

ART REVIEW

30 Must-See Artists at the Armory Show



“Pink Forest” (2018), by Patrick Jacobs at Pierogi’s booth, is one of several dioramas at the Armory Show, through Sunday at Piers 92/94. *Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times*

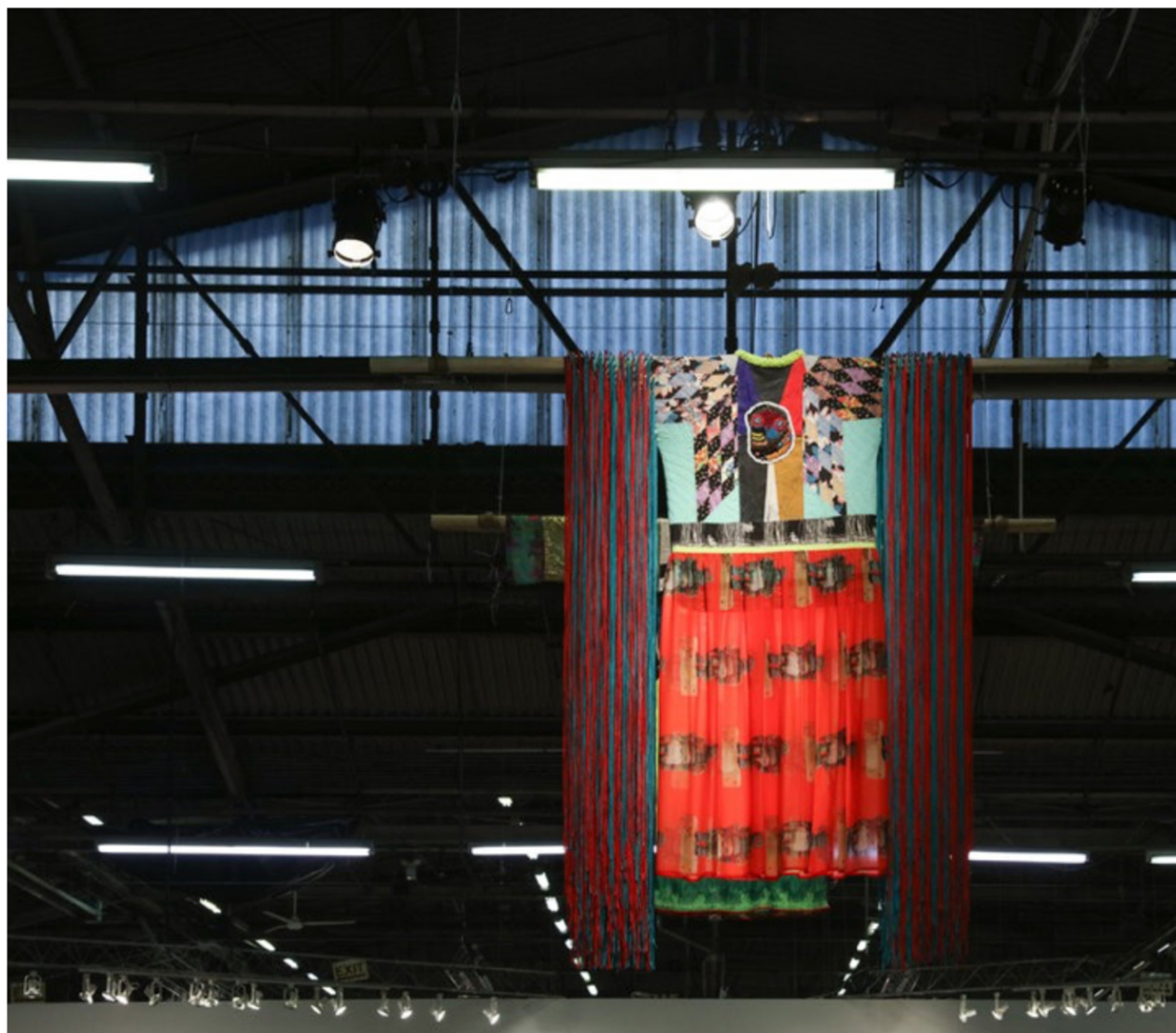
By Martha Schwendener

March 8, 2018

The Armory Show, one of the city’s top fairs for 20th- and 21st-century art, had a shake-up in the last year: one director replaced following accusations of sexual harassment, and a shift in focus under its new director, Nicole Berry. There is a notable drive toward streamlining, with fewer galleries this year — a total of 198 from 31 countries at Piers 92/94, the contiguous exhibition space. The timeline is being tightened, as well, to create less of a divide between the past and the present, between post-World War II art (usually found on the sleeper Pier 92) and newer work. It’s a smart move, since much “historical” art from the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s is now being shown in contemporary galleries anyway.

The impulse is toward slow looking and away from flashier displays. There are live discussions with artists: Carolee Schneemann at 1 p.m. on Saturday, and JR with the gallerist Jeffrey Deitch at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. There is plenty of historical work here that has not been seen before — or seen much — as well as commissioned projects and a very good mix of international, emerging and blue-chip galleries. Here are some currents I saw running through the fair.

Fiber and Textile



The painter Jeffrey Gibson makes ceremonial-style garments inspired by Native American Ghost Dance shirts. His installation “Without You I’m Nothing” (2018) is presented by the gallery Kavi Gupta and Roberts Projects.
Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

There has been a strong interest in fiber and textile art in the last half-decade, circling back to the '50s and '60s, as well as newer work. Textiles also honor traditions outside or alongside the Western painting canon. Jeffrey Gibson is a painter, but he also makes ceremonial-style garments, inspired by Native American Ghost Dance shirts. Several wonderful examples, presented by the gallery Kavi Gupta (Booth 611) and Roberts Projects (Booth 714), are suspended from the ceiling in Pier 94. Athi-Patra Ruga, at the

Cape Town-based Gallery WHATIFTHEWORLD (P3), is exhibiting tapestries that pay tribute to François “Feral” Benga, a Senegalese dancer who performed at the Folies-Bergère in Paris in the 1920s. Kiki Smith is showing a Jacquard-woven tapestry at Galleria Lorcan O’Neill (705) with shamrock references to her Celtic heritage. (They coincide with a room of Ms. Smith’s tapestries on view at the Haus der Kunst in Munich.) The Havana-based gallery El Apartamento (P24) is showing Reynier Leyva Novo’s wall of fabric scraps taken from workers uniforms and clothing. The master weaver Sissel Blystad, from Norway, has a selection of terrific textiles crafted with hand-dyed wool, on view at Downs & Ross (P6).

Digital

A range of digital art and video, both historical and recent, is here. A small survey of Nam June Paik at Gagosian (800) has a 2005 television sculpture with lions and Merce Cunningham dancing on the screens, as well as never-before-seen drawings by Paik. Another Korean video artist, Hyun-Ki Park, is on view at Gallery Hyundai (519, F14), with an installation of televisions nestled amid boulders and photographs of Mr. Park hefting a television. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer takes up the booth at Max Estrella (F20) with works that use sensors and face recognition software to create a variety of interactive effects, while Morehshin Allahyari at Upfor Gallery (F12) uses video and 3D-printed sculpture to highlight “digital colonialism” and turn ancient Persian and Arab goddesses and genies into futuristic guides and avatars.

The Body



Tabita Rezaire's wild installation "Exotic Trade" is at Goodman Gallery's booth.
Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

Artwork using the human body as a medium thrives. Maria Evéla Marmolejo, from Colombia, is represented here with performance photographs at Prometeogallery di Ida Pisani (F17). (She was included in the recent exhibition "Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985" at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.) In the same booth is the Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo, with a performance video, in which she tries to outrun a tank, from last year's Documenta exhibition in Kassel, Germany. Another

Guatemalan, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, offers an even more disturbing vision at Sies + Höke (804): “Print of Sleep” (2016) is a video in which performers lie on bed-sculptures covered with ink, alluding to various forms of torture and sleep deprivation.

Digital and post-human explorations of the body — often merged with other creatures and species — can be seen in Oliver Laric and Aleksandra Domanovic’s hybrid sculptures at Tanya Leighton (F23) and Tabita Rezaire’s wild installation at Goodman Gallery (702, F25), where you can sit in a pink gynecological examination chair and watch a video that mixes Afrofuturism with neo-psychedelic images and musings on sexuality and reproduction.

Painting



Kehinde Wiley’s “Margaret, Countess of Blessington” (2018) is the artist’s first portrait after painting former President Barack Obama. Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

Painting is always in full force at art fairs. The field is strong this year, with titillating objects like Kehinde Wiley's first portrait after painting former President Barack Obama, on view at Sean Kelly (501). It's titled "Margaret, Countess of Blessington" — in case you're wondering why when the subject is a man, Mr. Wiley is recalling an original painting of Margaret by Sir Thomas Lawrence, circa 1821.

A knockout newcomer to New York is the Norwegian painter Vanessa Baird, at OSL Contemporary (827). Her dark, erotic, sometimes violent pastels, hung in scroll-like strips papering the booth, are an excellent introduction to this painter, who has also illustrated the work of the Norwegian uber-writer Karl Ove Knausgaard. Pieter Vermeersch, a Belgian painter showing at Perrotin (802), explores color and surface in relation to each other with canvases mounted on painted walls with gently fading edges and gradients.



Huang Rui's deep red geometric canvases, at 10 Chancery Lane, were a discovery for our critic.
Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

Other discoveries for this critic include Li Yuan-Chia, a conceptual artist and abstract painter at Richard Saltoun (114), and Huang Rui, whose deep red geometric canvases are at 10 Chancery Lane (106). Hackett Mill (212) has works by Milton Avery and the lesser known San Francisco painter David Park, while Ronchini (120) has an exceptional display of work by Katsumi Nakai, an artist who migrated from Japan to Italy after World War II and exhibited with the so-called Spacialists, Milanese artists of whom the best known is Lucio Fontana. Also check out Sarah Cain's playful, site-specific "two day painting" (2018), presented by Galerie Lelong (Booth 604) and Honor Fraser (Booth 914); Mary Corse's works with glittering highway paint at Kayne Griffin Corcoran (502), a run-up to shows at Dia:Beacon and at the Whitney Museum of American Art; Claire Tabouret's military-drab-green paintings at Night Gallery (F27), in which women wear gas masks; and Dona Nelson's fabulous two-sided paintings at Thomas Erben Gallery (F7).

Big



JR's "So Close," presented by Artsy and Jeffrey Deitch at the entry to Pier 94, replaces the faces of immigrants passing through Ellis Island with those of current Syrian refugees. Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

The Armory Show has space to stretch out — and it does, mostly in the commissioned projects. But in the taxi driveway outside Pier 94, the French artist JR, presented by Artsy and Jeffrey Deitch, has created giant cutout figures from historical photographs of immigrants passing through Ellis Island. Their faces have been digitally replaced with those of current Syrian refugees in camps. The designer Nacho Carbonell is working away on expressive light sculptures at Carpenters Workshop Gallery (912), recreating his studio in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The space is already populated with biomorphic objects resembling illuminated bushes and trees. Tara Donovan is known for sprawling installations of everyday objects. Here, in an one sponsored by Pace Gallery (821), she has installed clear plastic tubes in a formation that is tinged with color from nearby artworks and ambient lighting.

A pleasingly pink diorama by Patrick Jacobs at Pierogi (727) recedes into the wall, while Berndnaut Smilde's project, at the end of Pier 94, presented by Ronchini Gallery, starts with a stage set. On it he creates temporary, artificially generated clouds and photographs them, serving perhaps as a metaphor for this fair, which was troubled by weather upon its opening, and will disappear after Sunday.



Nacho Carbonell is exhibiting expressive light sculptures at Carpenters Workshop Gallery's booth.
Rebecca Smeyne for The New York Times

Correction: March 10, 2018

An earlier version of this article omitted the name of a co-presenter of Jeffrey Gibson's installation, Roberts Projects. The article also omitted a co-presenter of Sarah Cain's "two-day painting." It is the Honor Fraser Gallery.

The Armory Show

Through Sunday at Piers 92/94; thearmoryshow.com.

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