

Less-crowded satellite fairs reveal labors of love

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Charles Ritchie's Astronomical Chart, Cactus, and Lamp watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink on Fabriano paper, 2003-14; at BravinLee programs at UNTITLED.

MIAMI BEACH — The satellite fairs UNTITLED and Miami Project offer an alternative to the bustle of Art Basel Miami Beach.

The pleasure of being in Miami hits you head-on as you approach UNTITLED over the sand dunes at 12th Street and Ocean Drive. Inside the tent, a wall of windows overlooks the sea and light floods the all-white decor and wide-open aisles.

White makes an ideal backdrop for the centerpiece of the booth allocated to artist-book publishers onestar press and Three Star Books. The brightly colored volume by Swiss artist John Armleder is encrusted with glitter.

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"Untitled (Sand/Sea - Alameda)" by James Sterling Pitt, 2013 acrylic on wood, 23.5 by 18 by 2.5 inches, at Steven Zevitas Gallery at UNTITLED.

Nearby, at Galerie Richard, Armleder's abstract paintings grasp sparkling, playful shapes in thickly impastoed surfaces. Sharing the booth are newly discovered monochromatic abstract paintings by French artist Jean Carzou, made in the 1930s before he developed his figurative surrealist style.

Steven Zevitas Gallery is displaying Bay Area artist James Sterling Pitt's three-dimensional "drawings" and visual diaries. The freestanding painted wood "drawings" consist of intersecting lines rimmed with frames.

The diaries are covered with watercolor sketches for the sculptures and dated notes recording his impressions about the day. Pitt's work, which resembles electrical schematics, is related to his brain's recovery from a devastating car wreck in 2003, Zevitas said.

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Speaking of diaries, it's no use trying to decipher the crabbed writing surrounding Charles Ritchie's tiny paintings at BravinLee programs. The artist uses watercolor, pencil and crayon to capture the vacant interior of his home and environs in the dead of night. The mysterious notes "are not meant for us," gallerist Karin Bravin said.

Ana Cristea Gallery and artist Shaan Syed deserve a medal for making lemonade out of lemons. When the London-based artist's giant abstract paintings got held up in transport, leaving the gallery with little to display for the first two days of the fair, Syed staged a performance modeled after John Lennon's and Yoko Ono's 1969 bed-in in Montreal.

Miami Project

Al Farrow's 2010 sculpture of a Protestant church is constructed of gun parts. Inside is a page of the book of Revelation and a facsimile of Albrecht Durer's 15th century woodcut Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. At Catharine Clark Gallery at Miami Project.

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"A Jolly Company," a 10- by 19-inch digital laser print on paper, from Richard Selesnick's and Nicholas Kahn's Truppe Fledermaus series at Kopeikin Gallery at Miami Project.

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Both fairs run through Sunday.

Like UNTITLED, Miami Project at Northeast 1st Avenue and Northeast 34th Street in Miami invites a more leisurely pace.

David Shelton Gallery devotes a wall to work that began with Joey Fauerso's video of a trip down the Guadalupe River in Texas. She created 198 abstract paintings based on the footage, scanned the paintings, and ran the prints four times through a printer to produce the final versions. Then she made a companion animated video from the prints.

Steve Yancar's works at Nancy Margolis Gallery also are labor intensive. First, he shoots photographs of films playing on television. He prints the photos in black and white on a low-grade printer and drafts a new composition from the imagery. Finally, he painstakingly executes the piece in pencil and black vinyl.

Humor — and deadly seriousness — infuse Al Farrow's realistic sculptures of religious buildings and objects at Catharine Clark Gallery. He constructs them out of guns, munition parts, shell casings, bullets and missiles, in a running commentary on the partnership of war and religion.

Visitors slogging through fair week might feel an affinity with the characters in Richard Selesnick's and Nicholas Kahn's Truppe Fledermaus series at Kopeikin Gallery. The fictitious cabaret troupe travels the countryside staging absurd performances in abandoned landscapes. The partners' staged and manipulated photographs documenting the company seem to have stepped straight out of a Magritte painting.