

# 12/11/2008: "SCOPE MIAMI 2008"

Upon entering, you realize that you're at the forefront. Like everyone else, you came to scope out the joint and quickly see that it's more cutting edge than most art fairs. And so, from step one, you comb this contemporary space almost in a trance.

I barely got through the front door when I saw Costa Rican artist Lucia Madriz on her knees in a corner studiously working on a mixed media installation she calls, "EAT."

Lucia and a friend were carefully gluing about 100 pounds of popcorn kernels onto a four foot by six foot long spread of paper with the word "EAT" printed on the front. It was clear that placing the paper canvas on the floor was the most effective way to create the piece. Madriz is concerned about the increasing use of corn and other cash crops for things like ethanol to power our vehicles rather than feeding the world's hungry.

"One day, we're gonna look at our food and we won't know whether it's edible or not," said Madriz, whose also very concerned about genetically modified food. She told me that the goal of her installation, which she was creating before my very eyes, was to bring the plight of the world's hungry into focus ... even if it meant that she herself had to use food to make her point.

"In reality, we need food," Madriz said. "Food is a very valuable material ... the main purpose of food is to keep us alive! Hunger is an issue that still needs to be resolved."

As you can see, I got a consciousness raising lesson right off the bat here at Scope Miami 2008. With that, I thanked Lucia for her time, snapped a few photos of her and continued on.

As I wandered and looked at various booths, I remembered that I moved mountains to be here. Looking back, the biggest mountain wasn't money and whether I could afford the vacation. My mind, my thought process, was the biggest stumbling block. Once you finally get over yourself and those ever present, stubborn thoughts of limitation, mountains begin to fall before you and you get a crystal clear view of what lives behind them. For me, that turned out to be a socially-conscious artist and 100 pounds of un-popped popcorn. But wait, there's more.

I came upon two more socially awakened artists ... Admir Jahic and Comenius Reothlisberger of Basel, Switzerland. They were here promoting their project called, "WITHOUT YOU BABY, THERE AIN'T NO US." It consisted of 32 works on paper (24" by 30" each) that are color-pencil and crayon recreations of notable YOUTUBE.com pages.

"(We did this) because of all the absurd things you can find on YouTube, but there are also serious things," said Reothlisberger. The artists, who call themselves, "The Invisible Heroes," pointed out two of their favorite YouTube video recreations that include, "Sexy Lady Going Nude With Thong," which at their time of creation had gotten 26,531,932 hits.

They also showed me, "Bitch," which shows two dogs mating. It had received 2,237,930 views when they found it. "It's like fast food for the brain," said Jahic. "It's like trash!" But he also quickly showed me the YouTube page called, "1929 Wall St. Stock Market Crash," which, needless to say, has a certain poignancy given our current economic turmoil. "Hello, it's NOT the end of the world," said Jahic, explaining that the world survived 1929 and will probably get through the current crises. "It's going to get better," he added.

Ultimately, the artists say they're using a primitive medium like paper to show how a digital phenomenon like YouTube has influenced 21st century society worldwide. On this second day of the fair, the guys told me they had already sold 22 of the works on display which went for \$300.00 each.

here through Scope is reminding me that the most important thing in life is to be in the moment. Yes, it's a cliché, but it still has legs. Here I am surrounded by art, artists, dealers and art lovers, but this experience shouldn't be about whether you love or hate art fairs. It's about being - PRESENT. I'm here and I'm awake. I'm in a hyper-state of being. Is there any other way to be? I'm in this space where I'm being bombarded with images, faces and all kinds of things. It's a hectic, glorious spin of life - and here I am right in the middle of it. I could be at a football game, crowded shopping mall or lovely restaurant having dinner with friends. It's all the same. Who cares that your team lost or that the mall was unbearable or the dinner was overcooked or the art may have sucked. These things are not even blips on the radar of your life. What's important is that we're here for the ride - we own our personal space - our eyes are open, we're thinking clearly and we're awake to life. Art constantly teaches me that it's not just about the visit; you have to make the entire trip count. Yes, getting here was a headache. Life can sometimes be a big, fat headache. However, headaches remind us that we're alive and in the thick of it.

This is what I think when I think about Scope. It's very modern and forward-thinking. Just so that you won't think I'm exaggerating, I stopped and asked art dealer Nancy Silverman-Miles to give me her thoughts about this fair.

"The caliber is cutting edge " she said. " And more contemporary. The work is more individual. People attending these fairs say there's more energy here." Another dealer told me he thought that Scope simply, "takes more risks."

You know, one of the great things about vacations is that you know at the end of them, you'll return home with a fresh perspective, a new insight - all because you took the risk. After a few days or so, your life comes back into focus and you're in the driver's seat again. You've spent quality time (hopefully) with your authentic self away from the demands of necessary evils. In short, you stepped outside your personal box.

Given that and all of this challenging art around me, all I can think is that we're not born to live artificially. This is for real. GET OUT THERE! DO IT! SEE IT! BE IT! MAKE IT HAPPEN! GET CREATIVE! GET OVER YOURSELF! You're most alive when you put yourself at the forefront. You may as well. It's not like we get to come back and do this again. Is this art imitating life or life imitating art? Either way, the clock is ticking and the heavens are watching.

I have to keep reminding myself to walk through life the way I walk through art fairs ... determined to discover something new and willing to make an ass of myself in the process. We can all do that! Look at it this way, our greatest compliment will come when future historians look back at us through their monacles and microscopes and shout with utter fascination ... "WOW! THEY DIDN'T MISS A THING! THEY BLEW IT OUT!"

If nothing else, they'll be able to say that we had our eyes open.

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