

The Best Booths at the Armory Show, From Hybrid Selves to Beautiful Body Horror

BY ALEX GREENBERGER [✉](#) September 5, 2024 9:23pm

The crowd at the Armory Show, with sculptures by Dyani White Hawk, Jim Denomie, and George Morrison at center. ALEX GREENBERGER/ARTNEWS

Was it the uncertain economy? A summer hangover? The fact that **Frieze Seoul** happened simultaneously, nearly 7,000 miles away? The Armory Show opened in New York on Thursday, and the energy that could be felt at past editions of this fair—the biggest in the city—was generally not present.

One might have expected something more dramatic, given that the Armory Show has gone through big changes in the past year. This was the first edition of the 30-year-old fair staged under Kyla McMillan, who **took the reins as director** from Nicole Berry two months ago, and the first held fully **under Frieze's ownership**. The results of those behind-the-scenes shifts will likely play out in future years. For now, however, the fair remains largely the same.

The art on view left something to be desired. Few of the fair's 235 galleries opted for attention-grabbing stunts (a good thing), and even fewer took big risks with the art on view (a bad thing). What could be seen, mainly, was a flood of interchangeable figurative paintings and so-so abstractions—more, even, than is usual for a selling event like this one.

But amid all that bland fare, there are some satisfying shockers. It's all too easy to walk right by Jimmy Wright's kinky drawings of S&M sex at Corbett vs. Dempsey's booth, or to miss Naturee Utarit's painting of a woman pointing a gun at a Giorgio Morandi still life, on view at Richard Koh Fine Art's presentation. My advice? Slow down and bask in these works' weirdness. Consider them a reminder that gems lie in the rough—if only you know where to find them.

To point you in the right direction, here are nine booths to see at the Armory Show before it closes on September 8.

I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih at Gajah Gallery



Works by I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, including *Kojadian (Incident, 2004)* at left.

Photo: Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

The Armory Show's most memorable artwork is this woefully under-recognized Indonesian artist's 2004 painting *Kejadian (Incident)*, featuring a foot speared by a pole. The painter, who worked under the name Murni, immortalized disturbing subjects such as this one to respond to violence against women—a timeless subject that she encountered early on, having survived a sexual assault by her father at age 9. More than simply acting as a record of traumatic events similar to that one, Murni's paintings are also stylistically subversive. Murni explicitly drew on the spare forms oft seen in placid landscapes from the Balinese village of Pengosekan, then moved them in a less peaceful direction.

In lesser hands, Murni's art would have been overly serious and impossible to endure. But her body horror often has a humorous edge, and that makes it invigorating. Witness the case of *Plek Menjengkelkan (Annoying Colds, 2000)*, in which a plugged-up nose emits gigantic, suffocating beads of snot, offering gross-out nastiness and sick pleasure in equal measure.

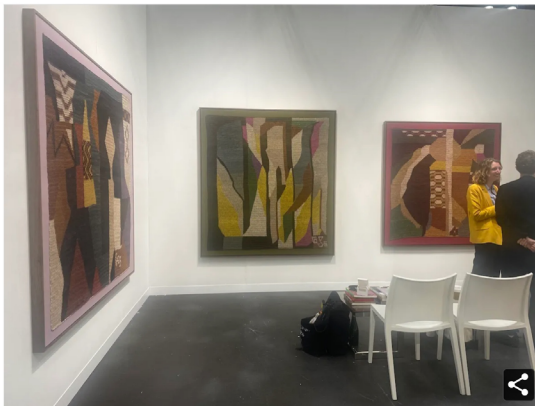
Yüksel Arslan at Galeri Nev and Galerist



Works by Yüksel Arslan, including *Arture 482, Man 123: Cures* (1997) at second from left.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

Calling Arslan an artist is technically wrong, as he did not believe he was one, and anyway, such a label cannot encapsulate the genre-defying sensibility evident in his drawings, which variously depict human heads, masks, and landscapes belonging to faraway places. Born in Istanbul and based for part of his career in Paris, Arslan was known for his "Artures," drawings made from pigment with his own bodily fluids, blood, spit, and urine among them. The wall text for the works brought to the fair by these two Istanbul galleries neuters his bizarre media, referring to it all as "natural materials," but even so, one cannot possibly tame a piece like *Arture 482, Man 123: Cures* (1997). That drawing features an array of penises, some of which are erect and outfitted with constrictive devices. Ostensibly, this drawing collects remedies for ailments unknown, making it emblematic of Arslan's zany practice of cataloging objects and ideas that intrigued him.

Claudia Alarcón & Silät at Cecilia Brunson Projects



Works by Claudia Alarcón & Silät.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

Alarcón, an Argentinian textile artist who often works with the Wichí collective Silät, is **a standout of the current Venice Biennale**, and she has wowed viewers once more with new collaborative pieces that abstract landscapes into colliding geometric planes. These pieces here are made from chaguar, a plant native to the Salta region of Argentina where Silät is based, and they are produced in such a way where they are allowed to hang loose, so that gaps are visible between the threads. These works look back to textiles by modernist women such as Anni Albers and Lenore Tawney, this time with a new emphasis on Indigenous imagery. The collaborative pieces are the main attraction here, but Alarcón holds her own solo, too, with the 2024 piece *La presencia permanente del sol con su resplandor [The ever-present sun and its radiance]*, whose crocheted wool threads, in shades of neon green and red, live up to the work's title.

Maria A. Guzmán Capron at Nazarian / Curcio



Work by Maria A. Guzmán Capron at the Armory Show.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

The self is multiple in Capron's visually resplendent textile works, in which people's bodies merge and contort. These works can be considered metaphors for Capron's identity. She was born in Milan to Colombian and Peruvian parents, and is now based in Oakland, California—she can hardly be boiled down to one nationality or culture. In that way, her art, made using cast-off textiles that she stitches together, is an expression of her own hybridity. In one work, a mother-like figure holds a child, whose patchwork form ends up being subsumed by its parent. Works such as that one make a strong for why Capron will likely emerge as one of the stars of La Trienal, the recurring survey of Latinx and Latin American art at El Museo del Barrio, which will open this year's edition later this month.

Diana Sofia Lozano at Proxycy



Works by Diana Sofia Lozano at the Armory Show.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

A similar form of hybridity can also be found in Lozano's sculptures resembling flowers gone rogue. Lozano, whose parents are both botanists, has **previously said** that her work could be compared to "flowers in drag," and indeed, her blooms are extravagant and unruly, adorned with gangly faux vinery that sticks out in all directions. Some even appear like animals, bearing claw-like hooks extending from chains that threaten to pierce anyone who dares to touch them. In real life, it is possible to categorize flora, essentially allowing botanists and biologists the possibility of reining in disorderly vegetation. Lozano's plant life, on the other hand, cannot be restrained.

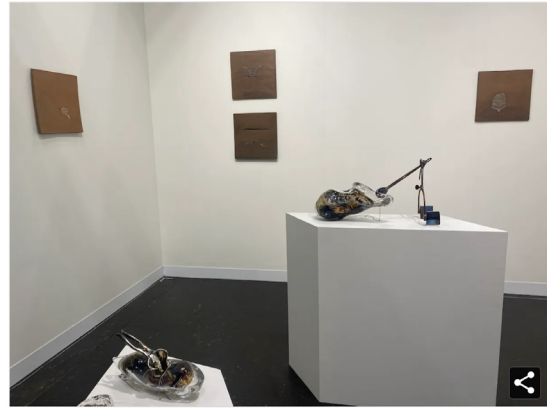
Ay-O at Whitestone Gallery



Ay-O, *Olympic Skiing*, 1982.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

Now in his 90s, Ay-O continues to prove himself one of Japanese art history's stranger characters. *Olympic Skiing* (1982), one of the works featured here, exemplifies his Technicolor style, with an athlete kicking up pink, warping snow as he descends a mountain slope. But this booth quietly reorients Ay-O's practice, pitting these works against a few made during the 1950s, when his art was a lot more sedate. *Rockaway Beach A* (1958), made the year that Ay-O departed Tokyo for New York, where he would later fall in with the Fluxus artists, is a canvas whose unevenly painted lower half has been partially cut away. (Black mesh appears in place of the excised canvas swatch.) The work, which includes a piece of found wood affixed to its surface, suggests an artist wrestling with the disappearing boundary between painting and sculpture, and settling for some combination of the two mediums.

Roksana Pirouzmand and Haena Yoo at Murmurs



Works by Roksana Pirouzmand and Haena Yoo at the Armory Show.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

The two artists in this booth, a star of the Presents section for young galleries, both make sculptural works dealing with the notion of resilience. Pirouzmand, who recently gained acclaim for her appearance in the Hammer Museum's Made in L.A. biennial, is here showing a sculpture composed of casts of hands that are piled atop one another. Though severed from the bodies from which they came, these hands form a tower of sorts that evinces its own strange strength. Yoo creates blown glass sacs containing a mixture of organic and inorganic objects—pebbles, a necklace, and a mysterious liquid in one. Another contains a saw that threatens to cut into the sculpture's exterior, but the glass surface keeps this torture tool from slicing through.

Denyse Thomasos at Olga Korper Gallery



Denyse Thomasos, *Untitled*, ca. 1990s.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews

Thomasos's abstract paintings often make a motif out of repeating grid-like forms, which for her acted as **metaphors for means of containment**. But the joy of looking at Thomasos's art is noticing how this late Canadian artist broke down the very sense of order that she worked so hard to construct. The *untitled*, 17-foot-long painting from the '90s at the core of Olga Korper's booth, for example, could hardly be viewed as rigid: Thomasos allowed her grids to drip onto one another, causing them to appear to melt into her paintings' dense backgrounds. One's eye grows dizzy trying to make sense of it all, but the experience of taking in a gargantuan canvas like this one is nothing less than liberating.

Anastasia Samoylova at Wentrup



Works by Anastasia Samoylova at the Armory Show.
Photo : Alex Greenberger/ARTnews