

## 8 of the Best Artworks at EXPO Chicago 2014

By Andrew M. Goldstein  
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The third edition of EXPO Chicago, the midwest culture hub's reincarnated art fair, returned to the city this week with a strong gallery roster, healthy attendance, and what seemed to be a newly vigorous sense of purpose. A common refrain among dealers—many of whom stoically stuck through the first two editions in hopes it would catch on—was that the fair had "turned a corner," with the heartland's hoped-for collectors, curators, and students showing up in force, and sales ringing up in both the middle and high ranges. Intriguingly, a number of dealers also brought work by artists that marked turning points in their careers, either by evolving previous processes or bringing attention to oeuvres too long unheralded. Here, below, is a roundup of a few of the best artworks on view in the fair.



SHEREE HOVSEPIAN  
*Honey Trap* (2014)  
Monique Meloche  
\$8,500

The Iranian-born artist Sheree Hovsepian has been working with photograms, producing abstract images—such as in her "Haptic Wonders" series—that seem to exist, palpably, in real space. In her presentation at Monique Meloche's booth, Hovsepian has one-upped this illusionistic effect by bringing her work into three dimensions, displaying a series of photograms alongside several attenuated, Giacometti-esque sculptures (cast in the lost-wax technique) and this beguiling hybrid: an accumulation of multiple gestures, it consists of a digital photograph she took of a pin-pricked sheet she placed over her studio window, then drew upon with graphite, then tacked up with a

waning photogram, then finally embellished with a constellation of string wrapped taut around nails. It suggests a breakthrough for the artist, who recently had a survey at Toronto's Gallery 44, Centre for Contemporary Photography.

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JULES OLITSKI  
*Untitled* (1964)  
Honor Fraser  
\$700,000

In a market moment obsessed with the often-spurious aesthetic innovations of its youngest artists, Honor Fraser's booth provided a welcome measure of historical perspective, showing paintings by fresh-faced stars (bent canvases by Kaz Oshiro, KAWS's latest abstractions, a big Sarah Cain) alongside some pretty cutting-edge compositions that turned out to be by—shocker—a bunch of supposedly tame midcentury names. The older canvases on view were specifically by the Washington Color School artists, now remembered mostly for their dyed-canvas technique and status as an armament in Clement Greenberg's about-face on Abstract Expressionism, and included revelatory shaped paintings by Kenneth Noland, an almost-not-there Helen Frankenthaler, and this megawatt Jules Olitski. While the artist's work from this era tends to have condition issues, the abstraction—with its hint of figuration and graphical suggestion of a question mark—looks like it could have been made yesterday, in every way.



DIANE SIMPSON  
*Robe* (1986)  
Corbett vs. Dempsey  
\$30,000

Sharing a booth at the fair with New York's David Nolan Gallery, the Chicago-art-scene boosters Corbett vs. Dempsey brought as their centerpiece this revelation of a sculpture by Diane Simpson, a Windy City artist in her 70s who, as Jim Dempsey puts it, "is still totally kicking ass today." Made from MDF board worked over with oil stain and colored pencil, the piece is one of Simpson's trademark riffs on fashion, elevating a woman's robe to imperious stature, with a regal train. The artist, whose work is both in dialogue with and enigmatically outside of the Pop tradition, always starts with drawings and then builds them into sculptures, which carries over into the final piece a satisfying 2-D quality—as if Simpson were drawing in space, like the disembodied cartoonist's hand in a Chuck Jones short. Long out of the limelight, the artist is currently undergoing a late-career ascent, which started with JTT's stellar solo show in 2013 and continued this summer with her inclusion in group shows at Anton Kern and Monique Meloche.

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HUGH SCOTT-DOUGLAS

From the "Economist" and "Heavy Images" series (both 2014)

Jessica Silverman Gallery

\$80,000 for the painting, \$10,000 for the sculpture

Much-buzzed as a young artist to watch, the twentysomething Hugh Scott-Douglas makes work that digs into the various ways visual information gets transferred from one medium to another, and the conceptual hiccups that arise along the way. San Francisco's Jessica Silverman is currently showing three new bodies of his work at her gallery, and two are represented at the fair: the painting is from the

"*Economist*" series, in which he lifts illustrations from the magazine (which famously doesn't provide bylines for its articles or images) by brushing them with clear acrylic gel, peeling the gel off, then scanning it and blowing it up for an abstracted reverse image; the sculpture is from his "Heavy Images" series, in which he sources old billboard advertisements over the web, rolls them up, and pairs them with coffin-like shipping crates as a commentary on that classic highway-friendly medium's ungainly obsolescence in the age of the digital file and LED sign.



BARBARA KASTEN

*Untitled* (1977)

Bortolami

\$35,000

With a retrospective approaching at the ICA Philadelphia next year, the conceptual photographer Barbara Kasten was going through her storage units when she came across this sculpture from 1977, the period right before she began making her well-known Polaroids of

staged geometric environments in her studio. Gripping in its complexity, it's composed of large-scale photographic paper that she imprinted with square photograms (most likely made with Plexi, a staple of her later work) then stretched, still wet, over a canvas screen and then drew atop. The sculpture bristles with dimensionality, from the zig-zag of the screen to the illusion of the photograms (which, popping into space, recall Duchamp's *Tu M'* of 1918), and speaks powerfully of the influence Kasten would later exert on younger artists like Liz Deschenes and John Houk.



JUDY LEGERWOOD

*Always Already* (2013)

Rhona Hoffman Gallery

\$25,000

A Chicago artist who teaches at Northwestern University, Judy Legerwood has for much of her career made paintings that play with a basic quatrefoil floral motif, laying them down in patterned rows or focusing on them solo to explore how the variations interact with architectural space. This canvas, from last year, constitutes a leap

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forward in her work through simply abstracting the flower shape into something more tenuously allusive, with melodic colors that emit copious visual energy. Another new direction in her work can be seen in EXPO Chicago's brochures, posters, and other marketing materials, which pulled imagery from another new body of the artist's work that she made when she was commissioned by a Florida tourism association to create a series of paintings based on Robert Rauschenberg's fabled art compound on Captiva.



SCOTT REEDER  
*Landlord Painting* (2014)  
Kavi Gupta Gallery  
\$16,000

The Detroit artist Scott Reeder is pretty hilarious, making paintings that send up the idea of Painting with slapstick gusto—and yet, at the same time, work as really, really good paintings. Previous examples include his abstracted compositions that he made by putting dried pasta on canvas, spray-painting it, then shaking off the noodles; his word paintings (*Idea Jail*) that sold like hotcakes at Lisa Cooley Gallery last year; and his list paintings ("New Kinds of Music" included "self-help hop" and "computerized soul"). This one, from his new "Landlord Painting" series, was inspired by the way that landlords use roller brushes to hastily repaint an apartment's walls between tenants, and, done in candy-colored layers that hypnotically bleed into one another, it's completely beautiful. Follow him on Instagram as @professoroops for more visual fun.



FRANZ WEST  
*Trapped by Red Goats and Afterwards...* (1987)  
David Zwirner Gallery  
\$100,000

Best known for non-furniture, playful public sculptures, and idiosyncratic "Passtucke"—interactive sculptures meant to be work or otherwise engaged with by viewers—the late Austrian artist Franz West also created collages throughout his career, using them as a kind of sketchpad for shaping his ideas. This work from 1987, composed of three advertisements West took from girlie magazines and then painted on, installed in a lumpy white frame of his own devising, is representative of this strain of his work: located in strange, anonymous spaces, the pornographic figures take on an unexpected psychological dimension. An artist who is close to the gallery's history, West showed with Zwirner when he first opened, though he eventually moved to Gagosian, which represents his estate today. The original relationship still pays dividends, however: a show of West's work is planned at Zwirner this November, and this collage sold to a Chicago collector at the fair.

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ROBERT GOBER  
*Untitled* (2007)  
Matthew Marks  
\$2 million

With his upcoming career retrospective at MoMA in the running for the most-anticipated exhibition of the fall—and he's up against Matisse and Picasso to boot—Robert Gober is primed to go from an acquired taste to a surreal superstar. This sculpture, on display at Matthew Marks's booth, is a greatest-hits encapsulation of the artist's unique preoccupations: structured around the armature of a stool (modeled after the one he uses in his studio, and cast in faux-bois aluminum), it's fronted by a fleshily convincing pair of disembodied breasts (hand-modeled in beeswax) and shelters within a bird's nest (painstakingly built from twigs) holding three blue robin's eggs (resin). Robins, one should note, are an element of Catholic iconography, and a reference to the religious upbringing that caused him to anguish over his homosexuality—with the breasts and eggs standing for both sexual identity and reproduction. A knockout Gober, it sold to a Chicago collector.

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