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The Best Art at Frieze New York, Future Fair, NADA and Esther III

The spring art fairs offer a whirlwind chance to take in works in every style and medium—from rococo- and Renaissance-inspired paintings to digital sculptures that destroy themselves.

By Brian P. Kelly

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The scene at Frieze New York, the biggest art fair of a week full of such events. CASEY KELBAUGH / CKA

New York

Do I recommend going to four art fairs in 24 hours? Not really, especially if you have other pressing tasks on your to-do list, like sleeping and eating. But even if you skip a marathon art-viewing session this week, there's plenty to enjoy among the whirlwind of fairs dotted across the city like tornadoes on a Kansas plain.

Frieze is the biggest name in town, where the most prestigious galleries roll out their wares alongside rising exhibitors hoping to make it to the next level. The event was a bit more reserved this year than in recent outings, no doubt due to the fact that many dealers, enthusiasts and artists are still recovering from jet lag after returning from the recently opened Venice Biennale. But while La Serenissima may have claimed a bit of Frieze's energy, the art here still sings.

[...]

The most outward-looking art at the fair, however, is that of **Karla Knight**, whose paintings at Andrew Edlin are focused on extraterrestrial life and UFOs. In diagrammatic canvases that look like otherworldly computer chips, she writes her own invented language and creates charts and instructions inscrutable to the viewer—not a problem since they're meant for nonhuman entities. In the lineage both of outsider artists obsessed with aliens and of painters like Hilma af Klint who have looked to communicate the incommunicably spiritual in their work, these sharply detailed pieces are as absorbing as they are mysterious.