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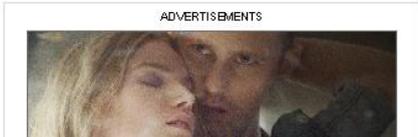
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ARCO 2013 Suggests Hope In Tough Times For Spain



When L.A. dealer [Christopher Grimes](#) came to exhibit at this year's ARCO Madrid, he could hardly have anticipated that one of his biggest sales would be to a couple who regularly buy from him back home. And certainly the collectors themselves hadn't planned to fly to Madrid just to buy from their local dealer in LA. "But if we hadn't come," they laughed about their purchase, "we never would have bought it."



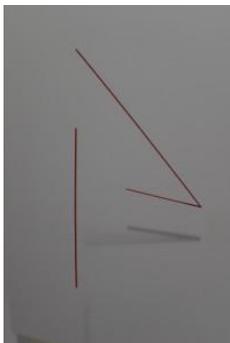
That relaxed pleasure in the buying and selling of artworks seemed to reign over the four-day fair, which this year came amid much speculation and angst in light of Spain's current economic problems. Well aware that Spanish buyers might be reluctant to make any purchases in the present financial climate, ARCO's organizers went the extra mile, flying in collectors from the US and other European countries in the hopes that they would help to bolster sales. A complete entertainment package also sweetened the deal, with dozens of parties for the foreign VIPs at the homes of private collectors and guided museum tours.



But the art world is never predictable, and ARCO proved no exception, as [Edward Tyler Nahem](#) learned in the first hours of the VIP previews when Spanish collectors crowded his stand, purchasing works by Juan Munoz and Calder, with "serious interest" in a canvas by Gerhard Richter. [Lelong](#) did almost as well, having sold a pair of David Nash works on paper within the first hour, while at [Galeria ADN](#), Carlos Aires' latest series, utilizing international currency, flew off the walls, with over a dozen works sold by the end of the first day.

Still, buying remained on the conservative side price-wise, compared with what one usually sees at major art fairs: ARCO's PR agency announced just as the doors opened to the public that the

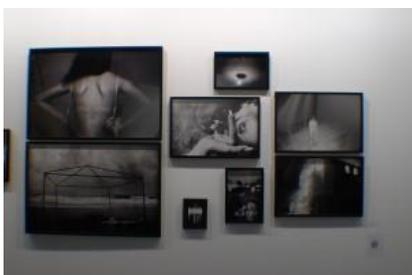
most expensive painting purchased in the preview days was Albert Oehlen's 2012 *Untitled*, sold by Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid for €340,000. (This may or may not have actually been the most expensive work sold, but it does give an idea of the level of buying at ARCO – hardly the multi-million dollar figures one finds during the VIP days at Basel, TEFAF, or Frieze.)



Galeria Cayon exhibited entrancing spacial studies by Herminio

Most bizarre was the number of – for lack of a better word – “experimental” booths, galleries (all from abroad) whose presentations consisted of two or three works in one-person shows by unknown artists, leaving you to you ask yourself what on earth these people were thinking, given the expense of exhibiting at an art fair in the first place.

On the other hand, there were plenty of pleasant introductions, from the photos of Yusuf Sevinçli at



photographs by Yusuf Sevinçli at Elipsis Gallery

Istanbul's [Elipsis Gallery](#) to the tense spacial geometries of kinetic sculptures and wall pieces by Herminio at Madrid's [Galeria Cayon](#). And the upbeat mood at the fair – situated in a large trade fair complex on the outskirts of the city, a world unto itself – was a welcome respite from the general sense of frustration that permeates Madrid (and probably all of Spain) these days. (Leaving for the airport, my taxi was delayed 20 minutes as it fought its way through the second demonstration in two days – this by the health care workers – and angry demonstrators pounded on the taxi roof and doors as we drove along the Paseo del Prado. And I won't even go into the fascistic behavior of Aero Europa's Madrid ground personnel, who expertly found ways to change the rules at whim, charging fees to random passengers on my flight for reasons of their own invention.)

So yes; it's tough times in Spain right now; but overall, ARCO 2013 suggests that the art, at least – and the artists — will survive them.

(All photos c. Peter Madden unless otherwise indicated.)

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