

5 Must-See Booths at the Dallas Art Fair

BY THEA BALLARD | APRIL 15, 2016



Mernet Larsen's "*The Ground on Which We Stand (Study)*" and "*The Salad (Study)*" at Various Small Fires (Courtesy of Various Small Fires)

Perhaps it's just the result of one too many trips to various New York City locations of Dallas BBQ, but as a newcomer to the actual city of Dallas, I arrived with many preconceptions of what an [art week](#) in this North Texas metropolis would look like. Obviously, my Yankee imagination had gotten the better of me: Dallas is home to an established, thriving, and notably congenial contemporary art scene, its major institutions (the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Contemporary, Nasher Sculpture Center) offset by collector-run kunsthalls and private collections (the Power Station, and [new additions like Site 131](#) and the Karpidas Family Collection).

The centerpiece of Dallas Arts Week — which includes openings at most of the aforementioned institutions, as well as a number of satellite events — is the [Dallas Art Fair](#), which kicked off its eighth edition Thursday. Housed in two stories of the Fashion Industry Gallery, with a labyrinthine layout I found weirdly pleasant to navigate, the fair is, as one dealer pointed out to me, unusually laid back. Among the 97 galleries participating this year, there's a healthy mix of fair standards, international galleries, and locals. Offerings did feel, to an extent, tailored to a certain taste. Particularly on the fair's first floor, it was hard to ignore a general sense of feel-good decorativeness about the work dealers had chosen to bring — big, bright, occasionally less-than-tasteful geometric shapes (I particularly enjoyed watching an older bottle-blond woman tote her glass of champagne around the Honor Fraser booth; her magenta chenille jacket was a perfect match for the Sarah Cain canvases on view there).

That's not to say there's not variety to be had, however. I think of the Thursday night opening at the Power Station, which included a noisy and rather long set by [Karl Holmqvist](#) and musician Stefan Tcherepnin, during which a suit-clad Holmqvist complimented Tcherepnin's fuzzy guitar loops by banging on a stool with a drumstick and smoking a cigarette. [On some other end of the spectrum, a show at Site 131 inspired by Lee Lozano's art-world-dropout career arc, curated by Callicoon Fine Arts' Photios Giovanis, included a lovely and rigorous selection of work by the likes of Ulrike Müller, Bracha Ettinger, and Sadie Benning.](#)

In closing, I would like to note that Dallas mayor Mike Rawlings *did* open his introductory remarks at the fair by stating that he had gathered us all "to talk about my football career." So, if I may: Texas forever.