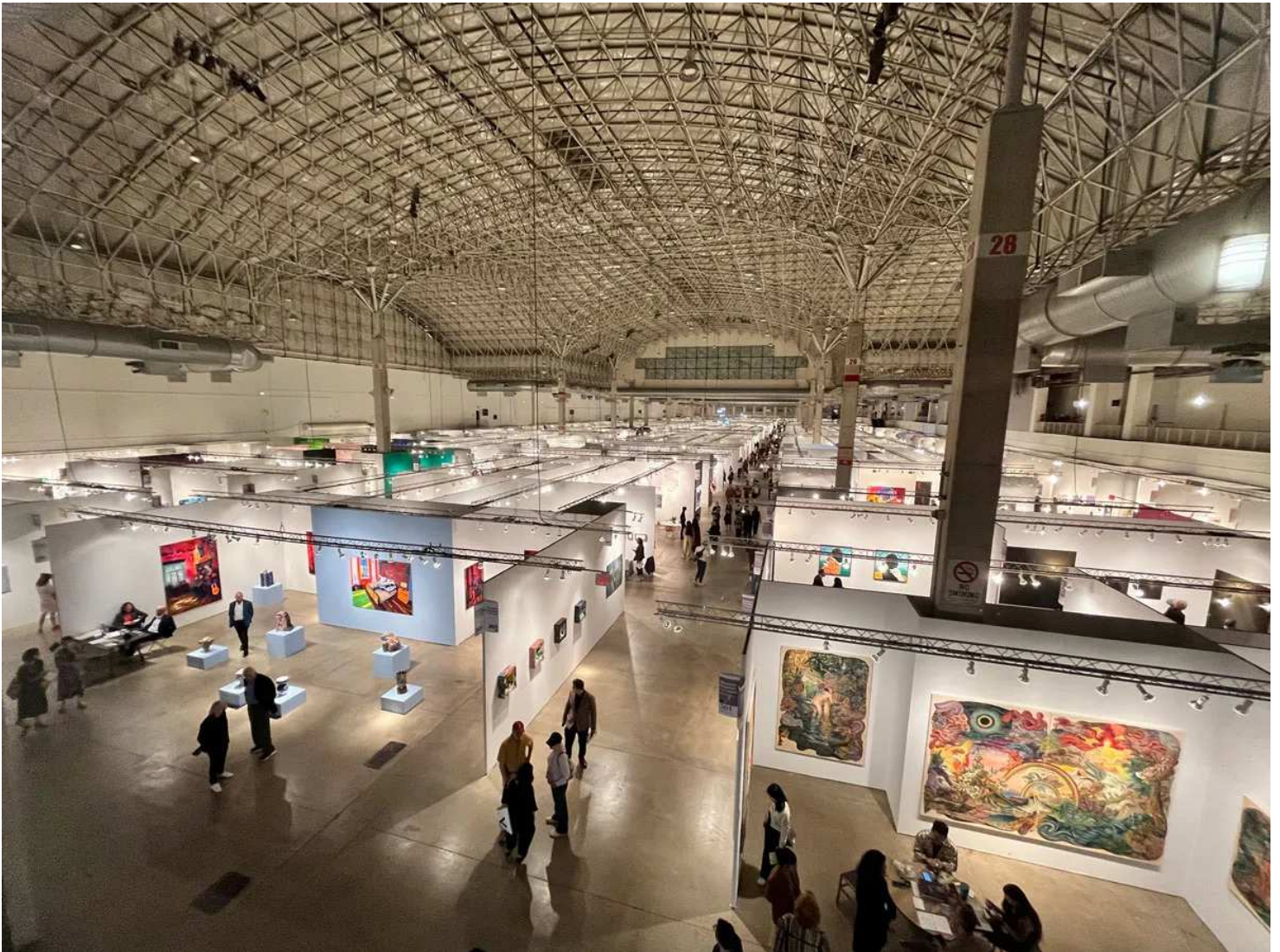


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# The Best Booths at Expo Chicago, from an Ode to Hometown Heroes to Solo Showcases

BY **TESSA SOLOMON** April 12, 2024 4:43pm

The scene at the 2023 edition of Expo Chicago, at Navy Pier.  
MAXIMILIANO DURÓN/ARTNEWS

Expo Chicago has returned to Navy Pier, offering its fairgoers more of what it's known for: a decidedly relaxed vibe (at least compared to its coastal counterparts), an unparalleled focus on regional operations, and wide-ranging art willing to take on American politics.

This is the first edition of Expo under the leadership of Frieze, which **acquired the event** alongside the Armory Show in 2023. Tony Karman, EXPO director, told *ARTnews* that new management has only led to further improvements. The fair has a fresh layout and its special sections—Exposure, In/Situ, and Profile—have been better integrated into the main exhibition.

Some 170 galleries have gathered for this year, including first-time participants Labor (Mexico) and Hannah Traore Gallery (New York), along with blue chip enterprises from beyond the Windy City, like Galeria Nara Roesler and Vielmetter Los Angeles. Chicago, of course, is well represented by homegrown operations such as Document, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, and Corbett vs. Dempsey. Among the notable returning enterprises are Perrotin, Mariane Ibrahim, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, and Harper's.

Below, a look at the best on offer during the 2024 edition of Expo Chicago, which runs through Sunday.



Faith Ringgold, 'Dancing on the George Washington Bridge', 2020.

Photo : Courtesy ACA Galleries

From open to close of preview day, the ACA Galleries booth was filled with human figures, both in the form of eager VIPs clamoring for the wealth of Faith Ringgold works for sale or the subjects of said works. In an exquisite selection of quilts and prints, ladies crowd the towers of the George Washington Bridge; a slick-suited band jams to the joy of a single finely dressed woman; and lone sitters stare boldly from their frames. Last month, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago closed a 60-year retrospective of Ringgold, aptly titled "American People," and at least one work from that show has made it to Expo: *The French Collection Part I, #4: The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles* (1991), an acrylic on canvas lined with fabric. Ringgold was born in New York, but her stories of gender and class, race and politics find traction anywhere in America.

## Eric Firestone Gallery



Huê Thi Hoffmaster, 'Certain Bliss', 2024.

Photo : Eric Firestone Gallery

Judging by Eric Firestone's recent programming (woe to New Yorkers who missed a recent show about the Godzilla collective), the gallery gets what means success for a group show. No color, pattern, or material overstates its welcome; each addition enriches the lot, all in service of a grand purpose. The gallery's booth at Expo is much of the same, a vibrant medley of paintings, ceramics, and collages. A 1967–70 painting from Regina Granne is among the more interesting nudes on the sales floor, and a 2024 black and white collage from Cato, a London-based artist and musician, is a promising teaser for his forthcoming show at the gallery.

Two outdoors scenes are paired logically. There's Soren Hope's *Where's Your Paddle* (2022–24), which depicts what might be a summer yard sale. In it, a bare-legged, barefooted woman in a lawn chair accepts a dollar in exchange for a length of hose; a person, abstracted beyond a discernible gender, struggles into a cowboy boot. There's also Huê Thi Hoffmaster's painted flower field devoid of people—just petals opening eagerly to the sun.



Andie Dinkin, 'Hora of Spring Hosts a Picnic, 2024.

Photo : Courtesy Half Gallery

In the solo presentation at Half Gallery's booth, Andie Dinkin has painted interesting people enjoying lavish affairs in strange places. The viewer arrives neither late nor early, which any seasoned partygoer knows is the optimal time to drop in on the action. Strangers have become confidants; small talk has ignited debate (or, even better, gossip). No one is too stiff or sloppy. With libation and moonlight, mundane things—candlelight, cake, champagne—gain an unbearable romance. If you look closely at these paintings, you'll spot fantastic figures from art history, such as a wind-swept mystique reminiscent of Remedios Varo, or a large fish grappling with an attendee in the spirit of Hieronymus Bosch (Willem Dafoe is seated, too). It's clear why Dinkin won the commission to paint the walls of Los Angeles's swanky newish restaurant Gigi's—she knows color and composition, and, more importantly, why the surreal is desirable.

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An installation view of Voluspa Jarpa at NOME Gallery, Expo Chicago.

Photo : Courtesy NOME Gallery, Berlin.

One of the best sections of Expo is Exposure, a series of solo and two-artist presentations represented by young galleries curated by the Walker Art Center's Rosario Güiraldes. And one of the most memorable participants of Exposure is NOME Gallery, which gathered an incisive selection of works by painter, sculptor, and installation artist Voluspa Jarpa. She's no emerging talent, having represented Chile at the 2019 Venice Biennale and participated in the Shanghai Biennale (2018) and the São Paulo Bienal (2014), but Expo should make her a more familiar name Stateside.

Jarpa deals in hegemonic history—a repressive tool of secret police and world leaders that's easy to spot, but laborious to undo. Faced with a foe like false memory, she brandishes proof of the past: government records, state symbols, eyewitness accounts, anthropological studies. At the entrance to Expo hangs a ceiling-scraping installation, titled *Declassified* (2021) and part of the In/Situ section curated by Amara Antilla. The work is from her "Minimal Secrets" series, which focuses on eras of misinformation, such as the Pinochet regime and the Cold War. Inside NOME's booth, reels of redacted records are elegantly draped against the wall, though the subject matter is grotesque—human zoos, a phenomena prominent in cities during the 19th and 20th centuries. This installation shares space with a series of delicate drawings based on first-hand accounts of Indigenous life in America before colonization. The communities are depicted at leisure in the everyday, and it is a sad and disquieting sight. The viewer knows what horror is coming to stay.

## Nancy Hoffman Gallery





An installation view of Nancy Hoffman Gallery at Expo Chicago.

Photo : ARTnews/Tessa Solomon

Nancy Hoffman Gallery has titled its Expo presentation “Real, Really Real, Surreal, Super-real” and organized its wares along those diaphanous divisions. The concept of “Real,” as explored by the artists here, is not to be confused with Realism, which tries to invoke the everyday as it is, free from speculation. Perspective rules this realm, as artists interrogate the materiality, values, and memories that form the world they singularly exist within. The still lifes are a bit strange: Nathalia Edenmont has clearly manhandled the eggs in her photographs, moistening and cracking their shells in preparation of a close-up. The people appear plucked from dreams or half-internalized memories, as in the case of the little figures that leap between the prickles of a pinecone in a print by Tiffany Shlain. The painted portraits by Hung Liu, however, may deliver best on the booth’s theme, given her mastery of melding personal myth and national history. Liu, who died in 2021, called her style “weeping realism” as her preferred linseed oil was allowed to drip, so that the silhouette of her subjects—many recreated from photographs—appeared to be crying. The subject of *Manchu Bride Study* (2015) was painted in the fashion, and she materialized from a solid gold background like the heroine ascendant.

Cernuda Arte



Manuel Mendive, 'The Dream of the Blue Bird (El Ensueño del Ave Azul)', 2002.

It's hard to miss the riot of color and form bursting from Cernuda Arte's booth. The gallery, hailing from Coral Gables, Florida, is a preeminent purveyor of Cuban art, and they've brought a buffet of the island's modern masters, such as Wifredo Lam. Lam, one of the few artists born outside America and Europe to reach art stardom in the West in the postwar era, embraced the revolutionary conventions of Surrealism, while synthesizing its aesthetic with Afro-Cuban spirituality, the tropical landscape, and Cuban politics. Another booth standout is painter, performer, and sculptor Manuel Mendive. Like Lam, Mendive draws from the associated histories of West Africa and Cuba, in particular the links between Yoruba religions, Santería, and Voodoo. His pictorial interpretations are decidedly less angular, leaning into the mysterious, malleable quality of mythology. In one exceptional Mendive painting on display, titled *The Dream of the Blue Bird*, the titular entity descends from a mottled sky with a kind, downcast expression. Followers—beings akin to humans, given their abundance or absence of limbs—approach, extending an empty cup to catch its blessing.

## Lorena Torres at SGR Galeria







An installation view of SGR Galeria's booth at Expo Chicago.

Photo : Tessa Solomon/ARTnews

SGR Galeria, from Bogotá, Colombia, has dedicated its booth to a new ten-part series of paintings inspired by the successive deaths of Lorena Torres's romantic relationship and family member in February and March, respectively. The series, titled "I Will Not See You Die," is meditative rather than maudlin, frequently featuring a man and woman who are alone, together. A plump red rose figures in each painting, sometimes as a gift, more often as a weapon. The couple embraces, only for the woman to plunge its stalk into her former lover's back. Elsewhere, the duo gaze disappointedly at a third figure sprawled on the grass. A bouquet bursts from the felled youth's bleeding chest, but no one applies aid; dying, they reach with one hand toward the empty sky. Torres, a self-described "survivor of heartbreak," was present at the booth, and called the execution of the show "cathartic."

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## DC Moore





Amy Cutler, *Commencement*, 2023.

Photo : Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York.

The most coveted commodity at an art fair (that isn't art) is attention. How do you get collectors in the booth? How do you get them to stay? One answer may come in the form of an approach taken by DC Moore: pair a historic artist or two (Jacob Lawrence, David Driskell, Robert Kushner) with contemporary talent (Theresa Daddezio, Chie Fueki) that shares an affinity for bright colors and enigmatic compositions. It helps to tease a talent with a forthcoming showcase at the gallery—in this case, the American painter and illustrator Amy Cutler. The gallery has brought a sampling of her intricate paintings on paper and graphite drawings of women, animals, and chimeras enacting untold folktales. In the gouache on paper *Commencement* (2023), archers, looking ready for an afternoon tea, shoot spotted horses from the sky. There's something admirable about a mixed metaphor that refuses to readily dismantle itself. Courage and curiosity are needed to hunt the secrets of these warriors.

## Michael Rosenfeld Gallery





Robert Colescott, 'Hot Dawg! An Impression', 1981.

Photo : Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York.

Within Michael Rosenfeld Gallery's dizzying selection of sculpture, assemblage, collage, painting, and more is an elegant ode to Chicago. The booth includes several artists celebrated for their complex examinations of Black city culture in America, including the painter and preeminent printmaker Eldzier Cortor; Archibald J. Motley, a master colorist who figures in the Met's lauded Harlem Renaissance exhibition; and Charles White, another celebrated multihyphenate and Chicago native whose paintings, what he called "images of dignity," decorate public spaces nationwide. Some homages to Chicago's working class are more explicit than others. In Robert Colescott's *Hot Dawg! An Impression* (1981), a mountain of classic frankfurters dominates nearly the entire canvas, save for a bright sliver of blue up top.

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