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Artlyst

ParisPhoto 2017 Ebbs And Flows — by Zoltan Alexander

By ArtLyst
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(from left to right) The terrace of Mini Palais at Grand Palais, and Catharine Clark of Catharine Clark Gallery San Francisco in a golden kimono at the opening night of ParisPhoto 2017 / Photo © Courtesy of ZOLTAN+

The Grand Palais always starts with the Mini Palais, the hidden corner café-bar-restaurant filled with friends, collectors, art lovers and the media. A double espresso and we were ready to enter the 21st edition of ParisPhoto on preview day, presenting more than 180 galleries and publishers. Florence Bourgeois, the director of the fair and the art director Christoph Wiesner, were our enthusiastic guides. The fair's Guest of Honour, Karl Lagerfeld has picked over 100 images presented at the fair and produced a limited edition book with German publisher, Steidl.

Despite the opening week of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the largest global event for cultural, geopolitical UAE, ParisPhoto counted on the participation of all major international galleries and museums. The fair highlighted the diversity and quality of the represented artists and works, also

proposed satellite programmes, prizes, autograph sessions and discussions led by curators and art historians. It was a definite “liberté non négociable”.

Each year there are unspoken waves of visuals at ParisPhoto that give a second meaning and character to the fair. Apart from the strongly emerging African contemporary art and photography in recent years, it struck me how much juxtapositioning, overlaid structures, staged architecture, and geometric reflections were in focus in parallel with wild and often melancholic nature. After a fine selection, here are the key and most significant artists and galleries of this year.



CATHARINE CLARK / FEMALE VOICES *ForPlay* and *Potus* by Deborah Oropallo /
Photo © Courtesy of Catharine Clark Gallery

One of the most significant galleries from San Francisco was Catharine Clark. Each year they present a small group of powerful contemporary artists and photographers. For the current edition, Catharine Clark brought female voices to ParisPhoto, Deborah Oropallo, Stacey Steers and Stephanie Syjuco.

Stephanie Syjuco exhibited her acclaimed series “Cargo Cults”, and photo-sculptures from “Raiders”. Syjuco’s black and white photographs interrogate historical tensions between race and photography by restyling “ethnic” patterned mass-produced goods purchased from American shopping malls as costumes that mimic and critique ethnographic portraiture. Stacey Steers’ gelatin silver photographs were stills from her most recent film “Edge of Alchemy”. The work was assembled from thousands of hand-worked photo collages, reminiscent of American silent film actors. Deborah Oropallo incorporated mixed media with traditional painting, printmaking, computer editing, juxtaposed found images from costume catalogues and military figures from historical paintings and layered them into intricate compositions that explore tensions between gender, power and representation. Three new video works complemented her photography by translating photomontage into animation, from nuclear missiles through dense layering of wartime photography.

ParisPhoto was its upbeat best, and has never been more popular than this year. During five days over 65.000 people visited the fair. Down the aisles we spotted the French Minister of Culture, Françoise Nyssen, the celebrated photographer Ervin Olaf, the French First Lady, Brigitte Macron examining one of Youssef Nabil's hand-painted photographs at the Galerie Nathalie Obadia and Patti Smith who after finishing curating her exhibition at the Gagolian Gallery gave a private concert later on to a small group of guests at Les Bains.