

SEANKELLY

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Sean Kelly at Zona Maco. Courtesy of the gallery.

Zona Maco, billed as “Latin America’s Most Important Contemporary Art Fair,” goes beyond easy classifications in its 14th year.

Exhibitors and visitors with far-reaching memories may recall, as Bellatrix Hubert from David Zwirner does, how small-scale the first edition was. “It’s become an important fair so fast, but that not surprising seeing as there’s a great community here,” she told us.

The Modern Art section of the Mexico City-based fair ensures that a high number of North and Latin American masters can be seen, perhaps doing the opposite of what so many contemporary dealers are avoiding—what gallerist Sean Kelly calls “taking coals to Newcastle”—giving people what they already have.

Strategies for a successful fair vary among exhibitors—in the main section, 20 of the 78 galleries hail from Mexico—and although many international booths might not be showing local artists, gallerist Kurt Beers explains, “color is more vibrant here than you would show to a conservative Italian, Basel or New York

audience.” Not so much coals as what might resonate, then, with the crowd gathering in Centro Banomex this week.

Dealer after dealer at the fair insisted that their first criterion is quality. It should come as little surprise, then, that many gallerists had secured sales or reservations in the opening hours.

Although Cecilia Leon de Barra, the curator of the Design section, felt this edition was “more laid back” than previous years, this didn’t seem to translate into less interest from collectors. The peso may be slightly lower these days, but that hasn’t affected art prices, at least not as yet. And, as gallerist Gary Nader pointed out, “you can ask if it’s better to buy at 32 pesos or 22 pesos to the dollar, but everyone knows it’s best to buy now.”

In fact, no one seemed particularly interested in Donald Trump’s proposals against Mexico. The only president in the room was a 1996 double portrait of JFK, dressed as John and Jackie O, by John Currin.

Below are the galleries that caught our eye this year.

Sean Kelly, New York

The affable New York gallerist is here for the first time, and feels “that it was the right moment.” He continued, “It is totally appropriate now to reach across the wall when that idiot doesn’t want to,” he said, referring to President Trump’s decision to build a barrier on the border with Mexico.

Sales were solid during the opening day of the fair. A \$40,000 piece by Hugo McCloud was the first work to sell, but others are likely soon to come.

Depending on what direction you look in Kelly’s booth, you see figuration, such as works by Antony Gormley and Marina Abramovic, or abstraction, with Los Carpinteros, Jose Dávila or Sam Moyer. Like Lisson gallery, Kelly has a work by James Casebere, which looks like a photograph in a Barragán house, but is in fact taken in an artist-made model, which adds a playful touch to the work on view.