

Daunted by the Sprawling Armory Show? Try These 13 Certified Winners.

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Will Heinrich, Walker Mimms

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Art Fair Review



More than 200 exhibitors will show this weekend at the Armory Show. From ACA Galleries, Doowon Lee's "Moonlit Night: Tiger and Frog," 2025, mixed media on wool.

September is busy for the art world in New York. Hometown galleries open their most important shows, and a cluster of fairs bring together collectors and galleries from around the world. The [Armory Show](#), which gathers more than 200 exhibitors from 35 countries at the Javits Center from Sept. 5-7, is the largest, and it remains an unparalleled opportunity to sample the global art scene.

But while dealers and artists alike may believe in art for art's sake, they also have to make it work as a business. And that business, at the moment, is wobbly. Though it remains enormous, this year's Armory fair, the second since its acquisition by Frieze, is slightly smaller than last year's, and it's really anyone's guess whether collectors will buy. So it's no surprise that most of the galleries approached this year's Armory conservatively, reaching for brightly colored, easily approachable art in well-worn 20th-century genres that will translate to Instagram. (There are also many dead artists, whose markets and perch on art history may seem more reliable.)

Along with several special sections, including **Focus**, curated by Jessica Bell Brown to highlight artists from the American South, there are enough fine artworks here to keep you occupied for hours. **Eric Firestone (416)** has a particularly strong group show, there's an exquisite Raymond Saunders painting at **Andrew Kreps Gallery (104)**, and the array of Gee's Bend quilts and monumental Thornton Dial installations in the **Platform** section is a fair unto itself.

The real problem is the sheer size of the place. It's almost impossible not to feel overwhelmed. So Walker Mimms and I went in early and chose 13 exceptional booths to look for. Your experience will differ, but it's enough to get you started. *WILL HEINRICH*



At ACA Galleries, Doowon Lee. Gimyeong Jeoljido (Still-life Painting of Scholarly Objects and Seasonal Symbols), 2025.

The saturated, nocturnal colors and intimidating tigers of the self-taught Korean artist Doowon Lee's felt paintings and carpets are powerfully suggestive of Thornton Dial, whose own work is on monumental display in the Platform section (though without any tigers). But their distinctly fuzzy texture is all Lee's own, giving the pieces, which also portray peacocks, frogs and eggplants, the same sort of potent ambiguity as the tigers. *HEINRICH*



"Deep Sea Kiki," 2024, by the Brazilian artist known as assume vivid astro focus.

Three striking abstractions by the Brazilian artist known as assume vivid astro focus are the best of the sort of post-internet postmodernism you find so much of in this and other contemporary art fairs. Splashy colors and gestures in the mixed-media piece "Deep Sea Kiki" reprise the approaches of Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and other 20th-century art movements as filtered through Photoshop and Instagram. But self-consciously crafty materials, like corrugated construction paper, add a sense of fun, as well as a crucial note of irony. *HEINRICH*

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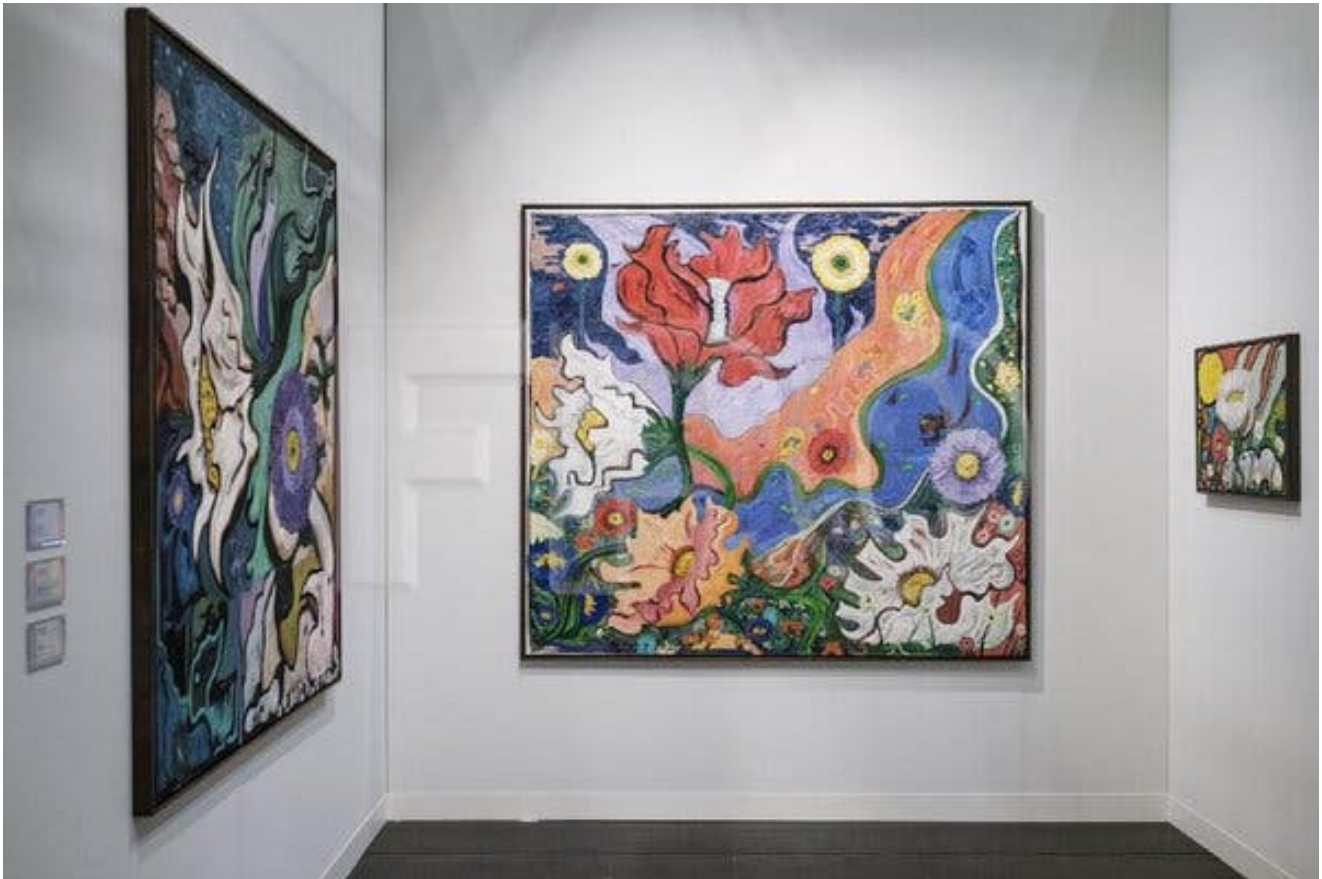
Sarah Graham, "Musa acuminata (paper) VI," 2025, charcoal and colored chalk on handmade paper. Sarah Graham's large-scale pencil drawings of banana plants look straightforward enough, like the kind of exercise an art student might turn to if she were lost in the jungle. What makes them so appealing is both their material lushness — the way their green and brown cross hatching fades into the bulbous modeling of the leaves — and the frank evidence they offer of the human hand at work. (If their vision of a natural good chopped up into approachable pieces constitutes a subtle art-fair critique, that's all right, too.) *HEINRICH*

Image



"Suddenly She Was Hell-Bent and Ravenous," by Jacqueline Surdell, a 14-foot-high remix of Giotto's "Last Judgment" rendered in nautical line and torn-up shower curtains.

"Suddenly She Was Hell-Bent and Ravenous," by Jacqueline Surdell, is a 14-foot-high remix of Giotto's "Last Judgment" rendered in nautical line and torn-up shower curtains. The shower curtains, which Surdell sourced online, were printed with the Giotto painting, and between them and the knots, you could read into the work all sorts of thoughts about labor, the persistence and perishability of visual culture, and social and financial systems of dominance. What really caught my eye, though, was the work's explosive, and very welcome, exuberance. *HEINRICH*



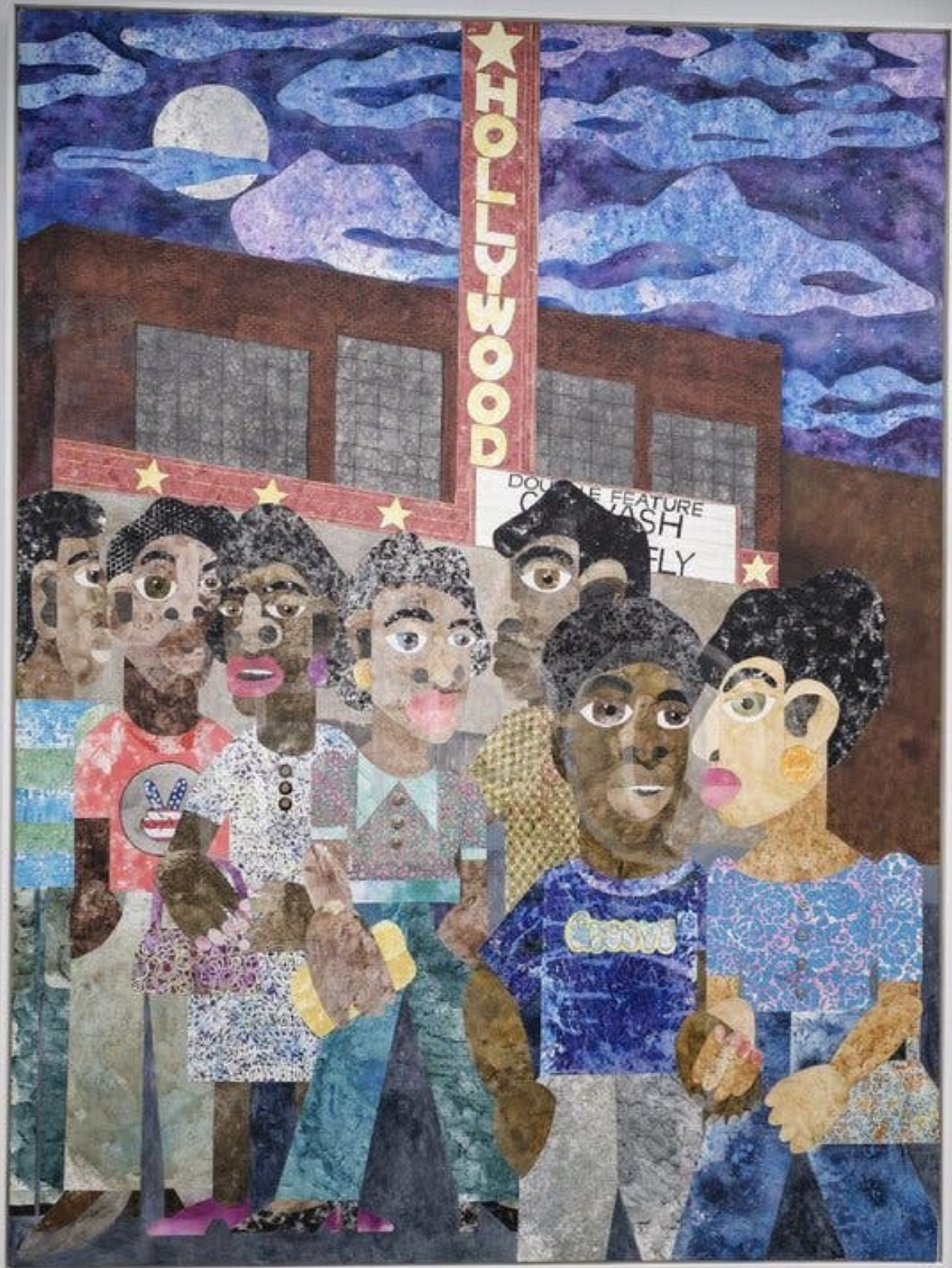
Daniel Gibson, oil on linen, from left: "Jacumba Nights," 2025; "Red Earth Green River," 2024; "Praying Moon w/ Guston Shoes," 2024.



Fernanda Galvão, "Tree-snake and gooey-warm-sandy-wind," 2025. Charcoal, dry pastel, oil stick, and oil on linen.

Semi-abstracted floral scenes by the Los Angeles-based artist [Daniel Gibson](#) seem to depict a world coming apart, with melting skies, lavender flames and no clear way of knowing which way is up. Compare them to the paintings of [Fernanda Galvão](#) at **Lyles & King (P14)**, whose similarly sinuous landscapes in darker, drier colors suggest a moment just slightly further into the apocalypse than Gibson's. *HEINRICH*

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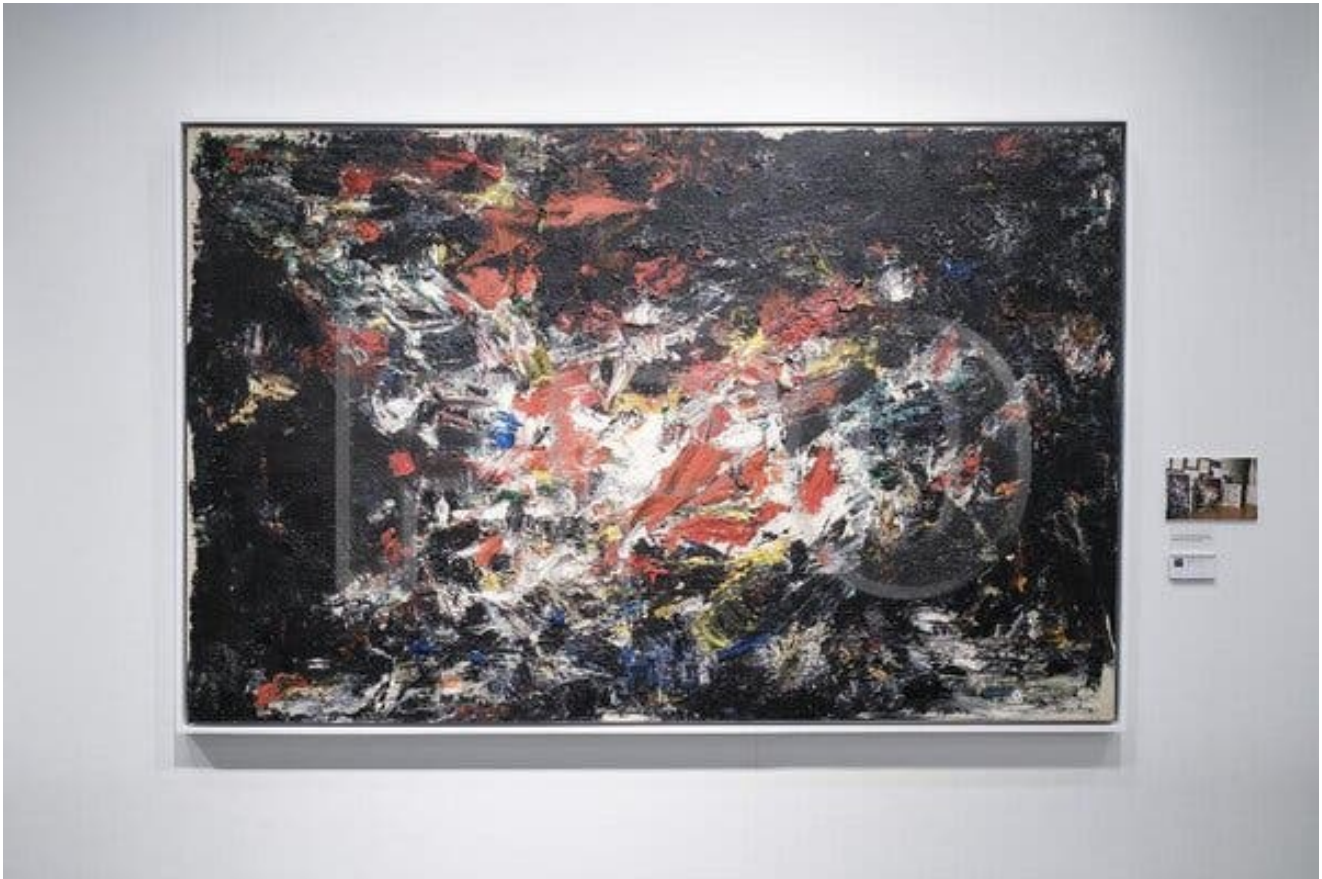
Evita Tezeno, "Saturday Night at the Hollywood Theater," 2024, acrylic, mixed media collage and vintage buttons on canvas.

Image



Orkideh Torabi's "Checkmate" (2022), dye on canvas.

[Evita Tezeno](#)'s hand-painted paper collages have an unexpected ease. Though their patterns are busy, and their compositions complex — one shows seven young people of color emerging from a double feature, two with real buttons glued to their chests — the artist, a 65-year-old native of Port Arthur, Texas, has an impeccable sense of balance and takes unmistakable pleasure in her work. Like [Orkideh Torabi](#), whose charming dye-on-canvas scenes are showing with the Tehran gallery **Sarai (P46)**, Tezeno has taken a well-traveled approach to painting and made it her own. *HEINRICH*



Norman Carton, "Sierra Night #765," 1956, oil on canvas.

This eye-opening historical survey of lesser-known Abstract Expressionists includes solid, interesting work by Michael (Corinne) West and Albert Kotin, both of whom studied with Hans Hofmann. But for me the star is Norman Carton (1908-1980). In his landscape-oriented abstraction "Sierra Night #765" (1956), broad, glowing strokes of red and white, dotted with yellow and a single blot of sky blue, break through the middle of a mostly black field, like dawn through a seemingly interminable night or a sudden glint of happiness amid despair.

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On the back wall, "The Ocean Belongs to Everyone," 2022-2025; at right, "Your Love Is Like a Blanket," 2022-2025.

A welcome exception to the frankly tired uptick in textile art, the American artist James Perkins, born 1978, produces fragile color-field abstractions that make you wonder if fabric could use a therapist. Perkins stretches swatches of silk or velvet across wooden frames, stains them, then buries and retrieves them from the earth, to achieve textures akin to oxidized aluminum, moldy Twinkies or the curtains of abandoned homes. It's a delicate collision between the pious canvas stainers of the 1960s and a grittier, hard-core patina. Pair with Myles Bennett's de-threaded canvases at **JDJ Gallery (P18)** nearby. *MIMMS*

Image



Lancelot Ribeiro, "Stricken Monk With Cat O'Nine Tails (Psychedelic Man Series)," 1968. The late-career or deceased Indian artists in this booth contribute surprisingly liberated, and often nightmarish, takes on color and sex. K. Laxma Goud of Hyderabad, born 1940, takes center stage with small but unsettling voyeuristic scenes in etching and crayon. Others employ a vigorous, three-dimensional segmentation on canvas, almost like scar tissue, to define the lines of their human figures. For instance: the slatherings of red polyvinyl acetate, an early version of acrylic paint, that outline the "Stricken Monk with Cat O'Nine Tails" (1968) by Lancelot Ribeiro (1933-2010) of Mumbai and London — a gory and bizarre painting not to be missed. *MIMMS*

Image



Alfred Jensen, "9 Precession Years of 260 Days," 1976.

Image

The Earth-Plate = Ti Phom.

N. The House of the Physical N.E. The House of the Creative E.

The House of the Joyous N.W. The House of the Creative S.E. The House of the Joyous S.W. The House of the Creative N.E.

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S. The House of the Joyous N.W. The House of the Creative S.E. The House of the Joyous S.W. The House of the Creative N.E.

The Outside Square

Alfred Jensen
Dec. 11 - 1970



Alfred Jensen, "The Outside Square, The Earth Plate," 1970.

In rug-like concentric checkerboards and paintings of geometric pinwheel meander, the Danish artist Alfred Jensen (1903-81) applies loud Op-Arty colors apparently directly from the tube, lining up gooey smooches of paint that, collectively, sort of vibrate as you approach them on canvas. If Jensen has a logic — as the sudoku-like numbers inside the grid of "The Outside Square, The Earth Plate" (1970) would suggest he does — then it is clownier than the exercises by Sol Le Witt that art-loving viewers might be reminded of here. Jensen is overdue for a retrospective. *MIMMS*

Image



Artworks by Tatiana Blass, all oil on canvas from 2025. From top: "Tightrope 4," "Tightrope 2" and Tightrope 3."

Image



Gerhardt Liebmann, "Two Roofs-Two Chairs," 1977.

There was a certain style in vogue during the 1990s — whimsical, moody in palette, starring reduced human figures à la Marc Chagall — that fell rapidly out of fashion. Tatiana Blass of Brazil, born 1979, revives it in an unapologetic and deeply felt way, across her paintings and wall-hanging sculptures that appear to drip and rust in their colorways of slate blue and Cor-Ten orange. They are peopled by distant suggestions of humans, walking or juggling, whom Blass sometimes heightens in sculptural relief, and sets in rock quarries or hot springs. (Pair with Gerhardt Liebmann's 1970s surrealist-scapes in Booth 233.) Is earnestness back?

MIMMS

Image

assemblies of people that might best be called Cubist. But these six works are less concerned with visual trickery than depicting hectic and "Guernica"-dense relationships. In one, a mob of people, wielding what appear to be high-heeled boots like pitchforks, supervise a quartet of women who bend down cartoonishly to examine a tabletop easel frame: People-watching, art-going, art. Hard to say exactly what's going on in these social studies, but you feel oddly satisfied not knowing and maybe a little too seen in the context of an art fair. *MIMMS*

Image



Santiago Yahuarcani, "Dueña de Peces (Owner of Fish)," 2022.

Arranged into a vertical sort of narrative logic, with all the details stacked like a Grandma Moses landscape or Byzantine altarpiece, the barkcloth paintings on pressed tree shavings by Santiago Yahuarcani are graphic in feel and political in tone, depicting Spanish phrases of protest and situations of plunder in northern Amazonia, where Yahuarcani was born in 1961 to the White Heron clan of the Uitoto Nation. But they are also powerfully mystical works, and this rewards long viewing. In his bird-people, mantis men, beasts and snakes, you sense a visual kind of oral history — an ancient anger that belies the physical delicacy of these paintings, which up close appear as dense thickets of fiber, almost living. *MIMMS*

The Armory Show 2025

Friday-Sunday, Javits Center, 429 11th Avenue, Manhattan. General admission tickets are \$42-\$59, with student/senior tickets for \$36; thearmoryshow.com.