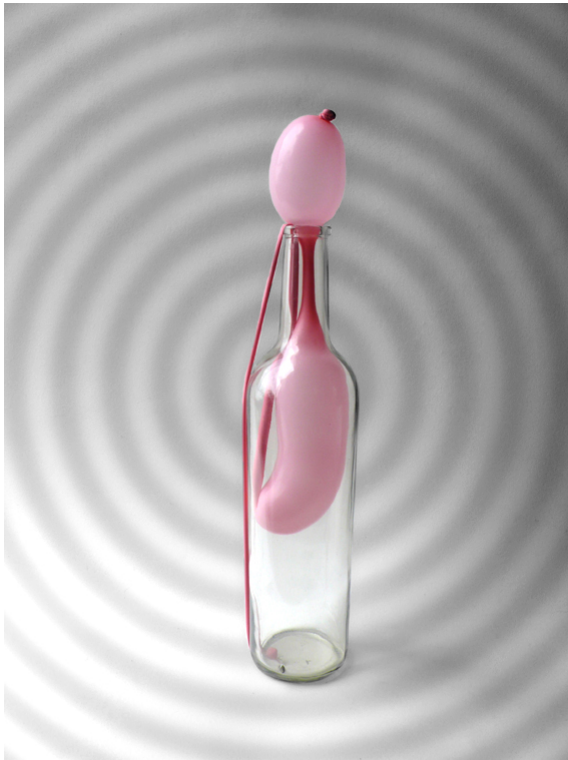




GalleristNY

At Cleopatra's, Seven Bottles of Wine for Martin Soto Climent

By Andrew Russeth 3/09/12



A work by Martin Soto Climent. (Courtesy the artist and Cleopatra's)

“You get to decide the brand of the beer, and therefore the color palette of the piece,” the SoHo art dealer Michael Clifton said on Monday night at the Cleopatra’s gallery in Greenpoint. He had just walked in the door and was discussing a sculpture by the artist Martin Soto Climent, whom he represents. “You bring your friends together, and Martin is usually present. You all consume the beer, empty the cans, and he delivers a slight crush to the belly and then assembles them into a sculpture.”

“It’s amazing to watch him do it,” Bridget Finn, one of the founders of Cleopatra’s, added. When Mr. Climent created one such work at the X Initiative a few years back, he crushed about a thousand cans during the party. About a dozen people were drinking from plastic glasses under dim red and blue lighting. The Modern Lovers and Suicide played on a stereo in the back of the long, narrow space. It was a romantic enclave on a cold night, and another founder of Cleopatra’s, Bridget Donahue, was pouring wine, which was going quickly. The gallery was between shows, and so there was no art on view. This was another Climent gathering.

Later in the week, the seven bottles of Charles Shaw were to be made into limited-edition sculptures conceived by Mr. Climent, who was down in Mexico. He had sent along photographs to serve as models for his pieces, and the plan was for the Cleopatra’s curators to build them, and offer them for sale in their hotel room at the one-day Dependent Art Fair on the Lower East Side on Saturday.

“We have these balloons that you build animals out of—pink, blue and white balloons,” Ms. Finn said. “And we’re going to figure out how to recreate them based on his images.” In the photo we saw, one section of a pink balloon is inflated inside the body of the bottle, and another section has bubbled up above the rim. Another thin piece of the balloon stretches the length of the bottle, resting underneath it. It looked like a complicated project. “He was just so generous about how he insisted on this,” Ms. Finn said. “He’s sort of created the piece and is now handing it off to us.”

Back in 1919, Marcel Duchamp, based at the time in Buenos Aires, did something a bit similar, writing to his sister Suzanne in Paris and asking that she make a sculpture for him by hanging a geometry textbook on the balcony of her apartment. She did, and the artist titled the work *Unhappy Readymade*.

But there was no such negativity in Greenpoint. “The work really comes together in a moment of celebration,” Mr. Clifton said. “Each one is unique, and each one has a different kind of arrangement of balloons and forms. They’re like floral arrangements.” After a bit more discussion he excused himself to get a glass of wine.