

# What to See at the Fairs

A SELECTIVE GUIDE TO ARMORY WEEK

## The Art Show

Organized by the Art Dealers Association of America  
Through Sunday  
Park Avenue Armory,  
643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street  
[artdealers.org](http://artdealers.org)

This is the smallest, oldest and most exclusive of the fairs. It's on the Upper East Side and proud of it. Only galleries admitted to the A.D.A.A. exhibit here, and it is sometimes noticeably slow to invite dealers it considers too flashy. Gala night, which raises lots of cash for the Henry Street Settlement, is a major event with a finely graduated social hierarchy: How early you get in is determined by your charitable contribution, or your hunger to buy. Since many of the galleries are from New York, the fair increasingly presents single artists, which makes it more interesting for those not buying: Think of the goods as mini-exhibitions. What the dealers wear: fox stoles, Chanel pantsuits, kitten heels (high enough to look formal but comfortable enough to be on your feet for a while).



## The Establishment Gig

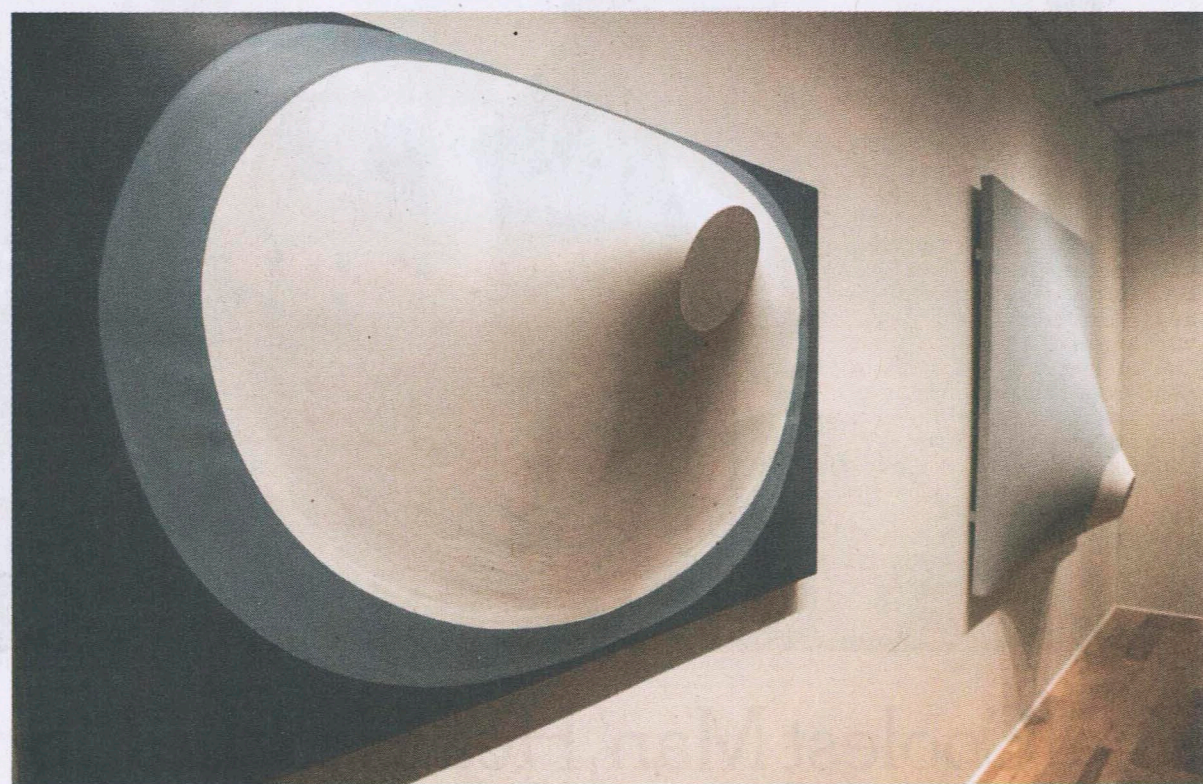
Though somewhat sedate, the Art Show holds surprises.

**AB-EXERS IN LOVE** Partners in life and art, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner wrenched New York into the first rank of modern art capitals in the 1940s. An impressive display of Pollock's drawings, at the booth of the stalwart Washburn Gallery, includes both early, Picasso-like scribbles — think bulls and ghouls — and a delicately worked sketch on a cigarette box. But a display of late collages by Krasner, in the Paul Kasmin Gallery, here at the Art Show, is dreary; by the '80s, her *mélanges* of shapes and stains had grown decidedly mannered. Better Abstract Expressionism is at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery booth, which showcases the stormy paintings of Norman Lewis, and in the Manny Silverman Gallery, where you'll find a jazzy composition of dots and crosses by Bradley Walker Tomlin.

**DISCARDED, PRESERVED** While New York preened, Paris retrenched. A rip-roaring display of works by the French-American artist Arman, in the Sperone Westwater booth, unites a dozen of his 1960s assemblages, in which everyday junk — light bulbs, doll parts, rusty faucets — is shoved into glass boxes or immured in resin blocks. They are signal accomplishments of *Nouveau Réalisme*, a more downbeat cousin of American Pop, that is at last winning greater consideration on this side of the Atlantic. Arman's "Accumulations" troubled boundaries between high and low in the '60s, though today they appeal principally for ecological reasons: These are solidified evidence of an economy of waste.

**FACES OF FEAR** Two adjacent booths jolt this somewhat sedate fair with bad-mannered figuration. In Julie Saul, 17 recent watercolors by Pavel Pepperstein, a sardonic Russian artist, depict Jacqueline Kennedy as a cartoon character in mythological extremis, carried forth by satyrs or kneeling before the goddess Athena. Next door, in Petzel's booth, the take-no-prisoners artist Joyce Pensato shows monstrous yet compelling portraits of other American figures: six paintings of a demented Bart Simpson, rendered in drippy enamel, and a dead-eyed Homer, in smudged charcoal.

**LADIES FIRST** More smudged charcoal is at the booth of Marc Selwyn Fine Art, from Beverly Hills, filled with drawings by the American master Lee Bontecou. The only woman to show with the dealer Leo Castelli in the 1960s, Ms. Bontecou is best known for her fierce wall-mounted sculptures of



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burlap and canvas, but her drawings, of eyes and teeth and uncertain orifices, also turn space into absorbing voids, thanks to passages of heavy black. (Another fine work by her is in the Mnuchin Gallery booth, two spaces away.) Selwyn has paired Ms. Bontecou's drawings with others by Jay DeFeo, but the match is uneven: The latter's peculiar, angular graphite works appear lightweight next to Ms. Bontecou's intense capriccios.

**INTO THE WOODS** A few booths at the A.D.A.A. fair have impressive showcases of art before 1900. Thomas Colville Fine Art is presenting more than a dozen landscapes by George Inness, a 19th-century painter who stands as an American cousin to Corot, Millet and the rest of the French Barbizon school. Where other American landscapists went for Manifest Destiny posturing, Inness favored splotchy, atmospheric renderings of fens and lakesides that may put you in mind of Emerson and Thoreau.

**PHOTOS WITHOUT CAMERAS** The booth of the photography specialist Hans P. Kraus Jr. contains perhaps the most beguiling work in the fair: "British Algae," a book by the English botanist Anna Atkins that docu-



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ments aquatic plants via cyanotypes, or impressions on photosensitive blue paper. Dating to around 1850, it's the first book to be illustrated with photographs, though no camera was necessary to make the images. These spectral photograms are the work of an ardent amateur, and a passport to an age when reproductive imagery was still a thing of wonder. They're also a good reminder that, in art as in science, women were pioneers until institutions shut them out.

Above, Galerie Lelong at the Art Show features a solo booth of "Topología" paintings by Zilia Sánchez, a Cuban-born artist. Left, Lee Krasner's "Buffon's Parakeet," a 1980 work at the Paul Kasmin Gallery booth.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
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