

Drill Hall Delectations: The Art Show at the Armory

By David Cohen

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Art Dealers Association of America The Art Show at the Park Avenue Armory

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Park Avenue at 67th Street

New York City, artdealers.org

Wednesday-Friday: 12 to 8pm; Saturday: 12 to 7pm; Sunday: 12 to 5pm

Don't wait until next week to get into fair mood: This year, for venue scheduling reasons, The Art Show, the ADAA's annual outing at the Park Avenue Armory, precedes the onslaught on the piers—the other Armory. And, like years past, it's proving to be the place for aesthetic delectation.

I simply don't know where to begin, there are so many fabulous exhibitions packed under this drill hall, so I may as well begin at the beginning: Cheim and Read's solo display of new sculpture by the redoubtable Lynda Benglis that greets you at the entrance. Turn left, as supermarkets have discovered most of us do, and you get a revelatory display of landscape sketches by Myron Stout at Washburn Gallery, along with one of his trademark black and white painted iconic shapes: the nervously breezy, feather-stroked perceptual landscapes done in Provincetown, Mass. in black Conté send you back to the hard-edged abstraction with renewed intensity.

Brian Washburn told me they discovered a box of these drawings when they moved downtown recently hidden in plain sight in a painting rack. A metaphor, in a way, for The Art Show experience, where in one box after another (the booths) treasures from the past reveal themselves. Just over the aisle, Peter Freeman, Inc. have Mel Bochner paintings from the early 1980s that, if you are more familiar with his word pieces, will come as a surprise: Shaped canvases bursting with geometric forms dispatched with neo-expressionist gusto. Bochner first painted these images on regular shaped canvas, the sales assistant told me, and then determined the right irregular shape from the resulting form. Their surfaces reminded me of his contemporary, Terry Winters, represented elsewhere at the fair in a group show at Matthew Marks.

Hirschl and Adler, nestled in the corner, are in an appropriately intimate, almost closeted space for their show, *Americans 1943: Realism and Magic Realism*. This marks the 75th anniversary of a show of that title at MoMA. Sunday communist Osvaldo Louis Guglielmi

delivers an allegory of corruption and resistance in *The American Dream*, 1935, that suggests that only the settings have changed in the interim. All the same issues are in place: horny CEOs, marginalized minorities, put upon protesters and an unloved statue.

Speaking of minorities, African American artists feature prominently amongst stand out solo booths in this year's fair, including some historic rediscoveries. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery celebrates the achievements of abstract painter William T. Williams, while Galerie Lelong & Co showcase the lyrical gestalts of southern painter Mildred Thompson with *Magnetic Fields*, a series from her last decade. "Years ago, I had a dream about an event in space" she wrote in a 1992 statement. "Feeling fortunate to see this event, I stayed to look at it in detail."



Harmony Hammond, *Letting the Weather Get In*, 1977. Oil and Dorland's wax on canvas, 14 x 45.5 inches.

Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates

Detail is the essence of the experience of Harmony Hammond's riveting textured grids in the Weave Paintings at Alexander Gray Associates. Not that one is seeking to survey the fair in identity categories, but another openly queer artist, Nicole Eisenman, makes play with a two-person display with Andy Warhol at Anton Kern Gallery. Their brochure quotes Andy Warhol as saying "If only one day my work could be shown in an art fair booth alongside the work of a radical lesbian", which ambition Eisenman has obliged in a display where master and acolyte are not always easy to tell apart.

Intensity of detail and exquisiteness in finish are also determining factors in appreciation of Lynn Herhmann Leeson's early work at San Francisco's Anglim Gilbert Gallery, Dotty Attie's works at P.P.O.W. and new drawings by Amy Cutler at Leslie Tonkonow. The balance of aesthetic and mechanical precision in Thomas Chimes 1970s metal box constructions are aptly contextualized at Philadelphia's Locks Gallery display with Alexander Calder and Joseph Cornell. But the last and abiding delectations in the final aisle were of a more rough-hewn nature: Milton Avery at Yares Art, sumptuous and fulsome collages by Biala at Pavel Zoubok, and the take home dream of this visitor, the ravishing quietude of James Bishop with San Antonio, Tx. gallerist Lawrence Markey, where color and space seem to be breathed onto the page.

ADDENDUM: Posted as a featured item from THE LIST on Sunday, March 4

So natural is the tendency of commercial galleries to hedge bets and pack their stands with variety that many art fairs have color coded sections put aside for solo spots. Not so ADAA's The Art Show at Park Avenue Armory, now in its 30th year, which through natural selection, it would seem, affords a hearty mix of group and solo presentations. Two standout stands that eluded my round up earlier this week exemplify these respective models. Jill Newhouse, whose gallery specializes in historic works on paper as well as contemporary works in different mediums, showcased a fine selection of drawings by Pierre Bonnard along with a tightly hung, intriguingly diverse group of living artists working in the Bonnardian spirit. The six living painters – curated by Karen Wilkin – included Larry Poons, Graham Nickson and Rachel Rickert. Danese Corey, meanwhile, opted for audacious singularity in presenting just one massive eight-foot high bronze sculpture by William Tucker, *Meru*, 2015-2017. The intricacies and folds of Tucker's massed modeling and the demands of this complex form to be seen, fully, in the round could detain the discerning visitor as long as the salon hung massed ranks of intimate works at other stands. It is just not quite so easy to take it home.

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