

The New York Times

Art Review: A Striking Balance of New and Rediscovered at the Independent Fair

Looking out the windows of Spring Studios in upscale TriBeCa during this year's 11th Independent Art Fair, I thought about the cycle of fashion. There are spectacular views of the teardrop-shaped roadway that leads out of the Holland Tunnel; on the same site, some two centuries ago, stood an exclusive gated park. Sooner or later, everything old is new again, and the most striking presentations in this fair, founded in 2010 by Elizabeth Dee to provide a curated alternative to larger art fairs, are revivals of work from the 1980s, the 1960s, or even earlier.

But there's plenty of room in this cozy coalition for young artists, too — and for older artists with brand-new work. The youngsters include Akeem Smith, with a dance hall video enclosed in a custom-built gate on the fifth floor, at Red Bull Arts (Booth 14), and, on the seventh floor, Sharif Farrag with an exuberant display of ceramic grotesques at Adams and Ollman (Booth 3).

Also on the fifth floor, Bianca Beck's huge papier mâchés at Rachel Uffner (Booth 8) offer an amusing counterpoint to Mary Carlson's amazing little porcelain women just around the corner at Kerry Schuss (Booth 18), while the octogenarian Chicago painter Margot Bergman brings a lush series of large portrait heads at Corbett vs. Dempsey and Anton Kern's conjoined Booth 22.

Commute between four floors of art and consider the following guide to my favorite 10 booths a suggested tasting menu — but feel free, as always, to order à la carte.

Fifth Floor

Parker Gallery (Booth 20) The Cuban artist Misleidys Castillo Pedroso constructs larger-than-life body-builders with exaggerated proportions, and the occasional doubled biceps, out of paper. Then she paints them in comic-book yellows, greens, or blues, with contrasting underpants. Schematic facial features, like a distinctive square chin, and the numerous dashes of brown tape with which they're affixed to white backings, give them the friendly mix-and-match appeal of trading cards. But there's something archetypal about them, too, like so many gods from a newly uncovered mythology.

Will Heinrich, "Art Review: A Striking Balance of New and Rediscovered at the Independent Fair."
The New York Times (March 5, 2020), accessed online.