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Armory—the personal touch prevails by Susan Yung



Art fair fever grips the city this weekend. In addition to the smaller Pulse, Scope, and Bridge fairs, there is the mega [Armory Show](#), which has added modern art to its contemporary focus, with more than 250 exhibitors. The Armory is located on two piers this year, with 94 (at 53rd St. on the Hudson) housing a majority of the contemporary galleries, and 92 modern work. The piers are connected by a soaring temporary staircase that holds 20 people, adding an element of daredevilry to things.

There are several tactics for galleries to follow. The most common is to bring a sampling of the gallery's artists, generally mixing known names with unknowns. Going one step further, you can curate your booth along a unifying theme, by color or concept. Still another, and by far the most successful for me, is to go with one artist in an installation.

A standout is [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#)'s booth, #951 on Pier 94. For the past several years, they have featured one artist at the Armory, including large installation work (remember Mierle Ukeles' mirrored sanitation truck? if you saw it, you do). This year's work is by performance artist Christine Hill, entitled *The Volksboutique Armory Apothecary*. It is not only an apothecary in the old fashioned style of those found in Europe, but Hill staffs the counter to hear of your maladies and administer advice—"which path to travel, which salve to apply, which wisdom to seek."

The piece succeeds in this context on many levels. Hill is there to fill prescriptions—engaging viewers in transactions, raising issues of connectivity, subservience, obligation. (Many of her works concern commerce or providing service.) The prices suit the times—a "menu" of services she renders includes \$20 for a remedy script or a recipe script; \$25 for a remedy packet of herbs. All three are \$50. Feldman's booth is centrally located, adjacent to a lounge so it's more like a welcoming corner lot than a storefront. The installation's design—lemon yellow and olive green walls covered with lively signage—invites people in. The concept is many-layered, yet simple enough to immediately engage passersby.

There are several other memorable booths that feature one artist or a clearly cohesive installation: at Greengrassi, Allen Ruppensburg's propaganda-like posters that viewers can move around; John Connelly Presents, with Kent Henricksen's eerily appealing hooded spirits; Baronian Francey, with a variety of punchy, pop-colored artwork, including net-bound balloons; Anton Henning's old-fashioned "Pink Period" installation by Van Orsouw Gallery. On Pier 92, the Starns are prominently featured by Wetterling Gallery; Spanierman has an excellent mini Burgoyne Diller survey. And Pier 92 yields some individual treasures by artists such as Joan Mitchell, Milton Resnick, Giorgio Morandi, Max Beckmann, and Milton Avery. An unexpected treat was the lounge at 94 with an elaborate installation by Richard Dupont, which you can peruse while you have a much-needed espresso.



Photo: Christine Hill at Feldman Gallery's booth