

SECTION



MegaGlam and curator Niama Safia Sandy at Lawrie Shabibi's booth featuring Zak Ové at The Armory Show. Photo: © Geo Geller 2019

ARTS
ARMORY ARTS WEEK

NEW YORK

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By *kHyal™* | 2019

The Armory Show met with its 25th anniversary this year where over 200 galleries from around the globe gathered at the Piers 90 and 94. Volta was suddenly postponed when Pier 92 was deemed “structurally unsound” by the City of New York, but some of those galleries found a last-minute home at Pier 36 with Art on Paper, which transformed that show to a more layered experience.

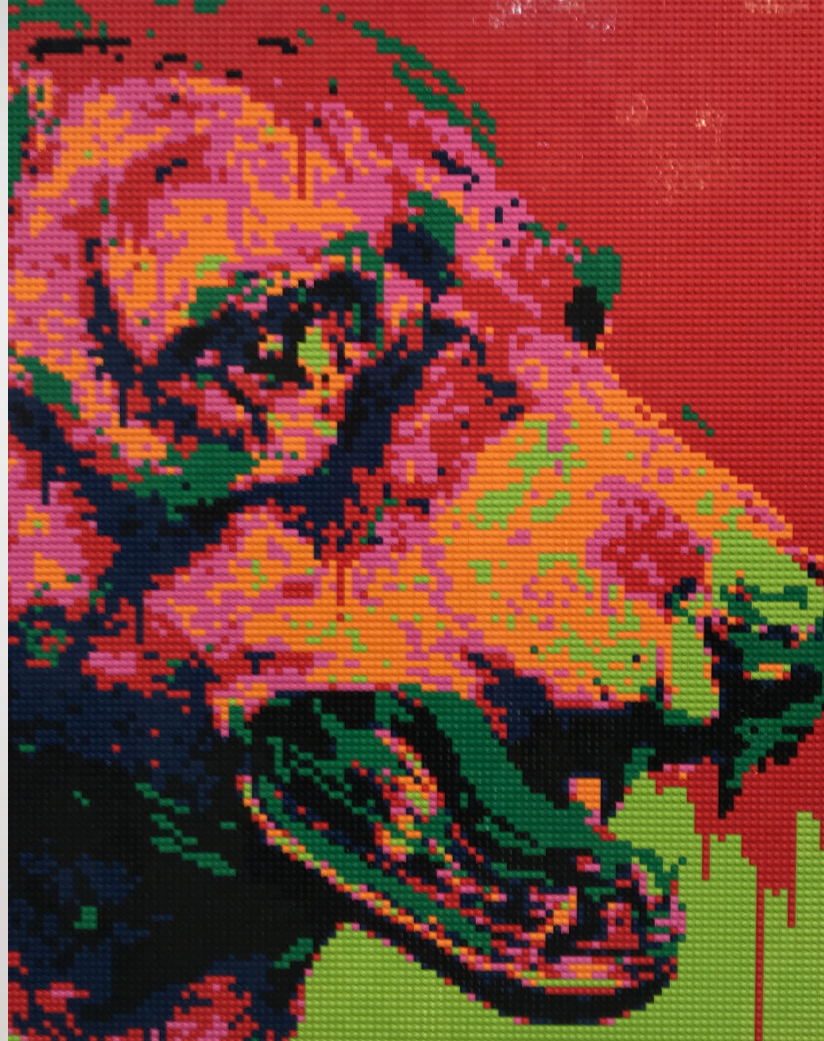
The Armory Show can differ significantly from one year to the next, always with some certainties by heavy-hitting galleries featuring established high-ranking artists, and in recent years, like everything else, the popularity of the art seems to depend on how well it might work as an Instagram post. This year it was Pascale Marthine Tayou’s “Plastic Bags, 2019” via Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York, and Galleria Continua, international. To stop and observe the human interaction with this piece, it seemed that over 50% of all passerbys used it as a backdrop for a selfie. Priced at \$240,000, a photo is all most attendees could hope to have of it. Beyond the fact that its scale, which made it impactful in regards to our lack of sustainability as a species, meant it is only suited for a considerably large space. I envisioned it living at Mass MoCA, for instance.

Spring Break moved from the corporate Times Square space it had used for the past two years into a United Nations Building on the east side. This made getting in during the VIP preview a bit chilling, as long lines formed outside the building because of the security process. Luckily it was milder than it had been, but not a great visitor experience for those not fully clad in winter wear. Once inside, it was a wonderland of installations. I couldn’t help but notice though, how similar certain themes and materials were. Penises and vaginas were central loomed throughout, along with potted plants and fountains. When reoccurring themes occur like this, the experience starts to feel homogenized, like a home show at the Javitz instead of a place where wonder-inducing original art springs up. And, again, the better those installations were for selfies, or Instagram images, the more acclaim they seemed to garner. And, within certain samenesses, there were some standouts none-the-less. Shona McAndrew’s papier-mâché sculptural installation curated by Lauren Powell had it all, dual-gender nudity, masterful craftsmanship and great Instagramability.

The Independent Art Fair continues to gain momentum and hold onto its status for high-quality and originality. The organization proudly touts a quote saying so by Roberta Smith of the New York Times front and center on their website: “Independent remains the New York art fair whose edge most deserves to be called cutting, the one where you stand to learn the most about promising new art.” And, of course, Roberta’s Pulitzer Prize-winning husband Jerry Saltz was everywhere, adding to his social media fame by posing with dozens of people and pieces of art for Instagram and other platform posts. It seems he is on the verge of commoditizing himself that way.

Scope New York seems increasing surface-based, not to discount the work presented in full, but a general slickness has edged in that dillutes the overall experience.

Other fairs have moved to May during Frieze Art Week, which does make it easier to take in all the happenings. And, the Horts opened their home again, to share the most recent installation of their sizeable private collection.



TOP LEFT: Zak Ové, Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, The Armory Show

TOP RIGHT: Ai Wei Wei, Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, The Armory Show

BOTTOM LEFT: One of the many subjects having a portrait painted by Joel Mesler for \$250, Independent Art Fair, Spring Street Studios

Photos: © kHyal 2019