

ART REVIEW

8 Standout Booths at Independent

The art fair has completed its transition from boutique outlier to art world institution.



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By Will Heinrich

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With 85 exhibitors this year, including 26 artists making their New York debuts and 39 galleries new to the fair, the Independent has completed its transition from boutique outlier to art world institution.

This has both upsides and down. It means a somewhat more crowded space and more obviously commercial vibe, but also an increasingly deep and eclectic bench of participants with a global reach. Below are eight standout booths, but also make sure to look for Matt Kenny's paintings of windows in a windowless room (**F**), Terran Last Gun's geometric ledger drawings (**Diane Rosenstein Gallery**), and especially **The Gallery of Everything's** over-the-top installation of Yiddish typewriters, tramp-art grandfather clocks, portraits of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie and other ephemera — all masquerading as a single collector's horde.

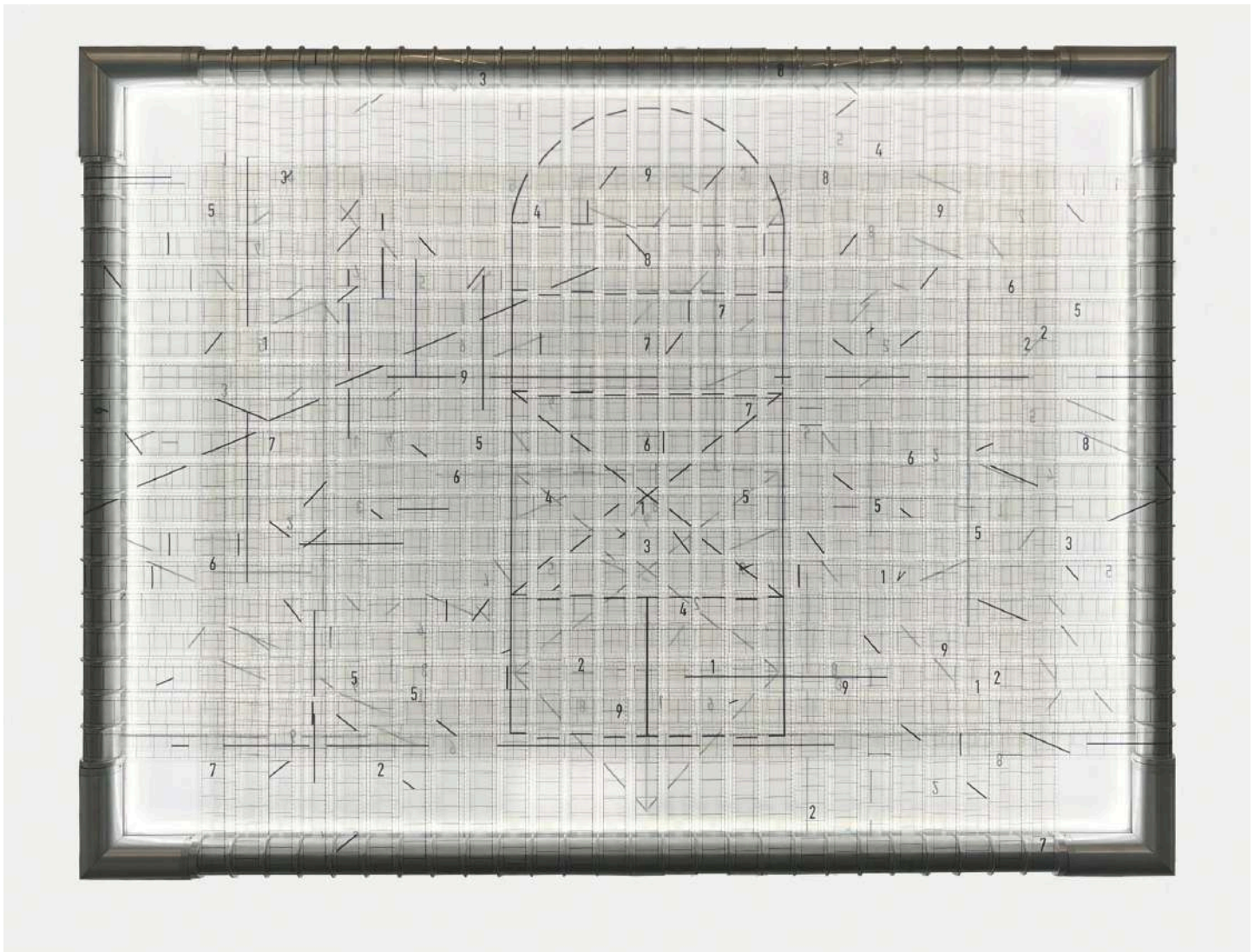
Fifth Floor: The Meeting



Selections from “My Fellow Americans,” a group of portraits by Tod Lippy, based on photos he found by searching for images of Trump voters online. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

After last fall’s presidential election in the United States, the artist Tod Lippy, a voter for Kamala Harris who has worked in music, photography and publishing, found himself perplexed by the other side. So he started searching for the phrase “Why I voted for Trump” online and painting the people he turned up, ultimately producing 50 portraits in acrylic, Sharpie and crayon. Earnest and obsessive, but with more than a whiff of artificial intelligence, “My Fellow Americans,” as he calls the whole project, may be the perfect response to our cultural moment.

Vistamare



Rosa Barba, "In Play (Hopscotch)," 2024, 35-millimeter film, aluminum frame, motors, plexiglass, LED lights. Rosa Barba, via Vistamare and Independent

This Milan gallery brings work by Rosa Barba, currently also exhibiting her film, kinetic sculpture and sound at the Museum of Modern Art, along with an unusual white monochrome by Ettore Spalletti. As a filmmaker, Barba takes a creative approach to the materials of her chosen medium. These sculptures make ingenious use of the typically overlooked beauty of film itself: Textile-like weavings of red film are an intriguing compromise between flatness and depth; a kinetic piece that features black numerals on clear 35-millimeter film is like an eye test from a doctor's office in a dream world.

Kerry Schuss Gallery



In Mary Carlson's work, ceramic and porcelain flowers and birds sit atop enormous curlicues. via Independent;
Photo by Alexa Hoyer

Ceramic and porcelain flowers and birds based on Medieval illustrations sit atop enormous metal curlicues in this exquisite presentation by the ceramist Mary Carlson. In "Blue Pod," a curving copper stem raises a fist-like blue blossom almost nine feet off the floor. Evoking fences and decorative gardens, this and other pieces bring a magical sense of space to what is otherwise just a standard art-fair cubicle. (The booth also makes a lovely complement to **Galerie Sator**'s presentation of work by Jean-Claude Silbermann upstairs.)

Sixth Floor: Mitchell-Innes & Nash



Pope.L, who died in 2023, left a legacy of subversive art. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

There's something undeniably melancholy about seeing Pope.L's chaotic, expressive and relentlessly subversive art in a fair booth two years after his death, particularly with several pieces listed as "title unknown." The good news is that the subversion still works

just fine, particularly in pieces like a welcome mat printed with Martin Luther King Jr.'s face; a mixed-media piece labeled "Brown People Are a Liquid," and a four-foot-high, vinyl-on-aluminum Obama mask with strange cut-out eyes and a sinister grin.

Yancey Richardson Gallery



In "East Meets West," Tseng Kwong Chi poses with different known sites. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

Between 1978, when he moved to Manhattan, and 1990, when he died of AIDS, the Hong Kong-born Tseng Kwong Chi took thousands of photographs. His black-and-white series "East Meets West," for which he posed with the World Trade Center, the Statue of Liberty and the Roman Coliseum in a Mao suit that he'd bought in Montreal, are at once conceptually complex and visually arresting — like Anselm Kiefer's "Occupations" series remixed with a sense of humor.

Parliament



Three paintings by Achraf Touloub show loose allegorical scenes. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

There's something quietly fascinating about the contradictions in three paintings by Achraf Touloub, who was born in Casablanca, Morocco, and lives and works in Paris. Loose allegorical scenes, populated by shadowy figures that look as if they're made of wire armature and muscle fiber, surely take place at dusk — but their surfaces are appealingly slick, and their colors surprisingly vibrant, with delicate greens and blues peeking out behind black brushstrokes.

Chris Sharp Gallery



Adam Higgins's two paintings would be eye-catching anywhere. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

Adam Higgins's two bright, impossibly crisp paintings of seafood salads — "Seascape With Raw Shrimp and Pecorino" and "Mixed Salad With Paris Street and Oysters" — would be eye-catching anywhere, but they particularly stand out in the sea of smudgy Emo figuration that is the contemporary art fair. From a distance they could pass for some travel writer's bizarre Instagram post; closer up, their shrimps and oysters are well-judged and generously creamy.

Seventh Floor: A Hug from the Art World



Guy Richards Smit's gag paintings have an extra dimension. via Independent; Photo by Alexa Hoyer

Not many artists commit to a gag like Guy Richards Smit. Fascinated by the punch and economy of single-panel cartoons, the painter studied the form and now regularly publishes his acidic takes on bourgeois pretension in general, and the art world in particular, in *The New Yorker*. As garishly colored paintings, the same jokes gain an extra dimension, lampooning the self-satisfaction and exquisite self-referentiality of a cultural scene with eyes only for itself.

Independent

Through Sunday, 50 Varick Street, Manhattan, 212-257-5600; independenthq.com.

Will Heinrich writes about new developments in contemporary art, and has previously been a critic for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Observer*.

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