

4 Non-Frieze Art Fairs to Explore This Weekend

By MARTHA SCHWENDENERMAY 5, 2016



Will Kurtz's uncanny human figures at the Portal art fair at Federal Hall National Memorial. Credit Linda Rosier for The New York Times

Despite their illusion of permanence, art fairs are ephemeral affairs: immersive pop-up events that emerge and evaporate with alarming frequency. Three of the four fairs I visited earlier this week are in their first two years of existence, while the fourth, Spring Masters, is [closing — set to reopen in the fall and next spring as two separate fairs](#), one devoted to antiquities, the other to contemporary art and design. Two of the fairs listed here, Portal and Flux, are artist-driven: organized by curators rather than participating galleries. Stretching from Harlem to South Brooklyn, these events taken together demonstrate how New York is still a supremely fair-friendly metropolis.

Portal (Through Tuesday at Federal Hall National Memorial, 26 Wall Street) Organized by the same artist-curators who mount the [Governors Island Art Fair](#) (which will reappear in September), Portal occupies three floors of a neo-Classical rotunda that was originally a United States Customs House. The 28 artists here, selected through an invitational process, are mostly emerging or unknown. Admission is free, and you'll be rubbing shoulders with some financial-district tourists who don't even realize they've entered the art-fair matrix. Portal is a low-key alternative to the high-octane fairs, though. Standout works include [Aaron Taylor Kuffner](#)'s robotic gamelan orchestra, a row of computer-programmed gongs that echo gently throughout the space; [Alice Sfintesco](#)'s sultry, multihued paintings of otherworldly women; [Will Kurtz](#)'s uncanny human figures made with wire, wood, newspaper and masking tape; and [Emily Chatton](#)'s expressionist ink paintings on plastic covering two windows in the space like a stained-glass membrane.

Flux Art Fair (Through May 31 at Marcus Garvey Park, Fifth Avenue and 120th Street, and other locations in Harlem) Public art, made for the outdoors, is often stymied by factors like the weather and threats of vandalism. [Flux](#), now in its sophomore year, largely ignores these concerns (the work only has to weather this month) and offers a strong showing of nearly 50 objects, projects and related exhibitions, selected by invitation. Sculptures range from [Kurt](#)

[Steger](#)'s post-minimal plywood structure perched on a boulder to [Bayeté Ross Smith](#)'s stack of boomboxes and [Sui Park](#)'s "Sprout" (2016), a series of furry-looking biomorphic forms made with white cable ties. [Rodrigo Guzmán](#) offers a downloadable sound piece, while [Tammy Nguyen](#)'s lamppost banners and signs celebrate the history of jazz in Harlem. [Tiffany Smith](#)'s photographic portraits of women are installed against colorful vinyl wallpaper on the side of the park's pool building and nod heavily to African predecessors like Malick Sidibé.

Photo



A sculpture by Ndary Lo at the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Credit Linda Rosier for The New York Times

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair (Through Sunday at Pioneer Works, 159 Pioneer Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn) This is also the second year for [1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair](#) in New York (the name is in reference to the 54 countries that make up the African continent). But 1:54 is hardly languishing in the outer reaches of Brooklyn. **Among the 17 exhibitors lodged in Pioneer Works' lavishly renovated industrial space are galleries like Magnin-A, founded by André Magnin, a well-known curator of African and non-Western art, which is showing contemporary photographs by [Omar Victor Diop](#).** Afronova from South Africa is also showing photography, by [Lebohang Kganye](#), who participated in the Armory show and won a jury prize for the 2015 Biennial of African Photography in Bamako, and [Nontsikelelo Veleko](#), known for fashion-themed photographs. [David Krut](#), whose printing workshop is in the same building in Johannesburg as William Kentridge's studio, is showing large-scale prints by Mr. Kentridge. Two prominent African-American artists are here, too: [Derrick Adams](#), who will have a show at [Pioneer Works this summer](#), is on view at the Paris gallery [Anne de Villepoix](#), while [Mickalene Thomas](#)'s photographs are currently on view in a satellite exhibition, sponsored by Aperture, on the floor above the fair.

Photo



"Sun" by Valentin Popov at Spring Masters. Credit Linda Rosier for The New York Times

Spring Masters New York (Through Monday at the Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Avenue) Museum quality art is what [Spring Masters](#) is known for, and this year's edition does not disappoint. A highlight is Bernard Goldberg's ambitious solo presentation of Gaston Lachaise drawings and sculptures devoted to women (inspired primarily by his wife) in the age of suffragist feminism. (And, Mr. Goldberg points out, pertinent for today.) The [Swiss gallery Cahn](#) has an extraordinary collection of ancient Greek vases, black-figure and red-figure, and [Colnaghi](#) has an exquisite still life by the 18th-century Spanish master [Luis Egidio Meléndez](#). A large, eye-catching 1946 Matisse silk-screen at [Chowaiki & Company](#) is less rare but representative of the kind of blue-chip art you'll find at this Park Avenue fair.

Photo



The Spring Masters fair at the Park Avenue Armory includes “Lotha la Nubienne” by Emile Louis Truffot. Credit Linda Rosier for The New York Times

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