



What Sold at EXPO CHICAGO

ARTSY EDITORIAL

BY MOLLY GOTTSCHALK

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Installation view of Yours, Mine & Ours's booth at EXPO CHICAGO, 2016. Photo courtesy of Yours, Mine & Ours.

EXPO CHICAGO came to a close on Sunday, having welcomed 145 galleries to the city's historic Navy Pier. This year marks the fair's fifth and largest edition since president and director Tony Karman resurrected the long-running but faltering Art Chicago in 2012. And based on the reactions of returning dealers and those among the fair's 35 new exhibitors, EXPO certainly didn't disappoint.

A rush of the world's top collectors and curators—Hans Ulrich Obrist, Simon Castets, Anita and Poju Zabłudowicz, Toby Kamps, Jorge Pérez, and every curator from the MCA among them—were seen scouring EXPO CHICAGO's aisles throughout the week. Dealers reported a quality of face time with heavy-hitters not always feasible at other major fairs. “The biggest impact is this cultural exchange it fosters in Chicago,” added Karman, who was knighted and received the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres during the announcement of the fair's upcoming 2017 partnership with Palais de Tokyo and the Institut Français on opening day.

The fair's EXPOSURE sector, which offered 26 younger galleries the opportunity to curate solo or duo artist presentations, saw a number of first-time exhibitors in high spirits. New York's Half Gallery had placed eight of nine paintings on view by Dublin-based artist Genieve Figgis by the stroke of 6 p.m. on opening day. New York's The Hole also saw success in the EXPOSURE sector. The gallery, notorious for creative fair presentations, installed a solo booth of sculptural, abstracted portraits by Los Angeles-based artist Vanessa Prager—including two paintings each only visible through peephole. Several of the artist's smaller works were snatched up on opening day for \$2,500 apiece.

EXPO CHICAGO's youngest gallery, Yours, Mine & Ours (which opened in New York's Lower East Side on September 11th) had a successful first-ever art fair outing. Their booth's walls were lined with to-scale paintings of album covers by artist Brooklyn-based Todd Biennu. (Albums by The Misfits, Aretha Franklin, Nirvana, and James Taylor were among them.) "Chicago is a music town, so we wanted to create this record store atmosphere," said gallery co-founder RJ Supa, who showed at EXPO CHICAGO last year with his former gallery Louis B. James. By Saturday afternoon, around half of the works from the series of 100 had sold at \$1,400 a pop. Supa noted that most sales took place after 5 p.m.—likely after work hours.

Los Angeles gallerist David Kordansky returned to EXPO CHICAGO having not participated since his gallery's first-ever art fair, at Art Chicago in the early 2000s. He and gallery director Mike Homer pointed to the market's slower pace as an opportunity to bring work that requires greater dialogue: in this case, a standout booth of recent work by two radical octogenarians, Betty Woodman and Sam Gilliam, who are just starting to get their due. According to Homer, "People are more thoughtful about what they are buying," looking at artist's track records and institutional support before making a purchase. Kordansky added that Chicagoans have long displayed "bold, brave, fearless thinking" in their support of forward thinking, and risk taking, from the Imagists to the Surrealists.

Chicago gallerist Kavi Gupta suggested that EXPO is helping foster a renewed interest in collecting in the city. "The art fair's first editions in the '80s built all of the collectors here," he said. "But then a generation was skipped, in a way." Today, he says, a new generation of young collectors in their thirties and early forties is emerging in Chicago—and the revived fair is no small part of that. "For all of the young tech pioneers of Chicago who've made a lot of money, and real estate people, the fair is the easiest way for them to get an entree into the art world," he said. From those hailing from J.B. Pritzker's tech incubator 1871 to those from GrubHub or Groupon, the city is ripe with young connoisseurs who are looking to learn about art. Gupta added that this group was out in full force on opening day: "After four or five years of the fair, they're collectors now; they've got the bug."

—Molly Gottschalk