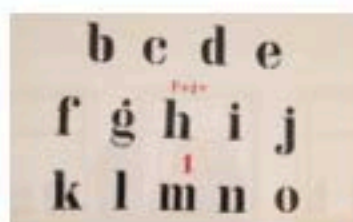


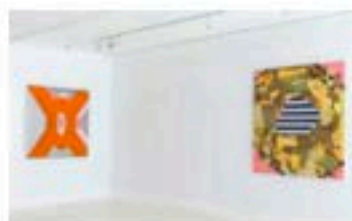
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GALLERIES

Finding Jesus, "YOUR MOM," and Other Surprises at the 2016 Armory Show

by Benjamin Sutton on March 2, 2016

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The entrance to the Armory Show (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

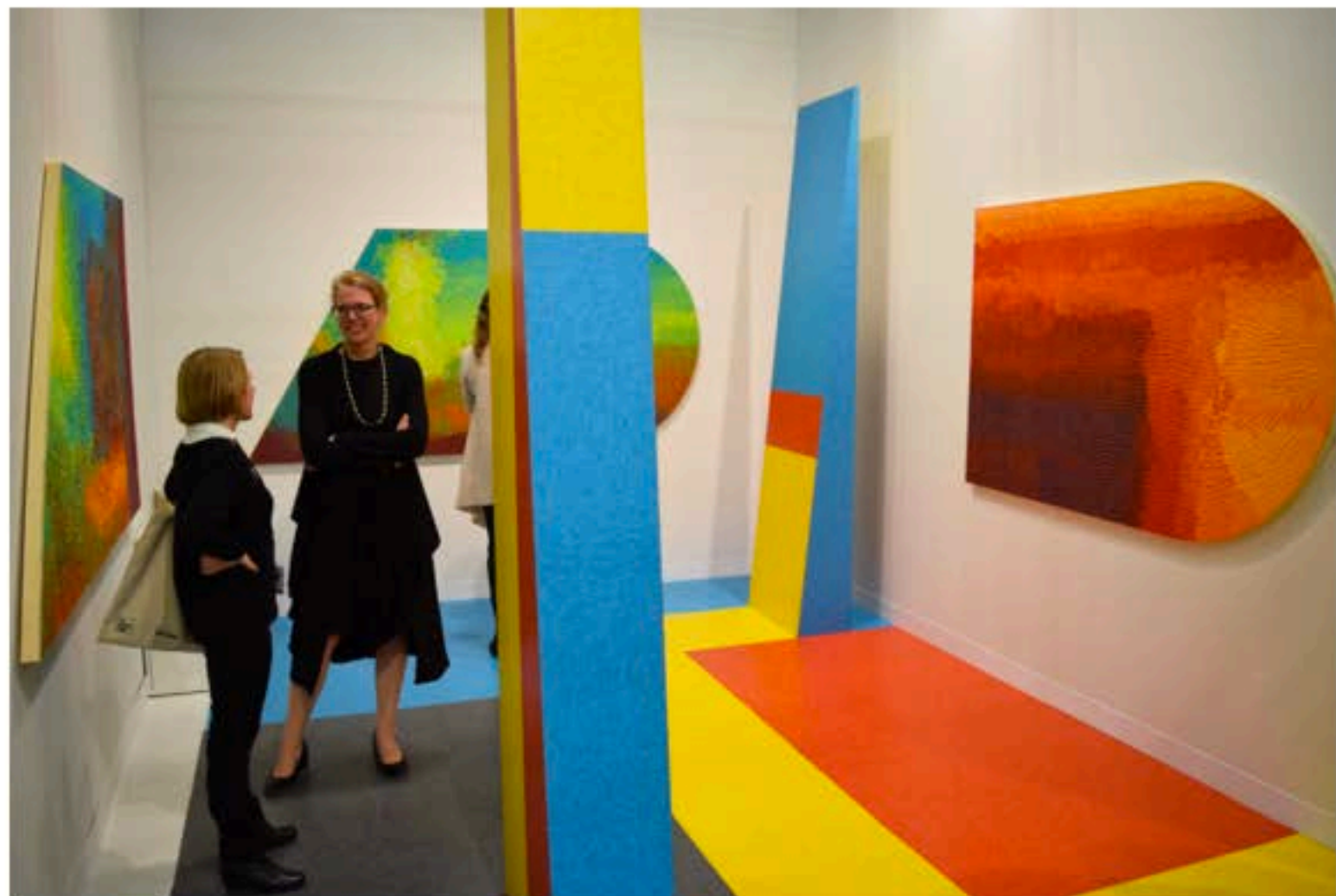
The 2016 edition of the [Armory Show](#) art fair opens to the public tomorrow, but already during today's preview Piers 92 and 94 were crawling with collectors, curators, and critics. On the latter pier, devoted to contemporary art, the usual smattering of US and international galleries was holding court with the usual array of high-end goods, from the token Anish Kapoor selfie vessel ("Alice – Double Circle," 2014, in the [Lisson Gallery](#) booth) and the compulsory Yayoi Kusama pumpkin sculpture (at the [David Zwirner](#) booth) to the requisite wall-filling Kehinde Wiley painting (three, in fact, the largest being "Equestrian Portrait of Philip III," 2016, in the [Sean Kelly](#) booth).



Kehinde Wiley's "Equestrian Portrait of Philip III" (2016) in the Sean Kelly booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

The aforementioned showpieces, in fact, are among the first works visitors see upon coming through the fair's main entrance. After that, as ever, venturing down the Armory Show's interminable aisles offers the promise of pleasant surprises amid numbing visual overstimulation.

A few booth-filling installations are among the most rewarding experiences this year, while the Armory Focus section, "African Perspectives," holds several strong presentations by galleries and artists that rarely reach New York. In the Armory Presents section, devoted to newer galleries, the Lower East Side's [Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery](#) may have the most dazzling booth, with glowing paper pulp paintings by [David Scanavino](#) and matching vinyl flooring that gives way to tall monoliths jutting toward the rafters.



David Scanavino's solo booth for Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery at the 2016 Armory Show

Also in the Armory Presents section, London gallery [Carlos/Ishikawa](#) is showing a series of playful cartoons and a set of morbid plush sculptures by [Ed Fornieles](#).



Ed Fornieles's "Furry" (2016, far left) and "Virtual Insanity, Cosmic Girl, Ballad of Big Nothing, A Fond Farewell, It's My Life" (2015) in the Carlos/Ishikawa booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)



Looking out of Delson Uchôa's installation "Pintura habitada" (Inhabited Painting) at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

A few booths away, [Ronald Feldman Fine Arts](#) has given over its entire space to “Disphotic Zone,” a magical installation by [Shih Chieh Huang](#). Glowing bottles line the walls of the dark, enclosed space, at the center of which a large jellyfish-like sculpture with blinking innards and limbs of clear plastic hangs, swells, and shimmers. Whether foreshadowing a harmonious melding of marine life with manmade devices or offering a glimpse of the surreal cyborgs that will come to wipe us out, the installation makes novel and theatrical use of materials, ensuring that it’s one of the fair’s most memorable works.



Shih Chieh Huang's installation "Disphotic Zone" in the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

Another standout installation — though only accessible by peering in on it through windows — is [Kudzanai Chiurai's](#) “Emporium” (2016), which looks like what would happen if the principles of Keith Haring’s Pop Shop were applied to selling Jesus merchandise. Taking up an entire corner of [Goodman Gallery's](#) booth, it promises (and withholds) Jesus wallpaper and a divinely garish Jesus robe, all waiting to be piled into a golden shopping cart — etched with the words “Shopping for Jesus,” naturally.



Looking in on Kudzanai Chiurai's installation "Emporium" (2016) in the Goodman Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show



Alternate view of Kudzanai Chiurai's installation "Emporium" (2016) in the Goodman Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

This isn't to say that all of the Armory Show's strongest works are large-scale installations and solo presentations. It's just that amid the sensory overload that is endemic to 205 galleries trying to move as much inventory as possible in five days, these are often the types of things that stand out. A few individual works make equally strong impressions, among them an enormous new diptych by [Njideka Akunyili Crosby](#) that dominates [Victoria Miro's](#) booth and the completely piercing [Zanele Muholi](#) photo portrait "Sibusiso, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy" (2015) that [Stevenson Gallery](#) is showing.



A diptych by Njideka Akunyili Crosby in the Victoria Miro booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)



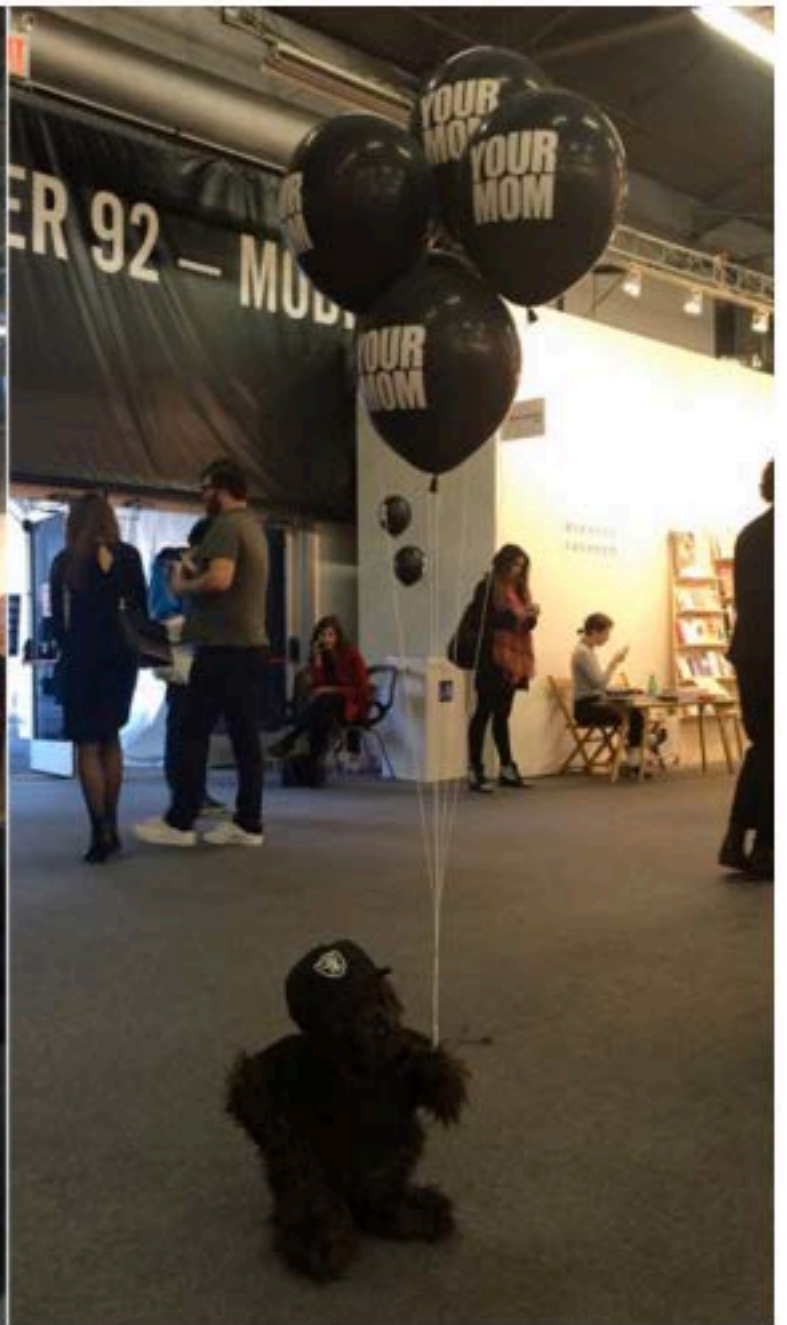
Zanele Muholi, "Sibusiso, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy" (2015) in the Stevenson Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

As in years past, the Armory Show's most interesting and unknown quantity is its Focus section. This year it is devoted to "[African Perspectives](#)," which, as co-curators Julia Grosse and [Yvette Mutumba](#) explained during this morning's press conference, acknowledges the impossibility of defining or conveying an entire continent's visual production.



"African Perspectives," the Focus section of the 2016 Armory Show

In these 13 booths you'll discover, among other things, the source of those balloons you keep seeing around the fair emblazoned with the words "YOUR MOM": Cape Town-based artist [Ed Young](#) is handing them out to passersby just outside the [SMAC Gallery](#) booth. At one of the fair's busiest intersections, several of the balloons are attached to a small teddy bear positioned just below Young's provocative painting "All so Fucking African" (2016), which features the titular phrase in big white letters on a black backdrop.

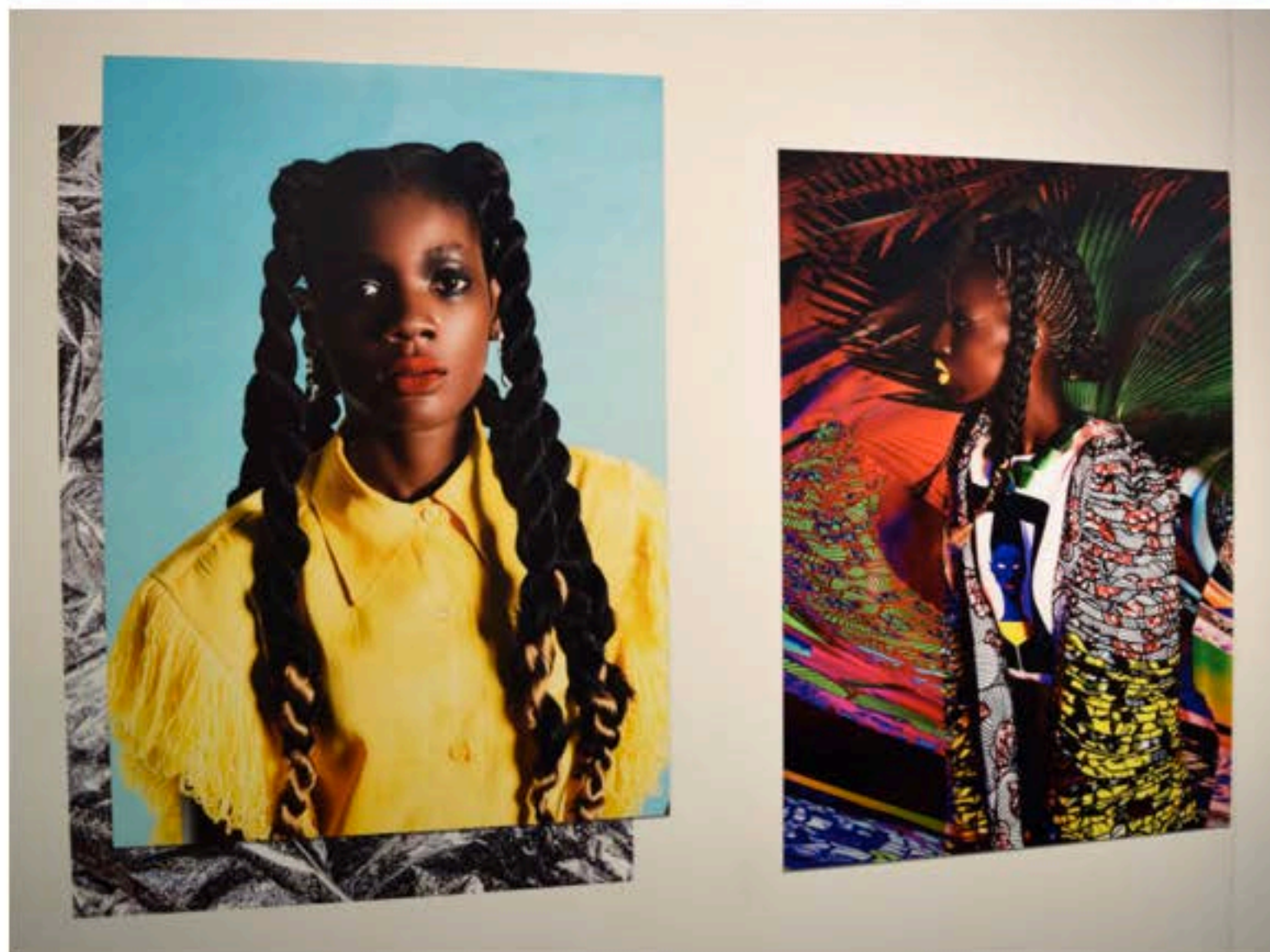


Left: artist Ed Young handing out "YOUR MOM" balloons in the 2016 Armory Show's Focus section; right: a teddy bear in an Oakland Raiders hat holding several of Ed Young's "YOUR MOM" balloons at one of the 2016 Armory Show's main intersections (click to enlarge)



Ed Young's "All so Fucking African" (2016) at the 2016 Armory Show

Amid works by such established masters as El Anatsui, Romuald Hazoumé, and Ibrahim El-Salahi, "African Perspectives" also features impressive work by a set of younger artists. [Namsa Leuba](#), for instance, has filled the walls of Lagos gallery [Echo Art's](#) booth with her vibrant and colorful photo portraits.



Photos by Namsa Leuba in the Echo Art booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

Just past where Young and an assistant are filling the "YOUR MOM" balloons is a solo presentation of works by the Kenyan artist [Cyrus Kabiru](#), whose materials evoke the metal tapestries of El Anatsui, though the aesthetic is distinctly Afrofuturist. He fashions found objects into science-fiction glasses and masks, and several of the objects are on view in SMAC Gallery's booth, along with self-portrait photos of the artist wearing them.



Sculptures and a photograph by Cyrus Kabiru in the SMAC Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)



Cyrus Kabiru, "C-Stunner: Brazilian Mask" (2015) in the SMAC Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show

Also in the Afrofuturist vein are two large paintings by [Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga](#) that anchor [October Gallery's](#) booth. With skins of circuitry, his cyborg figures don traditionally patterned clothes that pop against the paintings' bold, monochrome backdrops.



Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga's "Lost" (2015, left) and "No Identity, No Evolution" (2015, right) in the October Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

Patterns of a less glamorous sort figure prominently in [Dan Halter's](#) work in the booth of Cape Town's [Whatiftheworld Gallery](#). Two of his wall pieces and one freestanding mannequin are made up of the cheap plastic-weave bags often used to carry laundry. Meanwhile, his most provocative piece, "V for Vendetta" (2014), consists of five versions of the iconic Guy Fawkes mask that Halter commissioned from artists in different regions of Africa.

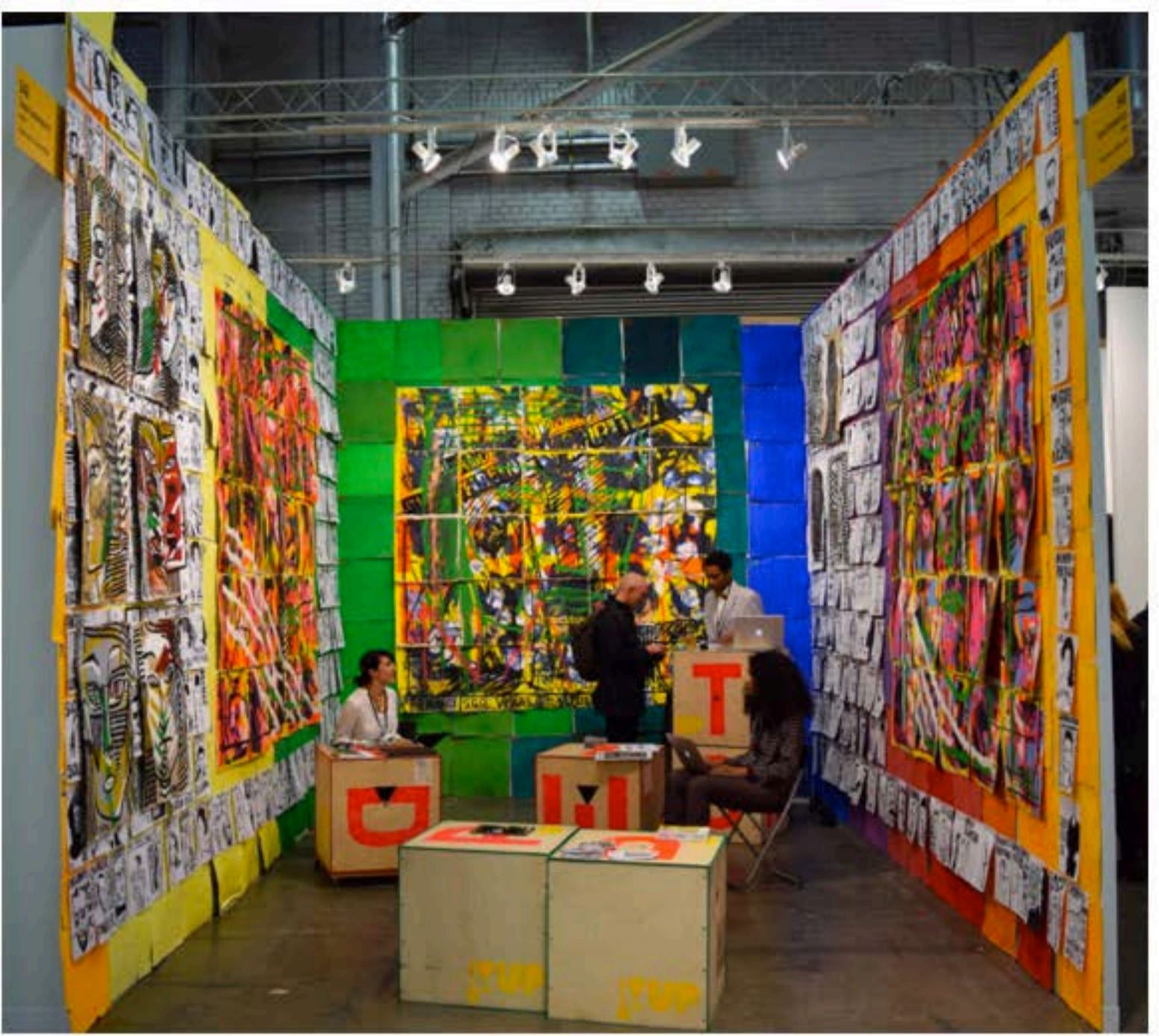


Installation view of works by Dan Halter in the Whatiftheworld Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show

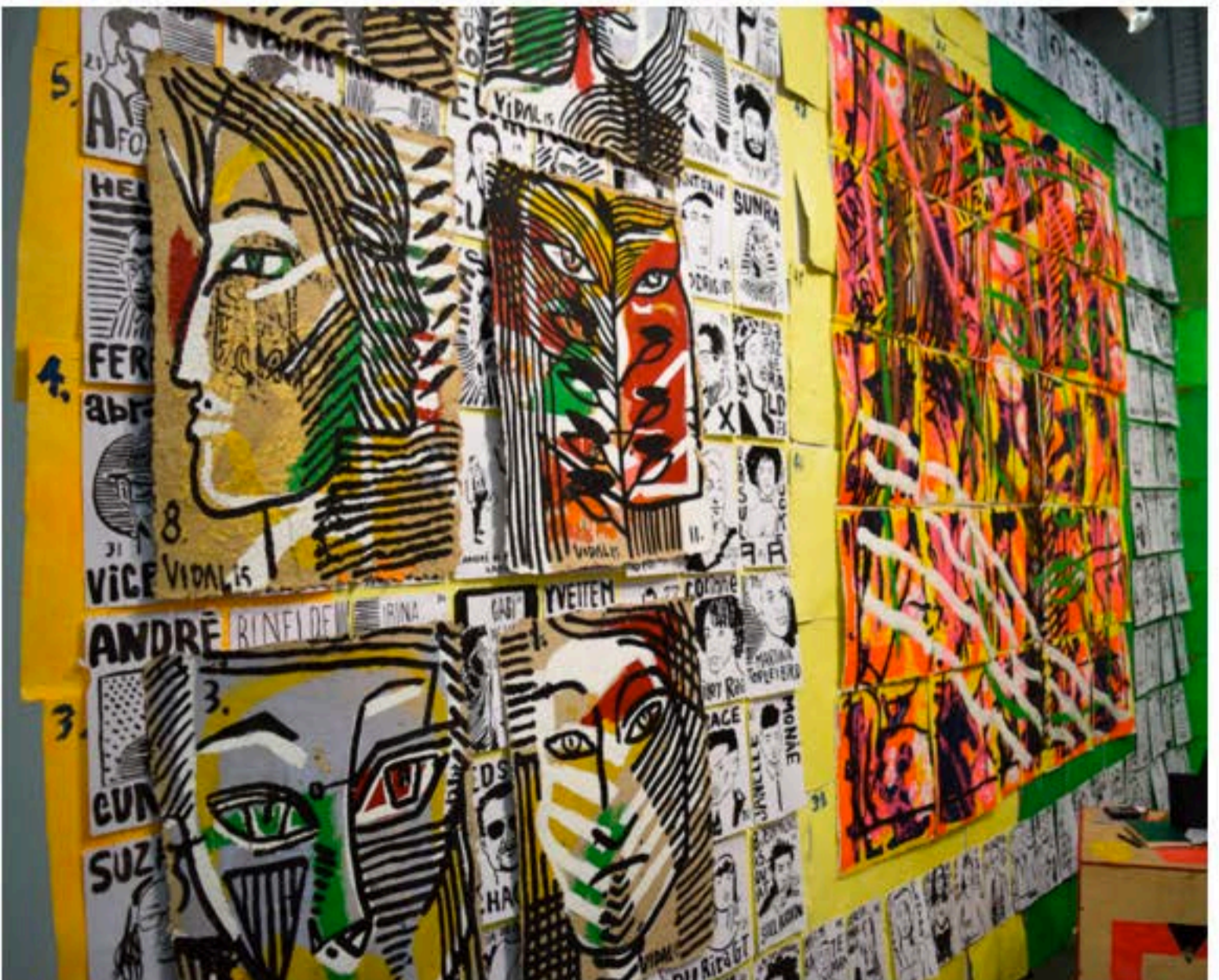


Dan Halter, "V for Vendetta" (2014) in the Whatiftheworld Gallery booth at the 2016 Armory Show (click to enlarge)

The "African Perspectives" section's most visually striking and copiously filled booth, however, belongs to [Tiwani Contemporary](#). There, amid his colorful murals on handmade paper, the Portuguese-Angolan artist [Francisco Vidal](#) has set up a temporary studio, where he's making portraits of figures from Duke Ellington to Janelle Monáe to the tune of a playlist of free jazz.



Francisco Vidal's installation in the Tiwani Contemporary booth at the 2016 Armory Show



*Detail of Francisco Vidal's installation in the Tiwani Contemporary booth at the 2016 Armory Show
(click to enlarge)*

(click to enlarge)

Like Huang's kinetic installation and Young's ambulatory "YOUR MOM" balloons, Vidal's use of the fair as a venue for making new work is a welcome reminder that contemporary art isn't only about six-figure paintings and shiny sculptures. It's an unwieldy and constantly shifting thing, and if you know where to look, you can even find evidence of this at the Armory Show.

The 2016 [Armory Show](#) continues at Piers 92 and 94 (West 55th Street and Twelfth Avenue, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan) through March 6.

[Armory Week 2016](#)

[art fairs](#)

[Carlos/Ishikawa](#)

[Cyrus Kabiru](#)

[Dan Halter](#)

[David Scanavino](#)

[Delson Uchôa](#)

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