

Seeing Red at L&M's ADAA Booth

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Image from John Baldessari's 'Portrait, Various Identities With Name/Date Cards.' (Courtesy L&M Arts)

One of the booths that caught our eye immediately at the ADAA Art Show was L&M's—most notably because its walls are painted bright red.

Of course that wasn't the only thing that drew us there. The gallery is showing works from the '70s by John Baldessari including *Portrait*, *Various Identities with Name/Date Cards* and *Untitled (Directional Piece)*.

Portrait is a high point of the artist's work at the time. It includes 10 photographs of different people, each of their faces covered with a white placard held by a hand extending from outside of the frame. The cards each read, "John," and bear the date (April 8, 1974). It's one of a number of playful re-interpretations of portraiture Mr. Baldessari has executed.

Portrait, Artist's Identity Hidden With Various Hats, which is exactly what it sounds like, is also from 1974. In another, the artist photographed himself various times holding cards in front of his face that each contained a different name. (*Portrait* sold

the second day of the fair to a private collector, according to the gallery. It had a price tag of \$575,000.)

Most interesting in the booth, however, is *Directional Piece*, which has the only bit of color of any of the work on display. It is a collection of 22 photographs of people that are, paradoxically, frozen in transit. Gaudy red arrows are drawn onto the images and trick the eye into registering movement or progress, but as Mr. Baldessari himself once said, the people "are going nowhere."

"It's a great body of work and it's not always well understood," Dominique Lévy, L&M's co-proprietor, told us over the phone from the gallery. Asked if the red walls were intended to match up with the red arrows of *Directional Piece*, Ms. Lévy said, "It just seemed like a good background." Sort of like one of Mr. Baldessari's portraits, "It wasn't meant to match anything."

topics: ADAA Art Show, Armory Show 2012, John Baldessari, L&M Arts