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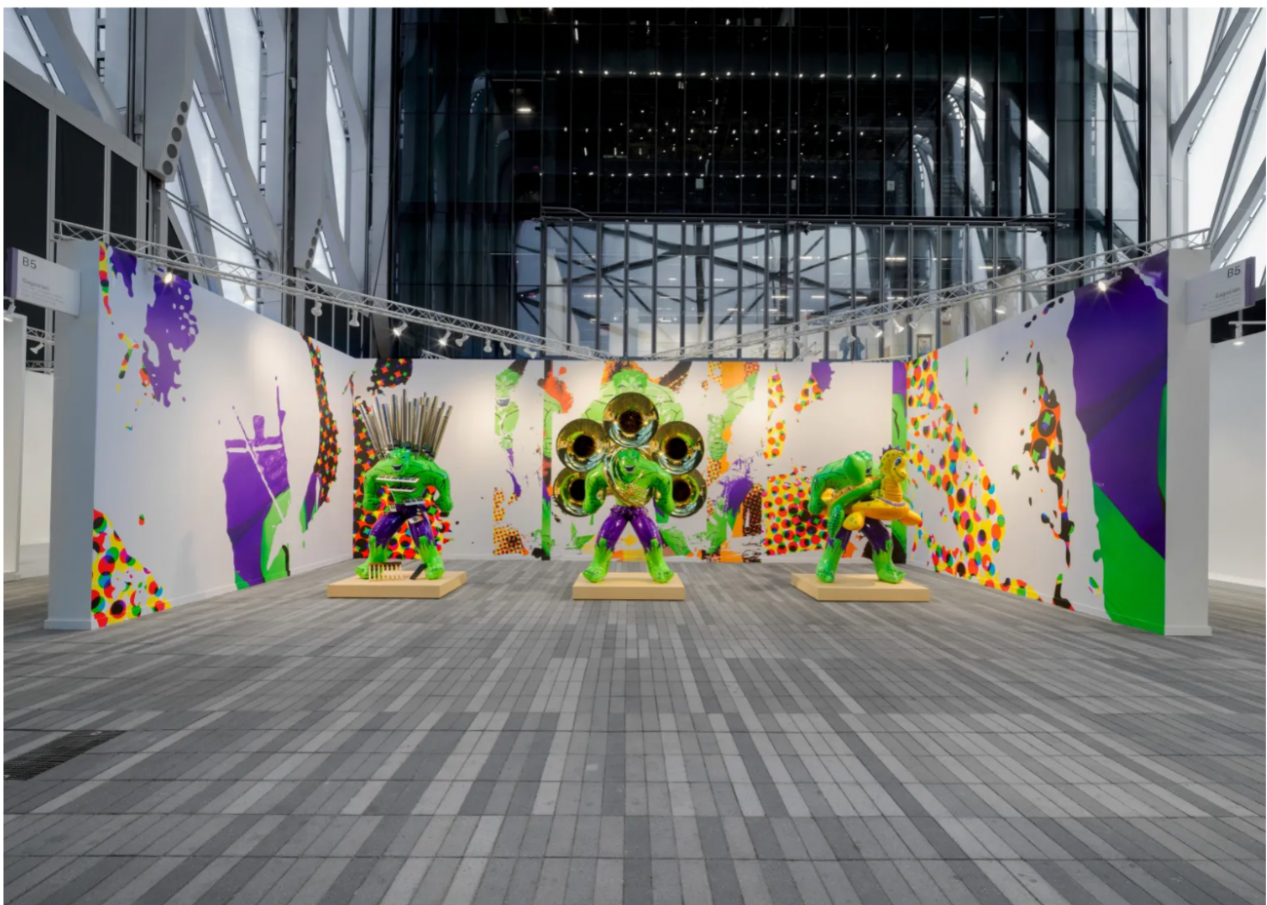
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ARTS • ART MARKET

Frieze and NADA New York's Early Sales Signal Buyer Confidence

Though both fairs saw fewer international buyers, strong sales reveal a market eager for fresh perspectives, cross-cultural narratives and multimedia experimentation.

By [Elisa Carollo](#) • 05/08/25 2:38pm



Jeff Koons's *Hulk* sculptures dominated Gagosian's booth. © Jeff Koons, Incredible Hulk ™, and © Marvel. All rights reserved. Photo: Maris Hutchinson Courtesy Gagosian

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Frieze officially took flight yesterday (May 7) with its VIP preview, kicking off a jam-packed art week in New York, where no fewer than nine fairs are unfolding ahead of the marquee May evening auctions. The fair opened just days after news broke of its acquisition by Endeavor's former CEO Ari Emanuel, in a deal reportedly worth \$200 million, and in the midst of turbulence stirred by an erratic 100-day-old presidency, where trade wars and cultural grandstanding have become the new normal. Still, early sales suggest a market that's holding steady—albeit one that's more cautious, more curated and leagues away from the sold-out-at-entry frenzy of years past. As the aisles rapidly filled in the fair's first hours, most works were still available, with dealers far more open to quiet negotiations, even for formerly too-hot-to-touch names. With Asian collectors largely absent and a notable number of Europeans skipping New York altogether, it was American buyers who showed up, browsed and—crucially—bought, perhaps sensing that now is the moment to make their move.

Held once again at The Shed in the heart of Chelsea's gallery grid, Frieze New York has positioned itself more like a boutique fair than the sprawling showcases staged in its international iterations. This year's edition features sixty-five exhibitors from twenty-five countries, though several New York mainstays—assumedly wary of economic crosswinds—opted instead for Independent, TEFAF or bypassed the fairs entirely to focus on in-house programming. “We’re just a few blocks from the fairs, and we decided to focus on our exhibitions; it’s been working. People are stopping by on their way,” Eric Gleason of Kasmin told Observer. On preview day, the gallery opened a solo show of ethereal, mystical works by L.A.-based painter Theodora Allen, and nearly half were already placed by that evening.

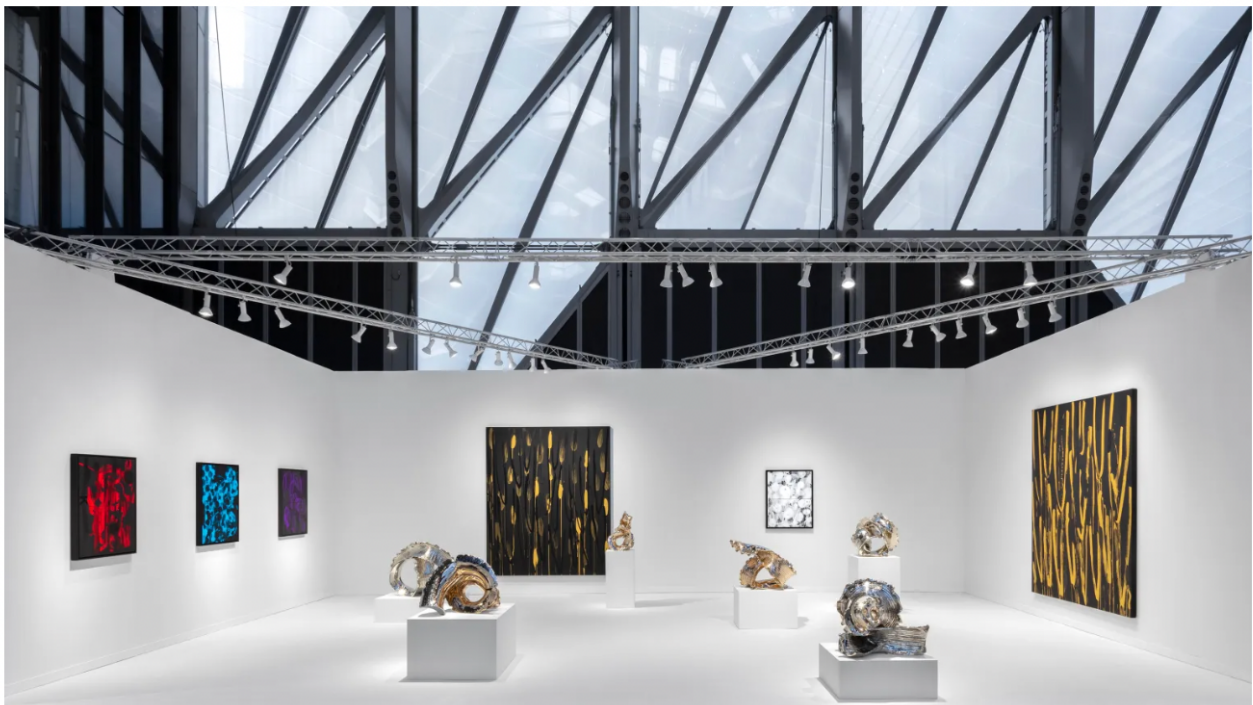
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The mega galleries that did show up largely opted for single-artist spotlights or tightly curated presentations. At Pace, Adam Pendleton took center stage in a thoughtful pairing with works by Lynda Benglis, highlighting parallels in their layered explorations of materiality and process. The strategy paid off: at the day's end, the gallery had sold multiple Benglis pieces in the \$275,000-300,000 range, while six of Pendleton's paintings were placed within the first few hours, priced between \$165,000 and \$425,000. The presentation dovetailed with Pendleton's solo exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., and followed the high-profile announcement that MoMA had acquired all thirty-five works from his 2021-2022 survey.



Pace at Frieze. Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

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Meanwhile, Gagosian seemed intent on flexing its muscles this season, perhaps to reassure collectors of its continued dominance. Fresh off celebrating Larry's eightieth birthday, the gallery opened not one but two museum-grade shows: "Willem de Kooning" in Chelsea and the Paloma Picasso-curated "Picasso: Tête-à-tête" exhibition uptown—while anchoring its Frieze booth with a bombastic display of Jeff Koons's *Hulk Elvis* sculptures. The three inflatable-looking polychrome steel sculptures, set against a fleshy immersive vinyl backdrop, brought full Koonsian crowd-catching Pop playfulness. That day, the gallery reported selling one piece for an undisclosed price—though auction precedent suggests it landed most likely around \$3 million, as a six-foot *Hulk (Friends)* fetched \$3.4 million at Phillips New York in 2019. "The fair is off to a great start, and the response to our booth has been phenomenal," senior director Millicent Wilner told the press, noting strong interest in the remaining two sculptures. The presentation could signal a homecoming for Koons, who left both Gagosian and David Zwirner for Pace in 2021—only to appear now back in Larry's court.

Nearby, David Zwirner also took a focused approach, devoting the entire booth to a postmodern wink at early twentieth-century iconography through the lens of Pictures Generation pioneer Sherrie Levine. The presentation included the debut of her 2024 series *After Piet Mondrian Inverted*, a characteristically sly reversal of modernist canon, with prices ranging from \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Hauser & Wirth, never one to play it small, reported confident early sales—including a \$1.2 million monumental work by Rashid Johnson, strategically placed at the booth's entrance as Johnson is currently the subject of a significant career survey at the Guggenheim, which opened just a few weeks ago. By afternoon, the gallery had reportedly placed more than twenty-five works, with prices ranging from \$20,000 to \$1.2 million. Additional sales included works by other artists with strong institutional momentum—Jack Whitten, Amy Sutherland, Lorna Simpson, Mary Heilmann, Roni Horn and Thomas J Price, among others. "The crowd and conversations today have been incredibly upbeat," Hauser & Wirth president Marc Payot told the press. "Perhaps most significantly, the energy this first day at the fair has been amazingly optimistic—we're seeing an even more robust commitment now on the part of collectors, curators and institutions to the story of art in this moment."

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Hauser & Wirth at Frieze. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth | Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Among the more headline-grabbing day-one sales, White Cube placed a large, emotionally raw Tracey Emin canvas for £1.2 million and one of her bronzes for £80,000. The gallery also moved a lyrical work by Etel Adnan for \$180,000 and two Antony Gormley sculptures for £325,000 each. A Christine Ay Tjoe painting was acquired by an institution for \$280,000—unsurprising given the artist’s recent auction ascent—while two vibrant works by Ilana Savdie, priced in the \$100,000 range, found buyers as well. The sales followed the artist’s New York solo debut with the gallery, her first since joining the roster in 2022.

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Austrian dealer Thaddaeus Ropac was still holding firm on a monumental upside-down George Baselitz canvas priced at €1 million by the end of preview day. But sales elsewhere were brisk: a €85,000 painting by Martha Jungwirth, a \$210,000 Joan Snyder, two Megan Rooney works at £18,000 each and a \$130,000 David Salle acquired by a U.S. collector. Ropac also placed a more conceptually driven work by Liza Lou for \$225,000.

Next door at Karma, the action was just as lively. The gallery placed a haunting Gertrude Abercrombie painting for \$350,000 and a \$90,000 oil by Maja Ruznic, fresh off her Whitney Biennial appearance. Other confirmed sales included a Richard Mayhew for \$350,000, a Manoucher Yektai for \$275,000, a Reggie Burrows Hodges for \$175,000, a sculpture by Alan Saret for \$150,000 and a punchy, Pop-catchy work by Calvin Marcus for \$135,000.

Further down the aisle, Perrotin reported a complete sell-out of its new psychologically dense paintings by Claire Tabouret, with prices ranging from \$65,000 to \$200,000. Nearby, Nara Roesler also moved multiple works, including a textile piece by Sheila Hicks for \$74,000, a work by Marcelo Silveira for \$65,000 and an oil painting by Tomie Ohtake for \$350,000—riding the momentum of her sold-out booth at last year's Art Basel Paris.

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Frieze New York 2025 opened at the Shed on May 7 in VIP preview. Casey Kelbaugh/CKA

Korean dealer Tina Kim reported strong first-day sales of works by artists with notable institutional traction, including a \$150,000 piece by Filipino American artist Pacita Abad, placed alongside a \$200,000 work by Lee ShinJa, a Ghada Amer for \$175,000, a sculpture by Suki Seokyeong Kang for \$80,000 and a new piece by Maia Ruth Lee for \$25,000. Not far away, her mother's gallery, Kukje, also saw a robust day, reportedly placing several works by Dansaekhwa master Park Seo-Bo in the \$250,000-300,000 range, following the artist's passing last year. Additional sales included works by Kyungah Ham (\$140,000-168,000), Kibong Rhee (\$80,000-96,000) and a Haegue Yang priced between €35,000 and €42,000.

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Meanwhile, Goodman Gallery confirmed the placement of a major Carrie Mae Weems work for \$100,000—already earmarked for a European institution—along with a Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum for \$90,000 and a Ravelle Pillay painting for £35,000. Nearby, Brazilian powerhouse Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel capitalized on the momentum of Beatriz Milhazes's current Guggenheim show, selling several of her works in the \$45,000-60,000 range. The gallery also placed pieces by Wanda Pimentel (\$45,000-60,000), Tadáskia (\$25,000-40,000) and Antonio Tarsis, whose meticulously composed wood constructions sold for \$40,000 to \$55,000.

The demand for more ambitious presentations

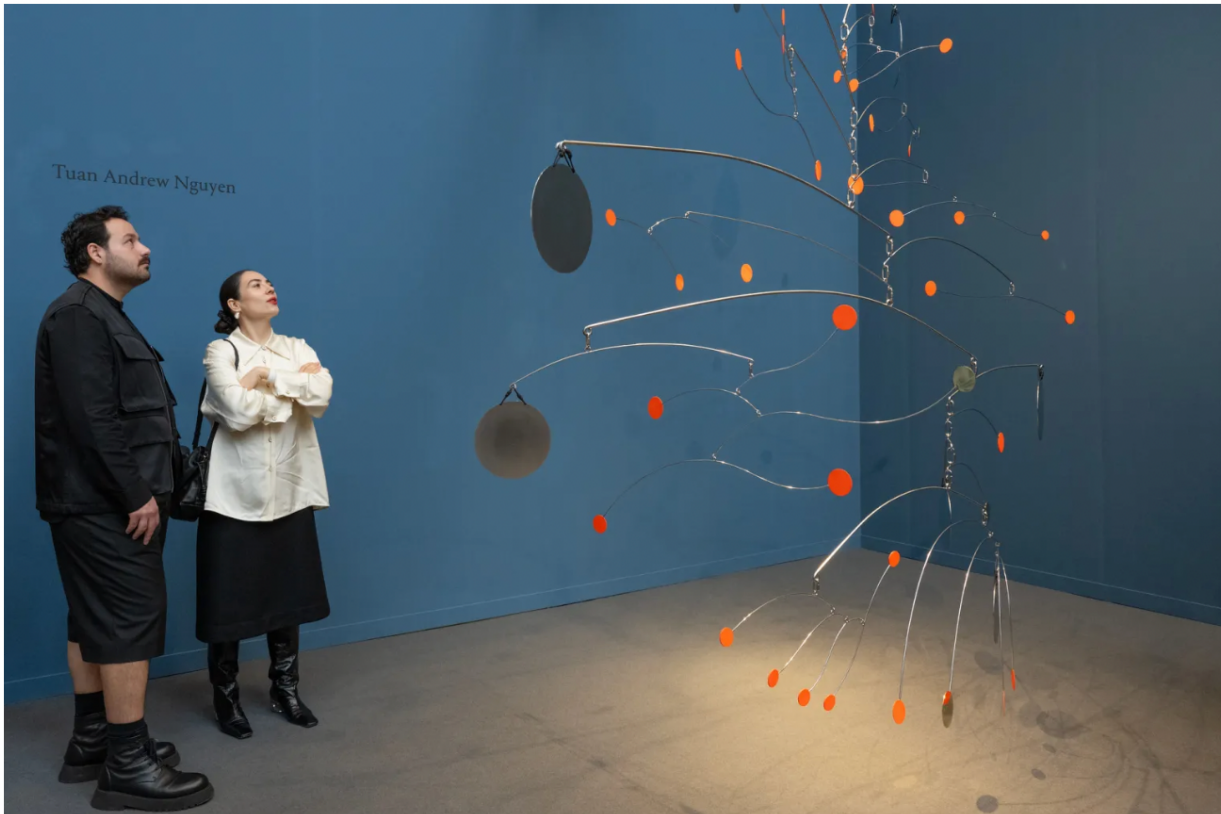
The appetite for museum-caliber work was evident at Frieze's preview. Mendes Wood DM placed the entirety of Kishio Suga's *Sliced Stones* installation—eight sculptures priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000—without much hesitation from buyers. James Cohan also reported strong institutional traction, selling several of Tuan Andrew Nguyen's Calder-esque, organically suspended metal mobiles, priced from \$85,000 to \$185,000, to a European museum, an American institution and a private collector—riding the momentum of the Vietnamese artist's breakout U.S. institutional debut at the New Museum in summer 2023. Meanwhile, New York dealer Casey Kaplan devoted the entire booth to Hannah Levy's alluring, hybrid biomorphic sculptures, and collectors responded accordingly. Several works, priced between \$45,000 and \$80,000, were swiftly snapped up as Levy's profile continues to rise—fueled in part by her showing in the 2022 Venice Biennale.

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Tuan Andrew Nguyen presented by James Cohan at Frieze. Casey Kelbaugh/CKA

Even the more dynamic and occasionally experimental offerings in the Focus section inspired a strong response. Showing at Frieze for the first time, Parisian and research-centred gallery Sultana reported selling three works by Jean Claracq in the \$20,000-30,000 range and two humorously playful works by Turner Prize artist Jesse Darling for €10,000 each. Nearby, Chapter NY captured collectors' attention, placing multiple works by Milano Chow, priced between \$16,000 and \$20,000, and Mary Stephenson, with prices ranging from £4,500 to £32,000.

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Among the most ambitious presentations in the Focus section was a multimedia installation by Yehwan Song, exploring the discomfort and incommunicability of digital media and online spaces. Presented by Seoul-based G Gallery, the work was acquired by a private institution for \$22,000. Leaning further into the multimedia and installation spectrum, London-based Public Gallery made its New York debut with an interactive, video game-based installation by Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley that confronts Black trans experiences head-on. Blending reality, gaming, technology and speculative fiction, the artist builds choose-your-own-adventure narratives that compel users to face uncomfortable questions around transphobia and racism—dismantling ethical complacency while centering responsibility, sincerity and care.

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Luana Vitra presented by Mitre Galeria at Frieze. Courtesy of the gallery

In the same section, marking its New York debut, São Paulo–based Mitre Gallery presented a solo booth of spiritual, totemic sculptures by Brazilian artist Luana Vitra, who also just opened a solo show at SculptureCenter. Drawing on the history and cosmology of Minas Gerais—the mineral-rich region where she was raised—Vitra explores the metallurgical symbolism and transformative power of minerals to reveal the “spirit in matter.” Her sculptures function as vessels designed to receive, store and transmit energy—works that blur the line between material object and metaphysical conduit. By the end of preview day, the gallery had placed four of Vitra’s pieces, priced between \$12,000 and \$26,000.

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Another standout in the section was the U.S. debut of Indonesian artist Citra Sasmita, presented by Singapore-based Yeo Workshop. Ancestral symbologies unfold in mystical, charged images that explore a visceral and spiritual interconnection between the female body and nature—rendered here in a textile-based installation that seems to transcend the fair's commercial setting and drift into otherworldly terrain. Titled *Vortex in the Land of Liberation*, the installation centers on a vertically suspended, embroidered cowhide that uses the traditional Kamasan painting technique and invokes folkloric spirits to evoke feminine power, fertility and the primordial. Drawing from ancient Balinese literature, mythology and iconography, Sasmita creates a personal cosmology that asserts a form of female agency and spirituality in harmony with the cosmos. With prices ranging from \$20,000 to \$38,000, the presentation aligns with a major Barbican commission in London and the artist's participation in both the Hawai'i Triennial ALOHA NŌ and the 16th Sharjah Biennial.



Citra Sasmita's *Vortex in the Land of Liberation* presented by Yeo Workshop at Frieze. Courtesy of the artist

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Nearby, Bogotá- and Paris-based gallery mor charpentier reported a sold-out solo presentation of Malo Chapuy, whose haunting, jewel-toned paintings draw heavily from Gothic and pre-Renaissance religious art, echoed in the gold leaf backgrounds that transport the subjects to otherworldly levels while channeling a spiritual austerity in new sacred forms refracted through a distinctly contemporary lens. Prices ranged from €12,000 to €22,000, and the swift sales spoke to collectors' appetite for works that bridge historical gravitas and emerging talent. Further signaling buyer confidence across price points, young L.A. gallerist Matthew Brown also racked up a strong first day of sales, including a mesmerizing Blair Whiteford painting for \$45,000, a new work by Kenturah Davis for \$40,000 and a TARWUK sculpture for \$40,000, along with additional acquisitions such as Vincent Valdez at \$45,000, Michelle Uckotter at \$25,000 and pieces by rising voices like Olivia van Kuiken (\$18,000) and Jack O'Brien (\$12,000).

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Emerging artists and first-time exhibitors find footing at NADA

Opening in sync with Frieze this year, NADA dealers reported a brisk and in many cases gratifying first day. Now housed in the Starrett-Lehigh Building on Twenty-Sixth Street—a convenient five-minute stroll from Frieze—the fair's eleventh New York edition brought together one hundred eleven exhibitors, including fifty-four first-timers.



A scene from NADA New York's VIP Preview. Kevin Czopek/BFA.com

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Among the newcomers, London-based gallery Alice Amati sold out its solo presentation of enigmatic, hyperrealist paintings by Danielle Fretwell, priced between \$5,000 and \$17,000. Fellow Londoner Chilli Projects also had a standout debut, placing every work in its booth by day's end. The poetic, fragmented meditations on identity and displacement by New Haven-based artist Christopher Paul Jordan, priced between \$4,000 and \$20,000, found eager buyers. Jordan is currently in residence at Titus Kaphar's NXTHVN and will show next with James Cohan.

From the West Coast, Los Angeles-based de Boer placed several of Noelia Towers's unsettling, cinematic figurative works (\$10,000-40,000), alongside pieces by Kat Lowish (\$6,000) and a large-scale canvas by Rachel Sharpe (\$14,000). Minneapolis- and now New York-based HAIR + NAILS also moved early, placing three dreamlike paintings by Julia García. Meanwhile, Rachel Liu Gallery (formerly Rachel Uffner, now in partnership with Lucy Liu) sold two works by Sheree Hovsepian priced at \$28,000 and \$24,000, tied to the artist's solo show that opened just ahead of the fair.

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Danielle Fretwell presented by Alice Amati at NADA. Photo Gabriele Abbruzzese

The newly launched Chozick Family Art Gallery—helmed by former Uffner sales director Rebekah Chozick—had a promising start, selling several works on day one by Sofía Del Mar Collins, Raphael Griswold and Andrea McGinty, as well as completing a late-evening sale of a work by Sara Gimenez. Another newcomer, MAMA Projects, placed six intimately scaled paintings by Chinese artist Zhi Ding, whose work interrogates the globalization of the American Dream. In NADA's sculpture section, the gallery also showed *Body in trouble* (2025), a haunting creature by Nicky Cherry that exists in a liminal space between embodiment and disembodiment, prodding at the fragility of identity as a fixed concept.

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Buenos Aires gallery CONSTITUCIÓN brought a quietly stunning solo presentation of Carlos Cima's moody, intimate domestic scenes, selling out all nine works by day's end. Another standout came from EMBAJADA, with a booth devoted entirely to Puerto Rican world-builder Joshua Nazario. With his distinctly DIY-meets-Pop aesthetic, Nazario reworks concrete, wood and other industrial materials into sculptures and flat works that slyly dissect status-signaling and emulative behaviors in Puerto Rican life.

Havana-based El Apartamento offered a deeply material meditation on memory and history through Eloy Arribas's solo booth. His works—priced between \$3,200 and \$5,800—were generated using the strappo technique, where wax molds capture, layer and distort painted marks over time. Each drawing is tied to a visual genealogy, bearing faint echoes of its predecessors, as figuration gradually dissolves into obfuscation, emergence and erasure. A couple of works had sold by midday.

Longtime NADA exhibitor Kates-Ferri Project (New York) found success with a tight dialogue on geometric abstraction and analog aesthetics, presenting paintings by Uruguayan conceptual artist Guillermo Garcia Cruz and sculptures by Martín Touzon. Two of Garcia Cruz's paintings sold during the preview, with strong interest in Touzon's work reported.

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Joshua Nazario presented by EMBAJADA at NADA. Photo Luis Corzo | Courtesy the artist and EMBAJADA San Juan

The new tariff threat didn't discourage South Korean and Japanese galleries, which also showed up in force to the fair this year. A-Lounge Contemporary presented recent Columbia MFA grads Youngmin Park and Ian Ha, placing two of Ha's works by the evening. Kyoto-based COHJU made its NADA debut with three rising Japanese artists —Takuya Otsuki, Anna Yamanishi and Shu Okamoto—all engaging with the interplay between traditional forms and contemporary expression.

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Mexico City–based galleries also had strong momentum at NADA. Third Born, a recently opened gallery, placed several small, poetic canvases by Korean artist Jungwon Ja Hur, whose quiet, existential tone was complemented by ceramics and delicate fabric works inspired by bujagi tradition—all priced under \$5,000. Nearby, JO-HS placed four dreamlike paintings by Melissa Rios, whose layered reflections on human connection struck a chord. Naranjo 141, another young Mexico City gallery, made its New York debut in the TD Bank Curated Spotlight with new textile works by New York–based Pauline Shaw. Her intricate tapestries—priced at \$11,500 and \$8,750—use the metaphor of woven fiber to probe belief systems, emotion and the murky enigma of the natural world. Both works sold on opening day to new clients.

While several collectors admitted to Observer they were waiting to see what Independent had to offer before locking in additional buys, NADA's preview day signaled an encouraging dynamism. We may no longer be seeing the sold-out stampede of years past, but the fair continues to demonstrate the market's appetite for emerging voices—and its ability to adapt with resilience to what feel like continuous market shifts.

Frieze New York and NADA New York run through Sunday, May 11, 2025.