

# The New York Times

ART REVIEW

## Art Fairs Come Blazing Back, Precarious but Defiant

New and overlooked artists shine at the Armory Show, New York's largest in-person fair since the pandemic, and other shows across the city.



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Even before Covid, the art world was changing rapidly. Sales that used to happen in New York or Basel, via hushed conversation, now happen through Instagram all over the world. Large galleries [are merging](#) to keep up with mega-galleries, while small galleries, somehow, keep multiplying.

From a strictly business point of view, this fall's Art Week — which was postponed from spring and runs through Sunday — represents an attempt to carry on with the way things used to be, albeit with some adjustments. [The Armory Show](#), the first major American art fair since the pandemic, has become even more American as travel restrictions and complications knocked 55 mostly European exhibitors into the fair's new online-only component. Visitors to the sprawling Javits Center in Manhattan, the show's new home, will have to prove that they're vaccinated or have a recent negative coronavirus test, as they will at most of the week's venues. (Check health protocols beforehand.)

When the Armory Show moved to the fall, satellite shows such as [Spring/Break](#), [Art on Paper](#), [Clio](#), and the stylish little [Independent](#) followed it to September. The all-new [Future Fair](#), founded in 2020, is finally happening in person, too. By and large, these are the New York art fairs as you've known and loved, or hated, them, and it simply isn't clear yet if attendance and sales will keep their model viable.

For most people, of course, the business of art is in the background right now. Asked what counts as a success at the gallery's first live fair appearance since Covid, Lisa Spellman, the founder of the [303 Gallery](#), replied, "Just seeing people!" [Ebony L. Haynes](#), who will be directing the David Zwirner gallery's new TriBeCa space in October, said, "You can never replace seeing art in person."



Crowds Friday during the Armory Show at the Javits Center. Installation view, center, large face is “Opus (The Ovule)” from 2020, by Tau Lewis presented by Night Gallery; right, Cammie Staros “Come to Pass” from 2021, Shulamit Nazarian. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

That excitement itself is grounds for optimism. “One of the main reasons for a thriving art market is exciting art,” said [Jeffrey Deitch](#), a gallerist opening two New York shows this weekend. “And we have exciting art right now.”

And for the first time in a long time we also have a community seeing that art together. As [Tom Eccles](#), who directs the Hessel Museum of Art, put it, “Art needs, or the art market needs, a society around it.”

What follows is a guide to the highlights of a defiant, resilient, precarious and exciting new season of art — and its society — in New York. Martha Schwendener reviews the [Independent Art Fair](#), while Siddhartha Mitter takes on the new [Future Fair](#), and I preview the [Armory Show](#), below.

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## Lyles & King, P28



Jessie Makinson's "Me Time" (2021) along with two of Makinson's "Kissing chairs."  
Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

The English painter [Jessie Makinson](#) had just hung her first New York solo show, a sultry and disorienting group of sharply rendered elves and other not quite humans, when Covid shut her gallery down. So this single-artist presentation, centered on an enormous picture of earth spirits consorting around an oily black pool ("Me Time"), is an overdue debut.