

Highlights and Surprises: A First Look at EXPO Chicago 2015

BY IONIT BEHAR SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

In its fourth edition, EXPO Chicago has shown considerable institutional growth, adding new programs and publications, and expanding from 125 galleries in 2012 to 140 from 16 countries in 2015. A few months ago, signs promoting the fair popped up all around the city, boosting expectations for art lovers. Although EXPO is open to the public for just three days, the week of September 14-20—now referred as the EXPO Art Week—is one of the Chicago art scene’s busiest times of the year. Collectors, artists, and curators from around the world meet in the Second City for scores of events built up around the EXPO centerpiece, among them: gallery openings, gala benefits, lectures, curator-led private tours, and performances.

A surprise was the almost empty booth of New York Gallery Garth Greenan. What seemed to be a space to critique the art market was in fact the calm space needed for three wonderful and delicate works by Argentine artist Victoria Gitman who recently had a show at the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). These three works, one on each wall, are incredibly naturalistic oil paintings representing beaded and fur vintage purses that the artist finds in thrift stores, flea markets, and online. The paintings force the viewer to get near the work; the proximity might create not just a visual experience but a tactile one where one imagines touching the canvas or the actual purse. I was greeted by the artist herself who generously took the time to describe her work: “They are small abstractions.” The geometric patterns in the purses remind her of canonical artists such as Sol LeWitt, Joseph Albers, Kazimir Malevich, and Mark Rothko.



Victoria Gitman, *Untitled*, 2015, oil on board, 8 1/4 x 12 inches