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## Discoveries Abound at Second Expo Chicago Under Frieze Ownership

Twenty galleries were on hand from South Korea via a partnership stemming from the fair giant's relationship to the country. by **Eileen Kinsella**

April 28, 2025



Odonchimeg Davaadorj at re.riddle, San Francisco, during Expo Chicago, April 2025. Photo by Lucy Hewett/CKA, Courtesy of EXPO CHICAGO

Much remains uncertain about the Frieze family of art fairs, as its owner explores a possible sale, but it was business as usual this past week at Expo Chicago, which wrapped on Sunday. From its opening hours on Thursday, the energy was upbeat—and even more

crowded than usual, thanks to a scheduling change that got VIPs in the door earlier than usual.

Frieze leaders were on hand at all the major events, from award ceremonies to cocktail parties and talks, showing their commitment to Chicago nearly two years after they acquired the fair, along with the Armory Show in New York. This was the second edition of Expo under Frieze ownership, and its former owner and current director, Tony Karman, is clearly enjoying its support. “To have a broader footprint of professionals being able to be additive in both the programmatic side and the production side, and the outreach of VIPs, is nothing but positive,” he told me. Like last year, there were 170 exhibitors.



Expo Chicago at Navy Pier, April 2025. Photos by Lucy Hewett/CKA, Courtesy of EXPO CHICAGO

This year, there is a magazine dedicated to Expo, with artist profiles (of Caroline Kent and Nick Cave) and collector interviews, as well as a partnership with KIAF (the Korea International Art Fair) and the Galleries Association of Korea that has brought 20 galleries from the country.

While Korean galleries participated in Expo's predecessor, Art Chicago, the collaboration marks an upgrade, and

“came out of this deep relationship that Frieze has with South Korea and Seoul,” Karman said.



Installation view of work by Hyangro Yoon at One and J. Gallery, Seoul, at Expo Chicago, April 2025. Photo by Eileen Kinsella.

I loved Hyangro Yoon’s work at Seoul’s One and J. Gallery, small paintings inspired by Marvel comics rendered in a bright Pop style. All of the characters have been stripped out of the scenes, leaving viewers to wonder why, for instance, a glass of milk is suspended in mid-air, spilling its contents. While Expo lacks the frenzied buying and celebrity sightings of Frieze Los Angeles or the Armory Show, dealers reported plenty of interest and a healthy number of sales.



Jaylon Hicks, *Untitled (File Cabinet)*, 2024. Image courtesy the artist and Maximilian Williams, London.

London dealer Maximilian William sold out his minimalist three-work presentation of art by Jaylon Hicks within the first hours of the fair at prices ranging from \$3,000 to \$20,000. These include a filing cabinet painted half back and half white that “confronts Major League Baseball’s delayed acknowledgment of the ‘Negro Leagues’ statistics as part of its official record,” the gallery said in a statement.

William, who was doing his fourth Expo, told me, it “is still one of the best fairs to introduce new voices.” While he was happy with his success, William said that “there’s definitely room for improvement and further investment on Frieze’s side of things. They need to continue to invest in what is a very special American art city. This I don’t feel was fully reflected this year, that was the sentiment all round from exhibitors I spoke with.”



Clint Strydom, *Bicycle, Window, Paris* (2021). Image courtesy the artist and The Melrose Gallery, Johannesburg.

Johannesburg artist Clint Strydom's layered and collaged photographs were on view with Melrose Gallery, where he works, along with pieces by several other artists from the city. His pieces mash up building facades with imagery that does not neatly fit together, like passersby or illuminated windows, to surreal effect.

"It's been a fantastic experience exhibiting at Expo Chicago," Strydom said, adding that "it's been inspiring for me to see a strong mix of U.S. and



international galleries, and there's definitely a culture of collaboration here." He's been shooting while in town. "The city's energy, architecture, and atmosphere are giving me a lot of fresh inspiration," he said.



Installation view of Jen Everett's found objects sculpture at Rivalry Projects, Buffalo, N.Y., at Expo Chicago, April 2025. Photo Eileen Kinsella

"The energy today was fantastic," said Olivia McManus, director of Buffalo, N.Y.-based Rivalry Projects, which was showing multimedia works by Jen Everett. "Expo is such a unique fair because of their emphasis on, and investment in, curatorial engagement through the Curatorial Forum," which brings together curators for a conference. "It encourages more experimental, conceptual presentations that result in long-lasting discoveries and continued relationships with institutions across the country.

Each year, the fair and one of its sponsors, Northern Trust, allow three different institutions to acquire works from the fair's "Exposure" section, for galleries 10 years and younger. This year, works went to the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

The DMA selected a painting by Wallace Pato, for \$36,000, from Mitre (of Belo Horizonte and São Paulo), PAFA picked three Soo Shin works from Patron (Chicago) at prices from \$3,000 to \$10,000, and the BMA got two works—a \$14,000 Lilian Martinez painting from Ochi (Ketchum, Idaho, and Los Angeles) and an \$8,000 collage on panel by Winnie Truong from Patel Brown (Toronto). As usual, Expo-timed events occurred throughout the city. Karman and Frieze leaders hosted a breakfast for hundreds of people at the Art Institute of Chicago, which just opened a Frida Kahlo show. They also hosted a cocktail party at the Peninsula hotel, the site of an eye-catching exhibition from the private collection of Kansas City collectors Bill and Christy Gatreux that includes pieces by Belkis Ayón, Raúl de Nieves, Nick Cave, Jeffrey Gibson, Caroline Kent, Tau Lewis, and others.

“Frieze remains deeply committed to all of the fairs, and Expo Chicago gets to benefit from the leadership of a great global team,” Karman said. “Chicago is a deeply collaborative city, and to see it totally energized, as Expo does very year, is deeply rewarding.”



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