

Between Expected and Exhilarating

DESPITE OVERSATURATION, market wobbles, the relentless pace, the sheer expense and every other complaint you may hear this week from a gallerist on a cigarette break, it's art fair time again in New York — but that's not without its merits. Fairs like Spring Break, Volta and C10 give younger and less established artists chances to be seen and be seen while providing city dwellers glimpses of what's happening elsewhere.

Independent 20th Century, a major fair held in a historical setting — the 1908 Battery Maritime Building at South Ferry, on the southern tip of Manhattan — adeptly walks a narrow line between safety and excitement. This year is the third edition, and its tight curation features 32 exhibitors, some of which are sharing booths and



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
From left: Karel Appel's "Happy Birthday to You" (1953); "People in Landscape No. 2" (1973); and "Woman in Front of Mirror" (1957).

nearly half of which are Independent 20th Century debuts.

The 20th-century focus guarantees that you'll find plenty of familiar names. Pablo Picasso is here (with a fine lineup of prints at **John Szoke Gallery**), as are Karel Appel (blaring into your ears and cones at **Amine Rechy**) and Sol LeWitt (with vibrant, curvy drawings at **James Barron Art**). And a strong contingent of Brazilian artists, along with a couple of female artists who never quite got their due, means you're likely to find some surprises, too. These are the booths I found most striking.

Independent 20th Century

Through Sunday at Casa Cipriani, 10 South Street, Manhattan, independentth.com/fair2



From left: Lenore Tawney's "Untitled" (1961); "Floating Shapes" (1958); "Untitled (Bird)" (1965); "Untitled" (1965); "Untitled" (1962); "Untitled" (1964); and "Untitled" (1964).

Alison Jacques

Lenore Tawney (1907-2007) is most famous for her groundbreaking textile art, and the rich purple weaving that opens this exhibition — and the fair as a whole — shows why. (She also lived and worked at nearby Coenties Slip.) A precarious intersection of pattern and line, color and emptiness, the weaving seems to shimmer as it first disappears into the background and then takes over the room.

But also on display, along with half a dozen other weavings, are lesser-known small sculptures and works on paper that translate Tawney's inward, minor-key aesthetic into such forms as a pale blue box of iridescent feathers or a grid of perforations glued to a page of old Scandinavian black letter.



An untitled 1950 work by Heitor dos Prazeres.

Galatea x Simões de Assis

As a musician and composer, Heitor dos Prazeres pioneered samba in Rio de Janeiro, where he was born in 1938. As a painter, later on, he kept the rhythm going with canvases in which simple figures dance, drink, play cards or stage razor blade fights in exceptionally sophisticated compositions.

Consider, in this joint presentation by two São Paulo galleries, one untitled painting of people dancing outside. Only one face, of a woman in a yellow dress, looks forward, anchoring the group in the center. (The rest look left or right.) To the left, by the tree, four figures squeeze together; to the right, by contrast, three others spread out. No one is at quite the same level as anyone else, so if you follow their shoulders in perspective, they form a loose spiral. If you follow their feet, though, it's a different song entirely.



Clockwise from top center: Carl Van Vechten's "Pierre Balmain Fitting Ruth Ford" (1947); Man Ray's "Portrait of Ruth Ford" (1941); Carl Van Vechten's "Portrait of Charles Henri Ford" (1955); Romaine Brooks's "Youth upheld the world but belief disdains it" (1937); and "Portrait of Romaine Brooks, Paris" (1936).

Mitchell Alguis Gallery

This beautifully installed display of photographs and drawings from the estate of Charles Henri Ford, a Mississippi hotel heir and co-author of "The Young and Evil," a novel of 1930s gay life in Greenwich Village, is an art fair in itself.

It includes Ford's own elegant 1930s-era photographs of André Breton, Yves Tanguy, and Salvador and Gala Dalí; later photos of a young Italian lover; Man Ray's portrait of Ford's glamorous sister, Ruth; a wonderful ink drawing of a giant ear by Pavel Tchelitchev; and Carl van Vechten's portrait of young Charles trying to look relaxed in a striped shirt against a striped background.



From left: Abdias Nascimento's "Tennage Yemanjá" (1971); "Oricha's Mother (Mother Nature)" (1971); and "Etain Boracalistic: Ocoxo-Xango-Ogum" (1969).

Galeria MaPa

Five paintings by the Afro-Brazilian painter and activist Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011) balance here against a small but distinctly powerful collection of Candomblé ritual objects by unknown makers. Sharp edges, intuitive drawing and bright, saturated colors make the paintings irresistible, however charged their subject matter; in one, a pregnant white woman, her belly full of water, sea creatures and a Black face, locks eyes with a tropical bird. The ritual objects, rusted iron sculptures that evoke magical sigils or surreal weather vanes, still vibrate with spiritual energy, protesting against their change of context. (I suggest you don't photograph them.)



Clockwise from top center: Brad Kahlhamer's "House of Snakes" (2000); "Brid + Thalia" (2000); "Friendly Frontier" (2000); "End of the Trail w/Nice Music" (1999); "Hawk" (1988); and "Adult Eagle Monument" (2000).

Venus Over Manhattan

You really see the importance of color in the paintings, drawings and small sculptural figures — all, in this booth, from the 1990s or 2000s — of Brad Kahlhamer. He sticks to an unmistakable palette, whether he is layering Jackson Pollock-like strands of black and fragments of angular, half-legible writing over abstract turbulence on a large canvas, placing more or less cartoony Native men and women in comic, unmythical situations in watercolor, or sumptuous little dream gremlins with wood and twine. Beiges, creams and reds evoke the Southwest, where Kahlhamer was born. They also bring to mind Plains ledger drawings — among his influences — and the knotty, constantly shifting questions of race and identity that provide his subtext.

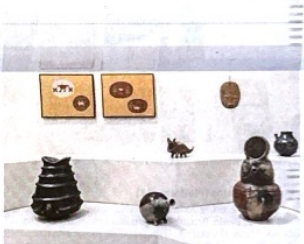


From left: Raoul Dufy's "Le Concert Orange (Orange Concert)" (1949); "Au Concert (At the Concert)" (1948); and "Nogent-sur-Marne" (1923).

Nahmad Contemporary

Ah, Raoul Dufy! There are the sketchy black figures, unbroken blue of sky and river, and the curiously violet French tricolor that make his oil painting "Nogent-sur-Marne" (1923) like a postcard from a more genteel world. There are the planes of color harmonizing with dancing outlines in orange and maroon chamber concerts. The swarm of black cacti that turn the waves into a flock of birds in "La Fenêtre" (1923).

But the greatest delight of this exhibition of watercolors and oils by the quintessential French modernist, who died in 1953, is a chubby, ridiculous, gloriously foreshortened blue horse of "Cheval au Dressage" (circa 1925).

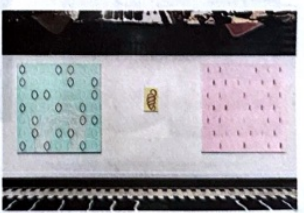


On the wall, two untitled works by Maria Lira Marques from 1990 and her sculpture "Untitled" (1980). Back row, from left: Julia Isidrez's "Paca (Diseño de Juana Marta)" (1989) and "Velador cantarito con dos cabezas con agujero" (2001). Front row, from left: Isidrez's "Cantar con relieve" (1999); "Eucaracho" (2017); and "Alonso (Diseño de Juana Marta)" (2017).

Gomide & Co.

Maria Lira Marques started sculpting as a child in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. In the 1990s, when artists made it difficult for her to handle ceramics, she began painting strange animal silhouettes with earthy pigments she gathered herself. Some look like walking frying pans or teapots; others suggest designs on ancient pottery.

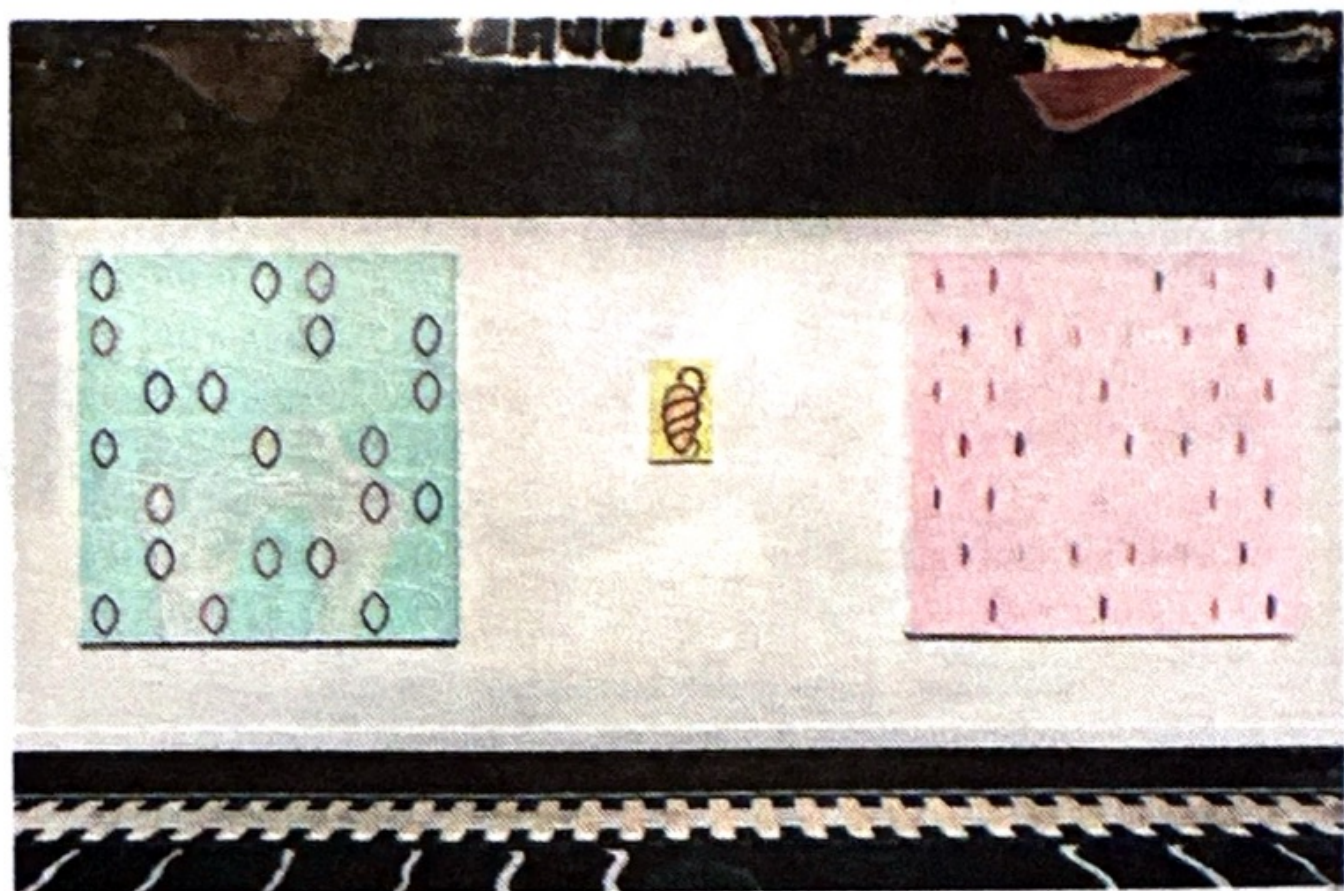
They make a perfect complement to the large closed vessels of the Paraguayan ceramist Julia Isidrez. Large, fire-blackened, nutlike shapes with tiny protruding fingers and heads, the ceramic sculptures remind us how small and contingent the particular forms we inhabit are when compared with the sleeping weight of the cosmos as a whole.



From left: Andra Skuodas's "Vibrational Vulnerability — Weaving Hands" (1999); "Untitled (Snake and Lingham)" (1980); and "Womb Wounds Series 1999" from that year.

Cristin Tierney Gallery x Abattoir Gallery

Andra Skuodas (1940-2019) was born in Lithuania but spent most of her life painting in Oberlin, Ohio, where her husband, John Pearson, also a painter, taught. As if recapitulating the journeys of earlier abstractionists, Skuodas gradually shed figurative elements in favor of delicate pink and blue patterns of dots and sinuous lines. Unlike her predecessors, however, Skuodas wasn't using her ethereal geometries to transcend earthly pain. She was drilling into it, particularly in the floating, blood-red almond shapes of her 1990s "Womb Wound" series.



From left: Audra Skuodas's "Vivritional Vulnerability — Weaving Hands" (1999); "Untitled (Snake and Lingham)" (1990); and "Womb Wounds Series 1999" from that year.

Cristin Tierney Gallery x Abattoir Gallery

Audra Skuodas (1940-2019) was born in Lithuania but spent most of her life painting in Oberlin, Ohio, where her husband, John Pearson, also a painter, taught. As if recapitulating the journeys of earlier abstractionists, Skuodas gradually shed figurative elements in favor of delicate pink and blue patterns of dots and sinuous lines. Unlike her predecessors, however, Skuodas wasn't using her ethereal geometries to transcend earthly pain. She was drilling into it, particularly in the floating, blood-red almond shapes of her 1990s "Womb Wound" series.