

**Andrew Freiser interview in Armory in his booth,
Friday, 03/08/13 in the afternoon at 4:30.**

AM:

Hi, I really appreciate you letting me interview you today, so if you wouldn't mind just introducing yourself for me.

AF:

Sure, my name is Andrew Freiser and I'm one of the owners of Fredericks and Freiser Gallery on 24th Street.

Today we are at the Armory show, booth 812 and it's Friday, the 3rd day of the Armory show.

AM:

Great, yes. So we met yesterday and I asked you to let me interview you, if you would and here we are. So, Francis Bacon said "the job of an artist is always to deepen the mystery. So my question to you is what is the role of a gallerist, especially here in sort of this unnatural setting of an art fair?

AF:

It seems sometimes that the role of the gallerist is to strip away the mystery but, no, part of the role of the gallerist is to be an educator and I think fairs like this are for the wider public who don't feel comfortable coming into, or don't have the time sometimes, to come into a gallery and sit and spend a lot of time learning about an artist to get a broad overview. But this is really an addendum to the work we do at the gallery. Not really our sole work. You know we are all representing our artists, we spend a lot of time talking to people about the artist, so fairs, with few exceptions are more introductions.

AM:

Just talk into the mic here, it's uni directional so, this is the best way, it's ok.

AM:

How do you seek new collectors, like you said, I mean there is a little bit of an educational process when someone walks in do you try to hone in on their pallet or visual taste in a certain way?

AF:

We don't really cater to a collector's pallet, I think you know many galleries, certainly our gallery has a point of view, we have an aesthetic, and we're trying to introduce that aesthetic to a lot of people, but the aesthetic doesn't sort of change based on taste. The art fair is a great place to meet new collectors, we always tend , we do a lot of art fairs not just in NY, where we have our gallery, we do an art fair in Chicago, we've done fairs in Switzerland, and in obviously in Miami and you always meet new people.

AM:

That's good to hear. I'm also a painter so I love hearing that there's new collectors walking in your door at the gallery, walking into the fairs everyday, that sort of thing. That's good for all of us I think.

Is there a specific way that you engage the viewers once they walk into the booth or into your art space, perhaps with Natalie Frank, her work.

AF:

I mean we tend to stand back unless somebody engages us first with an interest. But with someone like Natalie for instance, she's a young artist who has gone through quite drastic changes in the four years or so, my math is off, seven years she has been showing, so with Natalie I always like to start with the first painting she showed coming out of Columbia at Mitchell Innes, Nash, and explaining kind of the arc that's led her to these very new canvases that are sort of collaged canvas on board that are being showed for the first time here at the Armory.

AM:

I really wanted to hear that description, how you describe. I wanted you to do it without me asking in a way, was for you to describe someone's work or how they began and where they are at now with your gallery, to someone new like me walking in.

AF:

OK, so how about I do that with Steve.

AM:

OK

AF:

So Steve Gianakos is an artist who started showing in the mid to late 70s and he initially showed with at the Clock Tower, which is now PS1, and that group and a gallery called Fish Bach, which is a great gallery in their day. And he is a basically a first generation post pop painter. We are focused, we have done many show's of Steve since 2002, I believe, mostly with new work. This is the first time we are going back and focusing on this sort of seminal series of paintings from the early 80s. Some of these paintings showed at the Whitney, he was in a major show at MOMA, at this time, but this group of paintings hasn't been seen since the 80s. They are very dear to Steve and he's kept them in his studio and he's refused to part with them until now. I thought this would be a really good introduction to his older work, Steve has a bit of a cult following has had some nice museum exposure in the last few years. NY Times gave him in his last show with us, a nice little review. But, Steve is making new work in the studio now, which I think is his best work in years and we are very very excited to show that and we wanted to give him some more time to finish. He was supposed to show at the Armory, so we went back and focused on an earlier body of work that I think is, I think is prescient. I think first of all the Armory this year is dedicated to Warhol, the Warhol Museum has such a presence here, I think this is a great place on the idea of the icon, the pop icon and very kind of audacious work. You know you see the aesthetic of Maurizio Cattelan and David Shrigley and so many people who use humor in the work and there is no, I mean imagine how these paintings looked in 1980 when so few people were painting and how this audacious was. And other than John Wesley who we show there was very little humor, you know in the very kind of institutional art of post minimalism and minimalism and the very little pop painting that was being done at that time outside of the main, original pop.

AM:

Thank you very much. And as an.....

AF:

Should we tell people what we are looking at?

AM:

Yes, yes let's tell people what we are looking at.

AF:

We are looking at three foot by three foot paintings of icons. There are three paintings of Jesus and three paintings of Hitler. And the paintings of Jesus are altered a little, they are very graphic linear black and white heads. Steve always has kind of a dialogue with printed subject matter so there's these abstract marks which vaguely reference sort of printing and the visuals of printing. But the icons are altered, so on one Jesus is wearing a Groucho Marks nose and glasses and another one he has a pie in his face. Hitler is wearing a Mickey Mouse ears in one painting and has a snorkel in another, so they are all tweaked in a just a little. I think they look kind of fresh.

AM:

They are fresh, despite the time that they were made.

And they are funny.

I appreciate that, going through the fair when you see so many works of art as a viewer, just seeing one booth after another you walk in here and you can chuckle along with the artist.

AF:

I think even now with all those artists I listed, people still are unaccustomed to having humor in art and it's always a fresh kind of moment for them to...Well, there's a lot of people who don't laugh at these. A lot of people walk by very straight faced. They don't know you're supposed to laugh.

AM:

Or maybe because of the subject matter.

AF:

Some people might be offended, yes.

AM:

We don't care about those people, who get offended by art. Well, we hope some do. [I joke]

AF:

Can you imagine, that you are that thin skinned that you are offended by a painting.

AM:

I agree, I can't imagine.

AF:

I think these are fairly good natured.

AM:

I agree and they are funny. And you know you were talking about the history of...

AF:

I also they think they are incredibly formally sophisticated.

AM:

Indeed they are. Yeah, the lines are clean, and like Andrew said they are black and white and executed well, so....

AF:

And you know Warhol and the whole group have spent you know how many years now, like 20 years by the time these paintings are made kind of taking meaning away from images like this and it's funny how in a very sly way and through a very funny activity a lot of meaning is ascribed back to these kind of printed repeated linear forms.

AM:

Yes, yes it's true. So you were describing...I'll take a few more minutes if you wouldn't mind.

AF:

He's coming tomorrow.

AF:

You know it's funny, there's certainly, we're the most vocal representative. We also have ancillary materials, you know there's books on Steve, we have the articles from the NYTimes, articles in Art in America, so if someone wanted to spend a few moments to consider their career, you know that's why we have the table and chairs and we can sit with them and really walk them through in a much more focused way, not as casually as this, in a much more focused way. I mean I kind of gave you the two second run down. But no, that's what we do all day, we sort of take people through the arc of how a, of where a painting comes from and the context of the artist's work, you know what the artist has achieved over...whether it's someone like Natalie who's fairly young or someone like Steve who's worked - you know for decades.

AM:

So the collector really has to do a lot of their own research, before they jump in and purchase something.

AF:

I believe in collecting what you love once you know what it is that you're collecting.

AM:

I guess one last thing is, I talk about this with other artists is you know to be an artist in NY, or wherever you are, making work, it's a seven day a week job. And I am sure your job is the same and coming here and having the stamina to last the whole day, and then go back to your gallery and do the work - how do you keep up with the stamina - is this more difficult being at a fair - to sort of engage with the collectors?

AF:

I think a big, a big...

AM:

Sorry that was a badly worded question.

Narration: pardon my stammering mess.

AF:

No sure.

A big topic among dealers now is fair fatigue.

AM:

There we go.

AF:

We talk about fair fatigue for collectors like you know it's tough for them to continually view art in this context and art really wasn't meant to be in this context. But I think we do,... I think I'm doing five fairs this year, I wouldn't say I do a tremendous amount of fairs compared to some galleries. You know it's a part of the business we, a lot of us didn't sign up for, fairs have turned us into carney folk, it's like we are constantly wrapping it up, putting it on the road, unwrapping it. It's probably not that aspect is probably not the most pleasant part.

AM:

Right, ok.

That makes total sense and I guess that's what I was trying to get at is fair fatigue is intense, it's something you have to deal with as part of the job.

AF:

But there are great parts of the fair, I mean it's great to sit and talk with people all day.

It's ...one of the things the art fairs have really changed in the art world is I think dealer to dealer relationships are very different. We are seeing each other all the time now. You know if I go to Berlin I go somewhere I'll visit people but just t go to fair to fair builds a real camaraderie which is nice.

AM:

Right, yeah.

People liken it to summer camp.

AF:

I've never heard that. that's great.

AM:

I keep hearing that, everyone says, it's like summer camp, I keep running into people I haven't seen in a long time.

AF:

It's like the most pathetic summer camp you can imagine with no fun and no games.

AM:

That's true.

So, you've answered all my questions before I even asked them - about that camaraderie between yourself and other galleries.

AF:

You know it used to be, I'm doing Frieze this year, I think Frieze has a Monday, you know the fair usually runs Wednesday or Thursday through the weekend. The Armory show used to be, have that Monday, that next Monday open to the public, I think Frieze does and that Monday in Chicago years ago, I mean we are doing, there's a new Chicago fair now. But the old Chicago used to be a very big United States fair, really it was what Miami is now, and they always had a Monday and that was really like the Dealer's day, the business, you know - the industry day. And you'd do business from one dealer to the another. You know it's funny, I don't think we need those days anymore because there are so many fairs - we are doing it all the time.

AM:

Right, and you're seeing each other all the time and so you don't need that extra day away from your gallery to set up the next show.

Thank you very much Andrew, it was a pleasure.

AF:

Thanks a lot it was a pleasure.