

Double Fair Report: The Armory Show and Art on Paper Pack a Punch in 2022

Both the Armory Show and Art on Paper took place this weekend, among others this crowded September. Here's what you missed.

By [Farah Abdessamad](#) · 09/11/22 12:51pm



Dana Claxton, *Lasso* (2018) Courtesy

People, champagne, sad fashion, loud designer logos—fairly cheap-looking for such an expensive affair at the VIP days. This weekend marks the NYC end-of-summer art fair extravaganza, with the [Armory Show](#) at Javits Center and [Art on Paper](#) at Pier 36, and it's more meh than wow.

I can't believe we still have gimmicky banana-derived art, and yet the fruit is semiotically alive at the Armory. Yawn. At least Monica Bonvinci's appropriately-named *Small Pendant* (2021) puts a penis on display. In fairs that are so obviously designed to see and be seen, the sheer abuse of mirror-based art for the social media-crazed narcissists shouldn't come as a complete surprise—it's part of the overhype and vain communion during such consumerist feasts.

I confess, I took a few selfies by French gallery Templon's Iván Navarro's *Polka* (2022), a multidimensional neon light mirror, a chamber in which the gaze becomes the apt projection of an infinite scroll of doom. Other mirrors paired with neon slogans shout vacuous, dystopian messages such as Jeppe Hein's *Everything Can Change* (2021, 303 Gallery) or Brigitte Kowanz's "united in diversity" (2018, Galerie Krinzinger) when, in fact, we're still in the same loop of disunity, despair, and growing inequalities.

Self-taught Philadelphia artist Timothy Curtis applies playful drawings to illustrate the woes of mental (ill)health in *Feelings #5* (2022), developed from an earlier sense of haziness in his "inkblot" series (2021) of Rorschach-esque dimensions. In such disorientation, we find comfort in the absurdly cynical large-scale map of Grayson Perry (*The American Dream*, 2020, at Paragon) and the decolonial atlases of Malagasy artist Malala Andrialavidrazana at Afronova that deconstruct fetishized "antipodes." With the mystical mandalas of Karla Knight at Andrew Endlin gallery, we approach the mysteries of a world-language and an welcomed elevation, such as in *Little Wheel I* (2022). There's a way in and out.

Moments of suspended grace permeate in close-up artworks of elements, such as sea sparkles (Melissa McGill, *These Waters*, 2022 at Mazzoleni), leaves (Alejandra Fenochio, "Esteros Del Iberá" series, 2000-2004, at Nora Fisch), and thunder (Kapwani Kiwanga, *Ground*, 2012, Galerie Poggi). Amid the noise, they urge us to stop, observe, feel.

Still at the Armory Show, Donald Ellis Gallery and Indigenous-owned, Buffalo-based K Art Gallery showcase Native American and First Nations pride in carefully curated collage, inkjet print, and LED artworks. For instance, Lakota artist Dana Claxton documents traditions and modernity in masculine portraits against a viridian green cinematic background that embody an aesthetic scenography of remembrance and celebration. Edgar Heap of Birds's graphic names of indigenous nations inscribe a notion of inerasable survival and defiance in *Native Nations Sovereign* (2019); we stand in front of them with sorrow as much as a rage for justice and true reparations. Conversely, Henry Payer's mixed media and collages depicting scenes of invasive capitalism communicate a sense of precariousness and insecurity in indigenous communities.

Overall, the Armory Show paradoxically delivered in what it lacked: intimate disruptions, sculptures, and textiles.