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## "Resistance and feminism: what to expect from this year's Armory Show"

By Nadja Sayej

The much-anticipated contemporary art fair hits New York with a range of provocative pieces, taking aim at Trump and highlighting the work of female artists



▲ The Armory Show in 2017. Photograph: Aria Isadora/BFA.com

It's that time of year again, when black-clad art enthusiasts descend upon New York's Armory Show, the labyrinth-like contemporary art fair at Piers 92 and 94 in midtown Manhattan. Kicking off 8 March, over 200 international art galleries will set up their booths in the white wall jungle to dazzle, sell and sizzle on Instagram. Let's hope they have free wifi.

On top of your painting and photo fare, there will be tech-inspired artworks in the new Focus section, where 34 artists imagine a post-human world. From 3D-printed sculptures to digital spiritualism, it's curated by Gabriel Ritter, who is fascinated by our online personas.

Olafur Eliasson's Reality projector: 'No more secrets – at least not here'

"The internet and social media have created an elastic space of human identity, allowing individuals to reimagine themselves in a myriad of ways that were previously unthinkable," he says. "The physical body continues to remain a constant – maybe even a hindrance to future development."

Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is showing a computer-controlled water fountain which draws portraits of onlookers with water vapour sensors. Berlin artist Oliver Laric is showing a 3D-printed copy of an ancient sculpture from Europe and Johannesburg artist Tabita Rezaire, a hybrid artist-yoga teacher, taps into our need to worship the screen with her angelic, Photoshopped self-portraits. Anne Libby, a New York artist, uses machine-cut objects for sculptures inspired by the prefabricated New York skyscrapers that keep springing up across the city.

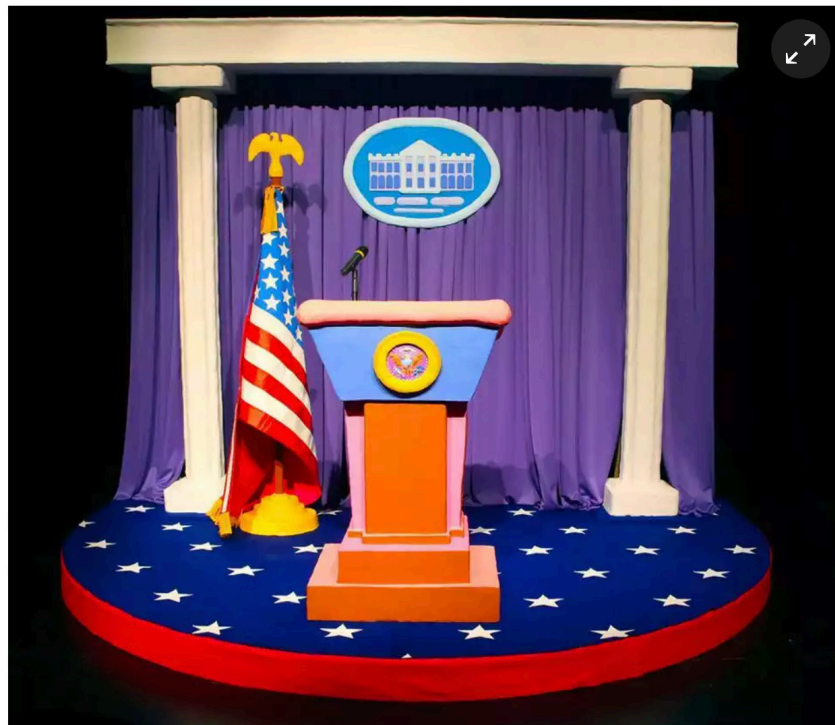
Outside the fair, there'll be a new public art piece by the French street artist JR, who photographed Syrian refugees at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Their portraits have been blown up larger-than-life and are pasted outside Pier 94.

Expect a flurry of protest art-inspired projects for the Platform section curated by Jen Mergel, as there will be an installation by Wilmer Wilson IV, who has republished a letter to a Mississippi newspaper dated 1919, which threatens to "burn the entire state" if the lynching of black citizens didn't cease, while the South African artist Mary Sibande shows a sculpture inspired by the anti-apartheid Purple Rain protest in Cape Town from 1989.

For a critical look at the state of America, there's the Spring/Break Art Show, a political exhibition now in its seventh year. This year's theme is A Stranger Comes to Town, or resistance art against the alt-right.

"In light of the rise in nationalism throughout the world and the new outward-facing xenophobia voiced by white supremacists and the current US president, this show addresses divides and tensions between being an 'outsider' versus being 'one of us,'" said Spring/Break's co-founder, Andrew Gori.

It features work from Nate Lewis who shows tense moments from the presidential inauguration with images of African Americans taken from social media, while Kumasi J Barnett paints over Spider-Man comic covers to show a new alter-ego named The Amazing Black Man.



▲ Installation recreation of the White House's James S Brady Briefing Room 2018 Photograph: Macon Reed curated by Helen Toomer



A life-sized replica of the White House's press briefing room has been recreated by artist Helen Toomer, who will use it as a theatrical stage (designed by Macon Reed) for performances throughout the weekend under the title: A Pressing Conference.

A small splash of political art makes its way to the Armory too, as they're featuring the first-ever US exhibition by controversial Chinese artist Huang Rui, a staunch critic of Mao and leading artist from post-revolution China. Rui plays with political slogans, propaganda and piles of banknotes to com-

ment on the country's economy hardship and censorship.

One might guess the Armory would bring a feminist edge, especially since the fair's new director Nicole Berry comes after the former executive director Benjamin Genocchio stepped down after allegations of sexual harassment surfaced last year. But is female empowerment a theme at this year's show?

"I believe that some of the artwork on view at this year's fair is more a reflection on the constant realities of oppression and inequality experienced by women, and less a reflection on recent popular movements," said Berry.

But it isn't just artists who use their voice, curators and gallerists can stand for change, rather than just play it safe.

For an all-woman cast, head over to the Scope Art Fair, where one special group show is curated by Miami gallerist Anthony Spinello, who puts the focus on feminist artists living in Miami. On view will be the works of the Cuban artist Clara Varas and Colombian artist Nathalie Alfonso, among other young female artists.

The show is inspired by the early works of the feminist art collective Guerrilla Girls – who trailblazed the museum world in the 1980s with protests and statistics to show sexism in the art world – as well as the artworks by the activist artist Micol Hebron.

"As I have become more aware of the extreme imbalance in the representation of women artists within the gallery system, museum acquisitions and the art fair market, I have sought to shift the paradigm," said Spinello.

"I consider myself an ally and a feminist and will continue to create platforms for women-identified artists as well as underrepresented and underserved communities."