

In bow to economy, million-dollar works mix with affordable pieces at Palm Beach art market



Richard Graulich/Palm Beach Post

Aldo Castillo, right, describes a piece by Carolina Sardi called Blood/Love to a visitor during the Art Palm Beach show Friday at the Palm Beach County Convention Center. The piece is located in the Next Generation section with works by up-and-coming artists.

By [ALLISON ROSS](#)

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WEST PALM BEACH — Sitting in a \$3,750 aluminum and walnut chair at his booth, Irving A. van Dijk surveyed the people wandering through art installations at Art Palm Beach.

"This show is in Palm Beach," he said, as if that explained it all. "People are going to buy art. The economy doesn't matter; if they like it, they're still going to buy."

Contemporary art show Art Palm Beach kicked off its 13th year Thursday evening with an opening that drew almost 6,000 people, according to organizers.

With price tags of upward of \$1 million and a good turnout of collectors with an eye to buy, it would seem that the art world has been untouched by the financial turmoil of recent years.

Still, there are indications that art collectors are being cautious and that artists and galleries are having to adapt to a different economic environment.

"People are still buying art, but they've been spending less," said Kurt Nelson of Palette Contemporary Art & Craft Gallery in Albuquerque, N.M.

This is Nelson's first year at Art Palm Beach; he said he was drawn to the event because of its contemporary tone and the high-caliber clientele.

Still, he's hedging his bets. In addition to five-figure art pieces, his booth includes jewelry pieces going for as little as \$61.

This year, the theme of the fair is "going global," meaning an increased emphasis on less-expensive pieces from emerging artists and art scenes in places like Vietnam, China and the Ukraine.

There is also a section devoted to "next generation" up-and-coming artists, whose art is less expensive than more established craftsmen.

"We have a lot of accessible art," said David Lester, who organized Art Palm Beach with his wife, Lee Ann. "Too often, art fairs get carried away with the multimillion-dollar pieces, but we want things that are accessible and affordable for everyone."

Dick Coplan, owner of Coplan Gallery in Boca Raton, said that "prices aren't as good as two to three years ago, but they're still OK."

He said that his gallery, which focuses on photography pieces, has been lucky because that medium has seen increased popularity in recent years.

"The reason is simple: Photo pieces are generally cheaper," Coplan said. "Young adults who are upwardly mobile can decorate their home with a famous guy for a reasonable price."

Boynton Beach residents Robert Mandel and Lois Alexander paused from perusing art pieces on Friday to have a snack. They said the tough economy has given them better deals on art pieces, although they haven't seen a huge drop in prices at this event.

They've got their eye on a glass sculpture at one of the booths.

"We buy what we like," Mandel said. "The artwork here is super."