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At New York Fairs, Dealers Make Last-Minute Pivots, Seeking an Edge

One Armory exhibitor signed on two weeks ago; another dropped Frieze Seoul to do it for the first time.



visitors at James Cohan Gallery at the Armory Show 2020 | Review on September 04, 2020 in New York City.

Photo by Sean Zanni/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images.

Katya Kazakina (<https://news.artnet.com/about/katya-kazakina-1589>) September 5, 2025



(<https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.artnet.com%2Fmarket%2Farmory-week-fairs-dealers-changes-2684500&title=At%20New%20York%20Fairs%2C%20Dealers%20Make%20Last-Minute%20Pivots%2C%20Seeking%20an%20Edge>) Share

There's no denying it: The art world's season opener in New York is always exciting, even in anxious times. Collectors, artists, and influencers swarmed the **Javits Center** on Thursday for the **Armory Show's** VIP day. Crowds mobbed gallery receptions all over town. Bursts of inspirations are everywhere. Discoveries and conversations just keep coming. I love it all.

I also worry. As **Artnet's** upcoming Intelligence Reports reveals, this moment is the most challenging for galleries in at least 20 years. Navigating it "requires patience," artist **Sanford Biggers** told me as we caught up at the afterparty for **Marianne Boesky Gallery's** two new exhibitions—paintings by **Celeste Rapone** and clay and metal sculptures by **Gabriel Chaile**.

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Many galleries closed and downsized over the summer. Lackluster sales this week could break even more. Yet I am convinced that somewhere, probably right here in New York, artists are making the work that will define the next big chapter. The YBAs came out of the bloodbath of the early 1990s, and many significant private collections were built up during previous downturns in the art market. (Some are now museums, like the **Broad** and **Glenstone**.)

We have to ride out this scary wave and be ready for the opportunities that invariably arrive. I was reminded of this at Armory Show by art dealer **Bart Keijzers Koning**, whose tiny booth in a special section on the periphery of the fair features two artists, **Tamara Johnson** and **Michelle Cortez Gonzales**.



Bart Keijsers Koning at his booth at the Armory Show, with works by Tamara Johnson and Michelle Cortez Gonzales. Photo: Katya Kazakina

In mid-August, Keijsers Koning was preparing for the first opening of the season at his eponymous gallery in Dallas—a solo show by Johnson, a Texas-born sculptor—when he got an email from the fair’s organizers.

“Would you like to have an opportunity to present in New York?” they asked.

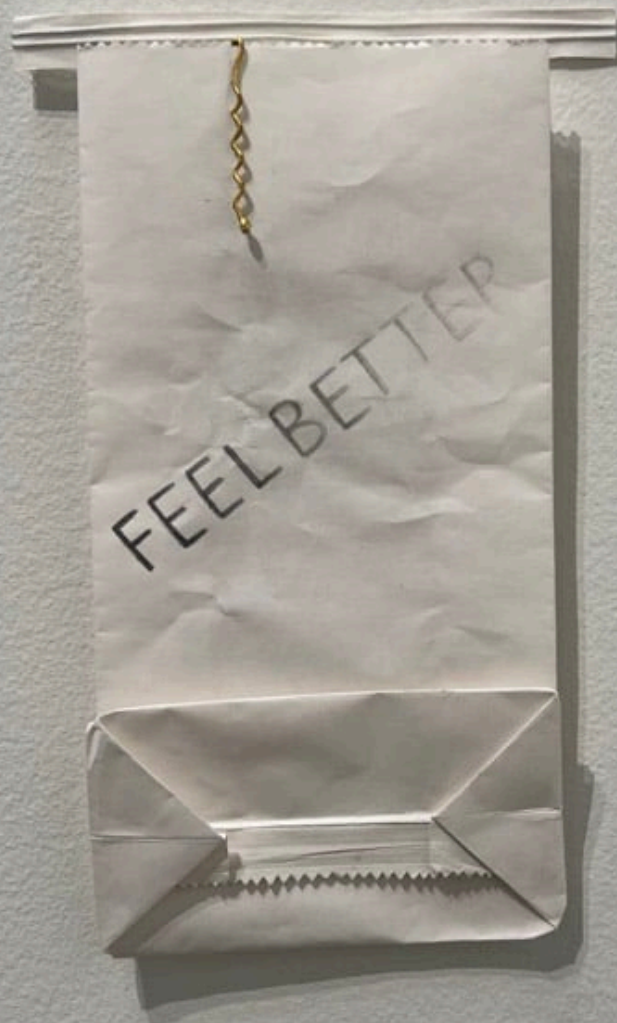
“Next year?” Keijsers Koning replied.

“No, in two weeks.”

Apparently, another gallery had dropped out in the sector, which is focused on artists and galleries from the American South. It had something to do with tariffs, he was told.

I don't know why this is on my path, but I just had to pick it up and go, Krijger's Koning told me on Thursday, standing in the booth and looking somewhat dazed. "I saw the opportunity to show my artists and my gallery. You can't sit still."

A mad rush ensued. Last Saturday, he loaded his dark-blue Nissan Pathfinder with paintings and sculptures. On Monday, he began the 1,550-mile drive to New York, arriving at 3 a.m. on Wednesday, the day before the fair's opening. There was no time to send out PDFs.



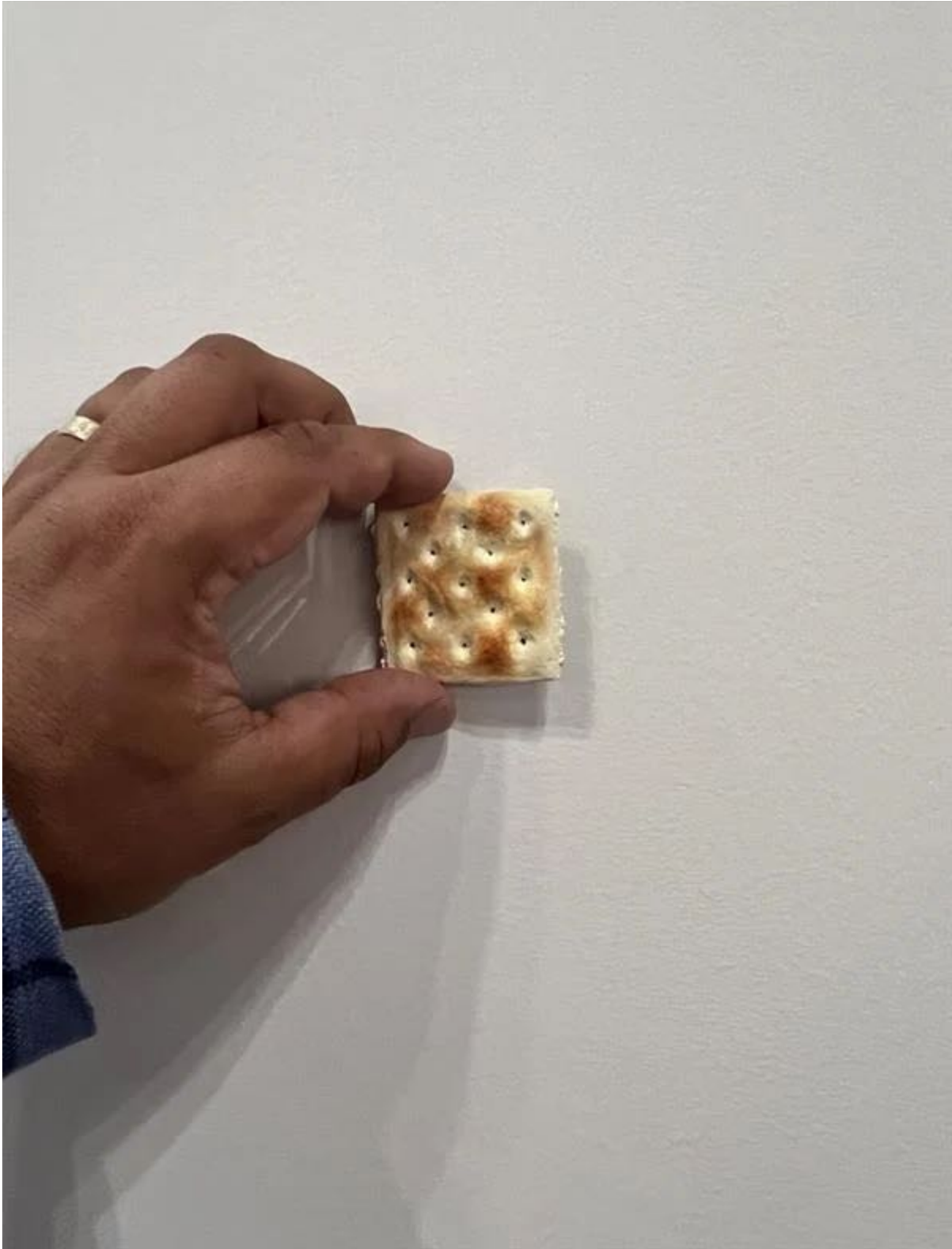
“My collectors see me and ask: What are you doing here?” he said, standing amid paintings on canvas and lace by Cortez Gonzalez and quirky sculptures by Johnson. Both artists flew in for the fair.

On the outside wall of his booth is a saltine cracker by Johnson, which is surprisingly hefty when placed in your palm. It’s painted pewter. The work is an edition of 30, and each is priced at \$1,500. Inside the booth, a goldfish cracker—true to size, silver-based, and gilded in 24K gold—is priced at \$3,000. The 1-inch piece takes the prize as the smallest artwork at the fair.

Nearby, a 9-inch-tall white paper bag, also by Johnson, is pinned to a wall, adorned with the words “Feel Better” and holding a squiggly piece of gold. The work is titled, *Feel Better Barf Bag* (2023), and it comes in an edition of 10, each priced at \$4,000.

By the end the VIP day, he had closed a sale of *Goldfish cracker* (2025), the first work in an edition of 20.

“Let’s hope for the rest to go,” he texted me this morning. “I have a feeling (and so do others) that people were looking and will come back. A few art consultants were browsing ahead for their clients to come by this weekend.”



Tamara Johnson, *Cracker #2* (2023) at Keijzers Koning gallery at the Armory Show in 2025. Photo: Katya Kazakina

Blue-chip dealer **Per Skarstedt** also changed his plans. He decided to participate in the Armory Show for the first time after dropping out of **Frieze Seoul**. The silver **Rudolf Stingel** painting in his booth, priced at \$750,000, was among the priciest works at the fair,

along with the \$2 million work on paper by **William de Kooning** at **Berggruen Gallery**, from San Francisco.

Skarstedt, who has galleries in New York, London, and Paris, said that the Armory was an easy choice. It costs \$300,000 to \$400,000 to do a fair in Asia, he said. In New York, he's paying \$60,000. By the end of 2025, he will have done seven art fairs, including the big ones in Basel, Paris, Miami, and Maastricht.

"I am like a traveling salesman," he said ruefully, when I buttonholed him at the **Independent 20th Century**, where he's doing a joint booth with **Nahmad Contemporary** of paintings by **Georges Rouault** (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/georges-rouault-independent-2683022>).

He sighed, looked at his phone, and said, "Can I call someone? They are trying to buying something."

By the end of Friday, Skarstedt said he sold a work on paper by **Christopher Wool**, priced at \$175,000, and a painting by **Cristina BanBan**, priced at \$40,000. He also had some good conversations. "I'm optimistic," the dealer said.



A painting by William Brickel at Michael Kohn gallery at the Armory Show, Sept. 4, 2025. Photo: Katya Kazakina

After several years of Black portraiture being everywhere at the fair, it was striking to see the white male figure back again, this time with a distinctly queer vibe.

Michael Kohn Gallery from Los Angeles mounted one such work, by the British artist **William Brickel**, on its outside wall. It depicts a group of four androgynous men, their naked torsos very white and hairless. The asking price was \$35,000, and the gallery said that it sold.

Another male nude portrait graced the wall of **Gratin** gallery from New York. **Victoria Miro** (London and Venice) had a presentation of many works depicting male couples in sepia tones, with prices ranging from \$22,000 to \$35,000; many sold, according to a gallery rep. **Navot Miller's** painting at New York's **Yossi Milo Gallery** depicted two shirtless white dudes in shorts by a blue lake surrounded by mountains.

Caroline Fuchs, from Stuttgart, Germany, brought a large canvas by **Hanneli Petting** of two men wearing only boxers, desire crackling amid a torrent of brushstrokes.



A painting by Navot Miller at Yossi Milo Gallery at the Armory Show in New York, September 4, 2025. Photo: Katya Kazakina

White Cube, the British heavyweight that opened a New York gallery two years ago, returned to the Armory Show for the first time since its inaugural 1994 edition at the **Gramercy Park Hotel**. That was a big surprise. But even more surprising was its solo booth dedicated to **TARWUK**, an artist duo made up of Croatian, New York-based 40-somethings **Bruno Pogačnik Tremow** and **Ivana Vukšić**.



A solo booth by TARWUK at White Cube gallery at the Armory Show, Sept. 4, 2025. Photo: Katya Kazakina

Their paintings, drawings, and plaster sculptures evoke Eastern European phantasmagoric realism. And sure enough, there was a big white male head staring squarely at the viewer, accompanied by a partial view of a pink head with two pointy years—a dog, a pig?

Valerie Cueto, an art advisor and curator, fell in love with the Old Europe mood and the cultural references, like **Brecht** and **Wagner**. Prices for the paintings are \$65,000 and \$100,000. Works on paper are \$8,000 to \$22,500.

“I can’t help it,” she said. “It’s whimsical. It’s mysterious. It reminds me of *The Street*

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it's also well priced, she said. And so, she's proposing some of the material to her clients. "What can you buy for less than \$150,000?" she said.



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