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ART REVIEW

Still Independent, and Still Exceptional

Let your fall re-entry begin at the Independent Art Fair in Manhattan, which features painting, photography and the pioneers of net art.



Inside the Battery Maritime Building in Manhattan, clockwise from bottom left: Urs Fischer sculptures on the table; Jorge Galindo's "Latidos"; Chase Hall's pair of paintings, "Chivalry is Dread (Equestrian)" and "Sweetness"; Erik Parker's "Gatekeepers" in the center; and Stanislava Kovalcikova's "Virgin High" on the righthand wall. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

By Martha Schwendener

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Coming up in the '90s, "independent" (often shortened to "indie") signaled culture that was maverick, authentic and relatively low budget. It meant movies that weren't Hollywood-blockbuster types and music not released on corporate record labels. And while art didn't necessarily follow the same ethos, or economic model, the Independent Art Fair, founded by fellow Gen-Xers Elizabeth Dee and Matthew Higgs, kind of felt like it did.

This year, its 12th, is no exception. Still keeping an eye out for overlooked and underrepresented galleries and artists, the Independent is featuring 43 galleries and approximately 100 artists, with lots of women, nonwhite and a few self-taught artists. The quality of the work is exceptional and ranges from painters right out of art school to artists long known to collectors and museums. Solo and duo booths are the norm, making the fair feel like a series of small exhibitions rather than a commercial bazaar. There is also an online component up through Sept. 26, with videos, podcasts and interviews.

And yet, lodged in the Cipriani South Street, inside the Battery Maritime Building, the Independent could hardly be called edgy. More Sundance than the garish Oscars, it's an exceedingly pleasant way to re-enter the art world after being battered by hurricanes, politics and pandemics. Here are some highlights.

Jameson Green at Derek Eller Gallery



Jameson Green, "In hopes that we find what we need" (2021) from Derek Eller Gallery. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Jameson Green graduated recently from the M.F.A. program at Hunter College, and the boxy figures and angular compositions in his works clearly recall the politicized paintings of Jacob Lawrence and Philip Guston. Black figures picking cotton, migrating with the birds, or wearing hoods with nails — a seeming mash-up of Guston's hooded figures and Central African nkisi power figures with nails driven into them — offer an update on the situation of racism in America. The paintings also recall the look of prints by Elizabeth Catlett, another towering figure in African-American art, so history and art history — and remixing and remaking — are as much the subjects here as racism and its deleterious effects.