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The Best Booths at the Armory Show 2024

The sprawling art fair returns with over 200 exhibitors, offering plenty of opportunity for discovery.

By Brian P. Kelly

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Tschabalala Self's work at Two Palms. PHOTO: TWO PALMS

New York

The fall art season marked its unofficial launch yesterday with the opening of the Armory Show, the annual fair here that calls for a panoply of descriptors: overstuffed, overwhelming, oversaturated, but also insightful, gratifying and enlightening. Major art fairs are often [a study in contradictions](#)—frustrating for their cost, market-first focus and sheer volume, rewarding for the singular vantage point they provide on the landscape of contemporary art. And Armory is no different: With 235 exhibitors from 35 countries it is too much to take in fully, but this breadth means that intriguing trends and great art are readily discovered in a sea of less-surprising displays.



Elif Uras's 'Upstairs Downstairs,' on display at Galerist and Galeri Nev's booth. PHOTO: GALERIST X GALERI NEV

While politics was far from absent here, the best artists subtly handled cultural flashpoints, taking on hot-button issues as happy warriors, deploying the power of aesthetic beauty over polemical point-scoring. **Elif Uras**, shown in a dual-gallery presentation from Galerist and Galeri Nev, examines the traditional role of women in Turkish society through her cheery ceramics. Gilded women decorate vases and platters: mopping, dusting, scrubbing and gracefully balancing hefty burdens—in one case, literally on one figure's head. Ms. Uras elevates these humble domestic tasks into the realm of myth while tapping into the history of her homeland by working in the lineage of Iznik tile makers.

Aleksandar Todorovic, at Dio Horia Gallery, deploys tradition in another way, using the visual language and techniques (tempera, metal foil) of religious icons to humorously illuminate the dangers of new technology. Skeletons lure a pair of people into a *danse macabre* as the still-living play with their phones, use a VR headset and vape. A deified version of [Mark Zuckerberg](#) is haloed with the letters CEO and in an MMA-gloved hand grasps a glowing token emblazoned with "Web3." "Saint AGI"—referring to the point at which artificial intelligence matches and surpasses human intelligence—is a chasuble-clad robot displaying a tablet filled with unsettling phrases about AI.



Aleksandar Todorovic's 'Danse Macabre,' shown by Dio Horia Gallery. PHOTO: DIO HORIA GALLERY

At SLAG&RX, **Tamara Kostianovsky**'s stunning quilted sculptures take on the forms of fallen trees and sides of beef hanging from menacing meat hooks. The richly colored, densely patterned works are shot through with tension as their morbid subjects upend our notions of death. From their bright surfaces sprout new life—plants and animals emerging from cracked bones and spilling viscera, a chilling yet beautiful reminder that so much of existence itself is built on decay. These are some of the most arresting and thought-provoking artworks in the entire fair.

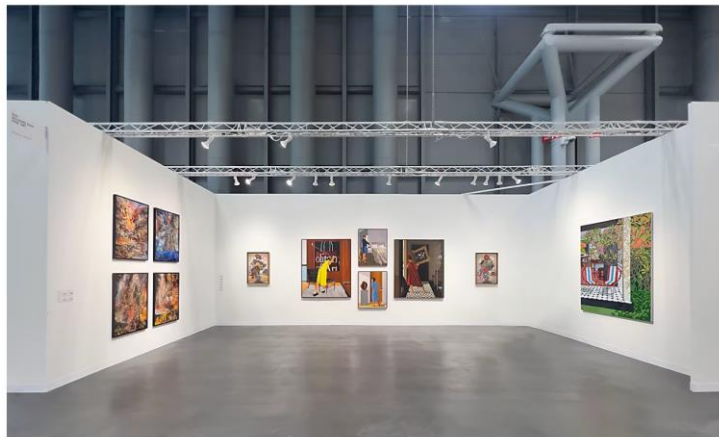


Tamara Kostianovsky's 'Growth' (2024), shown by SLAG&RX. PHOTO: SLAG&RX

Artists have never shied away from the self-referential, and here they happily engage in meta commentary on the art market and wink at art history. **Natee Utarit**, one of the foremost painters working in Bangkok, exhibiting at Richard Koh Fine Art, has created a series showing individuals destroying reproductions of Western paintings that he made (a copy of a Morandi still life, for example). A critique of the ways the secondary market treats artists and their work—as mere commodities—these oils are imbued with a captivating mystery. At Frestonian Gallery, **Adrian Berg**'s gorgeous landscapes channel Matisse, **Barry McGlashan** embodies Bonnard and **Minami Kobayashi**

appears as a 21st-century member of Les Nabis; for sheer visual pleasure it's a can't-miss display. Then at Maruani Mercier, **Jaclyn Conley** mashes up images from the counterculture of the '60s with Watteau's soldiers in her paintings, while **Kasper Sonne** draws on his personal photographic archive to create Fauvist-inspired reimaginings of real life.

In terms of pure Pop confection, nothing here is as deliciously fun as **Tschabalala Self**'s new work at Two Palms. Paper-pulp sculptures and reliefs of cans of Goya beans, bottles of Negra Modelo, containers of Fabuloso and more re-create oversize scenes from a corner bodega. The semi-abstract works by **b chehayeb** at OCHI swirl with rich planes of color, out of which begin to peek recognizable objects—horseshoes, goblets, a bag—that draw on her childhood memories of growing up Mexican-American in Texas. And the impressively quiet scenes of **Jacqueline Utley**—gentle, caring studies of women, alone and in groups, that explore their role in the domestic sphere—at Niru Ratnam Gallery come with a feel-good story. Ms. Utley is only now enjoying attention in her 60s, showing that success can come at any age.



Natee Utarit's work (center) at Richard Koh Fine Art. PHOTO: RICHARD KOH FINE ART

There are too many other standouts to name in so brief a space, but I'd be remiss not to mention a few. **Rafael Lozano-Hemmer**'s surveillance-focused art at Bitforms Gallery is an unsettling look at the current digital world—especially a piece that captures a viewer's image and uses facial-recognition software to show you the other guests at the fair who have the most- and least-similar faces to your own. **Cannupa Hanska Luger**'s stoneware-and-textile sculptures at Garth Greenan Gallery blend indigenous art with futurist visions, creating busts that reconcile the traditions of yesterday with the technology of tomorrow. Schoelkopf Gallery should be applauded for staging an insightful mini-survey of **Mary Abbott**, the underappreciated Abstract Expressionist. Finally, **Anastasia Samoylova**'s striking photographs at Wentrup present an unidealized America, depicting a Florida that's simultaneously humorous and gritty, environmentally imperiled yet resilient. The images embody the power of close looking, at a fair that rewards just that.

The Armory Show

Javits Center, through Sept. 8

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