

## Shaquille O’Neal, George Lucas Add Luster to Expo Chicago VIP Preview

September 19, 2014 | by Brian Boucher



A work by Jon Pylypchuk at Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami.

When filmmaker George Lucas, who collects Norman Rockwells, arrived yesterday afternoon at Chicago’s Navy Pier for the VIP opening hours of Expo Chicago art fair, he was ready to buy. “I’m just looking for something for the walls of my apartment,” he said.

Elsewhere on the fair floor, former NBA star Shaquille O’Neal flaunted his skills as a curator. O’Neal selected the works presented by New York’s nonprofit Flag Art Foundation. His picks included pieces by Kamrooz Aram and Ron Mueck.

But most of the fair was geared toward commerce, and dealers were cautiously optimistic that the Windy City marketplace, now in its third year, would yield up sales.

“Everyone is bringing their A game,” said Chicago dealer Carrie Secrist.

Among 140 galleries exhibiting this year are a number of first-timers, including Lisson Gallery (London), Elizabeth Dee (New York), Bortolami Gallery (New York) and Meessen De Clercq (Brussels).

Dealer Kavi Gupta (Chicago and Berlin) had a busy day, selling several \$65,000 works by MacArthur Binion, Glenn Kaino sculptures for \$50,000 and a \$45,000 Roxy Paine sculpture along with more affordable works like \$15,000 Scott Reeder paintings, all by dinner time.

The VIP preview got off to a slow start Thursday at noon. "It's a working town, so they'll come later," said Christopher D'Amelio of David Zwirner (New York and London).

Zwirner sales included works by Ad Reinhardt, Suzanne Frecon and Raymond Pettibon, with others placed on reserve. "So, no complaints so far," he said. Salon 94 brought large abstractions by Huma Bhabha. The gallery participated in the fair's debut year, but, according to Jeanne Greenberg-Rohatyn, didn't do well, and declined to return for its sophomore outing. "But we're taking another chance," she said.

Several dealers took an economical approach and shared booths, including Garth Greenan and Fredericks and Freiser (both New York), London's Max Wigram teaming up with New York's Elizabeth Dee, and New York's David Nolan in a duo with Chicago's Corbett vs. Dempsey.

"We *ooh* and *aah* at some of the same things," John Dempsey told *A.i.A.*, referring to his co-tenant, "though it's true that the galleries' programs are distinct."

Greenan was showing canvases by Nicholas Krushenick and Rosalyn Drexler; Freiser was offering a classic John Wesley canvas, featuring his simplified, black-outlined figures.

More experimental work is on offer in the Exposures section, where smaller booths run about \$10,000. The section includes Los Angeles's Hannah Hoffmann, along with Zieher Smith & Horton and James Fuentes, both from New York. Fuentes is showing painter Landon Metz, who cut one of the booth's walls in half so that his large abstract canvas juts out beyond the drywall. His 8-by-10-foot canvases go for \$22,000.

Many fairs now include cheaper booths for nonprofits, perhaps to elevate the discourse from pure market; over two dozen are represented at Expo. The Renaissance Society, from Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, was still setting up shop partway through the VIP preview. Staffers had encountered a Shaq-generated traffic jam that morning, one told *A.i.A.*

A neon work by Alfredo Jaar reading "Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness" hangs in the booth of New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW); the sign is based on a quote from Japanese author Kenzaburo Oe.

"Art fairs are bananas," said HRW's Jobi Cates. "We work in a field of austerity and scarcity, so to come here and see ideas expressed in such grand fashion is, for us, a bit like going to Las Vegas for the first time."

## Here's a Look at That Show That Shaq Curated at Expo Chicago

By Andrew Russeth | Posted 09/19/14



All photos taken by Andrew Russeth

One of the great things about being a Shaq fan is that the man stays busy, so there's a lot by him to enjoy—four studio albums, a bevy of film appearances (remember when he popped up in *Good Burger?*), five books (Wikipedia just alerted me to a 1999 volume called *Shaq and the Beanstalk and Other Very Tall Tales*), at least one videogame, 1994's *Shaq Fu* (which I remember being perfectly serviceable, though not his strongest project), and his wonderful basketball blooper television segment “Shaqtin’ a Fool.”

Shaq has also worked as a curator, organizing a show called “Size Does Matter” at The FLAG Art Foundation in Chelsea in 2010, and this week he's at it again, with “Shaq Loves People,” a group exhibition at Flag's booth at the Expo Chicago fair, which runs through Sunday, September 21. It's pretty great.

As its title suggests, the show is filled with portraits, which are hung salon-style, packed together, high on the walls of the booth. (The hang is centered at 79 inches from the ground, which is Shaq's eye level, FLAG's assistant director, Jonathan Rider, explained.)

There's Malick Sidibé's classic black-and-white photo of a barefoot dancing couple, Dawoud Bey portraits from the series he showed at this year's Whitney Biennial, a fun and odd Cindy Sherman (an aging partier, perhaps at a gala dinner, posing for a photo), plus works by Ron Mueck, Kehinde Wiley, Mark Bradford, and a bunch of others. It's frenetic and warm—all light, positive vibes.

There's one oddity in the show—a lone abstract sculpture made out of a towering stack of pennies. Artist Corban Walker made it especially for Shaq's exhibition, and happened to be standing near the booth when I dropped by.

“I'm using the pennies as a measurement, to measure my height,” Walker said. “[The number of pennies] is my height in millimeters, which is 1,290 millimeters.” So while the artist is a bit over four feet, the sculpture is about 6 and a half feet tall. (Pennies are each a bit more than a millimeter thick.) “I stacked it up,” he continued, “and it becomes about the average height of a basketball player.”

The work also consists of a little shelf (visible above) with a row of pennies that measures the length of Shaq's hand. It's enormous. (The 15-time NBA all-star and Olympic gold medalist is 7 feet, 1 inch tall.) The work's title: *Self Portrait in Pennies Accompanied by the Hand Span of Shaquille O'Neal*.

Shaq is as laid-back as a curator as you would probably expect. I asked Walker how the piece came about. “I gave it to him as an idea, and he liked it,” he said.

## Shaquille O'Neal Becomes Curator as Expo Chicago Begins

By Mary Romano | Sep 20, 2014



Shaquille O'Neal stands in front of a booth of photos that he curated with The Flag Art Foundation, at the Expo Chicago art fair in Chicago, U.S., on Sept. 18, 2014. Source: The FLAG Art Foundation

Shaquille O'Neal pointed to a photograph of one family's group portrait and an enlarged mug shot of a young woman with tiny words imprinted that could only be seen up close.

"I like to look at art," the 15-time National Basketball Association All-Star said, explaining why those works appealed to him as he was surrounded by schoolchildren and photographers. "I like to try to figure it out and what's going on with it. I like art that makes people ask questions."

O'Neal, who stands 7 feet 1 inch, was a star attraction as Expo Chicago opened yesterday in a vast exhibition space on Chicago's lakefront Navy Pier with 140 galleries from 17 countries selling \$60 million of modern and contemporary works. In the first hours of the fair's opening to select guests, dealers said sales were modest but likely to pick up today, as the pace tends to be slower at Expo Chicago than at bigger fairs in which collectors swarm the booths early. About 30,000 people are expected to visit the fair, which runs through Sept. 21.

"Buying art is a serious matter and people should take their time," said Jory van Rosmalen-de Koning, co-owner of Amsterdam-based Borzo, which has a booth at the fair. "It's not like Art Basel where everyone rushes in," she said, referring to the June fair in Switzerland where \$4 billion of works were available.

### 'Loves People'

O'Neal, 42, was standing in the booth of photos showing people of different ages and from various cultures that he selected from more than 1,000 candidates. He agreed to curate "Shaq Loves People," a nonprofit exhibition that included drawings and sculpture, at the invitation of Glenn Fuhrman of MSD Capital LP, the money manager for Michael Dell, the billionaire founder and chief executive officer of Dell Inc. Fuhrman also runs the exhibition space Flag Art Foundation in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood.

Fuhrman said he asked O'Neal to help with this show after the two worked together four years ago on an exhibit called "Size Does Matter."

"He said yes without skipping a beat," Fuhrman said. "Shaq loves people and everybody loves Shaq, so when we were thinking about a title, we said let's just go with that."

Fuhrman later escorted O'Neal through the fair and showed him various works but he didn't buy anything, said Stephanie Roach, director of Flag Art Foundation.

Other collectors strolled the booths. John and Sharon Hoffman of Kansas City, Missouri, said they had their eye on works by Derrick Adams at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery. The gallery was offering two mixed-media collages on paper by Adams that depict human figures and landscapes. The couple said they were early sponsors of Chicago artist Theaster Gates and own two of his works.

### **Saccoccio Abstracts**

Eleven Rivington, based in New York, sold two of Jackie Saccoccio's multilayered abstract paintings in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range.

Kavi Gupta, a Chicago gallery, sold a 2014 Scott Reeder black and purple abstract painting for \$16,000 and a red curvy sculpture by Roxy Paine for \$7,000.

At the booth of Richard Gray Gallery, which has Chicago and New York locations, a 2013 Murano glass sculpture by Jaume Plensa sold for \$80,000 and a 2014 sculpture of antlers covered with crystals by Marc Swanson went for \$30,000.

Chicago has hosted an art fair since 1980, starting at the Navy Pier. It went through various incarnations and locations, and by 2012, the fair's owner, Merchandise Mart Properties Inc., the Chicago trade show producer and a division of Vornado Realty Trust, canceled it. Tony Karman, who had been the fair's vice president until 2010, then started Expo Chicago, now in its third year.

### **'Another Leap'**

"The first year sales were not very strong, for everyone and for us as well," said Christopher D'Amelio, a partner at New York's David Zwirner, which has a booth for the third year. "But there is an active collecting base that comes through here. This year the fair is making another leap. It just needed time for people to get it on their calendar."

Zwirner's booth has works ranging in price from \$15,000 to \$1 million, he said, adding that "\$100,000 to \$600,000 is a better zone for this fair than multimillion-dollar pieces."

Cari Sacks, an art collector along with her husband, Michael J. Sacks, CEO of Chicago-based Grosvenor Capital Management, is using the fair for the debut of Curate, her free app that lets people snap photos to visualize how a piece of art would look on their wall. Curate and Expo Chicago teamed up to allow the participating galleries to use it at the fair.

"Chicago is having a moment in the art world," Sacks said. The city's roster of critically acclaimed artists includes Gates, Kerry James Marshall and Rashid Johnson, she said.

### **Tense Theater**

Chicago-born Johnson, who works in painting, photography and mixed medium installations, directed "Dutchman," his interpretation of a 1964 play of the same name by Amiri Baraka about a confrontation between a black man and a white woman in a sweltering New York subway train.

Johnson moved the setting to the Red Square Russian and Turkish Baths in the Wicker Park neighborhood of Chicago, where it's being performed through Sept. 21. At the 11 p.m. show on Sept. 17, about 18 audience members changed into robes in the locker rooms and sat in the steamy sauna as the two actors angrily and sometimes violently addressed sexual and racial issues. The show was commissioned by Performa, the performance-art biennial.

"It's similar to being on a train, where you are trapped with other people," said assistant director Alex Ernst. "We are implicated in what people are doing if we don't step in when there's racial injustice."

## Shaquille O'Neal's Art Fair is Art

B. David Zarley | September 22, 2014



Photo by Cheri Eisenberg--Carol Fox & Associates

EXPO Chicago—the city's "International Exposition of Contemporary and Modern Art"—is housed in the cavernous Festival Hall of Navy Pier, and vast enough to fill the place. It's all white and gray and silver halls, lined with innumerable (and expensive) art works from an international array of galleries. One approaches the EXPO floor and feels overwhelmed at the light, the space, the surrounding creation; it is like the first chapter of Genesis.

And here, amid it all, is the biggest name in an exposition full of them, a man who garners the kind of attention and Jovian gravitational pull all artists lust for: the Big Aristotle, the original Superman, Art Diesel, Shaquille O'Neal.

O'Neal stands in the booth of the FLAG Art Foundation, surrounded on three sides by the works he has helped curate for the exhibition *SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE*, and facing a small phalanx of crab-eyed TV cameras and flashing photographers. He is as large as one would expect, even in such expansive environs, surprisingly un-intimidating in both psychic and physical presence, graceful in a behemoth way, and with a friendly, low rumble in his voice; the effect is akin to seeing a C-130 Hercules in a 50-yard-line flyover.

The FLAG Art Foundation is a New York City based exhibition space—meaning they do not *sell* the art; that would make them a gallery—with a focus on presenting contemporary art to as diverse an audience as possible.

O'Neal has curated a show with FLAG before, 2010's *Size Does Matter*, which was installed in the Foundation's Chelsea Art Tower space. Art Diesel, currently flanked before the assembled press corps by FLAG founder Glenn Fuhrman and director Stephanie Roach, is the face of the Foundation's first exposition at a contemporary art fair, and only its second outside Chelsea.

"We were invited by the Chicago EXPO [sic] to come put on a non-selling exhibition here at the art fair," Fuhrman says. "Shaquille is an amazing person. Obviously, he is known as one of the greatest basketball players that has ever been on the planet, but he is constantly looking for ways to challenge himself."

In putting on an exhibition of portraiture, O'Neal and FLAG were inspired by his multifarious, still strong fan base. "Everyone that we know, old, young, internationally, American, no matter where you're from, everybody loves Shaq," Fuhrman explains. "And he said 'Well, I love everybody also.'"

As if to illustrate the point, standing just behind the media is as diverse an assemblage as one can hope to get on press preview day at a contemporary art fair, with various art world denizens joined by Aramark contractors and sundry non-glamour personnel, smartphones periscopic and smiles spreading.

While obviously the figurehead and main draw, O'Neal is quick to share credit for the exhibition with Fuhrman and Roach. "You guys already know this being from Chicago," he says, "you can't win a championship by yourself. So, I'm Jordan, this,"—he lays one great arm across Fuhrman—"is Pippen, and this,"—he swallows Roach whole—"is Phil Jackson."

O'Neal points out a Wayne Lawrence photo, *Nechemaya Davis*, a portrait of a black Orthodox Jew, as his favorite piece. He also draws the crowd's attention to Ben Durham's *Chassity*, a mugshot drawn with sentences describing her story, "To me, that's art."

The art seems to be rather well received by the various people who drop by; in keeping with the cosmopolitan humanism at *SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE*'s core, the subjects, mediums, and artists selected are widely diversified—especially for the still rather homogeneous high end art sphere—and artists from the well established to the fresh-out-of-college are on display.

"There is a lot of great black artists represented," says Robin Dluzen, leonine-maned artist, critic (*Art F City, Art Ltd.*), extempore sportswriter, and devout Detroit sports fan. "And not just the ones you would expect." Dluzen gravitates towards the Lawrence pieces and Malick Sidibe, as well as a piece by Chicago

based artist Carlos Rolon/Dzine, a black and white photo of Panamanian boxer Roberto Duran, arms lofted in triumph, set against a field of robin's egg blue and gold living room wallpaper. Jewelry dangles from Duran's wrists, savage and exquisite weapons that they are.

In the industry tradition of Warhol and Hirst, one could consider the entire Shaq-curates-an-exhibition-and-draws-diverse-crowd-to-historically-homogeneous-sphere project as art *in itself*. He is a man whose own consciousness is on permanent display, yet he is choosing to express himself through the work of others. The very presence of a man as large and as famous as Shaq raises questions about our relationships with scale and fame.

Either way, *SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE* seems a boon for EXPO, both with the regular set—"At least he's into art, you know?" says one apparently recent convert—and, as the media exposure makes clear, the general public.

As O'Neal graciously takes photos and provides personal tours of his exposition, his diamond championship ring glitters—for perhaps the first time, not the most expensive thing in the room—while a massive showcasing of Annie Leibovitz photos stands comparative



## Shaq Loves People

September 25, 2014 | Asja Nastasijevic



Installation view of SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE

The special program of the third edition of Expo Chicago, which was held from September 18 to 21, included the 15-time NBA All-Star Shaquille O'Neal as a curator. A show from the FLAG Art Foundation entitled "SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE" is the second collaborative exhibition between the two. The FLAG Art Foundation and the basketball legend Shaq worked together four years ago on an exhibit called "Size Does Matter." Glenn Fuhrman of MSD Capital LP, who also runs the exhibition space Flag Art Foundation, explains that the choice of the title came naturally. "Shaq loves people and everybody loves Shaq, so when we were thinking about a title, we said let's just go with that," Fuhrman said. This presentation is FLAG's second exhibition outside of its New York City gallery space and its first time participating in a contemporary art fair.

### Personal Narratives

Along two dozen projects organized by museums, universities, organizations, institutions, artists, one booth at the Expo Chicago fair displayed in a vintage fashion portraits of people of various races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds which Shaq selected from more than 1,000 candidates. The collection comprises works by both emerging and established international artists including Bruce Gilden, Dawoud Bey, Cindy Sherman, Kehinde Wiley among many others. Through a variety of media – photography, video, drawing, sculpture, and even currency – selected artworks challenge stereotypical notions of family and community, female beauty, power, and masculinity. It is interesting that the portraits were hung at a height of 2 meters which is Shaq's eye level.

## **A Man of Many Talents**

Along with his NBA accomplishments, Shaq has written an autobiography, starred in his own television show, released a certified platinum album, received his B.S. from Louisiana State University, an M.B.A. from University of Phoenix, and has graduated with a doctoral degree from Barry University in Miami, Florida. Shaq has also maintained an interest in the workings of the police department and has become personally involved in law enforcement in different capacities with many agencies. Shaq has appeared in several films including Blue Chips with Nick Nolte and the star vehicles Kazaam! and Steel, for both of which he also recorded the soundtrack albums. His recent reality television show Shaq Vs. features him competing against some of the greatest athletes at their own sports demonstrating yet again that traditional limits cannot contain him. He is that rare individual who is constantly looking to challenge himself. At this year's Expo Chicago Shaq's creative thinking widened for the second time with the "SHAQ LOVES PEOPLE" show, with him playing the role of curator and muse.