

The New York Times

Daunted by the Sprawling Armory Show? Try These 13 Certified Winners.

With its crowd-pleasers and safe bets, this big trade show tones it down for an uncertain art market. Our critics sampled the global art scene for these discoveries.



From ACA Galleries, Doowon Lee's *Moonlit Night: Tiger and Frog*, 2025, mixed media on wool. Photo by Gus Aronson for The New York Times.

By Will Heinrich and Walker Mimms | Sept. 4, 2025

September is busy for the art world in New York. Hometown galleries open their most important shows, and a cluster of fairs bring together collectors and galleries from around the world. The Armory Show, which gathers more than 200 exhibitors from 35 countries at the Javits Center, is the largest, and it remains an unparalleled opportunity to sample the global art scene.

But while dealers and artists alike may believe in art for art's sake, they also have to make it work as a business. And that business, at the moment, is wobbly. Though it remains enormous, this year's Armory fair, the second since its acquisition by Frieze, is slightly smaller than last

year's, and it's really anyone's guess whether collectors will buy. So it's no surprise that most of the galleries approached this year's Armory conservatively, reaching for brightly colored, easily approachable art in well-worn 20th-century genres that will translate to Instagram. (There are also many dead artists, whose markets and perch on art history may seem more reliable.)

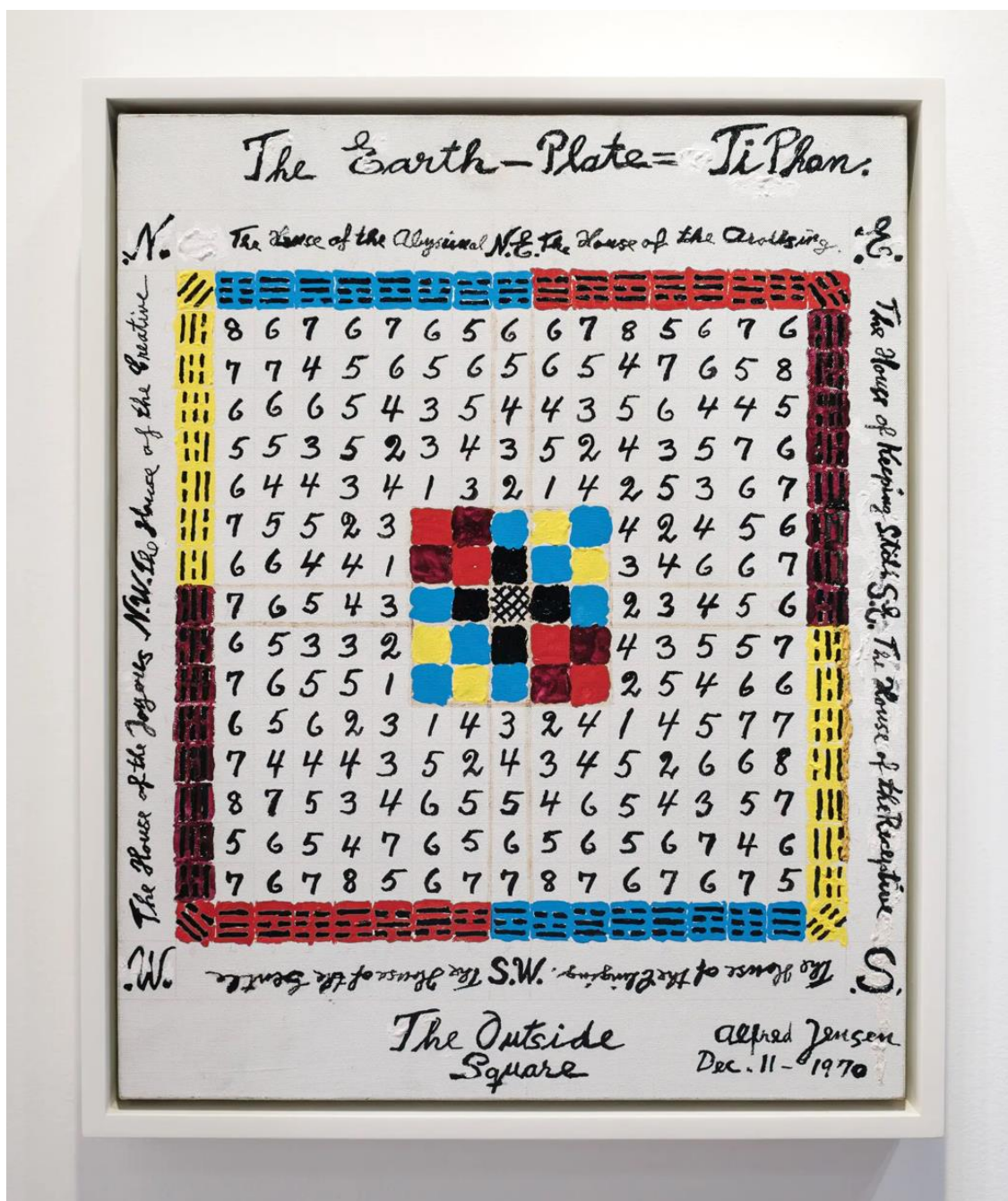
Along with several special sections, including Focus, curated by Jessica Bell Brown to highlight artists from the American South, there are enough fine artworks here to keep you occupied for hours. Eric Firestone (416) has a particularly strong group show; there's an exquisite Raymond Saunders painting at Andrew Kreps Gallery (104); and the array of Gee's Bend quilts and monumental Thornton Dial installations in the Platform section is a fair unto itself.

The real problem is the sheer size of the place. It's almost impossible not to feel overwhelmed. So Walker Mimms and I went in early and chose 13 exceptional booths to look for. Your experience will differ, but it's enough to get you started.

Goya Contemporary Gallery (426)



Alfred Jensen, *9 Precession Years of 260 Days*, 1976.
Photo by Gus Aronson for The New York Times.



Alfred Jensen, *The Outside Square, The Earth Plate*, 1970.
Photo by Gus Aronson for The New York Times.

In rug-like concentric checkerboards and paintings of geometric pinwheel meander, the Guatemalan artist Alfred Jensen (1903-81) applies loud Op-Arty colors apparently directly from the tube, lining up gooey smooches of paint that, collectively, sort of vibrate as you approach them on canvas. If Jensen has a logic — as the sudoku-like numbers inside the grid of “The Outside Square, The Earth Plate” (1970) would suggest he does — then it is clownier than the exercises by Sol Le Witt that art-loving viewers might be reminded of here. Jensen is overdue for a retrospective.