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Armory Guide: Everything You Need to Know for NYC's Biggest Art Fair Week

By Paddy Johnson • 02/27/19 11:43am



The Armory Show 2018. The Armory Show

Much like a weather system, every winter a mass of art fairs descend on New York City. Short in duration but intense in activity, the five major ones offer more art than viewers would be able to see at the city's five largest museums. But what's extraordinary about New York's fair week, over all others, is the quality of the events themselves. Given the volume of work on view, though, it's good to head into it all knowing what you're looking for. Here are Observer's tips on tackling each one, including what type of art to expect and what the biggest draws are this year. They start today.

ADAA Art Show, February 27–March 4
Park Avenue Armory; \$25

Art Dealers Association of America doesn't just let anyone into their club. Dealers need to demonstrate that their gallery upholds superior business and academic standards. It's for this reason that their intimate annual members show—the ADAA Art Show—is so anticipated. As a group, these galleries are known for securing the best artworks by some of the world's best artists—both new and old. It's a really good fair.

The preview gala gives collectors the chance to secure their choice of art, but for those simply looking to get acquainted with new work, Sunday may be the day to visit. From 12 to 3 p.m. attendees will have a chance to chat with the artists whose work is on view. No specific names have been listed as participants, but Seth Price has a solo booth of assemblages at Petzel Gallery and it would be a boon to visitors to find him there. Price authored the 2002 essay “Dispersion,” which argued that distribution, rather than production, is the primary way works acquire meaning. The article is still taught in classrooms today.

Number of participating galleries: 72

Notable participating galleries: Luxembourg & Dayan (New York), Venus Over Manhattan (New York), Marian Goodman Gallery, Hauser & Wirth

Spring/Break Art Show, March 6–12
866 UN Plaza; \$20

Now in its tenth year, this fair strives to be less of a sales floor and more of an experience. To achieve this, Spring/Break invites curators, not galleries, to submit proposals around a pre-determined theme, and sales occur only through their website. This year's theme, fact and fiction, feels timely. Keywords provided by the fair include self-mythology, cultural conspiracy, propaganda, appropriation, psychedelia, the occult, religion, pseudoscientific and pseudohistorical. Spring/Break tends to be most Instagram friendly of all fairs.

Number of participating galleries: Over 80

Notable curators/booths: Sara VanDerBeek and Yelena Yemchul, Jennifer McCoy, Kevin McCoy and Jennifer Dalton, Odetta, Amanda Browder, Andres Serrano

The Armory Show, March 7–11

Piers 92 & 94; tickets start at \$27

The Armory Show will look a little different this year. Just over a week before the fair was due to open, a city inspection revealed that one of two of the piers that traditionally hosts the event was structurally unsound. So, they've canceled VOLTA, an art fair run by the same entity on pier 90, and moved one-third of its 194 exhibitors there. Shuttle buses will be provided, but this means the high-profile fair will be unusually difficult to navigate this year.

A lot of the star attractions, though, remain at Pier 94. For example, Platform, which exhibits monumental scale work, will be curated by Sally Tallant (the recently appointed executive director of the Queens Museum) with work by Andreas Angelidakis, Siah Armajani, Tania Candiani, Ryan Gander, Iris Häussler, Xaviera Simmons, Jessica Stockholder, Super Taus and Pascale Marthine Tayou.

Perhaps the exhibition with the most historical value, though, will be the restaging of Robert Morris's *Finch College Project* (a convoluted installation, explained well by MIT) from 1969 at Castelli Gallery. That too will take place on Pier 94.

Number of participating galleries: 194

Notable participating galleries: Kavi Gupta, Lisson Gallery, 303 Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Jeffrey Deitch, Andrew Kreps Gallery

Independent New York, March 8–11

Spring Studios; tickets start at \$29

Of all the events listed here, Independent's open fair concept might produce the most pleasurable art viewing experience and attract the strongest contemporary art. Dealers don't exhibit art in the standard format booths, but on the pre-existing walls and freestanding supports. Nothing feels cramped. No panel discussions. No special fair sections. No frills. Just a lot of gorgeous art.

Number of participating galleries: 65

Notable participating galleries: David Kordansky Gallery, Anton Kern, Cooper Cole, Canada, Chapter NY, The New Museum

NADA New York Gallery Open, March 4–10

Various locations in NYC; free

This year the New Art Dealers Association won't be hosting their usual art fair. After canceling the 2019 edition last summer, they worked to coordinate an exhibition and event schedule with *Collecteurs* for participating New York galleries (and out-of-towners who wished to participate in exhibition space shares.) Nina Katchaturian's On-Hold Music Dance Party, Thursday, March 7 at Fridman Gallery, promises the strangest and possibly the most fun experience. For this event, she recorded music played while placed on hold and collaborated with Julie Covello (DJ Shakey) and Gabriel Willow (DJ Stylus) to sample, loop, chop and mix the tunes. Friday, galleries will hold extended hours for viewers—Foxy Production, Company, Larrie, Kerry Schuss and ProxyCo all have openings.

Number of participating galleries: 62

Notable participating galleries: Derek Eller Gallery, Kate Werble Gallery, White Columns, Foxy Production