

Post Card from Venice

by Marie – Louise Brulatour Mills

Unlike the 52 Venice Biennale running until November The first Venice Art Fair presented a handsome adjunct to this prestigious biannual event during the opening weekend.



August Rylands, the son of the well respected Phillip Rylands, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Gallery in Venice, and his authoress wife, Jane, has galvanized 53 exhibitors to a purpose built space complete with latest lighting on Tronchetto, a small island known for its dry land before you get to the lagoon. Is it possible Venice could use another art fair running, at least for the first few days, of the prestigious 52 nd Biennale? Yes because it is another market. It is not the hot bothered fan fair that confuses the mind and wounds the feet with running to see all the pavilions of the 110 year old biannual fair where today chocks at much of the exposed stuff loosely termed art. Instead Cornice, the name for the art fair proposes a luxurious easy way to see new and older artist whose work is on display. My personal quest, after seeing the Biennale is the daring question, can anyone draw or is it all computer photographic imagery with dots and dashes scribbles and scraps to supposedly spark

something in the viewers psyche. Maybe it's the pocket of the Hedge Fund managers who have made money and often cultureless assume they can buy culture in the form of modern art thus pumping up prices but hardly quality. "And the british art mafia" said one artist friend attending the Biennale who asked not to be named added "It get worse and worse every year". Fortunately I found the answer, a concurrent Venice Art Fair.

At Cornice, The First Venice Art Fair, I found true artists, who besides expert draftsman ship exercised, a knowledge and respect of art history handsomely woven with creativity little seen in the age of the machine. Both are sculptures, both foreign.

J.Johnson Gallery of Jacksonville City Florida showed one artist, Mexican sculptor, Javier Marin. Marin works in monumental size using the anatomy of the human body and often perplexed and contorted individual faces as his subjects. His medium is his more native clay, a humble medium that transforms to a majestic one as his gigantic faces flooded with feeling and often grief and a dignified despair remind the viewer of a cross between the Republican Roman Laccous Group at the Vatican Museum in Rome with hair (the latter were serpents) and ancient Mayan sculptures with their distinctively high cheek bones and thick lips.

Viewers, who know Mitorij bronze faces and body that dot PietraSanta, Rome

and Venice might equate Javier's work with his well known European sculptor, but the difference in expression is clear and distinctive as Javier digs deeply into the soul extracting inner feeling often buried under placid calm facades of Mitorij.

For the traveller to Madrid the Cibeles Fountain in front of the American Plaza of the Americas reflects his obvious treasury of talent, as a cluster of handsomely articulated bodies while held in space and place. Glide down the torrent of life and living enabling the on looker to place himself in the flow of life.

Venetian Galleria Michela Rizzio represents an American sculptor Barry X Ball whose concept of integrating a strong background in art history and applying 21st century techniques such as scanning, and laser cutting before hand chiselling then minute dental tools to refine his images.

"His work begins with himself or now a friend who sits still for about an hour for a cast" said gallery owner Michela Rizzo. The material used is not the one time plaster cast, rather alginate with making it moderately less suffocating. After this torturous hour for any Closter phobic photos are then taken of the person's head skull and face from many angles.

"After the plaster mould is made, Ball the hand carved plaster positives are digitised using a three dimensional laser scan" pronounced Laura Steward Heon, Director and

Curator of the Site Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Continuing to explain the intricate process the three dimensional process is used to manufacturing which gives more depth and possibilities of embellishment than more known two dimensional one used in architects offices for example.

"Once a virtual positive is generated by the scan of the real positive, Ball and his assistants commences the laborious manipulation of the virtual model" Heon adds.

Seeing and experiencing Ball work at a time when the contemporary art world seems to be manipulated by men in high places whose goal is to promote and foster art which is both irrelevant, violent and reflects a lack of any artistic training, this Cornice Art Fair in Venice

revived the idea there are artists left who indeed don't make the biennale because they are frankly too good.

Three other artists worth mentioning. Canadian Ed Pien his huge lacy cut outs of trees are captivating are represented by Pierre Francois Ouellette of Montreal. The Baik Song Gallery of Seoul Korea showed three painters. Koh Changyu in basically primary colors were reminiscent of the German Expressionism, a la suffering but zen devoid of décor behind the grieving pair. Galerie Kai Hilgemann in Berlin shows Stephen Wilks series of simple pig drawing topping the London Parliament and other amusing aspects of pig versus people power, the theme based on Orwells Animal farm. Hurrah for the alternative Venice Art Fair where I DID find art.