

Art Fairs

4 Things You Can't Afford to Miss at miart 2017

From design collectibles to context-based conceptual pieces, this small fair has it all.

Hili Perlson, March 31, 2017

Since his takeover was announced in 2016, it was clear that Alessandro Rabottini, the new director of the Milan International Fair of Modern and Contemporary Art, or miart, had big shoes to fill.

“Milan had everything, it was all there before, but Vincenzo de Bellis [the fair's former director, now curator at the Walker Art Center] really created a network,” Italian writer and critic Barbara Casavecchia told artnet News at the fair's preview yesterday. “He made it into a collective effort.”

In a city with an enviable wealth of historical museums, collectors, and galleries but no public contemporary art museums to its name, coordinating this collective effort is no small feat. It is up to the private foundations like Pirelli HangarBicocca, the Trussardi foundation, Fondazione Prada, or the Fondazione Carriero to bring contemporary art to a wider audience.

And the fair, following the complete makeover that de Bellis had given it, managed to pull together the city's private and public institutions to collaborate and create the scene's palpable buzz.

With not only the fair's reputation but that of the entire city at stake, the question remained: what can the new director bring to the table? Attracting more international attention seems key.

Rabottini made slight tweaks to the fair's curated sections, and enhanced the number of invited speakers, pulling in big names such as Kaspar König and Elmgreen & Dragset to a series of panels discussing the global biennials and their impact. Envisioning new things for miart, he also managed to give the endowment for awards a sizeable boost through new collaborations, catapulting the fair to the position of a co-producer of future art works.

Here are some of the highlights from Rabottini's first edition:



Barbara Kasten and Jessica Stockholder, presented by Bortolami and Galleria Raffaella Cortese at the “Generations” section, miart 2017. Photo by Hili Perlson.

What: Barbara Kasten & Jessica Stockholder

Where: at the “Generations” section, curated by Douglas Fogle and Nicola Lees

Presented by: Bortolami, New York and Raffaella Cortese, Milan

“Though we would always say hello to each other at openings, it was only last year that we decided it was time to become better acquainted,” Kasten writes in the statement accompanying the joint presentation, describing how the fellow Chicagoans had visited each other’s studios recently, only to find out shortly after that, coincidentally, the curators of the “Generations” sector at miart wanted to present them together.

Here, Kasten’s meticulously built stage-size compositions and the intensity of light and color in the photographs she takes of them reverberate in Stockholder’s sculptures, with their unexpected materiality and erratic forms. The shared

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sensibilities in the distinct work of Kasten (born in 1936) and Stockholder (born in 1959) are in fact so pronounced that it is remarkable that they have only been paired together now.

While most of the photographs by Kasten shown here are from the early 1980s, (and cost around \$20,000) a more recent work titled *Transposition 14*, from 2014, that deals with the aging of matter, is brilliantly paired with a lighting sculpture by Stockholder, which vaguely resembles a giant wind chime (going for €45,000.)

“We are both involved in asking questions about the limits of the forms that contain our work,” writes Stockholder of this artistic dialogue. “At the same time, we care deeply for the inventive and evocative space of the picture, and how that space has the capacity to reify emotional life.”