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CHARTA

The Art Fair Age



Are there too many art fairs? Are art fairs outdoing biennials as cultural events? How should we interpret the increasing involvement of curators with art fairs? Are we experiencing a sort of “New Fairism”? And what about the motivations that drive collectors to take on a much more active role? Analytical, well-documented and irreverent, *The Art Fair Age* is an unprecedented book that examines the ongoing evolution of the art fair phenomenon.

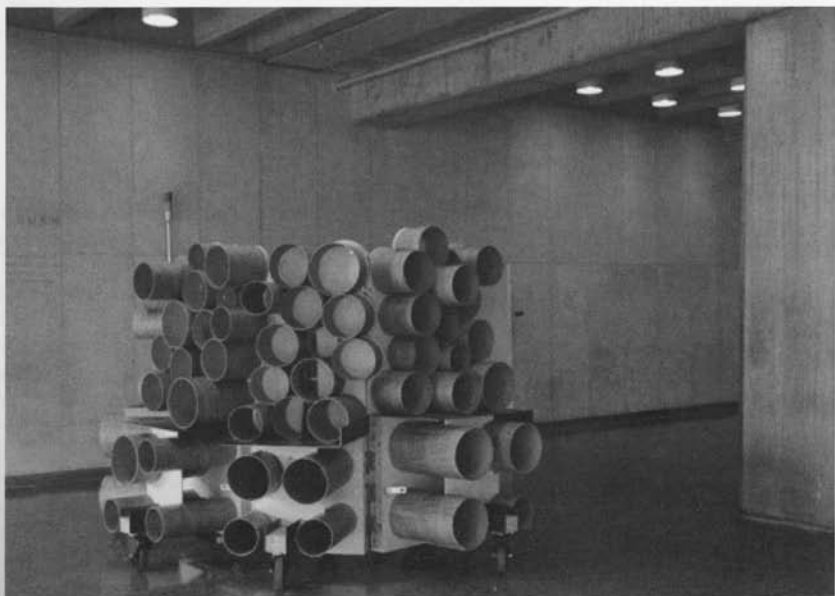
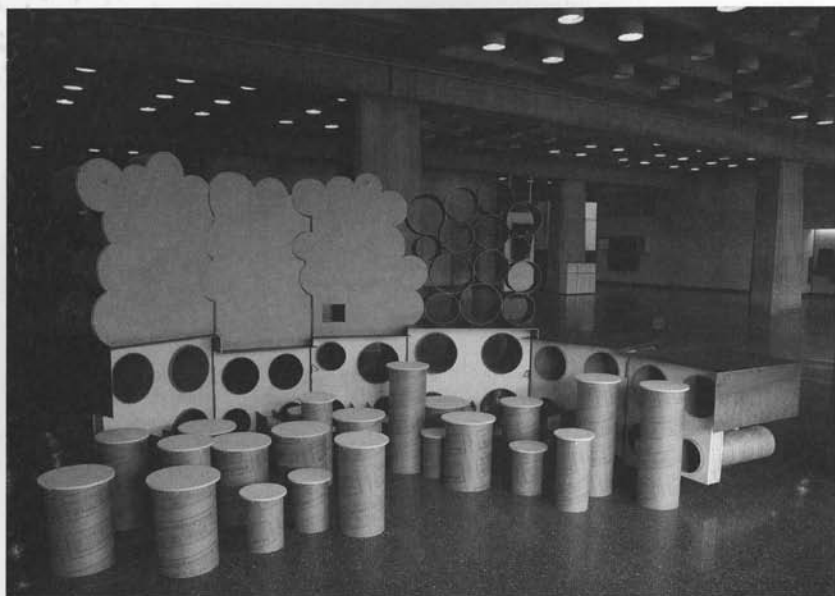
200 pages—68 black-and-white illustrations

New, mobile ideas for what would normally be boring, lazy art fair architecture.

Luis Berríos-Negrón,
Tortuga, 2005, hot-rolled steel, recovered wood, recycled paper tubes,

CAD/CAM structure, surfaces, chairs/pedestals, dimensions variable.

Presented at the Vannevar Bush Room, MIT, Cambridge.
Courtesy the artist.



Epilogue

A Brief Note on Theme Parks, Art Fair Architecture and Chill Outs

If we paraphrase William Kowinski¹ and his famous “mall evil,” which translates into a perceptual paradox generated by simultaneous excitement and sedation, thus can we also talk about an “art fair evil.”

The art fair and its spatial-architectural dimension will definitely convert in the near future into that “extension of the battlefield” of which Houellebecq speaks. Below I will present a few brief notes that I hope will serve as a starting point for a new type of “art fair urbanism” that the majority of art fairs and their managers do not want to tackle. Enough already with suffering visitors who quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, leave without having demanded opportunities for rest, leisure, socializing and good food! Fed up with endless corridors full of booths, we feel like the Houellebecquian narrator who, submerged into an apparently benign environment, ends up deprived of an authentic interaction with his surroundings.

Each space requires its proper architecture and focus, although there are prototypes, in the form of experimental architecture, perfectly adaptable to other contexts. This is the case with *Tortuga* by young Puerto Rican architect Luis Berríos-Negrón, originally designed as a mobile site for thesis students at MIT. Berríos-Negrón himself comments that “*Tortuga* takes on aspects from practical as well as cultural mobility and represents applicable equipment for the global art fair and biennial circuit. In the absence of chill-out spaces, *Tortuga* can help gallery-less artists to not only present themselves to a flowing audience, but also serve as a site for documenting and disseminating different materials such as books, videos, drawings or models, which are introduced in a dynamic manner into the flux of the art fair.”²

Unfortunately enough, the originality of this project reminds me the habitual line of thought that prevails so often in the art

1. William Kowinski, *The Mall of America: An Inside Look at the Great Consumer Paradise*, 1985, William Morrow & Company, New York.

2. Correspondence via e-mail with Luis Berríos-Negrón, February 29, 2008.