



Trish Tillman

Interview at Untitled Art Fair, Miami 2017

Age: 42

Location: New York, NY

Have you shown your work in Miami or other fairs before, and how do you think it's different from a typical exhibition?

I have shown in Miami a few times. I had work with [Asya \(Geisberg\)](#) at UNTITLED two years ago when I was just finishing the Fountainhead Residency. I was one of three artists chosen for the UNTITLED Fellowship. I really connected with Miami at the time and met a lot of people. The work was fresh off the press and it was great to have immediate exposure. Prior to that I've had work here a few other times.



As far as how they compare to other exhibitions, two years ago I did a solo booth with Asya at NADA New York. It was more like a solo show than an art fair booth, so in that way not much different from a typical exhibition. But there are limitations such as size and what you can and can't alter in the space itself. Asya did an excellent job of curating her booth at UNTITLED. I made three new works just for the fair. You kind of want to take risks in a fair but have to balance the parameters. Asya and I had a lot of back and forth about what I was going to make. I had a lot of drawings and shapes I was working with at the time. We picked a few that made sense for the fair and I took them from there.

In simple terms, what is the driving force behind your work?

There are so many layers about what I could talk about. I'm always thinking about connections to places and other people. So I think about that in terms of my work in how can I portray *that* moment in an emblem? I look at my pieces as emblems, or some kind of celebratory armor. They could be altars or memorials—portraits of a moment. I start off with a simple drawing, and emphasize the shapes that have something to say. Connections are really important to me; with ourselves, with other people. Those are the chains and tassels. The place thing comes into it in a way where maybe it's not too apparent at first, but that is why I work with these materials. I use things I'm attracted to from my environment in the works, and that signify some kind of anchor to a place or time.

Why do I keep making the work—I have to. There's a little bit of me that always wants to portray the same thing, and then there's also something different to do next, or a different aspect of it. For example, I could say for this next body of work I want to portray how I felt when I was fourteen and doing something I might have gotten in trouble for. So I feel *that moment* could be portrayed in so many different ways, and it's not satisfying until you reach all the possibilities of how to portray it and also make it accessible to people.



Music seems to play a large role in your life. Can you talk about where/how these references exist in your work?

Growing up in Washington DC...going to the old 930 Club, DC Space... I'd catch a ride with my older friends and end up in these dingy places which always had something radical going on. Going to shows where you would bring something for the benefit of someone else, like canned goods, or the door fee would go directly to a social cause. St Stephens church threw benefit shows all the time. I felt like I was rebelling against the usual systems, and the music was always the draw to get people involved in something larger. Learn something new, get involved in the community. Being a female in this world was not always easy, but I made it comfortable for myself and always tried to make it comfortable for others. In the work, I often use references to punk—aspects like a chain wallet, studs, pins, or the grittiness

of an upholstered bar stool. I also grew up going with my dad to all of his clients' restaurants. He was a salesman of restaurant supplies, so he would take me around when he had to make deliveries. We went in through the back of the building, so we'd walk into the kitchen and see all the stainless steel. I would notice all the dirty stuff in the kitchen next to the pristine stainless steel, and I was always drawn to that dichotomy...my dad would be selling them these weird little gadgets, like a shiny extra tall faucet or some fixture for cooking, that would look so sparkly and so funny because it has this mundane function. And then the manager would take us out to the restaurant area and it would become this big reveal—these beautiful interiors where nobody was there because it was so early.

You saw it with the lights up, no customers, only workers cleaning to get it ready for the night, so you saw all the grit between the plush. So that sense of place informs my work. The empty restaurants were potential meeting rooms, like a kind of stage, like the bars and restaurants I ended up working in. Different than the stages of the clubs and little basement shows when I was growing up, but equally important to me. For me it is the comfort of those places that I try to portray in my work. It's the brown cozy couch I'd sit on in my friends' practice spaces, or the cars we'd lounge in while in a parking lot skateboarding, or the basement floor while the band would be playing.



Can you recommend an artist who is really interesting to you right now in Miami or otherwise? Or something you've just seen here?

At the main fair I saw a piece by Marcuis Galan. It's concrete with black and white paint. It's so simple, but there was something about that piece being concrete and on the concrete floor that got me. The piece is called "Common Area."

I liked the Marisabela Telleria installation at UNTITLED as well as the David Ryan works. Guess I'm into minimal shapes lately.

I thought the Mika Rottenberg exhibit at the Bass Museum was phenomenal. The video was so good. She works with women doing laborious jobs, creating bizarre stories so complicated and interesting. There's a woman sitting there with a hammer busting up light bulbs, and then you see another scene of a woman so bored at the computer in a tiny, crowded flower shop. Another on her computer with this overwhelming mess of stuff around, flashing lights, consumer objects, plastic, plastic, plastic. And then you see this woman pushing a cart for miles across desert, borders, to the location where she sells her wares. There are suited men and a taco costume going through tunnels, and water traveling in tubes

from here to there. She weaves all these connections. I think about that which connects us a lot in my work, which is the rope, or the horsehair coming out, or the chain going from one side to the other, but it's just done in a completely different way, totally minimal in comparison. I am blown away by her work.



What are you most excited about this week?

I'm interested in going to NADA, I have some friends who are showing there and I always think they have a good program. Honestly every time I come here I'm always running around so much, so I'm looking forward to some chill time. I feel like as an artist I never give myself time to relax, so that's the main thing. Just go to the beach and meet up with friends. Living in New York, I hardly ever slow down. And if I do, I feel guilty for doing it because I think I should be working.

Do you have any shows coming up?

I have a three person show at Tiger Strikes Asteroid in Philly in February. In January I will be going to Richmond, VA for a residency for five weeks. It's at the Visual Art Center of Richmond, VisArts. They have a great facility and program. I'm going to push myself to do something I don't usually do—I want to bring fabric and my sewing machine, but I'll work with stained glass, screen printing and metal. So then there will be a solo show there at the end of March.