

## The New York Times

ART REVIEW

### Going Solo Has Its Day, in a Hodgepodge of Styles

Art Dealers Association Show at Park Avenue Armory



Linda Rosier for The New York Times

Three large, differently hued prints of the same photographic image by Louise Lawler at the Metro Pictures booth.

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It would be hyperbolic to call it a revolution, but it is a significant development: Of the 72 vendors taking part in this year's [Art Dealers Association of America Art Show](#) at the Park Avenue Armory, 40 have dedicated their booths to single artists. Last year's featured 30 solo shows.

When I began reviewing New York art fairs in the late 1990s, one-person shows were rare. Most dealers displayed a variety of works reflecting the diversity of their inventories and clients. That created a hodgepodge effect, which could be exhausting for the average attention span and fascinating for visual omnivores.

The occasional solo was an oasis of focus in the midst of the pluralistic flux and a boon to critics. It is easier on the eyes and mind and usually more stimulating of thoughtful response.

You might think that putting all your money on one horse would be counterintuitive. Among the show's most spare displays is that of Metro Pictures, with just three large, differently hued prints of the same photographic image by Louise Lawler — an off-center, waist-level close-up of "[Little Dancer](#)," Edgar Degas's most famous sculpture.

Cheim & Read outdoes Metro Pictures by filling the ordinarily open fourth wall of its booth with a monumental sculpture by Jannis Kounellis, "All or Nothing at All" (2013). It consists of big steel plates separated in one place by an accumulation of antique sewing machines and in another by a stack of cobblestones. Over the tops of the steel facades you can see piles of coal.

In this approach, the booth is less like a small store and more like a three-dimensional advertisement for the dealer's business as a marketer of intellectual properties. The introduction on the exhibition's [Web site](#) notes, "ADAA dealers conceive and install significant exhibits at the fair and use it as an opportunity to advance their gallery's vision." Perhaps developed in reaction to accusations of crass commercialism overrunning art fairs, it is a sophisticated form of branding.

For the nonbuying viewer, the advantage of the variety-store type installation is that if you do not like one thing you might like the thing next to it. Acquavella's diversified booth looks junky compared with Metro Pictures', but it is more richly various in its offerings, which include a lovely small painting of a plate of oysters and a knife in browns and muted blues made by Georges Braque in 1938, and a gorgeous 1877 painting of a red-haired little girl sitting in her father's lap by Degas.

The fair has become more up-to-date than it used to be, with solo shows by established contemporaries like the photorealist painter of suburban ennui Robert Bechtle, at Gladstone, whose booth happily turns out to be opposite Fraenkel's, where there is a similarly moody selection of photographs of residential development in the American West by Robert Adams.

There is nothing here that you'd call experimental and hardly anything socially challenging or offensive to educated taste. Sean Kelly has a show of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, but not the troublemaking kind; the ones here are all luminous portraits of famous artists, including Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner and Robert Rauschenberg. The first presentation you face upon entering the show is a display of sleek, biomorphic sculptures by Jean Arp — five bronzes and a plaster. We are entering the realm of aesthetic eternity, escaping the relentless onslaught of ephemeral novelty in everyday life.

Contemporary painters like Sean Scully, whose black-stripe paintings from 1975 to 1980 are at LeLong, and John Zurier, whose wispy abstract paintings are at Peter Blum, uphold their medium as a vehicle of timeless poetics. Once-revolutionary artists now look like old masters, as in three 1973 Mao portraits by Andy Warhol, together on one wall at Mnuchin, and Skarstedt's display of works by '80s artists like Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince and George Condo.

David Zwirner, best known for promoting unruly contemporaries like Jason Rhoades and Raymond Pettibon, presents a series of exceptionally lively Milton Avery paintings, all from around 1930. Two canvases picture men in theater seats ogling strippers and chorus girls onstage. Oddest of all is one in which the foreground is filled by the upturned purple face of a man watching a woman riding a bicycle on a high-wire rendered by a fine line scratched into the darkness of a circus big top.

Generally, however, there is not a lot of levity. John Newman's recent colorful abstract sculptures resembling biomechanical life-forms from a planet with laughing gas atmosphere (at Tibor de Nagy) provide comic relief from the overall ambience of high-minded seriousness.

Few dealers have taken chances on unfamiliar talent, but Anthony Meier has with Kristen Morgan, a Los Angeles sculptor of trompe l'oeil ceramics. Even with careful examination it is hard to tell that what look like collages made of found paper material, including comic books, an old Life magazine with Picasso on

the cover and much-used Monopoly and Candyland game boards, are actually made of painted clay. Tricky yet profound, Ms. Morgin's works invite us to see through our veils of illusion.

The Art Show continues through Sunday at the Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street; [artdealers.org](http://artdealers.org).