

Liste: Quality Uneven but Spirits High

By Sarah Douglas

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Photo by Sarah Douglas

London's Dicksmith Gallery sold this painting by Alistair Frost for £5,000 (\$8,140).

BASEL—Collectors, established dealers from the not-yet-open [Art Basel](#) who'd finished setting up their booths, and others, as per annual tradition, converged at the preview of the 13th edition of the **Liste** fair yesterday, and many of them, in common with quite a few of the dealers inside, may well have had knocking around in their heads a phrase from a recent edition of the insider newsletter *The Baer Fax*: "...if galleries do not have a strong June (at fairs etc) this long summer of no sales could lead to a plethora of non-reopening galleries in September." Liste, being a fair for young dealers, most of whom can be assumed to be running their galleries relatively hand to mouth, could seem especially prone to the market's recent sea changes. As [Joel Mesler](#) of L.A. gallery **Mesler&Hug**, a Liste exhibitor, put it before the fair opened, "galleries operate on two things — cash flow and hope — and if Basel doesn't go well for some it takes out both."

And yet, those prognosticators intent on hearing in Liste something that sounds like a death knell for young galleries and their (for the most part) young artists will be disappointed. If sales didn't exactly go gangbusters on opening day, as they had in boom years, dealers, although nervous, generally kept spirits high, and some managed to make enough sales on day one to feel assured they might just cover costs, a feat in these straightened times, when more and more galleries are considering moving art fairs from the profit-making to the advertising and marketing categories.

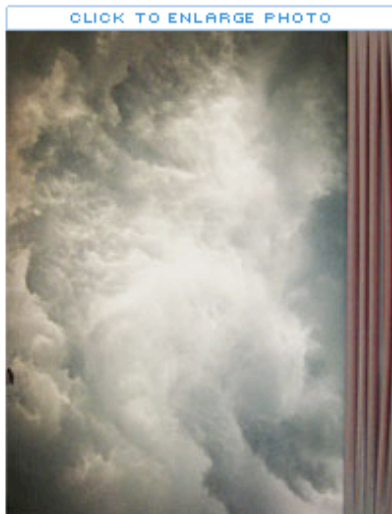


Photo by Sarah Douglas

This mixed media piece by Simone Gilges sold at New York's Foxy Production for \$3,500.

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Uneven as it may be — and it is more uneven in quality this year than it's been in years past — the fair, Basel's original satellite and the only one now fully endorsed by the main fair, is still considered by galleries to be a good context in which to be seen. As new exhibitor [James Fuentes](#), from New York, who has brought small, exquisite, and reasonably priced (just a couple thousand dollars apiece) works by [Alejandro Cardenas](#), put it, "I'm excited to do this fair. It was the first real satellite fair."

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Fuentes added, "Even if you're just talking to people, this is better than being back home in your gallery, where you might see two people come by in a day."

As for the crowd at the opening, some major American collectors, like [Michael Ovitz](#), have skipped Basel this year, as one Liste-goer pointed out, but other usual suspects from the U.S. were still in attendance. There were adventurous New York collectors like [Shelley and Phil Aarons](#) and [Susan and Michael Hort](#), as well as other art-interested folks, like [Joel Wachs](#), head of the **Andy Warhol Foundation**. And dealers from down the street at Art Basel making the rounds included [Adam Sheffer](#) of New York's **Cheim and Read**, [Courtney Plummer](#) of New York's **Lehmann Maupin**, [Tim Blum](#) of L.A.'s **Blum and Poe**, and [Massimo de Carlo](#), of his eponymous Milan gallery. Artist [John Baldessari](#) was on hand for the preview, eying prints on silver paper by [Emilie Pitoiset](#) at Paris gallery [Lucile Corty](#).

L.A. dealer [Javier Peres](#), who also has an outpost in Berlin, was doing brisk business in pieces by [Mark Flood](#), a 52-year-old Texas-based artist who until recently has worked in relative obscurity. (Peres showed Flood earlier this year, and the artist currently has his New York premiere at **Zach Feuer Gallery**, a show that has been widely, and favorably, reviewed.) By the end of the preview day, Peres had nearly sold out his booth of Floods, priced anywhere from \$5,000 to \$25,000, the priciest among them being the lace paintings (large, elaborate, abstract works made from layers of lace and paint). Less expensive were paintings from another series, which a colleague of Peres's referred to colorfully as Flood's "brash send-up sign pieces," with metallic grounds emblazoned with slogans such as "Another Painting."

Next door to Peres, New York gallery Foxy Production had parted with several works by Berlin-based artist [Simone Gilges](#) by early afternoon, editioned prints for \$3,500 and unique pieces with collaged-in fabric for \$5,400. And upstairs the L.A. gallery **Overduin and Kite** had sold almost every one of its small abstract paintings by Ohio-based artist [Scott Olson](#), priced at \$4,000 apiece.

Unusually for Liste, one of the most satisfying displays was of furniture. Tucked away in a corner of James Fuentes's booth are some hyper-clever pieces by 64-year-old artist **William Stone**, whom Fuentes showed earlier this year. There is a table with a top that seems to float — two of its legs are made of wood and the other two, improbably constructed of what appears to be flimsy metal wire — as well as an ottoman with a Transformers-like versatility — in a few quick steps, it morphs into a chair.

Eying Stone's work, Fuentes observed, "It's the kind of sensibility that grows old gracefully, like Johnny Cash."