

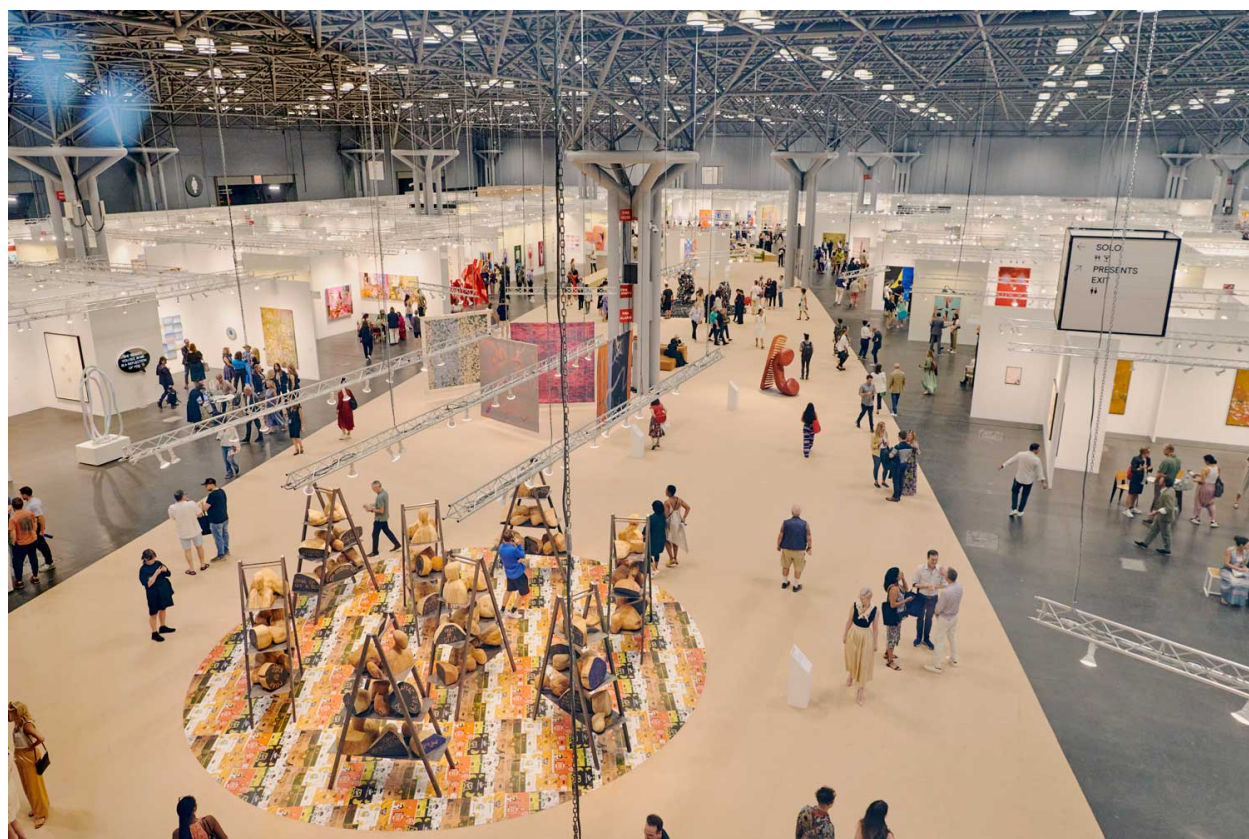
Galerie

Discover Highlights from the 2023 Armory Show

From a treasure trove of works by African artists at Southern Guild to a sold-out series by Colombian artist Maria Berrio at Victoria Miro

BY LUCY REES

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A birds eye view of the Armory Fair. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARMORY

On a hot Thursday afternoon in New York, art aficionados made their way to the Javits Center for the 29th edition of the Armory Show. There, in the sprawling convention center near Hudson

Yards, there were 225 galleries displaying a range of exciting works. Representing over 35 countries in total, collectively, there were hundreds of standout works to take in. At the Javits Center for the third year, the fair seemed to have finally hit its stride and presented its strongest edition yet.

Sales were swift in the first few hours with many exciting discoveries to be made. London's Victoria Miro, which was located right at the fair's entrance with a spectacular booth of new works by Colombian painter María Berrío, sold out within two hours. Berrío's works, which were created especially for the fair and feature imagined scenes from *A Feast for Ammit*, a fictitious, three-act play devised by the artist, ranged from \$65,000 to \$200,000 and were snapped up by both private collectors and museums.

Paris-based Galerie Templon, which opened a New York space in 2022, reported selling works by Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota ranging from \$64,000–\$106,000 as well as a Will Cotton painting for \$150,000. “The first hour was extremely busy and it felt like we were back in the pre-covid times with a lot of interest from mostly American collectors in our international artists,” said Templon's executive director, Anne-Claudie Coric. At Nara Roesler, Heinz Mack's *The painter's garden (chromatic constellation)* (2001) was sold for €240,000, while two paintings by Fabio Miguez sold for \$15,000 each.

San Francisco's Jessica Silverman, which is celebrating 15 years in business, sold a large-scale patinated bronze sculpture by Woody De Othello for \$400,000. The gallery also sold five table-top bronze sculptures by Rose B. Simpson, including one to Rollins Museum of Art in Winter Park, Florida. “The positive reception from institutions on the East Coast shows how our artists' material and conceptual rigor is timely and timeless,” commented founder and director Jessica Silverman on the opening day. Collectors were also hovering around the booth of Almine

Rech, who presented a solo booth of new works by emerging French star Alexandre Lenoir, whose striking abstract paintings are created from reworked personal photographs.

Founders of Cape Town art and design gallery Southern Guild, Trevyn and Julian McGowan, who are opening a sprawling new location in Los Angeles in February 2024, described a buzzy energy on the opening morning. They were presenting a group of four talented African artists, including a dazzling new clay and bronze sculpture by South African ceramicist and designer Zizipho Poswa, who is known for carving ancient stories in ceramics. (It was on hold at time of reporting.) 56 Henry, which was presenting for the first time, had sold all but one of a group of works by LaKela Brown, a Brooklyn-based artist working in sculpture and plaster relief.

As usual, there was a heavy focus on curatorial sections, adding an interesting, conceptual spin to the edition. A standout was the Focus section, which is made up of solo- and dual-artist presentations with work that is decidedly outside the mainstream. Curated by Candice Hopkins, Director and Chief Curator of Forge Project, it included a strong representation of Native American and First Nation artists. Highlights include works by Eric-Paul Riege, a Diné textile artist and weaver from New Mexico, who is showing at the booth of Bockley Gallery in Minneapolis and Choctaw-Cherokee artist Jeffrey Gibson, who was recently selected to represent the U.S. at the 2024 Venice Biennale at Marc Straus. Clearing gallery presented a striking booth of works by emerging artist Sara Flores, whose new work is also on view at their Brooklyn space.

“To have a non commercial perspective means that there are going to be interesting works that might not be seen before, not just at a fair, but anywhere else,” says Nicole Berry, the executive director of the Armory. “To have that opportunity with a large audience and to provide a platform

for these artists that might not have had the opportunity is really important to us. We get feedback each year that people come to this fair and make important discoveries, and then those artists or those galleries go on to do amazing things. If we can be that springboard for them, we're thrilled." The Platform section was another hit, dedicated to large-scale installations and site-specific curated by Eva Respini, Deputy Director and Director of Curatorial Programs at Vancouver Art Gallery under the theme of "Rewriting Histories".

"Platform is literally at the center of the fair," Respini tells *Galerie*. "It is the beating heart, if you will. It is gratifying to see so many visitors engaging with these innovative works that speak to how we might understand our current moment." Emerging star Vaughn Spann's works transformed a booth by David Castillo. Yinka Shonibare CBE's *Man Moving Up from 2022*, presented by James Cohan gallery, depicts a headless figure clutching a suitcase while climbing a flight of stairs. It captures the bravery of the Black Americans who refused disenfranchisement by seeking a new place within urban public life in the North and West. Teresita Fernández's installation *Island Universe 2* re-images global territories, presented by Lehmann Maupin.

"We always wanted to have fantastic curators involved with the fair to bring their different perspectives," says Berry. "What was interesting about this year's edition is they all were in dialogue before the fair opened, discussing overarching themes of historical narratives and how that would impact each of their sections... they have each taken their own spin on it and have really brought amazing ideas to the table."

The 2023 edition of the Armory was already well in the works when the sale of the fair to British company Frieze was announced in July. While this year was “business as usual,” as Berry says, the art world is curious to see what changes will take place next year, which will be the 30th edition of the fair. “I hope it only enhances it,” says Berry. “A lot of the discussions about the future will happen post fair. My team has really been focused on delivering this one and making sure it’s great. But we’re excited about the opportunity that lie ahead.”

The Armory Fair is on view from September 7 – 10 at the Javits Center in New York.