

EXPO CHICAGO

Special Report

For its second edition under Frieze's ownership, the Windy City's art fair aims to extend its international impact, including deepening ties with Korean galleries. By **Osman Can Yerebakan**

Expo Chicago connects the Midwest to the global art market

MORE THAN 170 GALLERIES WILL TAKE PART IN THIS MONTH'S EXPO CHICAGO FAIR (24-27 APRIL)—ITS SECOND EDITION SINCE IT WAS ACQUIRED BY FRIEZE IN THE SUMMER OF 2023. The exhibitors hail from 93 cities spanning 36 countries, reflecting the global reach of the fair's new ownership and bringing an international cohort of galleries into dialogue with its longstanding Midwestern network of artists, dealers and collectors.

"In the last year-and-a-half, we have been able to see the benefits of Frieze's global network with access to expanded resources and staff," Tony Karman, the fair's president and director, tells *The Art Newspaper*. He sees the acquisition's outcome as "nothing but positive", adding that it is "galvanising the national collectors' outreach to the Midwest and bringing fresh and refined eyes to the fair's programme".

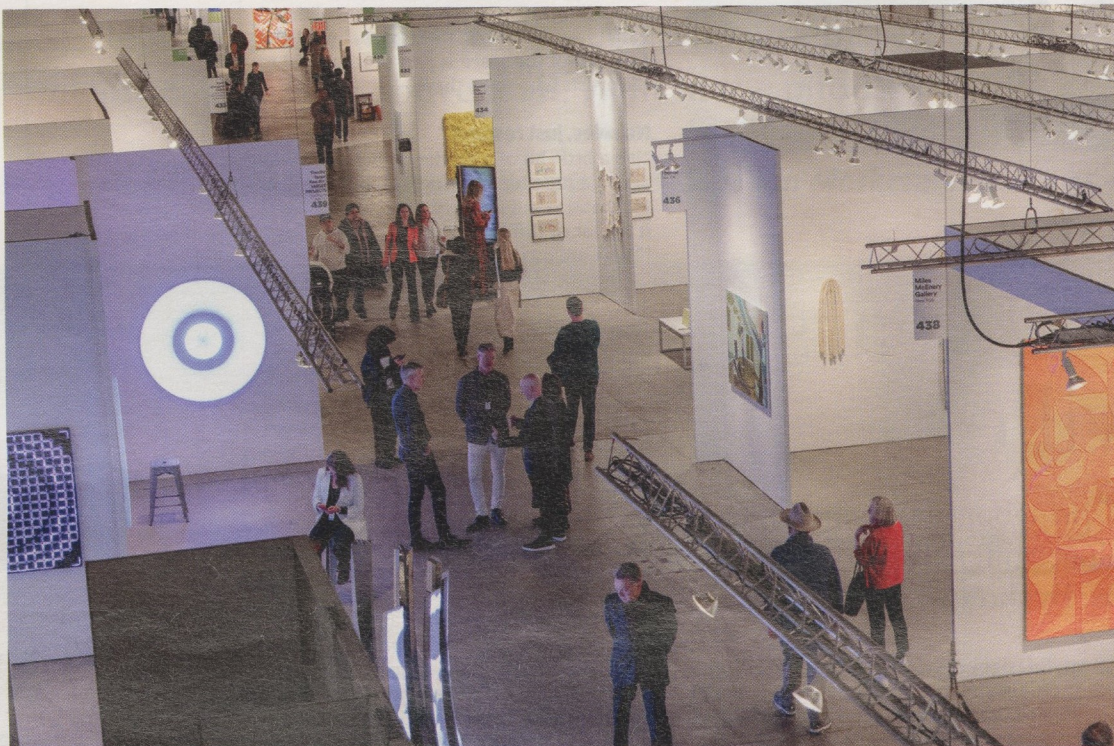
There are 50 new exhibitors this year, many of them hailing from the Americas and Europe, including the New York-headquartered veterans Lehmann Maupin and Two Palms; ILY2 from Portland, Oregon; the Pittsburgh-based gallery April April; the Belo Horizonte-based gallery Mitre; Megan Mulrooney gallery from Los Angeles; and Alberta Pane, which has spaces in Paris and Venice.

The clearest sign of Expo Chicago's increasingly global reach under Frieze is its new partnership with the Galleries Association of Korea, which is sponsoring participation by 20 galleries from South Korea. The initiative is backed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korea Arts Management Service, expanding on the dialogues initiated by Frieze Seoul and the concurrent Korean fair Kiaf. The Chicago-bound Korean galleries, all from Seoul except the Busan-based Lee & Bae, include Gallery Baton, Bhak, Gana Art, Keumsan Gallery, Sun Gallery, One and J. Gallery, PYO Gallery and 313 Art Project.

Lee & Bae's stand at Navy Pier will consist of a miniature group exhibition,

"International museum curators have made Chicago their April destination"

VALERIE CARBERRY
Partner, Gray gallery



A new partnership, backed by South Korea's ministry of culture, will bring 20 galleries from the country to Expo Chicago

From *Blindness to Awareness*, showcasing mixed-media works by Jinwook Yeom, Hyojin Park, atelierJAK, Lee Sangmin and Janghee Jang. The Wellside Gallery, one of Seoul's oldest Modern and contemporary art galleries, will celebrate some of the nation's best known artists, including Park Seo-Bo, Lee Ufan and Yun Hyongkeun. In addition to reflecting Chicago's significant Korean community, Karman points to the history of Korean galleries participating in the fair's predecessor, Art Chicago, in the 1980s and 90s as evidence of the long-running connection.

True to Midwestern roots

Even amid this international influx, Karman says that the fair's identity as a regional force is an "important differentiator", adding: "Local is not something to run from."

The veteran Chicagoan dealer Rhona Hoffman—who will shutter her West Town space next month and shift to a more nomadic programme—is optimistic about Frieze strengthening the fair. "Collectors from many states and other countries have been buying from Expo for decades, but now that Frieze owns the fair I believe the fair will get certainly more international," she

says. Her gallery's stand will feature new paintings by the Chicagoan artist Amanda Williams, two cloud works by Spencer Finch and mixed-media works by Derrick Adams and Jacob Hashimoto.

Another local powerhouse gallery, Gray (which also has a space in New York), is returning to Expo Chicago for the first time since 2022. "International museum curators have made Chicago their April destination for several years now, with the excellent programming and conversations at the fair being a powerful draw," says Valerie Carberry, a partner at the gallery.

Gray is one of the eight galleries participating in Contrast, a new curated sector organised by Lauren Hayes, the head curator of Governors Island Arts in New York. The new sector, according to Karman, "heralds artistic voices and provokes conversation in contrasts in culture". Gray's stand will feature photographs by the Chicagoan artists Bob Crawford, Roy Lewis and K. Kofi Moyo that document the 1977 pan-African festival Festac in Lagos. The presentation will blur the boundary between documentary and fine art photography, featuring colourful and black-and-white images of the month-long celebration.

Americas converge

Galleries from New York make up a large portion of out-of-town exhibitors, among them Bienvenu Steinberg & C, Eric Firestone Gallery and David Nolan Gallery. The Brazilian gallery Nara Roesler, which has locations in New York, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, is participating for the fifth time.

"The strong network of collectors from Chicago and the Midwest, combined with the solid relationships Tony Karman has built with local institutions and cultural organisations, never ceases to impress us," says Patricia Pericas, a senior director at Nara Roesler who also serves on the fair's selection committee. The gallery is devoting its stand to an inter-generational pairing of two Brazilian artists: Sergio Sister, a septuagenarian painter whose bold and often geometric compositions reflect trauma from the period of Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-85); and Thiago Barbalho, an artist in his early 40s who employs an extremely dense Pop art approach to explore identity.

The fair's Exposure sector, organised for the second time by Rosario Güiraldes,

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DCASE has lost 25% of its staff since Clineé Hedspeth took over last year

DCASE hits crisis point

CHICAGO'S DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS (DCASE) IS IN DISARRAY. At least 18 staff members—around 25% of the department—have left since Mayor Brandon Johnson appointed a former legislative aide, Clineé Hedspeth, to replace ousted cultural commissioner Erin Harkey last year.

With so many departures, there is growing concern that the turmoil is affecting DCASE's ability to fulfil its mission of providing arts programming throughout the city, along with funding and professional development for artists and organisations. At least four formal complaints have been filed against Hedspeth that include, among others, allegations of bullying. There have been only two all-staff meetings since the commissioner took charge last year, and one was a virtual meeting where Hedspeth only spoke for a few minutes.

"There has been no clear communication or strategy regarding the funding crisis we face," says one current DCASE staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "We are left without guidance on how to navigate this challenge, and that lack of direction is deeply concerning for our staff, community partners and cultural leaders."

The situation at DCASE has reached such a crisis point that leaders in the arts community are speaking out. "It is critical to honour the unwavering commitment of the staff who are there now," says Angelique Power, who spent decades working in the arts in Chicago and now leads a foundation in Detroit. "These are the people who continue to do the hard work each day, despite the uncertainty, turbulence and lack of clear direction caused by the current leadership."

A department spokesperson says they "are committed to filling departmental vacancies and have successfully brought in new talent as positions are posted. Our department continues to operate at a high level and remains intensely devoted to the Chicago arts and culture community."

Ruth Lopez

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Christina Fernandez: Multiple Exposures

MARCH 20 — AUGUST 3, 2025

Image credit: Christina Fernandez, *Lavanderia #1*, 2002. Archival pigment print. From the series *Lavanderia*. Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Ralph M. Parsons Fund. This exhibition was made possible by generous grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Teiger Foundation, Illinois Arts Council, and DePaul Vincentian Endowment Fund.

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Sérgio Sister's *Untitled* (1967) features on Brazilian gallery Nara Roesler's stand

the Walker Art Center's curator of visual arts, features a strong contingent of Latin American dealers and artists among its solo and two-artist stands by galleries no older than a decade. The Miami-born artist Gabriel Martinez, for example, will show his multi-exposed mirror-ball photographs and contact printing on paper negatives about queer nightlife (featured in his 2023 show at Chicago's Leather Archives and Museum) on Bill Arning Exhibitions' stand.

For collectors whose tastes tend toward earlier eras, Les Enluminures – a dealer in Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts that has locations in Chicago, New York and Paris – is participating in Expo Chicago for the second time. "With the primacy of contemporary art in the global art market, we are delighted to offer visitors the opportunity to discover something new," says Tomas Borchert, an associate art director at the gallery. Les Enluminures will be showing *Roman de la Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's illuminated manuscript from the second half of the 14th century.

Karman admits that there are challenging forces in the art market, from the global slowdown of the past two years to the general climate of uncertainty in the US economy amid mounting trade wars and fears of a recession. Also hanging over Expo Chicago is the prospect of Frieze changing hands; Endeavor, the entertainment conglomerate that owns the art fair and media company, has been exploring its potential sale since last autumn. Even so, Karman expresses optimism about being a part of the Frieze family, pointing to the recent success of Frieze Los Angeles in February as proof of the market's resilience. "Expo touches on both similar and different collectors and institutions, some of which are located in the centre of America, and represents the region in many ways," he says.