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ARTNEWS

Scenes from the 2019 Armory Show

BY Maximiliano Durón and Katherine McMahon

March 6, 2019



Stephanie Syjuco, *I Am An...*, 2019, in the booth of Ryan Lee, of New York.

This 2019 edition of Armory Show opened to members of the press and VIPs on Wednesday, March 6. The fair, which has brought 198 exhibitors from 33 countries to New York, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. After a slight hiccup two weeks before the fair, with most of Pier 92 being declared unsafe for usage at the event, the Armory Show opened with the usual fanfare and sales on Piers 90 and 94. Below, a look at some of the work on offer, including Mark Dion in his lemonade stand, an unmissable Sadie Barnette installation at Charlie James Gallery, and a choice 1979 painting by Miriam Schapiro.

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HYPERALLERGIC

Women and Minority Artists Flourish Amid Elite Indulgence at the 2019 Armory Show

Progress is incremental, and art fairs are still hellacious places to appreciate art.

by Zachary Small

March 7, 2019

About halfway through my tour of Armory Show 2019, I encountered the gigantesque and hollowed-out sculpture “Plastic Bags” (2019) by Cameroonian artist Pascale Marthine Tayou. Nearby, an overeager gallery attendant explained to a small crowd of glittering culturati how this work speaks to the pollution seen in developing countries. With the exactitude of the artist’s Wikipedia page, she informed her high-net-worth listeners that Tayou wants to “redefine postcolonial culture and raise questions about globalization and modernity” with his work. It also looks really cool from the inside. Cut to the next scene: a woman shoves her french bulldog underneath the sculpture for the perfect Instagram photo as another woman in leopard print edges into the frame.

Let’s get one thing straight: art fairs are hellacious places to appreciate art. Here, contemporary culture rends artists of their political pretense and unmasks itself as a collection of shiny baubles for the rich, whom galleries pad with puffery and champagne. White carpeting, white walls, white artists, white gallerists, and white collectors: the homogeneity of these annual events is stifling when considering the great artistic potential of amassing hundreds of artworks under one roof. But for the many galleries that depend on art fairs for exposure and sales, fighting against these prevailing market forces is like spitting into the wind: it’s going to hit you smack in the face.

Those criticisms only partially apply to this year’s Armory Show, which feels like an earnest attempt to nudge the market toward diversity. Despite getting off to a rocky start, the fair’s 25th edition hosts an observable uptick in artworks by women and people of color when compared to past years.

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Stephanie Syjuco, "Total Transparency Filter (Portrait of N)" (2017), archival pigment inkjet



Stephanie Syjuco, "Color Checker (Pileup)" (2019), archival pigment print

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Artist Stephanie Syjuco was an easy favorite of the press preview and VIP crowd. Ryan Lee gallery is showing a carefully curated selection of her probing photographs, which riff upon clashing concepts of America and current events. The San Francisco-based Filipino artist specializes in finding the artifice of everyday life and then making that the focus of her work. In her images, couples face their back to the camera, cloaked in green screen outfits. She creates applicant photos with migrants who shroud their faces in cloth. The checkered Photoshop pattern appears on a blanket that's draped across a figure's entire body; it's like a request for anonymity or deletion. My favorite of all is Syjuco's "Color Checker (Pileup)" (2019), which features a still-life of patriotic paraphernalia in the background and a rainbow ColorChecker card thrust into the foreground by the artist's hand. At a moment when the politics of white nationalism threatens to engulf America, it's hard not to see the colorful checker card as a reminder of our nation's diversity. What other colors are hiding behind red, white, and blue?

Another impressive exhibition of political commentary was Federico Solmi's orgiastic nightmare video-painting hybrids, on view at Ronald Feldman Gallery's booth in Pier 94. The Brooklyn-based artist twists reverence for the Founding Fathers into a carnival masque of unwieldy ghouls. There is a childlike essence to the work, which collapses American iconography with a Nickelodeon palette of neon pinks and booger greens. Even his frames burst forth with cartoonish (but pertinent) juxtapositions: skyscrapers and rollercoaster tracks, Mount Rushmore and King Kong, Las Vegas and Washington DC. In one work by Solmi, "The Grand Masquerade" (2018), we see battalions of Native Americans and colonists fighting inside a football stadium.

Grander trends within this year's Armory Show are likely obvious to anyone who's hoofed around galleries in the past few years. Surrealism is back with a vengeance, alongside figuration. Erik Thor Sandberg (on view at the Connersmith gallery's booth in Pier 90) works in a conceptual mode and color palette similar to René Magritte, but ups the existential ante — if you can believe it. For example, one of his works, called "Blossom II" (2017) features a subject peeling back layers of their own personhood, reflecting a variety of different personae from different ages, genders, and races. This type of work definitely indulges in the cliché and bathos of the genre — clocks shorn of its numbers, vacant stares mixed with expressions of abject terror — but it still holds one attention better than the many lackluster conceptual-based works on display.

There's also indication that experimental film is slowly creeping its way into the art market's arms. There were more than a handful of galleries that displayed compelling video work. The best was undoubtedly the small exhibition of José Val del Omar at Galería Max Estrella in Pier 90. The Spanish abstractionist may have died in 1982, but his dreamlike films remain captivating. Filled with amorphous blobs and biological forms, the Grenada-born artist's work is an examination of film as a painterly medi-

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um. Included in the gallery's show are Del Omar's improvised projection equipment, which combine light gels and warped plastic lenses for a spooky effect.

Speaking at a press conference ahead of the Armory Show's opening, executive director Nicole Berry said that she hoped this year's edition would be a "reflection on the enduring promise of New York's cultural and commercial scenes." Emphasis on diversity throughout the fair's curatorial programs is an important indicator of the Armory Show's progress, but it remains to be seen whether or not the market will embrace this better vision of itself.

The 2019 Armory Show continues through March 10 at Piers 90, 92, and 94 near Midtown, Manhattan.

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ARTNEWS

Armory Show Survives Pier Pressure, Sees Big Names and Strong Sales on VIP Day

BY The Editors of ARTnews

March 6, 2019

This article includes reporting by Annie Armstrong, Andy Battaglia, John Chiaverina, Maximiliano Durón, Alex Greenberger, and Claire Selvin.

By 11 a.m. the champagne was flowing.

It was bone-achingly cold in New York this morning, when the Armory Show, New York's most established fair for contemporary art, threw open its doors to VIP guests. The bubbly was to celebrate an anniversary—the fair is turning 25 this year—but it could just as well have been a toast to the organizers having narrowly avoided a disaster.

Less than two weeks ago, Armory organizers announced that Pier 92, typically home to about one-third of the show's 200 exhibitors, had structural problems. They said that dealers slated to show there would be relocated south, to Pier 90. As a result, Volta, the sister fair that typically calls that space home, was canceled.

Silver Linings to Pier Problems

Volta ended up finding an alternative now known as Plan B, courtesy of some helpful dealers and collectors, and mercifully, Pier 90 turns out to have a remarkably similar layout to Pier 92: if you were dropped into it without being told about the change of venue, you could be forgiven for not noticing the difference. Armory Show organizers had gotten the job done, and as staffers began scanning VIP cards, many big art world names were already on hand.

There were collectors Beth Rudin DeWoody, Donald and Mera Rubell, and Susan Hort; Museum of Modern Art trustees Glenn Fuhrman and AC Hudgins; curators Hans Ulrich Obrist, Alex Gartenfeld, Cecilia Alemani, Massimiliano Gioni, and Gary Carrion-Murayari; other art-fair machers like Untitled's Manuel Mozo and 1-54's Touria El Glaoui; and, last but not least, actor Paul Rudd (who was on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon last night, re-creating the music video for the song "King of

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Wishful Thinking” by Go West).

No one seemed to be complaining about the venue—and it doesn’t hurt that Pier 90 is only a couple minutes by foot from Pier 92 (which is still home to a VIP lounge) and Pier 94.

Some visitors even thought the potential debacle was providing some benefits, like Iliya Fridman, whose New York-based Fridman Gallery is showing on Pier 90, in the Focus section (for one-and two-artist booths) of the fair. “We’re overwhelmed by the positive response to our presentation” of Nate Lewis works, he said, amid a crowd that included artist and Pioneer Works founder Dustin Yellin. “The fair has gone out of its way to bring foot traffic to this pier, and it’s definitely showing. We’ve had a rush of collectors buying work already, in the first hour.” At that point he had sold four pieces from a series by Lewis, all priced between \$8,500 and \$12,500.

Fridman (whose Lower East Side gallery is hosting an “On-Hold Music Dance Party” on Thursday featuring sounds assembled by artist Nina Katchadourian while waiting on the phone on hold) said his good fortune owed in part to a switch in schedule, in which early-access collectors who had been slated to enter at noon could go to Pier 90 an hour earlier, at 11 a.m. “That worked,” Fridman said.

Also in the Focus section, which was organized by Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art curator Lauren Haynes, Tif Sigfrids, the director of a namesake gallery in Athens, Georgia, is showing paintings by the young Los Angeles-based artist Becky Kolsrud. “She’s interested in painting water and how to make something transparent opaque,” Sigfrids said. “She’s also painted fingernails a lot.” Were her own red fingernails inspired by the red polish in a painting nearby? “They are, yes!” the dealer said. “I never paint my nails, but it seemed weird not to.”

Before noon, Sigfrids—participating in the Armory Show for the first time—had sold half of her inventory of Kolsrud paintings, for \$3,600 each. Asked if the move to a different pier was disruptive, she said the show organizers seemed to have smoothed it all out. “It’s like Frieze in reverse,” said said, referring to last year’s unexpected heatwave that made Frieze New York, in a tent on Randall’s Island, unbearably hot. “Whereas Frieze had to make it up to dealers afterward, here they had to do all that work up front. And they did a good job, with a special opening and help with storage. I have positive feelings about the fair.”

Sales Across the Spectrum

Nothing makes an art dealer feel more positive than sales, of course, and many reported early successes.

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New York's Ryan Lee Gallery sold photographs by Stephanie Syjuco for prices between \$5,000 and \$15,000. Jeffrey Lee, a partner in the gallery, said, "There was incredible buzz in the first few hours."

The Brussels outfit Sorry We're Closed sold sculptures by Eric Croes to private collectors and one foundation for prices between \$4,000 and \$25,000. New York's 303 Gallery reported moving a bunch of paintings—a Sue Williams for \$100,000, a Mary Heilmann for \$95,000, and a Sam Falls for \$65,000, among others. Within an hour of Pier 94's opening, an extroverted Devin Shimoyama painting had sold for \$65,000 in the booth for the Chicago dealer Kavi Gupta. New York's David Benrimon Fine Art, participating in the Armory for the first time, said early in the afternoon that Tom Wesselmann's Birthday Bouquet (Hat Vase), 1988–91, had sold for around \$150,000.

On the high end of the price spectrum, New York's Hollis Taggart gallery parted with Lee Krasner's Peacock (1973) for "very near the \$1 million asking price," according to director Ellis Kelleher. Nearby, the London outfit Archeus/Post-Modern had a booth that was completely dark from floor-to-ceiling, amplifying the selection of light-based works in the booth from masters of the form like James Turrell, Larry Bell, and Keith Sonnier. The gallery reported that it had sold a jet-black acrylic painting by Pierre Soulages, Peinture 202 x 143 cm, 14 août 2015 (2015), for a seven-digit figure. And New York-based Michael Rosenfeld Gallery had sold a nearly 8-foot-tall red canvas by Frank Bowling for around \$500,000 in the fair's first hour.

For more darkness and light, the global giant Pace Gallery said it had sold a number of LED-panel works for \$48,000 a piece by Leo Villarreal, who is one of the stars of the Armory Show: To enter Pier 94, one walks through a long, dark tunnel with shimmering lights by Villarreal along its ceiling.

New York's Van Doren Waxter sold 12 wild ceramic works by Brian Rochefort for prices between \$3,500 and \$4,500, all within the first hour of the show, plus two drawings from Marsha Contrell's Aperture Series (2016), for \$8,000 each, and Moira Dryer's Untitled (1982) for \$16,000.

As is often the case in fairs, concise and focused presentations stood out. ACA Galleries was offering a multi-decade survey of the storied artist Faith Ringgold, who will have a solo show at the Serpentine Galleries in London in June. Victoria Miro gallery, of London and Venice, had devoted most of its booth to understated paintings by Celia Paul—seascapes and portraits that were rendered in brown and beige tones—who had a Hilton Als-curated exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art last year. Tucked off to the side, in a separate room, were Chris Ofili works on paper that depict what appear to be mermaids and are absolutely unmissable.

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The Paris-based gallery Ceysson & Bénétière, which also has a location in New York, had given over its whole booth to the pioneering Supports/Surfaces artist Claude Vialat, whose work was priced between €8,500 and €60,000 (about \$9,600 to \$67,800) and had already sold one work for €14,000 (\$15,800).

Jeffrey Deitch, the dealer (and former director of Los Angeles's Museum of Contemporary Art) who now has galleries in New York and L.A., dedicated his splashy booth to a solo presentation of Ai Weiwei's "Zodiac" series, which depicts the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac calendar in Legos. (The works were also included as part of Deitch's collaboration with Larry Gagosian, "Pop Minimalism Minimalist Pop," during Art Basel Miami Beach last year.) The series is an edition of 10, with two of those editions being sold as individual works for \$150,000 apiece. A full suite of the series carries the hefty price tag of \$1.2 million.

Galleries on the Move

The Armory Show also provided an opportunity to catch up on galleries that are on the move. "It's been an incredible turnout—a remarkable improvement over last year, actually," said Adrian Sutton, the director of Blain Southern gallery, which recently announced that, in addition to running its London and Berlin spaces, it will open in New York, in Cheim & Read's former space in Chelsea. Early in the day, a monumental Lynn Chadwick sculpture had been placed on reserve, and a sale was in the works for a figurative painting by Jonas Burgert.

Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, which is decamping from Seattle for Chicago, is showing figurative collages made with materials like ink, mylar, and glitter by Florine Démosthène, a Haitian-American artist whose works, as a sheet of text tells it, "excavate new diasporic mythologies and ancient heroine figures while reconstructing Black female heroine personas." "We've had very strong interest from the beginning," said Ibrahim, who early in the day had so far sold seven works, for \$7,000 a piece.

Ramiken gallery, which recently resurfaced in New York after a brief sojourn as a Los Angeles enterprise, was participating thanks to having won the Armory Show's first Gramercy International Prize for New York galleries that have never shown at the fair. On view at the booth are paintings by Andra Ursuta and Darja Bajagic, the latter of whom figured in a two-person show with Boyd Rice planned last year at New York's Greenspon gallery that was scuttled amid controversy surrounding previous provocative comments by the artist.

"I've loved both of these artists' work for a long time, and I've always wanted to combine them because they both reconfigure hardcore aesthetics with a playful extremism," Mike Egan, the gallery's founder said. At the booth's center is a 2019 Ursuta work

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shaped like a butterfly and inspired by ISIS's flag, with the title *Vanilla Isis (Antisocial Butterfly)*. Reading the text scrawled in white paint on its surface, Egan, doing his best Axl Rose impression, intoned, "Na-na-na-na-na-ee-ee!"

A Los Angeles Presence

Ramekin may not be in L.A. anymore, but other dealers hailing from the city were out in force. Philip Martin Gallery, in the Focus section, had a solo presentation of Katy Crown wall sculptures of cast-aluminum string that the artist painted over with acrylic and graphite. Two of the works had sold before noon, each for \$8,500. Charlie James had artist Sadie Barnett showing a massive installation—replete with a spacey couch, wallpaper featuring images of a hair pick, glitter sculptures, and photographs—in the Presents section, which is reserved for large-scale works.

Kayne Griffin Corcoran, another L.A. shop, sold a Llyn Foulkes work for \$60,000 and three Mika Tajima pieces for \$7,000 each. A Mary Corse painting was on reserve for a price around \$400,000. Three recent paintings by Jonathan Lyndon Chase had sold to three U.S. arts institutions—the Walker Art Center, ICA Miami, and an unnamed one—for undisclosed prices at Kohn Gallery. Luis De Jesus sold two Peter Williams paintings for around \$20,000 to \$30,000 each. Roberts Projects sold work by Kehinde Wiley in the range of \$100,000 and \$500,000, as well as a sculpture by Jeffrey Gibson for around \$225,000. "It's going better than could have been expected," Bennett Roberts, the gallery's co-founder, said. "And it's not just about the sales. It's about the follow-up and the other things that happen at this fair."

Elsewhere in the Presents section, Apalazzo Gallery of Brescia, Italy, had four new works from Edson Chagas's ongoing photographic portraits with African masks (an earlier example appeared on the cover of ARTnews's "Africa Now" issue last year). Each work was on sale for €7,500 (about \$8,500).

Document from Chicago had a two-person showing that included four works by photographer Paul Mpagi Sepuya, who is currently the subject of a solo show at Team Gallery in New York. A large-scale collage is on offer for \$13,700, two works for \$7,100 each, and one for \$4,700.

New York's Cristin Tierney gallery dedicated its booth to video works by peter campus (he prefers lowercase letters), who is the subject of a retrospective that opens at the Bronx Museum this week. The gallery will also open a solo show of his work on Friday. Each video is from an edition of five and is on offer for \$20,000.

Liliana Porter, who was the subject of a just-closed survey at El Museo del Barrio in Upper Manhattan, had work on offer in the booth of two galleries. Mor Charpentier

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of Paris had a small section of several works, and Porter fabricated several new works for the booth of Chicago's Carrie Secrist Gallery. These include a multi-object sculpture of figurines, titled *Them with traveler*, on offer for \$50,000; a 2019 clock work for \$10,000; and *To Hold a String* (lady in red), showing a figurine on a wooden shelf holding a long string and priced at \$10,000.

Among the more unusual exhibitors at the fair, which runs through Sunday, was Vhernier, an Italian jewelry brand beloved by celebrities like Jennifer Lopez. A representative from the company showed off a handcrafted 18-karat gold bracelet. "Our pieces are known for being very sculpture-like and artsy," the rep said.

One nice surprise was the inclusion of Belgian-style Stroopwafels—thin waffle snacks with a caramel syrup filling—in the small press lounge. Though the brand, Rip Van Wafels European Snack, is perhaps not the best known in the market (that would likely be Belgian Boys), the treat was a nice option for those not wishing to part with more \$20 for a sandwich and chips.

Perhaps no booth captured the fair environment as succinctly (or as bluntly) as New York's Pierogi gallery. Andrew Ohanesian was on hand there to activate his new P.O.S. work, which takes the form of a Verifone credit-card machine sitting on a pedestal. Ohanesian charges cards a minimum of \$5, and visitors sign the printed receipts, which carry the gallery's old logo on the back and a watermark of the artist's signature in UV-sensitive ink. "What am I selling?" Ohanesian asked. "I'm selling the sale itself." The Verifone machine is also on offer as a readymade sculpture in an edition of three, each priced at \$5,999.

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FAD — magazine

16 Artists to check out at The Armory Show 2019

by Mark Westall

March 7, 2019

We got down to Armory yesterday at 11am and within the first half hr a few of the galleries had already sold out so we think its going to be a good year for sales. WE had to get to DSM for a late lunch so speed around pretty quickly but we still had time to pick 16 artists we think are worth you checking out our favourite space was probably Platform and the Canard Bar where you can read our sister publication Art of Conversation while drinking Champagne v cool.

RYAN LEE Presenting: Stephanie Syjuco Focus: Curated by Lauren Haynes | Pier 90



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