

## 5 Artists to Discover at EXPO Chicago 2016

By [Andrew M. Goldstein](#)

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Blair Thurman at Javier Peres's EXPO Chicago booth

The Midwest's premiere art fair, EXPO Chicago continues to prove a curatorial hotspot with unexpected discoveries proliferating its booths each year, and this edition appears to be a high-water mark—there are more fascinating artists to encounter here than you can shake an Andrei Cadere at. Here are some of the most exciting artists we found in it's aisles.

**NATE YOUNG**

**Monique Meloche Gallery (Chicago)**



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As the son of a theologian, Nate Young grew up around the signs and symbols of Christian devotional theory. Then, as a young adult, the artist began to study the semiotic texts of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and found a fascinating parallel between the pictographic notations of this soft science and the spiritual diagrams of his father—with both of them using the tools of logic in the search for profound meaning.

Now a 35-year-old CalArts graduate with a mean set of woodworking skills, Young has taken to crafting sculptures that employ the arrows, circles, lines, and other symbols to create quasi-religious forms (a reliquary, an altarpiece) that celebrate our attempts to make sense of the big questions in life. His work has won some well-placed fans—[Theaster Gates](#) curated him into a group survey, he had a showing under Thomas Lax at the [Studio Museum in Harlem](#), and the Walker has acquired three pieces for its collection; several solo museum shows, meanwhile, are said to be in the works.



Recently he moved from St. Paul to the Windy City to teach at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and since last year he's been showing with Monique Meloche, which did well by him at the fair: two of his \$15,000 altarpieces sold, one of them to the New York collector Beth Rudin de Woody and the other to a Chicago collector who pounced after hearing the news.

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**KIM DINGLE**  
**Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects**



When the German dealer Susanne Vielmetter first moved out to L.A. around the turn of the century, one of the most interesting artists she encountered there was Kim Dingle, a figurative painter who specialized in portraits of “little girls doing unspeakable things,” the gallerist recalls. At the time the artist had been working with Blum & Poe, but Dingle decided to drop out of the art world, put her paints aside, and open a vegetarian restaurant called Fatty’s—which became very successful.

Ten years passed, and then a little while ago Dingle showed up at Vielmetter’s gallery to announce that she had sold the restaurant, returned to the studio, and had new work to show. “I came the next day,” says Vielmetter, who was happy with what she saw. “As a figurative painter I think she ranks among the best and most interesting right now.”



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As a sign of the times, those new paintings have taken a brutal turn—they're at once more abstract and more clearly violent, even political, showing little black girls defaced or wielding handguns, occasionally shooting each other dead. Vielmetter has experience with reintroducing painters to the market (one success story was [Nicole Eisenman](#), whom she took on in 2005 when she had “no career”) and now she is putting her weight behind Dingle's resurgence.



In March, she gave half her Armory Show booth to the artist and sold 14 paintings, and now she's bringing her work to Art Basel Miami Beach, with a major solo show planned at the gallery next fall. In an effort to grease the wheels, Vielmetter is keeping Dingle's prices the same as before she pulled her disappearing act, adjusted for inflation.

**JAMES CROSBY**  
**Team Gallery (New York)**



A while back, on a trip to L.A. to check on his gallery's quirky Venice Beach outpost, [the dealer José Freire](#) took a moment to swing by [UCLA's MFA program](#) and do a half-dozen studio visits. One of these visits surprised him, for two reasons. For one thing, the artist, James Crosby, was in his 40s—older than your typical starry-eyed art student. For another thing, his work was searingly powerful, far more mature than Freire had expected.

Several pieces of Crosby's were built on a foundation of research into Garrett Morgan, a self-made African-American entrepreneur and inventor who became a millionaire in the early 1900s by creating hair-straighteners, skin-lighteners, and other products intended to help black consumers assimilate into white society. He also made headlines in 1916 by rescuing tunnel workers from a fire by inventing a protective hood

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equipped with long hoses that dragged across the floor, allowing him to breathe in air from beneath the rising smoke.

Following Eric Garner's death, this exploit inspired one piece that Freire saw in the UCLA studio: a row of all-white hoods displayed on a long white hat rack, with the politically piquant title *The Garrett Morgan Safety Hood Allowing the Wearer to Breathe in a Hostile Environment* (2015). It was enough for the dealer to sign Crosby—who had previously worked for DLX Skateboards—to his program this June, giving him a display at Art Basel to seal the deal and now preparing a first solo show at his flagship SoHo space in November. The hood sculpture, meanwhile, was the centerpiece of Team's EXPO booth, carrying a price tag of \$30,000.

**YUKULTJI NAPANGATI**  
**Salon 94 (New York)**



The extraordinary story of the Australian aboriginal artist Warlimpirnga Tjapaltjarri is by now fairly well known. In the 1980s, he and eight family members were discovered in a remote desert, living off the land in accordance with the ancient traditions of their Pintupi tribe—even though everyone else in their tribe had long before been resettled onto reservations. Believed to be the last undisturbed Australian indigenous peoples, they were dubbed the Pintupi Nine, and, of course, swiftly resettled to a community outside of Alice Springs.

There, the family learned to adapt a form of sacral painting that they once did on sand, rocks, and their bodies to canvas, and Tjapaltjarri became a star when his sensational canvases—abstract to Western eyes, but actually relating ancestral myths—made their way into dOCUMENTA in 2012. When his work was shown at Salon 94 a year ago, it won fulsome admiration from the *New York Times*, which compared their optically dynamic dots and lines to [Bridget Riley](#)'s paintings, “except more so.”

But the plot thickens. A few months ago, when Salon 94's Alissa Friedman traveled by airliner and prop plane to visit Tjapaltjarri, she found upon arrival that he had gone out on a walkabout, and wasn't expected back anytime soon. Looking around the encampment, she found a circle of women who were mourning someone who had been murdered; in this circle, the women were painting their spiritual language of song cycles onto canvases, beautifully.

It turned out that, while men had been the exclusive artists in the desert, settlement life had opened the ritual up to women too, with all of the resulting artworks being sold for funds to support the community. One of these women was Yukultji Napangati, the youngest sister of Tjapaltjarri (now in her 40s), and the most accomplished of the group.

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Relieved that her trip hadn't been in vain, Friedman acquired several of her canvases, which are now on display at EXPO for \$30,000 (half the price of her more famous brother, and in the same three-color style). Now, if interest proves enthusiastic, Napangati might get a gallery show too.

**BLAIR THURMAN**  
**Javier Peres (Berlin)**



A New Orleans-born artist now in his fifth decade, Blair Thurman used to rumble through New York City's cool '90s art scene as part of a macho trio with [Steven Parrino](#) and [John Armleder](#), gaining some attention—mainly from Europeans—for his paintings that delighted in America's high-octane car culture. Riffing on wheels, racetracks, and automotive gear, the works were inspired by both California's Finish Fetish and the conceptualism of artists like [Sol LeWitt](#) and [Nam June Paik](#), who he knew from boyhood when they would hang out with his mom, a curator at the [ICA Boston](#).

In the years since, Parrino tragically died in a motorcycle accident, Armleder's career gained a second wind, and Thurman moved upstate to Hudson. Now he's enjoying a major resurgence as well. In 2014 he received a solo show at the Madison Avenue headquarters of the Gagosian empire (which works with the Parrino estate as well), and he's now also had solo outings in Paris (with Galerie Frank Elbaz), Berlin (with Peres), and London ([Almine Rech](#)). Karma also published a covetable monograph, and [earlier this year he acquired a church in Hudson](#) and turned it into a studio complex.

Now, at EXPO, Thurman has taken over Peres's entire booth, outfitting it with bright lights of the kind you find in a NASCAR spray booth so technicians can see every sculptural line and curve of the automobile. One could almost hear the revving motors. The works were priced at \$35,000 to \$60,000.

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