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Art & Design

## NADA New York Is an Art Fair With a Stunning Sense of Humor

March 3, 2017 4:28 pm By Cait Munro

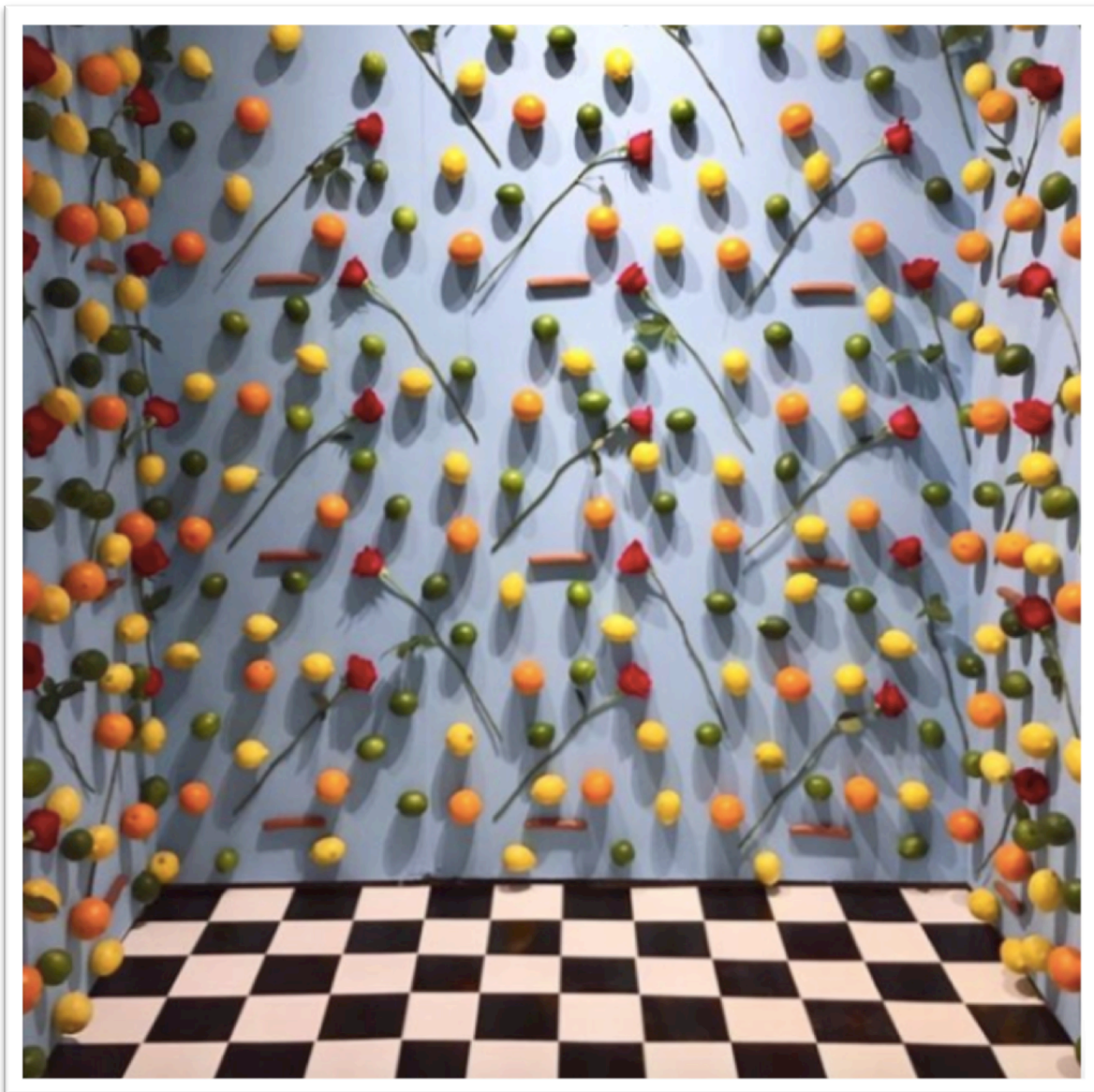


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*Annabelle Arlie at Jonathan Hopson*

When making a mental list of stuff that's ha-ha funny, art fairs probably aren't the first thing that springs to mind. And yet, NADA New York, in its sixth year and held for the first time at Skylight Clarkson North, brings an unparalleled sense of humor to Armory Arts Week. A common thread between the 100+ galleries and projects from 37 cities around the world is a tongue-in-cheek mocking of the art world, pop culture, the media, and modern technology. At times, it's almost too

At the booth operated by LAND, a nonprofit dedicated to bringing art to public spaces, a painting by Joe Sola reads simply “The Artist” above a beautiful, painterly brushstroke. Nearby hangs Amanda Ross-Ho’s oversized “Do Not Disturb” sign and a self-referential sculpture of a cube by Rob Pruitt. These works are easily processed visual jokes that jab lightly at the art world and its trappings. They’re probably not going to shatter your worldview, but they will give you a chuckle, and sometimes that’s enough.



*Lazy Mom at the Knockdown Center*

The same is true at Guatemala City's Proyectos Ultravioleta, where Radames "Juni" Figueroa's large, cut-out paintings of the kinds of things you might wish to have with you on a deserted island — a pipe, a tropical drink, an ice cream sandwich, a slice of Hawaiian pizza — dominate periwinkle walls. Actually, there's something of a fruit theme happening at the fair this year. At San Juan's Galeria Agustina Ferreyra, Cristina Tufino's ceramic sculptures turn melons and pineapples into minimalist faces that bear the same sense of existential dread as their human counterparts, but with much more visually pleasing color palettes. Nearby, the Knockdown Center, a Queens art venue, has lemons, limes, oranges, roses, and hotdogs affixed to the walls courtesy of Lazy Mom (aka Josie Keefe and Phyllis Ma).



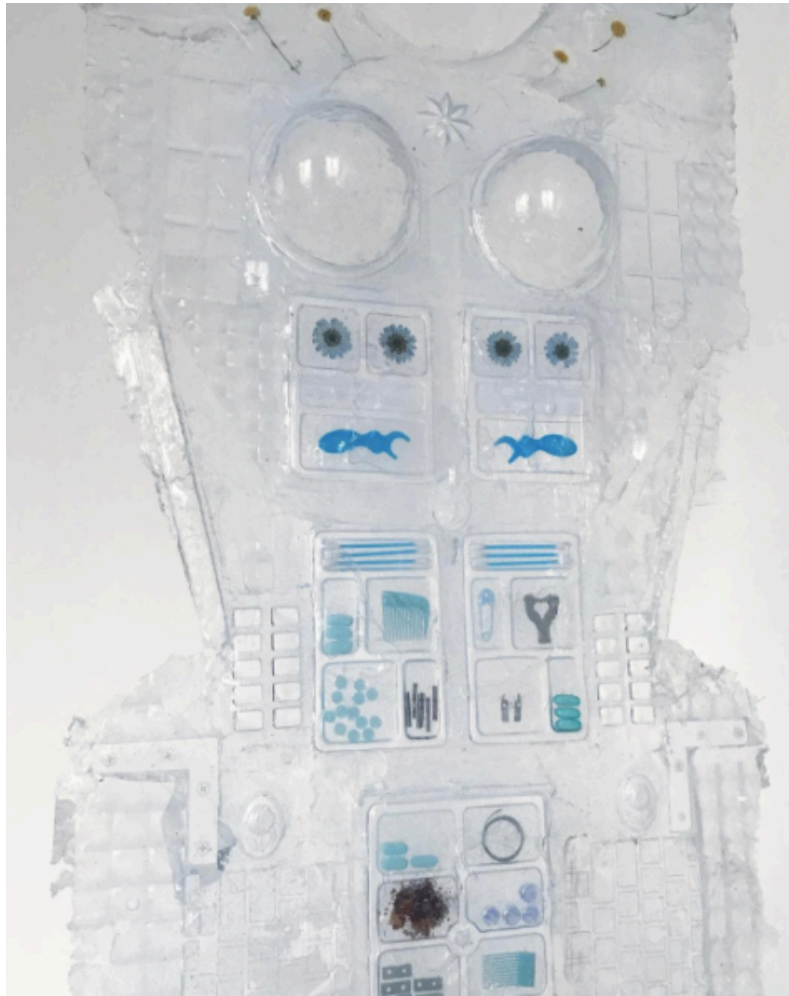
*Cristina Tufino at Galeria Agustina Ferreyra*

It's hard to say why, exactly, some of these things are so funny, which is one of the best and most underrated things about visual art — the ability of the artist to simply toss imagery together and have it be humorous just by virtue of the fact that the results are weird and novel. Like citrus and hotdogs on a wall, or the fabric prints of tropical birds housed in embroidery hoops by Annabelle Arlie at Jonathan Hopson Gallery. I mean, sure, why not?



*David Leggett at Shane Campbell Gallery*

That's not to say that funny precludes serious. In fact, David Leggett's paintings at Chicago's Shane Campbell Gallery prove that humor is often the best way into uncomfortable subject matter. With references ranging from *The Simpsons* to *Sesame Street* to the "toxic masculinity" embodied by bananas, his work is a mash-up of icons and imagery that result in a massive eye roll at the racism and sexism embedded in American culture. What's more, he manages to set up these jokes in



*Amy Brener at 315 Gallery*

While non-art worlders may be confused by the offerings at places like LAND, anyone with an internet connection is likely to appreciate pieces like Luke Murphy's *Unhappy Users* at Canada gallery, a crude, blinky digital animation featuring two faceless emoticons interacting with one another, or Amy Brener's icy-looking casts of keyboards filled with ephemera like pills, buttons, Q-tips, and dried flowers.

The strangest piece at the fair (and perhaps of the entire week) is also a joke on technology. It comes from new media artist Jeremy Couillard at yours mine & ours and takes the form of a plastic alien chained behind a laptop typing one-liners like "why do white people like guitars so much?" and "I have a Netflix account for my dreams." This dystopian vision is even complete with the typical trappings of cubicle life, like a coffee mug and a picture of the alien relaxing at the beach with its alien family. It's the perfect art fair work: attention-grabbing, memorable, and starkly funny — the kind of thing you'll bring up later at dinner



*Jeremy Couillard at yours mine & ours*