

Need a Bird Cage Shaped Like the U.S. Capitol? Try the Winter Show

The storied arts and antiques fair at the Park Avenue Armory has something for every taste. Our critic's choice of booths to get you started.



By Will Heinrich

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As it has done every year for the past seven straight decades, the Winter Show, the venerable arts and antiques fair, which benefits the East Side House Settlement in the Bronx, has brought together an incredible range of objects, most of those years under the capacious roof of the Park Avenue Armory. A concert piano with a curved keyboard, designed by the architect Rafael Viñoly and built by Chris Maene. (**Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, LLC, C1**). A couple of Bonnards for the foyer (**Jill Newhouse Gallery, A7**). A contemporary painter responding to Italian old masters (**Robert Simon Fine Art, C10**). A red, white and blue Centennial-year bird cage in the shape of the U.S. Capitol (**Focus: Americana**, curated by Alexandra Kirtley of the Philadelphia Museum of Art). What about a butter dish shaped like a bundle of asparagus (**Michele Beiny, D1**)? Or first editions of Edmund Spenser's "The Faerie Queene" and "Leaves of Grass" (**Peter Harrington, C12**)?

That last item alone made it hard for me to leave. The title of the ledger-size Walt Whitman volume, deeply embossed in gold on green leather, includes decorative roots and moss, and some long-ago owner used a pencil to mark out significant passages like "And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,/ No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before."

With 76 exhibitors, from Japanese ceramics to Native American art and photographs — here are some booths to use as your anchor.



Glass Past (A5)



“Pulegose cactus” (1939) by Flavio Poli, at left, and “Gazelle Sculpture” (1930), by Guido Balsamo Stella, at Glass Past. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

The dealers Jim Oliveira and Sara Blumberg specialize in 19th and 20th-century Italian glass, and among the treasures they’ve brought here is one clear, balloon-animal-like Murano gazelle that’s arguably either the most hideous piece in the entire fair or the most exquisite, depending on your taste. But this year Oliveira also brought selections from his personal collection of 19th-century glass Americana, including gorgeous amber “globs,” or swirly round vessels, and ornate little bottles called scroll casks in a number of honey amber shades unique to Ohio. (What were all these bottles for? Whiskey, obviously.)

Les Enluminures (A6)



Posy ring inscribed with the words “Rather Deathe Then False of Fayte,” 17th-18th century at Les Enluminures. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

This gallery shines its special light on works from the Renaissance and Medieval eras, but there’s plenty to explore even if you’re not a collector. Like a rare English men’s collar in partially gilt silver. The illuminated manuscript “Hours of LeGoux de la Berchère?” Reground yourself, if needed, with a homely gold “posy ring” inscribed around the inside with a reassuring motto like “I am but a token,” “I live in hope,” or “Rather Deathe Then False of Fayte.”

Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts (B5)



Center, a family portrait, circa 1608, by an “anonymous master” of Delft at Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts. Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

There’s something irresistibly contemporary about this booth’s centerpiece, a family portrait, circa 1608, by an “anonymous master” of Delft. The mother’s face is a little mask-like, but the father, with his perfectly cocked hat, is vivid, and both of them have a preening, faux-candid quality that could have been lifted from Instagram. (If there were a photo caption, it might read, “Don’t mind the gold seashell goblet. That’s just how we roll.”) It’s interesting to compare them to the family in the nearby work by Herman Meindertsz Doncker. Painted only a few years later, Doncker’s family look like refugees from the Middle Ages.

Thomas Heneage Art Books (B6)



A chamber pot cover, in the shape of a book, made for Louis XIV's son the Grand Dauphin, at Thomas Heneage Art Books. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Most notable among this London dealer's antique books is a volume in full red Morocco gilt. On its spine fleurs-de-lis alternate with gamboling dolphins, while its cover bears the arms of Louis XIV's heir, the Grand Dauphin. But there's nothing inside to read. Unfolding into a discreet box with a red leather seat on top, it would have concealed a tin or ceramic chamber pot, no longer extant, for the Dauphin's sons. Its title is an inspired, if puerile, political joke about the perennial enemy of the deeply Catholic king of France: "Histoire Naturelle des Pays Bas" could translate both as "History of the Netherlands" and "History of the nether regions."

John Szoke Gallery (B11)



Pablo Picasso's "La Minotaure," 1935 at John Szoke. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

This exhibition of prints by Edvard Munch and Pablo Picasso is pretty much without flaw. Munch wrings an amazing range of tones and textures out of simple black and white, particularly when he surrounds a face, or figure at a piano, with expanses of unbroken ink. As for Picasso, look for his famously overdetermined meditation on the mythological underpinnings of life when it includes both wife and mistress, "La Minotaure," 1935. Coming upon the sculptured, skeletal, bemused-looking goat in 1952's "La Chèvre," around the corner, may lead you to hope that wisdom sometimes comes with age.

Didier Ltd (D6)

Bottom, Giampaolo Babetto constructed a necklace of hinged golden cubes, 1994, at Didier Ltd. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

The booth's sensational display of jewelry from the so-called "Padua school," an experimental 20th century goldsmithing movement, includes several pieces that were overlooked at a 1997 Sotheby's sale and which this dealer has been hunting down ever since. In 1988, Mario Pinton set a green tourmaline inside a mesmerizing square gold grill atop a simple ring. A few years later, his student Giampaolo Babetto constructed a necklace of hinged golden cubes marked with smoky black niello. Francesco Pavan, another of Pinton's students, used long, overlapping rectangles to build an oversize 18-carat-gold brooch in the shape of an X. Every piece could hold its own next to any abstract sculpture.

Joan B. Mirviss Ltd (E5)

Eiko Kishi, “To no shinsho fukei: Recollected Vistas in Clay,” from 2012, at the booth of Joan B. Mirviss. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

The storied dealer Joan B. Mirviss represents many of the artists in “Radical Clay: Contemporary Women Artists from Japan,” currently at the Art Institute of Chicago. Commissioning pieces for the Winter Show from as many as she could, she built a booth that feels as varied, in texture and color, as any 10 others. A red, trompe-l’oeil wrapping cloth by the young artist Yu Tanaka sits across from a piece by Eiko Kishi whose knobby, blue and white finish and abstract triangular planes evoke a Star Wars spaceship. Patterned black and white vases by Junko Kitamura are equally labor-intensive. They seem painted with a stencil, but look closer: Every tiny triangle is a separate, handmade incision.

Spencer Marks (E10)/S.J. Shrubsole (A4)

Thomas Pitts, George III antique English silver Epergne, a botanically themed silver serving dish from 1762, at S.J. Shrubsole. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Standing out from the glittering wealth of silver at Spencer Marks is a yachting trophy in the shape of a crashing wave, likely made by Gorham for the 1893 Columbian Exposition (though apparently not finished in time). With the intricately hammered texture of a giant ridged potato chip, the cup must surely have cost more man hours than any yachting victory it could have ever been awarded to. Over at Shrubsole, I couldn't look away from the contemporaneous Chinoiserie "epergne," a botanically themed silver serving dish whose nine separate floating bowls are surmounted by a pagoda roof topped with a pineapple.

Daniel Blau (E8)

Daido Moriyama found a series of 35-millimeter “half-frame” negatives he had shot in New York in 1971 and reprinted them at large scale. Daido Moriyama; via Daniel Blau, Munich

Last year the Japanese street photographer Daido Moriyama found a series of 35-millimeter “half-frame” negatives he had shot in New York in 1971 and reprinted them at large scale. Each of the large, bronze-toned, black and white prints that resulted is a double image, showing some humble but iconic Gotham sights — steam enveloping a fire hydrant, a black cat in an anonymous hallway — at two

successive moments. It's an ingenious way to capture the cinematic romance of a gritty but world-renowned setting that is always changing but never goes anywhere.

The Winter Show

Thursday through Jan. 28, Park Avenue Armory, Park Avenue at 67th Street, Manhattan, thewintershow.org.

Will Heinrich writes about new developments in contemporary art, and has previously been a critic for The New Yorker and The New York Observer. [More about Will Heinrich](#)

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