

Art Fairs

WILL HEINRICH | ART FAIR REVIEW

An Elegant Return to Form and Its Home

The stylish fair offers a reliable menu of visual pleasures.

INDEPENDENT ART FAIR is back and in fine form. Returning to TriBeCa's stylish Spring Studios after a brief dalliance farther downtown, this year's edition of the modestly scaled but elegantly curated art fair features 17 new exhibitors, out of 67 in total, spread over four floors. Though its overall vibe is still more reassuring than revolutionary, an exciting, unsettled energy runs through its exhibits, and I found it more difficult than usual to make this standout list of only 10 picks.

FIRST FLOOR

Chris Sharp

It's a cliché to call small paintings “jewel-like,” but it's hard to resist with four little delights created by the painter Altoon Sultan, who debuted at Marlborough Gallery in the 1970s and now lives in Groton, Vt. Painted with egg tempera on calfskin parchment, they show close-ups of agricultural machinery in near primary colors. Precise but not fussy, geometric but anchored in figuration, they appear drenched with sunlight even with no sightline to a window.

Helena Anrather

It's hard to make out the tone of the photographs in an incisive two-artist presentation from this gallery on Bowery. Done by Olivia Reavey in gauzy, appealing black and white, they feature unusually frank depictions of male nudity. Three bright green bronzes by Oren Pinhassi, which look something like ironing boards with birds' legs and include a few plastic shower curtain rings and two panes of glass, are similarly disconcerting.

Nina Johnson

The former dancer Martine Barrat has an eye for detail. Each of her captivating, 1980s-era photographs of Harlem and the South Bronx is tied together by one discreet but well-observed moment. For one small boy extending his arms in a sudden rainstorm, it's the sharp white of a lollipop poking out of his mouth like a cowboy's cigarette; for a tired drummer with his eyes shut, it's the fingers that gently pinch the bridge of his nose.



UMAN, NICOLA VASSELL GALLERY AND INDEPENDENT NEW YORK; ALEXA HOYER

Two recent works by Uman, a Somali-born artist, at the Nicola Vassell booth. From left, “Blue Painting No 1” (2022); and “Matthew Higgs Planted Some Seeds,” (2022).

FIFTH FLOOR

Off Paradise

This TriBeCa gallery's graceful presentation, in a curious corner booth with a partially curved floor, pairs what appear to be two dark blue monochrome paintings by Maximilian Schubert with large narrative canvases by Peter Nadin. Though Nadin's pieces are rendered with much brio, it's Schubert's pieces that hold the real surprise: They're cast urethane resin — the only paint is on their trompe l'oeil canvas sides.

SIXTH FLOOR

Kasmin

The Pittsburgh-based assemblage artist Vanessa German combines sculpted plaster heads, miscellaneous found objects and Caucasian doll hands painted black to make exceptionally striking tabletop figures, evocative of Betye Saar though a little more commercial, that will likely be the hit of the fair. One blue and white duo, covered in beads, cowrie shells and little bottles, splits the difference between Nick Cave and central African power figures. A limited series of works by German also appears with Wave Pool, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit art center.

Nicola Vassell

There's so much going on in three large canvases by the Somali-born artist Uman — multicolored sunspots, eye-blistering yellows, a low tree listing under an enormous white boulder, a tall, many-armed figure growing out of a giant eyeball lettered MH (for Matthew Higgs, who gave her her first show at White Columns) — that you might need to schedule a few extra hours just to take it all in. Four handsome abstract canvases by Pam Evelyn, presented by the nearby booth, the Approach, make a wonderful complement.

Ricco/Maresca

According to the gallerist Frank Maresca, the Indigenous Australian painter Paddy

Independent Art Fair

Friday to Sunday, Spring Studios, 50 Varick Street, Manhattan, independenthq.com.

Bedford, who died in 2007, is the only outsider artist in the world to have a catalogue raisonné. But a group of gouaches, in which bulging, spider-like or riverine forms of brilliant yellow, turquoise and other are idiosyncratically balanced against plenty of white space, is his first work ever to show in New York.

Matthew Brown

It takes time to appreciate the strangeness and wonder of these carefully rendered paintings by Kent O'Connor, an artist in Los Angeles. Still lifes, landscapes and portraits mounted in chunky wooden boxes, they might strike you at first as earnest or demure. But notice the weird perspective of the table in one still life; consider the miniature size of a bunch of green grapes in the portrait; and wonder about that excessively wrinkled paper bag.

Mrs.

Meghan Brady produces exuberant, partially collaged abstractions that she calls “paper paintings” in a former schoolhouse in Maine — one which, when still in service, was attended by Louise Nevelson. The pieces shown by this gallery in Maspeth, Queens, though done with oil and acrylic, expand on Brady's vocabulary of simple, not-quite-figurative shapes in beguiling, seaside purples and pinks.

SEVENTH FLOOR

Maxwell Graham / Essex Street

This Lower East Side gallery's presentation of work by three artists' artists includes John Miller's aggressively banal graytone renditions of ordinary pedestrians, some surprisingly emotional constructions of winsome detritus by Sarah Rapson, and Soil Thornton's found piece of cardboard studded with found photographs of mirrors.

On View in New York

Michaël Borremans

The Acrobat
Through June 4
525 West 19th Street

Oscar Murillo

Ourself behind ourself concealed
Through June 4
533 West 19th Street

Richard Serra

Drawings: Through June 18
Sculpture: Through July 15
537 West 20th Street

Fred Sandback

Through May 21
34 East 69th Street

Nora Turato

govern me harder
Through July 1
52 Walker

David Zwirner



KENT O'CONNOR, MATTHEW BROWN, AND INDEPENDENT NEW YORK; ALEXA HOYER

A pair of paintings by the artist Kent O'Connor, which are at Matthew Brown. From left, “Self-Portrait With Bug and Grapes,” (2022) along with “The Imposter,” (2022).



MEGHAN BRADY, MRS., AND INDEPENDENT NEW YORK; ALEXA HOYER

Three works by the artist Meghan Brady, from left, “Tricks,” “All Eventually” and “Swarm,” all from 2022, at Mrs. Gallery, which is based in Maspeth, Queens.