

ART

SEATTLE ART FAIR 2017 IS BUILT FOR COMFORT, NOT FOR SPEED, AND IT'S SPLENDID



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Yesterday, visitors to the **Seattle Art Fair's** collector's tours and beneficiary preview got the first look at the work on display. Well, some were able to see more work than others. With such a critical mass of culture fiends and glitterati, it was hard to really focus on the work, but now we have all weekend to really soak it in.

And I have to hand it to them: The producers of this year's fair have made some very smart, much needed changes to the layout. In the past, we have seen a "shopping mall" style layout: long corridors lined with booths that often feel like cubicles. I have opined in the past that this is particularly problematic in Seattle, which can be a little timid and inexperienced when it comes to art. People need to be able to move more freely in and out.

This year, the art fair's layout feels much more fluid and porous. It's much easier to rove in and out, as one sees at other fairs, such as the Armory Show. You sometimes can't tell where one booth ends and another begins without looking at the signage overhead. That's great news for visitors, who want to be at ease as they look at the art. And hopefully it will be great news for the gallerists, too. When people can more easily fall in love with a work, they are more likely to take it home, after all.

Vanguard Seattle will be publishing small guides for specific experiences all weekend. We certainly didn't see it all last night, but here are a few highlights to check out.

Fahamu Pecou and Fela Kuti at BACKSLASH Gallery (Booth A20)

I was already happy to see that **BACKSLASH Gallery** would be bringing more **Fahamu Pecou** to Seattle Art Fair after featuring the artist last year. They have large, gorgeous paintings by Pecou, who was inspired for this work by musician **Fela Kuti**. The gallery will be playing Kuti's work in the booth all weekend, so visitors can connect the painting with the music as it was intended.



"Authority Stealing," by Fahamu Pecou. Image courtesy of BACKSLASH.

Mary Ann Peters' Elegiac Installation *the world is a garden, the walls are the state*

A few months back, artist **Mary Ann Peters** created a haunting installation at **James Harris Gallery**. By using a cardboard screen of very fine hexagonal mesh, Peters obscured an installation of painted synthetic flowers. You have to step far back to see it properly, and in the small space at the gallery, things were always slightly obscured by the screen's strange, optical effects. The new iteration, *the world is a garden, the walls are the state*, at Seattle Art Fair is even more complete. Seen from afar, the flowery sculpture seems to be contained in a dim scrim, but as you approach, it seems to submerge under muddy water.

This can be a metaphor for many things. The title, taken from a passage by 14th-century North African Arab historian Ibn Kaldun, links it to Peters' ongoing series, *impossible monuments*. Like her three other installations in this series at Oxbow in the last year, the work is a meditation on migration histories, refugee narratives, and exile. Among the more frenzied movement of the fair, *the world is a garden* is a gorgeous point of meditation and reflection on profound events beyond the walls of the event center, and within us.

The Kids at Play at See Saw by Civilization

Each year, Seattle Art Fair sets aside a space for kids to explore their creative side. This year, local design practice **Civilization** has come up with the creative space **See Saw**. Five design principles form the core of it: scale, color, type, symbols, and structure. Each has an activity associated with it, which allows kids and youths to experiment with how these principles work. For the adults, there is a bit of history, too, with a single designer/artist highlighted in association with each principle.

I heard one gripe (from a person with no children) that it wasn't as glitzy as past activities. Maybe so, but I think it's actually more rewarding and nourishing for young minds. And those young minds were already eating it up last night. Whether you have kids or not, stop by. It's worth the time...like so much else at the fair this year.

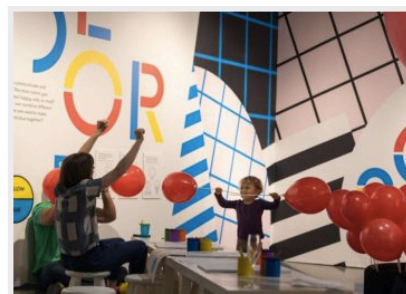


Photo courtesy of Seattle Art Fair.

Seattle Art Fair 2017 runs through Sunday, August 6. Get tickets at the door or online.