

Half a decade in, the Dallas Art Fair is evolving into something fresh, fun and unique to the art fair world. Balancing the best of local talent (Artspace 111, Barry Whistler, Conduit Gallery, Cris Worley, Kirk Hopper, Talley Dunn, Galleri Urbane and Valley House) with more than 80 up-and-coming and established galleries from New York, Chicago, Paris, London, San Francisco, Korea and Japan, there's an "art for everyone" approach that appeals to casual viewers and serious collectors alike.

Attendees at DAF, which runs through April 14 at the Fashion Industry Gallery, will find plenty to amuse the eye (and occasionally ears), but serious buyers need not go home empty-handed. Shopping for Basquiat, Botero, Haring, Hirst or Warhol? You'll find them here. If you prefer to discover the next generation of envelope-pushing talent, you'll discover that too.

For gallerists joining the fair for the first time, the city's innate hospitality is a draw. And DAF's free Wi-Fi and extra storage space for art do make a difference. But, in the end, it's the open-minded collectors that make the Dallas Art Fair one like no other.

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"This is the first time we participated and we dove in with both feet," says Michael Gitlitz of New York's Marlborough Gallery. "We go to all the fairs, but Dallas-Fort Worth is chock-full of collectors who get it, and there's an adventure to meeting them on their home turf. It's refreshing to meet people with big walls who aren't afraid of art."

"People here are starved for culture — no they're devouring culture — and are willing to turn out," agrees Michael Carroll, director of Turner Carroll in Santa Fe.

Works like Marc Dennis' Texas Cheerleader on a field of Hirst-esque dots from Hasted Kraeutler belong in Cowboy Stadium — or at least the expansive living room of a Dallas Cowboys fan. Pieces from the likes of Kris Kuksi from Culver City's Mark Moore Gallery could only complement the walls of a Design District pied-à-terre.

In 2013, the Dallas Art Fair is joined for the first time by the Seven Art Fair — a pioneering collective of seven revolving galleries — to present Caja Dallas at the Dallas Contemporary. Frequent participants in Miami's art week and the Frieze Art Fair in New York, Seven is transforming a space at the Contemporary into an experimental, collaborative exhibition that is a low-key addition to a weekend rife with high-end galas and grand presentations.

Think of Seven as the artistic indie rock to DAF's stadium tour.

With a theme based on "fictions informing reality," Seven's evolved show is the perfect complement to the sensory overload that is the DAF. Says organizer Joe Amrhein of Brooklyn's Pierogi Gallery, "All of the art fairs have been so overwhelming, but the idea of bringing Seven here very compelling to us because of the Dallas Contemporary.

"It's an alternative to the fair, and it's another way for people to see art. If it goes well, we could return. For every gallery, showing in Dallas in an interesting idea."

