

NEWS ANALYSIS

Free drink! If you’re lucky...

For 200 fair visitors every day, artist Liz Glynn has a surprise tucked away behind the stands

FRIEZE PROJECTS

New York. A Frieze New York VIP card may grant you early access to the fair and entry to a special lounge where you can rub shoulders with other art-world heavyweights, but it won't get you into the most exclusive watering hole on Randall's Island this week. To gain entry to *The Vault*, a 1920s-style speakeasy created by the Los Angeles artist Liz Glynn as part of Frieze Projects, you need a special key and, more importantly, instructions on how to find the unmarked door to the bar hidden within the grid of the fair.

Every day, around 200 lucky fairgoers will be selected at random to receive an envelope containing the means of entry to the concealed space—a 20ft by 40ft room with a high bar, benches, Art Deco-style sconces made by Glynn and two banks of plywood safe deposit boxes. In these boxes are two glasses, ingredients for a cocktail and one random item (also made by Glynn), such as a glove, a compass or a door-knob. These objects act as triggers,

around which the bartenders, who also happen to be trained in improvisation, spin tales inspired by the short stories of Franz Kafka and Jorge Luis Borges as they prepare your cocktail.

“These seemingly valueless objects become activated and acquire significance through these stories,” says Glynn, who wants to examine how objects become invested with meaning in often arbitrary ways.

“I’ll be hiding behind the bar. I thought about serving drinks, but decided against it”

“I’m interested in exploring how we imbue objects with value and, within the context of the fair, how value is often narrative, sentimental and objective, and thinking about that in opposition to the idea that certain works of art are more valuable than others because some higher authority has said so,” she explains.

Glynn has made a name for herself with her installations for collaborative performances. For *black box*, 2012, her project for the J. Paul



Glynn created *black box*, 2012, a bar and performance space, for Pacific Standard Time



Getty Museum’s Pacific Standard Time initiative, she set up a bar and performance space and invited artists from the first performance art festival in Los Angeles in 1980 to take part.

servicing drinks, but decided against it,” she says.

This is not the first time Frieze’s organisers have commissioned a project hidden within the stands. Mike Nelson’s work for the fair’s 2006 edition in London could be found by only the most observant of visitors: his immersive dark-room installation, which ran behind a series of booths, could be accessed only through an unmarked white door.

And how do the organisers feel about commissioning a public project that only a small percentage of visitors will be able to experience? “It’s a concession that we had to make because the experience would be ruined if 100 people tried to fit into a space designed for 20,” Alemani says. “VIPs are not guaranteed keys... the distribution is random, so there is a side to it that is totally democratic.”

Emily Sharpe

• Gatecrashers beware: security guards will be posted near the door to keep out the uninvited