

Day 13 - Christina Chaplin



www.youtube.com

In the art community, there is growing concern and awareness of the political states of the world. I personally believe that this new awareness comes from the political awareness of the way money has become entrenched in the art market (and politicians always seem to know where the money is). What I find interesting is that it seems like the art community is really binding together on some major issues, and creating what can maybe be called a global cultural community. Anish Kapoor, fellow artist and exhibitor at Art Basel 42/43, dedicated a huge sculptural installation to Ai Weiwei in 2011 even though they have never met. In his gesture of solidarity, Kapoor is showing us what I expect to be a profound a deep running respect that runs between true artists. This respect brings them together to support the artistic cause wherever it is in danger. In this particular case, that place is China. The Chinese government have been holding Ai without reason or trial, and the art community is becoming concerned. They have made it their mission to make this injustice known, as press coverage of the topic is sure to make clear. And they have more clout than they think. Billions of dollars go into the art market every year, some of the richest people in the world are art collectors, and among art collectors priority number one is to be able to show how deeply you truly care about art and artists (art purity). If this fact doesn't concern the Chinese, it certainly should. It might be possible after all to put up a cultural barrier against the Chinese in coming years if the authorities cannot explain their actions, and this kind of cultural coup could be devastating to an emerging art scene in Shanghai and Hong Kong and Beijing (all of which have Art Fairs of their own throughout the year).



Ai Weiwei at his famed sunflower exhibit at the Tate Modern



Anish Kapoor in front of Leviathan in Paris

In fact, the practice of the art fair has become so prolific it is a miracle that any of them survive except the most exceptional few. There is no possible way that each fair can attract the big name clients, and so many must surely cater to more specific markets. But what is undeniable is how international each of these fairs strives to be. We have surpassed the days of the big art transactions happening in 1 city or 2. Now you can find an art fair close to you no matter where you are. Each fair attracts exhibitors from several continents to boost the international flare of their selection. Although admittedly, Art Basel does favor European and especially Swiss galleries.

Anish Kapoor - Push Pull 2008, Art Unlimited/Art Basel

Anish Kapoor showed in the Art Unlimited section of Art 42 Basel. His large installation artwork was a conceptual piece made of red wax, vaseline, and metal. The piece was reviewed as being an exceptional work which bends the physical space around itself, and brings new connotations to the art-object as visual space vs. physical space. He is represented in the Art Unlimited venue by Galleria Massimo Minini, but also by London based Lisson Gallery in the main exhibition hall. It seems that Kapoor, an English artist, adheres to the same practice as many other artists of having representation by different galleries in different countries. Galleria Massimo Minini publishes its major events in several of the top art magazines and publications. It also participates in at least 4 other art fairs internationally, including Frieze Art Fair in New York. Publicity efforts like this show that the gallery is dedicated to getting the name of its artists out there in the world. However, Anish Kapoor seems like a publicity gold mine and with all of the articles on his personal statements and appearances and protests of the Chinese government, one hardly even hears mention of his gallery representation. I don't think this is a coincidence either. As a gallery, Kapoor's activism seems like a perfect way to separate him from the commercial side of the art market and to focus on him as a purist seeking to better the world. By encouraging him to the front lines, and staying to the back, a gallery can actively increase his symbolic market share and cultural value. Also, given the success of Leviathan in the art community - the large scale installation he set up in the Grand Palace in Paris last June - it seems as if Anish Kapoor's presentation of his work "Push -Pull 2008" was overshadowed by the implications of the other. At the opening of Leviathan, Kapoor gave a speech about his protest for Ai Weiwei and called for action from the entire art community. Leviathan was a new direction for Kapoor, one that many in the art community admired, with its all encompassing enormity. In comparison, his Push Pull series which is a continuation of long experimentation with the red wax substance seems much safer. Kapoor is the artist behind the recognizable and widely covered "Bean" monument in Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.



Anish Kapoor - Leviathan, Grand Palace Paris



Anish Kapoor - "The Bean" in Chicago

<http://www.we-find-wildness.com/2011/06/art-basel-diary-6/>

<http://www.galleriaminini.it/contacts/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6DpgdA9L-Q>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/may/10/ai-weiwei-anish-kapoor-sculpture>

<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/anish-kapoor-cancels-china-plans-to-protest-ai-weiwei-detention/>

<http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/picture-galleries/2011/may/31/inside-the-belly-of-the-monster-anish-kapoors-leviathan/>

http://trentfineartadvisory.com/tfaa_blog/art-basel-2011/

http://www.artfixdaily.com/news_feed/2011/06/20/6438-basel-buyers-bring-back-art-boom

<http://www.artbasel.com/go/id/elj/>