

ARTSY

The 10 Best Booths at EXPO Chicago's Online Edition

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[Alina Perez](#)

[*Cutting Off Loose Tongues*, 2021](#)

[Deli Gallery](#)

Sold

More than a year after the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic set in and art fairs around the world canceled their plans for the foreseeable future, Chicago's EXPO fair is holding its 2021 edition online, rescheduled from the fair's usual in-person time slot in September. This year's edition, known as [EXPO CHGO ONLINE](#), gathers presentations from more than 80 U.S. and international galleries showcasing both contemporary upstarts and well-known figures working in painting, sculpture, fiber art, and much more. In addition to regular gallery programming, the fair also includes a special presentation of ecologically minded works curated by [New Orleans Museum of Art](#) curator Katie A. Pfohl, a section dedicated to highlighting solo and two-person

exhibitions from galleries 10 years or younger, and a special exhibition section featuring nonprofit institutions and museums. The fair's online portal opened to the public on Friday, and will run through Monday, April 12th. Here, we look at some of the digital fair's standout presentations.

De Buck Gallery

With works by Stephen Towns and Tina Williams Brewer

New York's De Buck Gallery has brought together an exciting array of new and recent mixed-media works by Stephen Towns and Tina Williams Brewer. Towns's intimately rendered portraits of Black subjects, taken from the artist's forthcoming solo show "Declaration and Resistance," opening in 2022 at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, radiate a warmth that is enhanced by subtle decorative elements like the copper-leaf halos in *Two Roses* (2021) and *Two Navy Soldiers* (2021), or the hints of metal and silver leaf in the barbershop scene *Shaping Up* (2021).



Stephen Towns

We Will Rest Our Thoughts in the Embers, 2020

De Buck Gallery

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The booth's main focus, however, is its fabric works. Towns's contributions, all executed in 2020, draw on Black spirituals for inspiration, rendering narrative scenes of subjects placed along multi-textured coastlines and against vast star-studded skies. Brewer's textile work shares a similar penchant for textural juxtaposition, combining a wide array of materials including Peruvian woven fabric, domestic taffeta, shibori, rayon, batiked medallions, sequins, and more. The resulting works are gestural, collage-like objects, layering abstract forms over figurative elements and piecing together fabrics from around the world in an almost ecstatic fashion. Collectors seem to be excited about the works, too: As of this writing, three out of the five works by Brewer on offer have sold.

Richard Heller Gallery

With works by Amy Bennett, Sara Birns, Jackson Casady, Baldur Helgason, Sean Norvet, Justin Liam O'Brien, Paco Pomet, Charlie Roberts, Max Rumbol, Orkideh Torabi, and Dustin Yellin



[Sara Birns](#)

[*Wrong Concentration*, 2021](#)

[Richard Heller Gallery](#)

Contact for price

Richard Heller Gallery's booth features a host of contemporary artists pushing figuration into uncanny, occasionally uncomfortable realms. Take the subject of [Baldur Helgason](#)'s *Patty at Metro 1991* (2021), with its massive welling eyes and pair of pained-looking smiles, or the distorted, near-alien figure in [Sara Birns](#)'s *Wrong Concentration* (2021), which ripples with an uncomfortable sheen that places the subject just on the far side of human.



Max Rumbol

A Work in Progress (Mania), 2021

Richard Heller Gallery

Sold

Other works take a subtler, more intimate approach.

Justin Liam O'Brien's nightlife scene *Take Me Out Tonight* (2021), which had sold by the fair's opening day, and Amy Bennett's *Backscratch* (2021) both place their central subjects in familiar, even desirable situations—the bar, the living room—but an ambient dread looms in both, whether from the gawking stares of fellow patrons in *Take Me Out Tonight* or the creeping shadows at the edges of Bennett's living room scene. Dustin Yellin's glass-and-collage sculpture *Theia Study* (2020) brings these explorations of bodily discomfort into three dimensions, featuring a central human figure encased in glass and gushing water from its limbs—a foreboding and cautionary image of the body's self-destructive capabilities.

Rutger Brandt Gallery

With works by Carlos Sagrera, Johan De Wit, and Thijs Jansen



Carlos Sagrera

Siurell, 2019

Rutger Brandt Gallery

US\$11,000

Amsterdam-based Rutger Brandt Gallery's booth is broadly concerned with the spatial possibilities of interiors of all kinds, making for an interesting thematic exploration of what "inside" even means anymore. In his acrylic paintings of empty rooms, the Spanish painter Carlos Sagrera inserts details both mundane and otherworldly, layering totemic

household staples like lamps or bookshelves with flashes of mirage-like color—a wavering green growth on a cluttered desk, a bookshelf seemingly torn away to reveal streaks of metallic purple and yellow. As of the afternoon of Thursday’s preview, all but one of Sagrera’s paintings has sold; only *Siurell* (2019) is still available, for \$11,000.



Thijs Jansen

Self-reflection between 16 and 17, 2020

Rutger Brandt Gallery

Sold

Johan De Wit

's sculptural works, made of paper, resin, and acrylics, extend Sagrera's domestic explorations, rendering pillows, vanities, and stacks of books into something resembling monuments. All of De Wit's works are still available as of this writing, and range in price from \$2,000 to \$8,700. Thijs Jansen rounds out the gallery's presentation with a trio of claustrophobic paintings—on offer for figures between \$4,500 and \$9,000—of elevator interiors, their doors shut, reflecting nothing but a fluorescent sheen. The paintings, all executed in 2020, carry the weight of that hemmed-in year, and make for an excellent knot in the booth's interior focus.

“What ties these artists together in this particular presentation is the different ways domesticity is translated into art,” Rutger Brandt said. “A subliminal look into everyday life, trying to find meaning by modification of the corporeal.”

Deli Gallery

With works by Alina Perez



[Alina Perez](#)

[Stargazing](#), 2021

[Deli Gallery](#)

Sold

For its booth, Brooklyn-based Deli Gallery brought together a series of new works on paper by current Yale MFA candidate [Alina Perez](#). Perez's tense and often sexual portraits vacillate between scenes of lush romance, as in *Caught Between Her and I* (all works 2021) or *Stargazing*, and portrayals of vast and enveloping loneliness, as in *Something Always Happens When I'm Not Around* or *Cutting Off Loose Tongues*.



Alina Perez

Solo Por Un Beso, 2021

Deli Gallery

Sold

“Perez’s vibrant pastel and charcoal drawings immerse viewers into complex, speculative scenes drawn from a place of deep love, converting the mundane into fantastical and tenderly treated moments,” explained Max Marshall, founder and director of Deli Gallery. Perez’s strength comes from her deft manipulation of the textural possibilities of her chosen media, washing her subjects in a chromatic pastel haze or leaving them stranded in murky charcoal depths. Perez’s approach seems to be paying off, too—four out of the six works on offer had already sold by the afternoon of Thursday’s preview. At the time of writing, the remaining two works were still available for \$12,000 and \$18,000.

Monique Meloche Gallery

With works by Candida Alvarez, Sanford Biggers, David Antonio Cruz, Brendan Fernandes, Dan Gunn, Kajahl, Ben Murray, Cheryl Pope, Karen Reimer, David Shrobe, and Nate Young



Sanford Biggers

Tumbler, 2021

moniquemeloche

Chicago-based Monique Meloche Gallery used its EXPO booth as an opportunity to celebrate the diversity and formal range of its excellent program. “Unlike other fairs where we focus on solo or two-artist presentations, our hometown fair EXPO Chicago gives us the opportunity to curate a meaningful group presentation of our gallery artists,” Monique Meloche said. “Although not curated on a theme, we always tease out the interconnections between our diverse roster of artists both conceptually and formally.”



Candida Alvarez
Swarm, 2014
moniquemeloche
Sold



Cheryl Pope

Mother and Child on Blue Mat, 2021

moniquemeloche

The works on display are wildly divergent in terms of medium and subject matter, but they are united by a love of color and a penchant for collage-like juxtaposition. Take, for example, Candida Alvarez 's pastel-hued *Swarm* (2014), made of acrylic, enamel, walnut ink, and metal flakes, or Cheryl Pope 's *Mother and Child on Blue Mat* (2021), with its mix of needle-punched wool and cashmere fields (priced at \$18,000)—not to mention Sanford Biggers 's antique quilt and gold-leaf assemblage *Tumbler* (2021), priced at \$55,000.