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Culture Invasion! Art Chicago 2010 Opens Tomorrow at the Mart

BY CASSIE WALKER

Ken Tyburski, one of the curators, previews the NEXT show.

ART "Exactly what is Club Nutz?"

That was the question, but all I heard on the other end of the phone was the sound of hammers thumping and drills buzzing. Two days from the opening of [Artropolis](#), Ken Tyburski, the curatorial director of [NEXT](#), the emerging artists portion of the fair, was simultaneously trying to supervise the installation of booths and conduct an interview. I was trying to keep it short, really. And the interview was all but over, really. But then Tyburski mentioned the Club Nutz appearance, and that opened up a whole new conversational thread. Cue the hammers.

Actually, the noise fit. There is a real DIY feel to NEXT, which, by many accounts, is the best part of the hullabaloo that is Art Chicago. (In case you don't know, Artropolis is a five-day affair that takes over the Merchandise Mart starting Thursday, April 29th; the main thrust is a contemporary and modern art fair called [Art Chicago](#), but there is also a satellite fair for newer talent—which is fittingly called NEXT—plus an [antiques exhibition](#).) To attend NEXT is to participate in a combination sport: half talent-spotting, half head-scratching.

I asked Tyburski, a New York-based gallery owner who only in January came on board to run the fair, what to expect; before hitting a few highlights, he issued a caveat: "I've only had a few months to pull everything together, so I had to focus on what we had in play." One of the presentations he was able to pull together is Spanish Edge, a collection of eight of the leading Spanish galleries, including [T20](#), based in Murcia. (It's usually hard to lure European galleries to the Midwest, so kudos to Tyburski for making it happen.) He's also roped in a few fresh American gallerists who are making their mark in the art world: Look for booths from [Horton Gallery](#) (New York); [ADA Gallery](#) (Richmond, Virginia); [Steven Zevitas Gallery](#) (Boston); and [Walter Maciel Gallery](#) (Los Angeles), which is bringing a curated show of architecturally driven works. "That's a nice thing for Chicagoans," said Tyburski, a Cleveland native, who actually lived here for a while in the late 90s. (He was an investment banker at the time.) "You're proud of your architecture."

We're also proud of our scrappy, if scattered, local art scene, which Tyburski knows, so he dropped some Chicago names: [Linda Warren Gallery](#) is bringing 200 or so pencil and pastel drawings by the underrated Chicago artist [Chuck Walker](#). Kavi Gupta, who, as a

founder of NEXT, still has a major presence, is championing the South Side performance artist [Theaster Gates](#) (*Chicago* magazine [profiled](#) Gates in the May 2010 issue) and the Oak Park-based conceptual artist [Tony Tasset](#), whose massive *Blob Monster* is already lurking outside the fair on the river side of the Mart.

Then there's Club Nutz, which, as Tyburski explained over the thumps and whirs of the construction behind him, is a mobile nightclub assembled by a group of Milwaukee artists. What makes the Club Nutz nightclub unique is that it is tiny. Teeny tiny. Ten-by-ten tiny. Only about 15 people can fit into it at a time. It caught his eye at the [Frieze Art Fair](#) in London this past year; the folks who run it agreed to bring the karaoke mic, fog machine, and disco ball up to the seventh floor of the Mart for this weekend only. Cue the dance party.