist Mitchell Albus, who is hosting the Parisian gallery High Art, sees the decline in foot traffic in recent years as unhealthy for the long-term prospects of contemporary art. "That was where the culture happened. People would come by and talk to one another," he remembers. "I don't see that happening much anymore." According to High Art director Jason Hwang, dealers are obligated to adapt to these new conditions. "We're now in an era when a doctor living in Quebec City sees something on Instagram and simply wants to buy it. We have to confront and adapt to that."

This is where Condo's significance resides. For Albus and Hwang, the cooperative show has already been a great success. Not only has it already made for a sizeable uptick in foot traffic, it has also driven sales. According to Subal, the value of a cooperative model is clear: "The collaborative idea—opening up spaces and pooling resources—feels like a more viable and sustainable model right now. It also refocuses the attention on the actual gallery space, which is still where many of the most interesting things happen." The sentiment is echoed by other Condo participants. Pamela Echeverria, director of Labor, a Mexico City gallery exhibiting at Gavin Brown's enterprise, sees its value in the intangibles of long-term relationships and sensibilities: "The most important thing Condo offers is the time it gives me to spend with my colleagues. It allows me to strengthen relationships with people I respect and spend time with people I love."



Vivian Suter, *Untitled*, 2017. Oil and pigment on canvas. Courtesy Simon Preston Gallery

The opportunity to see work they know about but haven't examined up close, and to inhabit the aesthetic and critical skins of colleagues they admire, are key to the ongoing education of any gallerist, Echeverria reminds us. Ultimately, these factors are what sustain a dealer's success. For Russo, the work of Vivian Suter, exhibited at Simon Preston Gallery by the Guatemalan gallery Proyectos Ultravioleta, was a discovery. Suter's large, free-hanging canvases reflect the colorful and open rural landscape in which they're made. Andrew Kreps, whose Chelsea gallery is hosting Detroit-based What Pipeline, echoes Russo's feeling about the work of Mary Ann Aitken, a painter little known beyond the Midwest, whose small, grungy tableaux of everyday things exhibit a light, humorous touch: "It's an opportunity to learn about what's happening outside my usual stomping grounds."



Left: Olga Balema, *Climate of the Earth* ( *Klima der Erde*), 2016. Map, latex, and pigment, 86 1/2 x 57 inches. Right: Nancy Arlen, *Glass Cat*, 1981 Cast polyester resin with foil and pigment. Courtesy Mitchell Algu Gallery

Condo, then, serves up a notably diverse body of work. At Simone Subal's gallery on the Bowery are works from Tanya Leighton's gallery in Berlin and Gregor Staiger's in Zürich. Staiger brought several small, intense oil paintings by the more-often extravagant British painter Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, who was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2012, while Leighton is exhibiting Alexandra Domanović's witty *Snowbird* and *Pomegranate* (both 2017), two plywood sculptures sporting the buff, elegant arms of cosmopolitan women. High Art, showing at Mitchell Algu Gallery, is presenting a group show loosely organized around the theme of natural history and artificial worlds that includes *Chienne*, a lovely oil painting of a multicolored curtain by Dan Burkhart dating to 1983 but reworked from 2011 to 2016, *Churn* (2017), a sculpture featuring marine organisms suspended in a resin cube by Mark Prent, and Olga Balema's over-painted map *Climate of the Earth* (2016).

In the second iteration of Condo London, Carlos/Ishikawa founder Vanessa Carlos showed Oscar Murillo's *Human Resources* (2016). A large-scale installation composed of *papier-mâché* figures of Latino immigrants sitting around bleachers built into the gallery interior, the work appears to take a swing at current anti-immigrant feeling in the US. By placing the viewer into the midst of these figures, Murillo effectively reverses the way we tend to think about art objects, suggesting that it is art that hosts us rather than vice versa. Condo New York stays true to that perspective.

## LEO XU PROJECTS

Saul Anton is former Senior Editor at *BOMB* Magazine, and writes frequently about contemporary art and culture. He is the author of *Lee Friedlander's The Little Screens* and *Warhol's Dream*.

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