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Personal recommendations: the AIPAD Photography Show

Posted By [admin](#) On March 25, 2009 @ 9:16 pm In [Art Fairs](#), [Recommendations](#) | [1 Comment](#)



[1]

Lottie Davies, "The Red Devil" (2008), \$5,000

You don't go to the AIPAD photography fair for surprises, usually. The Association of International Photography Art Dealers, currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, is a membership organization that represents most of the blue-chippers in this particular branch of the art dealers' world. They call themselves "the world's leading fine art photography galleries," and have set themselves the task of establishing and maintaining standards in their particular aisle of the art market. This is not really the fair to seek out cutting edges or broken barriers, then. When I rather facetiously asked my friend Michael Foley what his gallery was doing here, his response was, "I've grown up." But on the other hand, at this afternoon's press view the genuinely perplexed young correspondent for a Spanish magazine stopped me to ask, "Why is everything so safe? Is it because of the economy?"

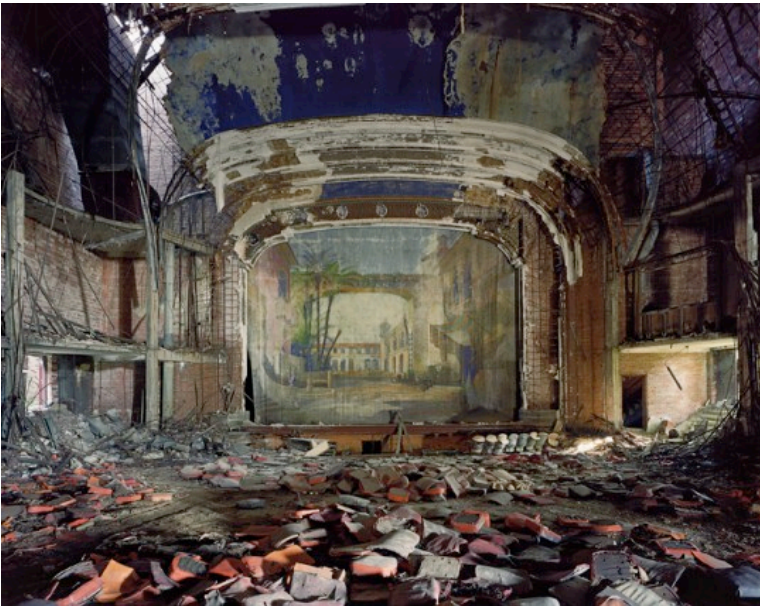
Still, as AIPAD's current president Stephen Bulger pointed out when we spoke today, something like half this year's fair is contemporary work, and in addition - and at the prompting of Bill Hunt (of [Hasted-Hunt](#) [2]) - each of the dealers here has contributed a work to a thematic exhibition within the fair, called "Innovation" (which you can find in an online version [here](#) [3]). I found it perfectly possible to come up with a set of genuine recommendations, and I'm going to start with something I'd never seen before, and found quite captivating. [Lottie Davies](#) [4] is a young compatriot of mine who is presented here by Eric Franck Fine Art of London. She is currently working on a fast expanding series called *Memories & Nightmares*, the subjects are which are drawn from the actual memories and nightmares of her friends and acquaintances, and out of which she has concocted some rather remarkable images. The precision of detail in this one *The Red Devil* is rather lost at this scale, though this isn't a distortion of its sumptuous color. The price is for the first print in an edition of 10.



[5]

Bart Michiels, "Paschendaele 1917, Goudberg Copse" (2005), \$4,500

Next, at the above-mentioned [Micheal Foley Gallery](#) [6], a wonderful, and wonderfully-provocative image by Bart Michiels, a Belgian who - perhaps unsurprisingly - is fascinated by the history of warfare that has shaped his little corner of north-western Europe. But his photographs don't concern themselves with the details of that history, but rather with its futility. What he offers us are the present-day appearances of fields that were once fought over at enormous cost in human lives, but which are nowadays the eerily unremarkable sites of agriculture.



[7]

Andrew Moore, "Palace Theater, Gary, Indiana" (2008), \$13,800

There is more naturally-occurring strangeness at [Yancey Richardson](#) [8] where this wonderful image by Andrew Moore enjoys pride of place. As though the image itself were not poignant enough - look how the almost Claudian scene depicted in the rather pathetically intact fire curtain includes architectural details that echo those of the ravaged theater's proscenium - Ms Richardson explained to me that rather than merely being the subject of a memorable song, Gary, Indiana is sufficiently close to Detroit for a number of Motown legends to have perfected their art on that very stage. To then discover that Andrew Moore also produced one of the most haunting film portraits of an artist I have ever encountered - *How to Draw a Bunny* about Ray Johnson - made this picture almost too bittersweet for me to bear.

Things remain decidedly odd in this image by Matthew Pillsbury at [Bonni Benrubi](#) ^[9]. Mr Pillsbury has a show called "An American in the City of Light" at the French Institute: Alliance Francaise through April 18, and this is one of the pictures that he made for the commissioned series that it features. The blurb for that show claims that it "brings a stunning representation of *la capitale* to New Yorkers." Rarely can the word "stunning" have been so appropriately employed in a press-release.



[10]

Matthew Pillsbury, "Hordes, La Galerie d'Anatomie Comparée, Musée d'Histoire Naturelle" (2008), \$9,000. Copyright of Matthew Pillsbury. Courtesy of Bonni Benrubi Gallery, NYC.

If everything I've recommended so far has derived its memorable peculiarity (or peculiar memorability) from its subject matter, or how the artist has approached it, then this next thing (which also differs significantly in size - it's an SX-70 Polaroid and is thus about the same size in inches as everything else has been in feet) has weirdness thrust upon it by the circumstances of its making. André Kertész was of course one of the great pioneers of photography, but he was very much in the autumn of his years and in need of some new stimulation when he was given his first Polaroid camera by his young friend Graham Nash. Yes, that would be the Graham Nash who, alongside band-mates David Crosby and Steven Stills, rode musically aboard the *Marrakesh Express*. Quite how André Kertész could have existed in the same universe as the warbling Mancunian is difficult enough to grasp, that he should have had his art revived by him is as weird as anything going on in Matthew Pillsbury's Museum of Natural History.



[11]

André Kertész, "July 11, 1981" (1981), \$4,200

The Kertész Polaroids are available at [Stephen Bulger](#) ^[12]'s own booth. When we spoke this afternoon it struck me that he makes a great president of his organization: he argues passionately

for the importance of his members' expertise in these uncertain economic times, and he is also willing to proclaim the desirability of photography over that of other art forms. These Kertész prints provided him with an immediate example: "How is it that here you can buy a unique Polaroid by André Kertész for less than \$5,000, when at a fine art fair you're paying \$15,000 for the work of some 20-year-old? Which then turns out to be one of an edition of three!"



[13]

Mariana Cook, "Barack and Michelle Obama, Chicago, Illinois, 26 May 1996" (1996), \$12,000

If Mr Bulger's comments reflect on the wonderful strangeness of our times, they lead me directly into my final recommendation from his fair (which is priced at its biggest available size, 36" x 34" in an edition of 18). At [Lee Marks Fine Art](#) ^[14] there is what may turn out to be the fair's most popular print, though when it was taken Mr & Mrs Obama were not altogether agreed on their future. It was taken by Mariana Cook for a project on couples in America which also involved Ms Cook interviewing her sitters. Michelle Obama told her, "There is a strong possibility that Barack will pursue a political career, although it's unclear. There is a little tension with that. I'm very wary of politics. I think he's too much of a good guy for the kind of brutality, the skepticism." What did she know? And did the print make the project? No, it was rejected.

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[12] Stephen Bulger: <http://www.bulgergallery.com/>

[13] Image: <http://www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/cookobamabarackandmichelle.jpg>

[14] Lee Marks Fine Art: <http://www.leemarksfineart.com/>

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