

# VENUS

## MANHATTAN

# AID

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

### FAIRS

## Design Aplenty at Paris's FIAC Art Fair

The 45th edition of the show features a strong emphasis on Jean Prouvé and more

TEXT BY DAN THAWLEY • Posted October 19, 2018



A Franz West totem in the Jardin des Tuileries.

Photo: Marc Damage

After a blockbuster week at Frieze and Frieze Masters in Regent's Park, London, the art world's descent on Paris (and, more specifically, FIAC, inside the Grand Palais) comes at a time of exciting renewal in the city across the cultural sphere. In its 45<sup>th</sup> edition, FIAC has grown to become an important contemporary fair, arguably the most lucrative on the European continent after Art Basel, and this year's edition sees a crop of new, younger galleries like Shanghai-based Antenna Space and London cool kid Arcadia Missa join the fray. Other significant players returning include Paul Kasmin (New York), The Breeder (Athens), and High Art (Paris). With unseasonably warm fall temperatures, Parisians and traveling fairgoers stand in good stead to enjoy not only the fair itself but also a series of external installs across the city. Highlights include one of Jean Prouvé's 1958 prefabricated structures taking pride of place alongside a trio of steel *Ilots* (2010) by Claude Parent on the Place de la Concorde, and the globular pink *Dorit* totem (2002) by Franz West nearby Pablo Reinoso's vein-like coven of steel witches that emerge from the Tuileries fountain. Over at the Place Vendôme, red metal starfish by Elmgreen & Dragset are clamped to the pavement—a comment on recent metro floods and the potential results of climate change.

Within the fair itself, close to two hundred galleries cover the entire expanse of the Grand Palais and circle its mezzanine, with emerging galleries upstairs and an even smaller five-booth “lounge” devoted to Parisian design galleries on the ground floor. Among the latter, a pointed emphasis on Prouvé marks this year's offer, with Francois Laffanour's Galerie Downtown pairing his shelves and porthole doorway (both 1951) with an impressive purple Wolfgang Tillmans from his *Freischwimmer* series, while neighboring gallerist Patrick Seguin offered a more didactic approach: displaying structural elements from the architect's demountable housing practice alongside photographic studies and models of his work.

Elsewhere, design elements found their way into the offering of many galleries and projects, in not only their approach to showing art but the pieces themselves. Of particular note were pieces like Bertrand Lavier's *Tango* (2018), a red acrylic-brushed console at Xavier Hufkens that appeared to jump straight out of an oil-painting into the third dimension, and Carl André's iconic assemblage of

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copper squares over at Thaddaeus Ropac—daring punters to take a closer look at a brilliant Robert Rauschenberg by stepping on its reflective surface. Blurring the lines further was Paul Kasmin, who placed one of Walton Ford’s spectacular fauna studies (here, a panther) above Claude Lalande’s *Crocodile Bench*, drawing the kind of opulent parallel to a collector’s home that most booths fail to achieve (or more specifically, rarely attempt to).

Taking a more immersive approach, Swiss gallery Gmurzynskya tapped French creative director Alexander de Betak to design their booth. Best known for his work producing the decor for fashion shows from Saint Laurent to Christian Dior, he transformed Gmurzynskya’s display into a lifelike fire station replete with plate steel flooring and fire engine red walls: the harsh frame showcasing his curation of fire-themed works from the likes of Yves Klein, Alberto Burri, and Miró. Betak’s radical touch made for one of the most eye-catching scenes at the fair, while Gagosian’s Katharina Grosse takeover came a close second, with her rainbow explosion of logs and cloth entitled *Ingres Wood* that included a pile of massive logs—the casualties of recent tree surgery efforts at the Villa Medici in Rome.

Further single-artist projects of note included a large, decorative body of work by the cross-dressing British artist Grayson Perry at Victoria Miro, celebrating Perry’s first French retrospective opening at La Monnaie de Paris. From wall-size tapestry and woodblock prints to plates and vases, Perry’s highly ornate, labor-intensive creations explore international cultural diaspora and global politics, with new works touching on both Brexit and the #MeToo movement (one vase naming Harvey Weinstein among its carefully scrawled subjects). Close by, 303 Gallery’s airy sculpture install by Alicja Kwade was a tranquil highlight and undoubtedly Instagram fodder, as her framed screenlike structure reflected columnar bronze tree stumps and willow branches in dialogue with mirrored panels and negative space.

Softening elements also prevail throughout as gallerists adapted to the conventional confines of the white cube space housed within the splendor of the Grand Palais’s vaulted glass domes. Backdropped in pale jade, a slick pair of Thomas Demand acrylic C-print photographs invited viewers toward the Sprüth Magers booth populated with tall, minimalist sculptures by Thea Djordjadz and Kaari Upson, while over at Almine Rech a salon feel abounded: the spruce green carpet underfoot perfectly complementing the verdant tones of Julian Schnabel’s curved 1994 oil *2<sup>nd</sup> Landscape Without Gravity*. At Gavin Brown’s Enterprise, a trio of large-scale Alex Katz paintings elicited their own harmonies (of scale, too), in some of the most accomplished new works at a fair brimming with exciting new paintings, from the likes of Brazilian wunderkind Lucas Arruda to new Chinese talent Xinyi Cheng—both bringing moments of quiet romance in a marketplace awash with politics, political art, and the all too common sensation of *déjà vu*.