



Why did the chicken cross the table? To get into the sculpture exhibition



Alex Lentati

REVIEW

Frieze Art Fair
Regent's Park

NICK HACKWORTH

IT'S BIGGER than the Royal Academy's Summer Show, more chi-chi than the Affordable Art Fair and more fun than the Turner Prize. In only three years, the Frieze Art Fair has firmly established itself as the annual highlight of the capital's contemporary art scene and added credibility to London's claim to rival New York as a global art centre.

For five days, 160 international galleries, handpicked to ensure maximum trendiness and significance, set out their stalls in a vast structure in Regent's Park, hawking the work of more than 2,000 artists and attracting collectors from around the world. But the vast and bewildering variety of work on show makes the fair just as good a spectacle for the amateur, worth visiting even if you're intending to purchase nothing more creative or expensive than a ham



Fowl at fair: Sarah Lucas's *Cock-a-doodle-do*, far left, and this disturbing piece by Austrian Werner Reiterer, left, join a richly bewildering variety of work by 2,000 artists in the Regent's Park show

sandwich. Forty thousand or so visitors are expected over the weekend.

For the non-collector, the fair provides a snapshot of what's going on in the art world, a strange place driven by trends that are often as incomprehensible as the fashion world's seasonal rising and falling of hemlines.

The YBAs (the so-called Young British Artists) are no longer the

headline grabbers they once were and Hirst and Emin are represented with now familiar works — medicine cabinets, butterfly paintings and embroidered blankets. Gary Hume provides a surprise with a return to the abstract simplicity that first made his name with a series of paintings at White Cube. German painting, meanwhile, which forms the backbone of

Saatchi's epic *Triumph of Painting* show and has been a big thing for a while, continues to impress with Martin Eder's dreamlike work and Neo Rauch catching the eye at Leipzig gallery Eigen + Art. Elsewhere brash blends of abstraction with the detritus of consumer culture dominate the world of sculpture.


Voyeuristic trend-spotting for the


public may be one thing but from the galleries' point of view, sales are everything. With so much surrounding competition and only so many collectors with deep pockets, how does each gallery grab the imagination? Some rely simply on the art. London's Haunch of Venison runs away with the prize for the shiniest and brightest work with day-glo efforts from Ian Monore, Patrick Tutfococco and Tobias Rehberger.

Others go a little further, such as Berlin gallery Klosterfelde, who have divided their space into two identical set-ups replete with lookalike blond German gallerists who smile at you manically from behind their desks.

Strange, but not as odd as the highlight of Frieze's series of curated projects, Californian artist Andrea Zittel's relocation of a US hiking club to the heart of the fair. From their base camp they will be setting off on daily hikes across London and will be meting out a truly terrible fate to visitors spotted looking unenthusiastic about the art — press-ganging them into going with them. You've been warned.

● *The Frieze Art Fair runs until Monday.*



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