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DARK FAIR
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Dark Fair Archive

[Dark Fair at the Swiss Institute](#)

By Julie Fishkin | Dark Fair | March 31, 2008

Perhaps the line spanning the several doorways on Broadway to Broome and around the corner, as well as the usual crowd of self-pronounced VIPs should have been a portentous indication of what the fair itself may be upstairs. While waiting in line is always a safe option, time constraints and impending curiosity meant seeking out another option. The art fair became a night club simulacrum, replete with a discerning door host and a lanky, well-dressed woman at his side. For a minute, I actually thought they would ask whose guest list I am on but my story superseded any potentially stumping questions. I told him my friend was impatiently waiting for me on the 2nd floor, one floor below the Fair's, and it was imperative that I meet her there, to which he laughed, complimented me on the elaborately ridiculous lie and let me in. I will only mention in passing that there was a \$5 entrance fee, sadly normal for art fairs, obviously to distinguish them from the otherwise mundane art show.

Needless to say, the upstairs crowd was maddening. With candles exacerbating the heat, the Dark Fair was as chaotic as it was thoroughly entertaining. The booths were literally booths, diner style, in which exhibitors presented either a number of work from artists represented by the gallery, an installation, Tarot card reading and, in one case, a lavish table of fruit free for visitors to indulge in as they sat around the table adorned by a curious take on Manet, depicting busty women reclining in all their glory. Clara Jo's installation was a closed circuit that connected wires to silverware via a light bulb, which required three people to place their hands on each utensil, whereby the third and final conductor would create a current that resonated in the connected speakers. Participants were able to create a rhythmic tune using their own bodies as electrical conductors.

Chicago's Golden Age Store presented wonderful small works by sundry artists, as well as art publications by Material Press, Post Present Medium, Pork Salad Press and many more. The candles lighting the booths created a romantic reading experience, to say the least.

Some work was appropriately neon and glowed in the dark, while Zach Feuer Gallery's Tim Lokiec sat at his table, assiduously drawing pictures, while other gallery employees and friends enjoyed the lively company, drank beer and talked to curious visitors. The mixed drinks were \$8, discounted by \$1 because the bar ran out of ice. Thankfully Milwaukee's Club Nutz and General Store's booth was a simulated restaurant, complete with a cheese board, champagne and ice water. Though I never quite figured out whether this was for public consumption because my persistent request for water came with a complicated explanation. The fire department did eventually come to inspect the situation only to conclude that everything was not, in fact, a hazard.

The opening night of the Dark Fair was a perfect prelude to tonight's Earth Hour, an invitation to turn off all the lights from 8 to 9 pm, all across the globe. The Dark Fair's atmosphere, somewhere between a sweaty nightclub and an ambient meditation room, was the perfect antidote to the business-as-usual fairs, presenting great art and clever installations while keeping the lights dim and the crowd curious.



Tim Lokiec, installation view.

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