

OBSERVER

What to Expect from This Year's Independent 20th Century Fair

With work by Black and Indigenous artists and women Surrealists, this year's fair will offer art lovers and collectors ample opportunities for discovery.

By [Elisa Carollo](#) · 08/14/24 8:00am

The invitation-only edition of Independent dedicated to works from the 20th Century will be held for the third time at the historic Battery Maritime Building during Armory Week, but those who want a sneak preview can go online on August 29 for an early access look. In advance of all that, we pored over this year's program to see what this year's thirty-two invited exhibitors have on tap to create a guide to the booths you should not miss once the fair opens on September 5.

"This year we anticipate seeing more and more growth across more artistic movements and genres," Independent founder Elizabeth Dee told Observer. Some of the leading curatorial themes we can already identify in this edition align with the institutional choices across museums and biennials of the past year—in particular, the revived attention for Indigenous practices and artists from the global south. "Our track record is exceptional in this area," Dee added. "We have been supporting galleries devoted to Indigenous art since 2019, before the Met Museum had a curator of Indigenous art. Last year at Independent 20th Century, we featured Louisa Keyser (Dat So La Lee) and Donald Ellis Gallery in a milestone presentation that landed a portrait of the artists on the New York Times homepage... It was the first time that a female Indigenous artist's portrait

was on the front page, and we are extremely proud to have played a key role in making that possible.”

SEE ALSO: The Armory Show Will Once Again Partner With the U.S. Open

Several artists who will be showcased at this year’s fair have received institutional recognition in the past year—this is by design, as Independent continues to serve as an important platform for not only collectors but also curators and museum directors. The fairs, according to Dee, have “always had a track record of being on the forefront of institutional development and curatorial innovation. I’ve been the creative director and founding advisor with Matthew Higgs from the inception, and I work with a small curatorial team (none of which are museum curators) which includes Sofie Scheerlinck, our COO, David Ulrichs and Alexandra Alexopolou in Europe.” Together, they look for what is deserving of more attention in New York and, with that in mind, here’s some of what you should prioritize at this year’s fair:

Abdias do Nascimento at Galeria MaPa (São Paulo)



Abdias do Nascimento, Oricha’s Mother (Mother Nature), 1971, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inch, Buffalo, New York, USA. Galeria MaPa, São Paulo.

The work of Afro-Brazilian artist, writer, activist and politician Abdias do Nascimento will be presented by Galeria MaPa (São Paulo) along with a collection of sacred iron tools associated with Candomblé religious ceremonies. The artist remained committed all his life to fighting for the rights of Afro-Brazilians and promoting African culture in Brazil while championing the idea of a Pan-African alliance. In 1944, Nascimento founded the Black Experimental Theater (Teatro Experimental do Negro or TEN), conceived as a platform to challenge racial discrimination in Brazilian society and promote Black culture and arts. The following year, he organized the “First Congress of Brazilian Blacks”

(1º Congresso do Negro Brasileiro), which addressed issues such as racism, education and social inequality.

Due to his opposition to Brazil's military dictatorship, Abdias do Nascimento was forced to live in exile for many years. He lectured at universities around the world and became a SUNY professor while playing a critical role in promoting Afro-Brazilian studies internationally. It was during his exile that the artist started to paint, sometime in the 60s. Despite the serious tone of the revindication of his political activity, his art is extremely playful, characterized by fantasy patterns and vibrant colors while reactivating ancestral symbols from the Brazilian and Yoruba cultures and the African diaspora. His art frequently incorporated African religious and spiritual symbols, serving as a connection to African ancestry and a source of spiritual strength, such as Orishas (deities in the Yoruba religion) and other elements from Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé. At the same time, his paintings are still animated by a message of resistance, often drawing from his notion of Quilombismo, the cultural and political resistance of Afro-Brazilians inspired by the stories of escaped slaves. In this way, Nascimento was able to develop a transnational language of Black solidarity, able to reunite communities from Harlem to Brazil in a communal cultural space of shared roots.

Julia Isídrez and Brazilian Maria Lira Marques at Gomide&Co (São Paulo)



Julia Isídrez's work on view at the 60th Venice Biennale. ABC

For the Indigenous visual narratives, don't miss the two-person exhibition of Parquayan artist Julia Isídrez and Brazilian Maria Lira Marques presented by another Brazilian gallery, Gomide&Co (São Paulo). Drawing from ancient Indigenous traditions, both artists evoke in sculptural vessels and the other in

vibrant paintings the intimate connection with the land and its animals, in a spirit of interconnectedness with nature that animates Indigenous episteme. Julia Isídrez is currently presenting her animal ceramic vessels in the Arsenale for this year's Venice Biennale, bringing us back (or forward) to a moment when art was a tool to still communicate with animals, within the ritualistic connotation that ceramic-making originally had in different cultures. As a Guaraní Indigenous artist and a ceramicist, following tradition, Isídrez learned the technique from her mother. However, the artist was able to fuel and transform the tradition with her feverish imagination, presenting animal shapes and traditional motifs in a very personal way that connects across cultures, making her work some of the most notable in her country.

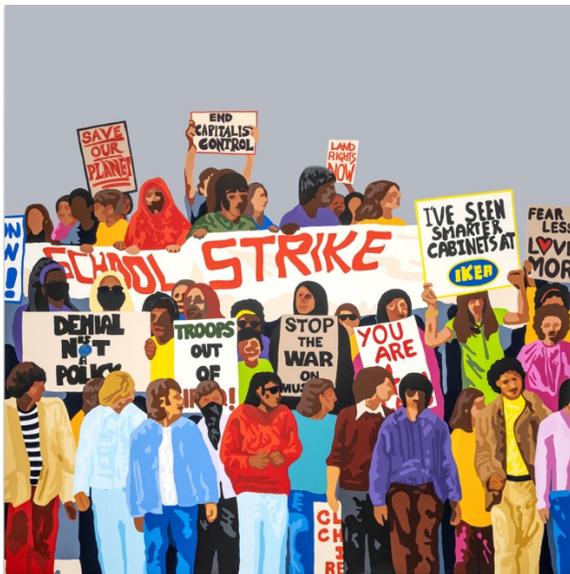
Brad Kahlhamer at Venus Over Manhattan



Brad Kahlhamer, *Bird + Thalia*, 2000, watercolor, ink on paper; 22 x 30 in (55.9 x 76.2 cm). Courtesy the artist and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.

Venus Over Manhattan will present early works by artist and musician Brad Kahlhamer, who was inspired by a blend of his explorations of Native American ledger drawings and his immersion in the gritty New York art scene. As someone of Native American descent with a mixed background and fully immersed in urban life, Kahlhamer makes art full of powerful statements of cultural hybridity and identity. Incorporating a mix of materials and techniques, his art reflects a relevant exploration of the “third place”—a conceptual space where his Native American roots, his experiences growing up in a German-American family and his life in urban America converge.

Richard Bell at OSMOS



Richard Bell, *Strike*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 180 x 180 cm. Courtesy of OSMOS, New York; Milani Gallery, Meanjin (Brisbane); and the artist

OSMOS is presenting historical and recent works by Australian Aboriginal artist Richard Bell, whose art is interwoven with his activism, challenging the legacies of Western colonization and addressing the rights and identity of Aboriginal people. The artist was recently the subject of a new documentary, *You Can Go Now*, which was screened at Chicago’s Gene Siskel Film Center in 2023, followed by a presentation at Tate Modern of his work *Embassy*, acquired in 2017 through the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia and Tate international as part of a joint acquisition program to promote Australian art globally and help Australian artists reach new audiences. Conceived as an ongoing project for the artist, *Embassy* features a large canvas tent that creates a space for dialogue and activism to address justice for Indigenous peoples and was presented in the Australia Pavilion for the 2019 Venice Biennale.

Karel Appel at Almine Rech



Karel Appel, *Personage*, 1969, oil on canvas, 36 x 28 1/2 in. © Karel Appel Foundation c/o ARS 2024.
Photography by Ana Drittanti.

Almine Rech will present a selection of works by pioneer Duch artist Karel Appel, a founding member of the short-lived but highly influential European avant-garde group CoBrA, active from 1948 to 1951. An acronym for Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, the avant-garde movement was animated by this internationalization while emphasizing spontaneity, experimentation and the radical rejection of traditional artistic conventions. Fueled by his exploration and interest in outsider art, folk art, children's drawings and non-Western art forms, Appel's style has always been characterized by vibrant, expressive colors, bold brushstrokes and a raw, almost primitive, aesthetic. The presentation will focus on Appel's artistic development in the 1950s and '60s when he spent more time in New York and engaged in a long and fruitful collaboration with the New York dealer Martha Jackson. Works from that period maintained the use of vivid colors but applied a more dense impasto, much more visceral and sensual in the flowing of the paint on the canvas, continuing his fearless approach to color, form and composition.

Filippo De Pisis at P420 and Bona de Mandiargues at Richard Saltoun



Filippo de Pisis, Vaso di fiori, 1948, oil on canvas, 70 x 45 cm. Courtesy: Filippo de Pisis Estate and P420, Bologna

For its debut participation in the September art fair, Bologna-based gallery P420 will present a selection of works by leading Italian painter Filippo De Pisis, who has recently received new attention after being included in this year's Venice Biennale. Deeply influenced by the art of Giorgio De Chirico, De Pisis developed his own version of "Metafisica," characterized by looser, expressive brushstrokes and vibrant color palettes while still drawing from Renaissance and Etruscan art to find a new sense of classicism. The gallery will present two lines of research into the artist: the first comprises works on paper depicting the faces and bodies of young men, recorded with immediacy and loose contours. The second is a series of paintings and works on paper made during the final phase of his career, from his return to Italy from Paris after the outbreak of the Second World War to his tragic hospitalization at Villa Fiorita up until his death in 1956. Often accused

of pursuing a painting with a Neo-Impressionist “decorative superficiality” (because of his quick, light brushstrokes and pleasing color combinations) De Pisis instead constructed many of his major paintings through an interplay of cross-references and references, both autobiographical and cultural, leaving an important legacy on the history of the 20th-century Italian painting.



Bona De Mandiargues, *Lady Caracol*, oil on canvas, 39.4 x 26 in. © Bona De Mandiargues and the estate of the artist, courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery, London and Rome.

As part of their curated booth, “Butterfly Time” featuring twelve women artists across continents, Richard Saltoun will present one of De Pisis’s pupils and his niece, the Italian Surrealist Bona de Mandiargues, who was also included in the Biennale. Immersed in the Surrealist movement, her paintings are rich in mystical symbolism and intricate details, evoking deep emotional and psychological responses to the disquietude of an entire historical period. Showing sometimes to be closer to Magical Realism and aligned with the visionary poetics surrounding the female body of artists such as Leonor Fini or Leonora Carrington, the artist explored themes of fantasy, mythology and the subconscious, instilling her work with a dreamlike quality that drew on both her Italian heritage and the broader Surrealist aesthetic.

Heinz Mack at Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art with MACK FOUNDATION



Heinz Mack, *Untitled*, 2017, Glazed ceramic, burnished platinum, 40 x 49 x 5 cm. © Archive Heinz Mack

As one of the founders of the German postwar group ZERO and one of the leading representatives of kinetic art in Europe, Heinz Mack developed his own language of light and color, reflection and perception. Mack created mesmerizing sculptures and immersive installations that interact with natural light and the environment. Less known are his ceramics, which he began to make in the '90s and will be presented at the fair by Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art in collaboration with MACK FOUNDATION. Mack's ceramic sculptures often feature abstract, geometric forms, playing with textured surfaces and the interplay of light and shadow on them. Often conceived on a more intimate scale, the complex treatment of their surfaces provides them with a new sense of dynamism, movement and depth.

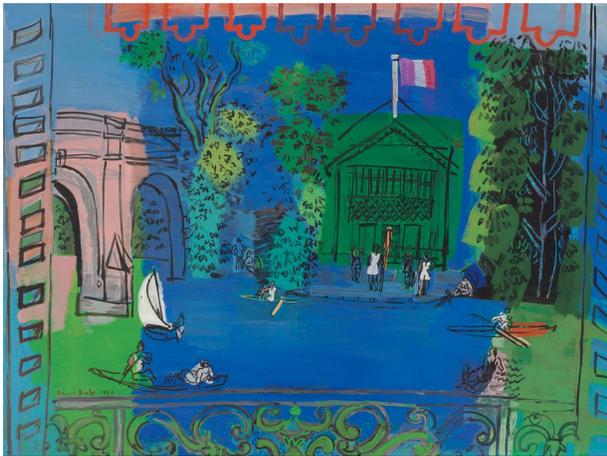
Sarah Schumann at Diane Rosenstein Gallery



Sarah Schumann, *Roma (Rome)*, 1978, Collage on paper, 17 x 24.5 inches (43 x 62.5 cm). Courtesy the Sarah Schumann Archive and Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles

Los Angeles-based Diane Rosenstein Gallery, in collaboration with the Van Ham Art Estate in Cologne, will present for the first time in New York City works conceived between 1958 and 1998 by the German figurative painter and collagist Sarah Schumann. An active pioneer in the feminist scene of the '70s, Schumann's work directly addresses the challenges of women's condition in the postwar period, directly attacking the related repressive patriarchal systems. Schumann of Brot + Rosen (Bread and Roses), a feminist group in Berlin influential in the political landscape of the time and co-curated the landmark show "Women Artists International 1877-1977" held at the nGbK (neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst) in Berlin, the first large-scale exhibitions in Germany to focus exclusively on the work of women artists. Using her collages as a tool to problematize the stereotypical representation of women in media, Schumann unveiled the dynamic of power and control of women's behavior, challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms and suggesting new forms of resistance.

Raoul Dufy at Nahmad Contemporary



Raoul Dufy, *Nogent-sur-Marne*, 1934, oil on canvas, 38.8h x 51.4w inches. © Estate of Raoul Dufy / Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York / ADAGP, Paris

New York gallery Nahmad Contemporary will dedicate a booth to the visionarily poetic work of French painter Raoul Dufy with a solo presentation of paintings and works on paper made between 1920 and 1948 at the height of his career. Emerging alongside other famous French painters in the early 20th Century, Dufy formulated his personal visual language starting from a blend of Expressionism and Impressionism absorbed in the Parisian art scene of that time. His unique “couleur-lumière” approach combined the bold and vivid colors and almost furious brushstrokes of the Fauves with the poetry of the moment and the delicacy of touch of the Impressionists in swaths of paint that captured the light. Dufy’s work often depicted lively scenes of coastal life, sailing and fashionable society, capturing the essence of modern life with a distinctive flair. The artist was heavily involved in the development of a new aesthetic in Paris during the Age d’Or, collaborating with the renowned fashion designer Paul Poiret in the 1910s, which deeply influenced his contributions to design, textiles, ceramics and murals. He is perhaps not well-known or exhibited enough in the U.S. despite his work being in the collections of MoMA, the Guggenheim, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, and this booth will provide a great opportunity to learn more about his multifaceted body of work and his contributions to modern art.

Independent 20th Century runs from September 5 through 8 at Cipriani South Street in New York.