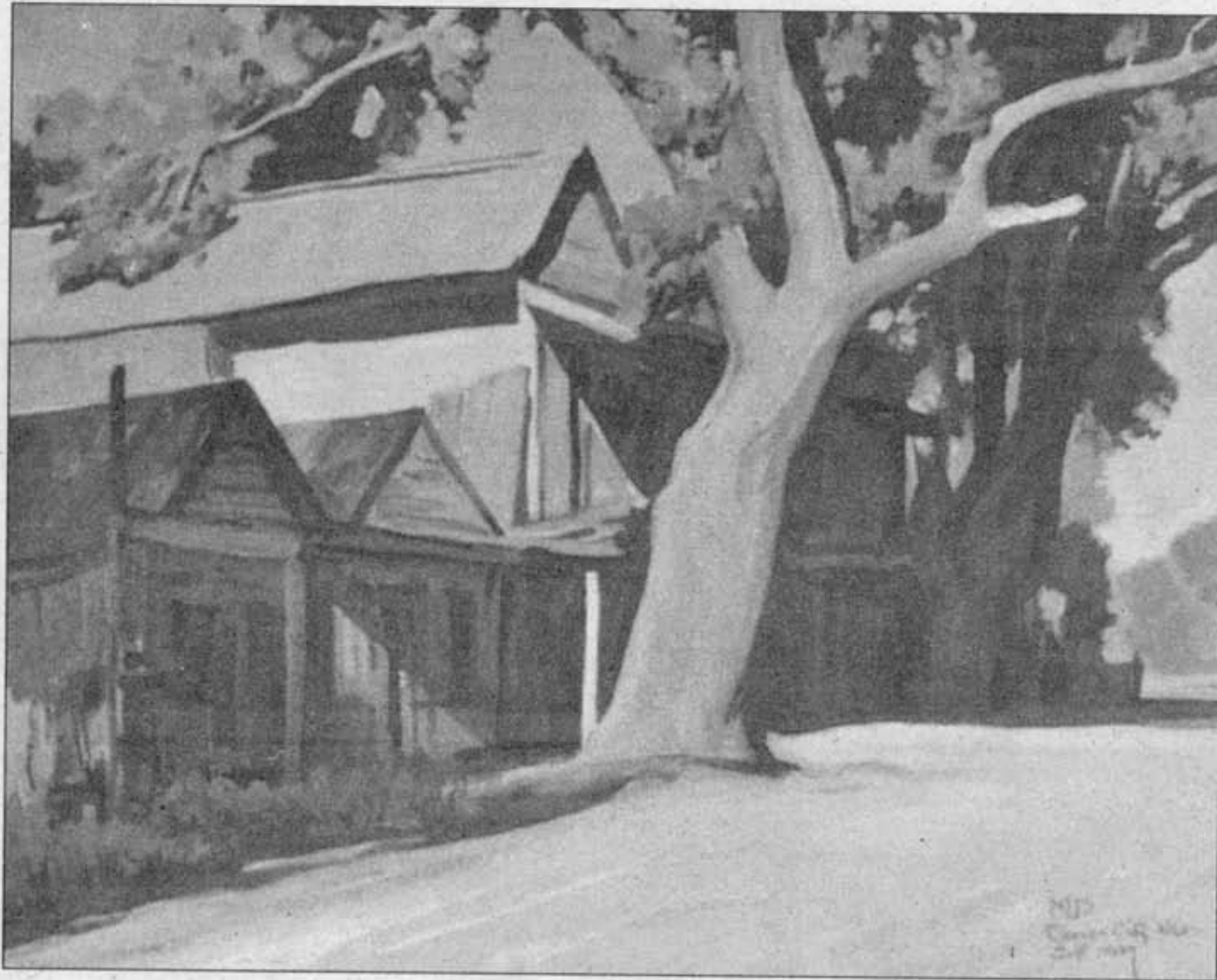


Art & Architecture



Mitchell Brown Fine Art Inc.

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Louis Stern Fine Arts

Not Just for the Jet Set

By SUZANNE MUCHNIC

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Once a year, people who love traditional art—particularly when it has a regional flavor—can make their way to the Los Angeles Art Show. They buy a ticket and enter an environment that offers something a little different from what the name suggests.

The "show" is an exhibition of sorts, but it's mostly a marketplace where dealers set up booths to display and sell their wares. It's the mall concept—one-stop shopping—applied to painting, prints and photography. Such art fairs are user-friendly for those who might hesitate to cross a gallery threshold, and something of an annual meet-and-greet for more established collectors and dealers.

The granddaddy of contemporary art fairs, Art Basel in Switzerland, welcomed 50,000 collectors, dealers and curators to its 34th annual international marketplace in June, when 268 high-end vendors

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showed their wares. Its American offspring, Art Basel Miami Beach, will be launched in early December with 150 galleries from the United States, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

The L.A. edition is a much smaller affair. As its organizers prepare for their eighth annual event next weekend, they are hoping that 10,000 people will come to see artworks offered by 50 dealers, 33 from California, and the rest from states sprinkled across the country from New England to the Southwest.

Modest as those numbers are in comparison with Art Basel, they still represent quite a leap for a fair that started with 16 dealers in 1995 and has yet to chalk up attendance of more than 8,000.

In fact, the Art Show has been growing at a slow but steady pace—outlasting other splashier ventures, including L.A.'s own

contemporary art fair, Art/LA, which ran from 1986 to 1993 at the Convention Center—and evolving in terms of dealers, audience and kinds of art shown.

But this year, says Kim Martindale, who organizes the fair for the Fine Art Dealers Assn., the show is ratcheting up the level of change.

For starters, there is a new location. The fair was held at the Pasadena Civic Center for its first three years. Then it moved to UCLA's John Wooden Center and stayed for four years. But now it has moved to Barker Hangar, at the Santa Monica Airport, which offers free parking and nearly twice as much exhibition space. It also provides room to grow.

"If we need more space next year, we can add a tent," says Martindale, who seems delighted to be thinking big.

The mix of art will be different too. Only

two years ago, the Los Angeles Art Show was billed as "the finest traditional art fair on the West Coast" and was known as a source of 19th century French landscapes, California Impressionism, Western art and works from the Taos and Hudson River Valley schools. Those popular genres will be present as usual this year, but they will be balanced by an influx of contemporary art—Abstract Expressionist paintings and prints by Robert Motherwell, sensuous paintings of a single line by Lorser Feitelson, colorful lithographs by David Hockney and haunting portraits by Dan McCleary.

Forum Gallery, Louis Stern Fine Arts, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts Inc. and a few other galleries have shown modern and contemporary pieces in the past, but a dozen other L.A. dealers who work exclusively with modern and contemporary art have joined the fair this year. Among them are Manny Silverman, who specializes in abstract paintings of the 1950s; Marc Selwyn, who runs the West Coast branch of Grant

► **LOS ANGELES ART SHOW**, Barker Hangar, 3021 Airport Ave., Santa Monica. Gala opening: Thursday, 7-10 p.m. Admission to opening: \$100. **Regular hours:** Friday, noon-8 p.m.; Saturday, noon-7 p.m.; Sunday, noon-6 p.m. **Regular admission:** \$15, includes catalog. **Phone:** (800) 656-9278.