

ARTnews

Four Gallery Shows to See in the Windy City During Expo Chicago

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The Expo Chicago art fair returns this week to the city's Navy Pier after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

As with most art fairs, the local art scene puts on some of its best offerings for the year to draw out-of-town visitors to the homegrown talent that makes a city like Chicago the site of a major international art fair.

Take a look at five of the best art offerings Chicago has to offer this week.

Correction, April 8, 2022: An earlier version of this article misidentified the maker of I Am Somebody. It is by Gerald Williams, not Wadsworth Jarrell.

Bethany Collins at Patron



Bethany Collins, three works from "Dixie" series, 2022, installation view. Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

For a pared down exhibition, titled "Cadence," Bethany Collins thinks through the importance of language in society and culture through three series that take as their subject classic songs of white Americana: "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Auld Lang Syne," and "Dixie." Each of these three songs are contrafactum, the musical term that refers to songs in which the lyrics can be changed while the melody remains the same. And transformed over the years they have been.

A series of seven charcoal and acrylic paintings presents the increasingly sinister changes to the gripping "land of the brave" line of "The Star-Spangled Banner": "land of the free," "land of freed," "land of the tyrant," "land of the thief," "land of the south," and finally "land of the slave." It's Collins' reminder that those who often tout this song don't think everyone belongs on this land. In Collins's hands, though, these lyrics are abstracted, smeared against a deep blue background.

Similarly, the “Dixie” body of work presents hand-drawn sheet music of versions of the song. They are smeared, however. This time by deploying tear gas against the sheets of paper. The twist, though, is that all of these are Union, not Confederate versions, of the song, further complicating exactly who was fighting for what.

In essence, Collins seems to ask what does it mean when we’re all saying the same thing to mean different things? Or, conversely, what does it mean when we’re all saying different things to mean the same thing?