

## 10 Must-See Booths at the Armory Show



Under the new directorship of Benjamin Genocchio, I expected major changes at the Armory Show this year — perhaps an abolition of the tyranny of booths, a more free-flowing, free-loving affair where dealers and collectors in Maison Margiela pajamas hung out on super comfortable Muji beanbag chairs, coolly discussing the future of contemporary practice while sipping a variety of cocktails inspired by popular back issues of Artforum.

Alas, despite a change in leadership, the booths remained. (There's always next year.) In the meantime, here's an entirely subjective list of a few things worth seeing at this year's fair.

### **Alison Jacques**

"She's like, a million-year-old German woman," one would-be collector said approvingly of Irma Blank, whose densely swirling ballpoint-on-canvas work hangs on one wall. (Fact check: She's in her 80s.) Next to it there's a terrific mixed-media painting-sculpture by Nobuo Sekine, which resembles a pinched and puckered nipple painfully cinched by a rope bearing a stone. The same abstracted-body mood carries into a series of plaster-and-Perspex works by Maria Bartuszova.

### **Victoria Miro**

Works by Kara Walker, Chris Ofili, Alice Neel, Isaac Julien, and Hernan Bas all shine here, but the obvious highlight is a large diptych by Njideka Akunyili Crosby — a portrait of a woman and a domestic interior enlivened by found textiles and family photographs dye-transferred to the surface to form a rippling collage.

### **Nicelle Beauchene**

Three different riffs on the grid, from Louise Despont, Ruby Sky Stiler, and Alexander Tovborg, each exuding a certain ritualistic vibe — as if they're all esoteric relics of religions way more interesting than the real ones.

### **Praz-Delavallade**

A solo booth from photographic experimentalist Matthew Brandt, though you'd be hard-pressed to guess that the three distinct bodies of work issued from the same studio. For one, the artist cropped moments from images in the Los Angeles Times and, using a projector (and, I'd guess, many nimble-fingered and patient assistants), reconstituted the composition

with shining rhinestones. An additional series, represented here by five painting-like pieces, uses a *devoré* (“burnout”) technique to sear a photographic image into sheets of velvet. It’s a neat, and weirdly Warholian, direction for this innovator.

### **Grimm Gallery**

Comfortably crammed and its walls draped with bare linen, this booth becomes a clubhouse for works by Nick van Woert, Dave McDermott, and others. I was so busy admiring Van Woert’s Minimalist cube structure, its interior stuffed with a maximalist assortment of soda cans, maps, and other stuff, that I *completely forgot* to look at the two sculptures by Dustin Yellin.

### **Susanne Vielmetter**

Sadie Benning has been doing aqua-resin based, puzzle-piece compositions for a while, but a new one from 2016 here has the bold graphic punch of early MTV. It sizzles in the best possible way.

### **On Stellar Rays**

The large-scale Julia Bland textile-painting here was made during a residency in Dumbo, with the artist’s windows offering a stunning view of the Manhattan Bridge that surely influenced this piece’s architecturally tinged composition. It shares the New York gallery’s cozy booth with paintings — of fields of dots, and orange-laden trees — by the excellent Ryan Mrozowski.

### **Sim Galerie**

This Brazilian gallery presents a solo booth by Delson Uchoa, 10 resin-based curtains that he calls “Inhabited Paintings.” They form a meditative cocoon within the fair’s larger buzz and clamor.

### **Blain | Southern**

I met newly signed gallery artist Agathe de Bailliencourt at this booth — she’s French, based in Berlin, but the piece we were standing in front of had been made during a residency in Marfa. It was a subtly glowing abstraction, made by soaking bare linen with lots of water and then brushing layer upon layer of paint on top. It may look simple, but plenty of factors are at play — like the water itself, which de Bailliencourt swore was just different in Texas. (Back home in Germany she’s been experimenting with the bottled mineral variety.) The artist is currently planning an inspiration-gathering six-day road trip in Death Valley — she’s a fan of “extreme landscapes.” And, she said approvingly, in America our landscapes — like our ice cream cones — are just *bigger*. Nearby, a black-and-white Wim Wenders photo of a row of lonely mailboxes on a dusty Montana road provides a more literal record of a similar terrain.

### **Carl Freedman Gallery**

“Last year I was looking at ceramics like these,” a fair visitor confessed, “and they just made me *ill*.” The offending works in question, resembling Boschian bongs, were squirmy, biomorphic glazed sculptures by Sebastian Stohrer. Any ill-making effects here are countered by Brussels-based Pieter Vermeersch’s cool and contemplative paintings, with their barely perceptible gradient fades.