

BEST OF

Arts in Review

The 15 Best Movies and TV Shows of April**Tony Awards 2025: The WSJ's Critic on This Year's Nominees**

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NADA and TEFAF Reviews: Art Fairs That Rise Above

Two of the many fairs taking place in New York stand apart from the others thanks to bold and intriguing works.

By Brian P. Kelly

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Kemi Onabulé's 'Unteathered' (2025). PHOTO: SIM SMITH

New York

The city's spring art fairs are at peak activity at the moment, after the final major event, TEFAF, had its opening last night. Around New York there's much to see—from the tentpole Frieze; to smaller, more boundary-pushing fairs like Independent; to the dozens of gallery openings scheduled to coincide with the influx of culturally conscious visitors who descend upon the city this time each year. And that's not to

mention major museum exhibitions that deserve a place on any art lover's itinerary ([Rashid Johnson](#) at the Guggenheim; [Jack Whitten](#) at MoMA; [John Singer Sargent](#) at the Met; and [Amy Sherald](#) at the Whitney are all worth a visit).



Installation view of Haleigh Nickerson's work at Superposition Gallery's booth. PHOTO: SUPERPOSITION GALLERY

We're swimming through a sea of art offerings at the moment, but despite highlights outside the fair circuit, inside it, [as I reported yesterday](#), things are rather bland. Safe, often unchallenging work is commonplace at many of this year's events, an approach driven by a struggling art market and uncertainty about an increasingly turbulent global economic landscape. But for those who'd prefer not to sift through the flotsam on view elsewhere in search of a few artistic treasures, there are two stops I can almost guarantee will please.

The first is NADA, a show known for exhibiting early and midcareer galleries and artists. It's a place where rising talent is ripe for discovery—the New At Dealers Alliance takes that “new” seriously. While it too has yawed toward a more conservative program, that approach is less stark here than at the other fairs. The result is the best fair I've attended all week.

Joshua Nazario is just 23 years old, but his display at Embajada has a gravitational pull. The Puerto Rican artist, based in a rural part of the island, uses what materials he has at hand to craft his folksy creations that celebrate sports, cars and local life. Oversize plywood cutouts of helmeted racers' heads lend them an almost mythic stature, and a collection of canvases of various teams' jerseys lets you appreciate variations on a theme while also subtly noting that behind our divisions we can find unity in common interests. His painting of a cyclist blows his legs up to outlandish proportions, reminding us of the ways athletes focus on certain parts of their

physiques to meet the unique needs of their sports, while a group of painted-cement championship rings proves there is much to celebrate in even the humblest materials.



Danielle Fretwell's 'A Quiet Fall' (2025). PHOTO: ALICE AMATI, LONDON

Danielle Fretwell reimagines the place of the still life—both art historically and literally. Her hyper-detailed works point to Cézanne and Northern European painting among other influences, and by radically shifting the perspective—fruit is barely glimpsed at the top of the frame as a silky, merlot-hued tablecloth fills most of one image—she stakes out her own unique place in this storied genre.

Superposition Gallery has become the most important outlet when it comes to nomadic spaces, and continues to pioneer an alternative to the staid bricks-and-mortar gallery model. It proves that breaking free of the confines of a

permanent location can abet adventurous programming. The sequined, jewel-encrusted and gold-colored assemblages here, made up of radios transformed to look like purses by **Haleigh Nickerson**, tap into notions of black femininity and hip-hop history while embracing cultural traditions and bristling at stereotypes.

At Sim Smith's booth, **Kemi Onabulé** channels Gauguin in her warmly saturated paintings of bathers in the natural world. "A Stranger's Dream" offers a pensive study of two figures, while "Untethered" is a lush trio that vibrates with joy. **Maya Perry's** works at Rainrain are quietly disquieting. Domestic scenes riff on Kafka as giant bugs swarm a bathroom, a lizard crawls into bed, and a cockroach the size of a throw pillow rests on a couch. Despite the creepy-crawly imagery, life continues as usual in these curious, pastel-hued tableaux, in which the human figures seem unbothered by their cohabitants. And at CH64, Tbilisi-based **Niniko Morbedadze's** works on paper are even more mysterious: a tightly cropped ostrich in a cage, giant lizards crawling in a Georgian landscape, a woman locking heads with a grasshopper. Delicately rendered, these captivating scenes grab us and refuse to let us easily leave.



Niniko Morbedadze's 'Untitled' (2024). PHOTO: CH64

If NADA is an effervescent relief from the flat and stale flavor of the other fairs this week, TEFAF is a strong tonic. This event spans more than just contemporary art, exhibiting everything from of-the-moment creations to midcentury design, French Impressionism and sculptures from antiquity. What unifies these varied presentations is that they're all top-notch, with many museum-quality works being shown before they're swept into private collections and behind closed doors. Should an oil sheikh or the founder of a space-exploration company ever want to start his own museum, an afternoon shopping spree at TEFAF would instantly establish an impressive start to the enterprise.

A display of **Ruth Asawa's** hanging metal sculptures at David Zwirner, for example, offers iconic examples of her most recognizable style. Much of **Fernando Botero's** output feels forced, but Leon Tovar Gallery's showing of his large work "El Nuncio" (1987) was well-timed given the recent papal proceedings, and the painting itself was actually humorous. **Barkley L. Hendricks's** "Selina/Star" (1980), at Edward Tyler Nahem, is instantly recognizable as the artist's, with his portrait leaping out from a burst of radiant yellow. And a salon-style hanging of works on paper by **George Condo** at Gladstone could be restaged as a small institutional exhibition without changing a thing.



Maya Perry's 'My feelings for you without form are free' (2025). PHOTO: RAINRAIN

But the highlight of the fair—and possibly the week—was **Gustav Klimt's** “Prince William Nii Nortey Dowuona” (1897), shown by Viennese gallery W&K–Wienerroither & Kohlbacher. Long thought lost, the painting was rediscovered when a couple brought a photo of it to the gallery, only to be turned away by one of its workers. After hearing about the encounter, a co-owner of the space found them at a nearby café and contacted art historian Alfred Weidinger, who wrote the artist's 2007 catalogue raisonné.

He was shocked, having been looking for the painting for decades, and identified it as a missing portrait of an Osu prince from an area in modern Ghana, a subject that both Klimt and his artist friend Franz Matsch captured, likely on commission from the same client, who the gallery says opted to keep the latter's version but not Klimt's.

Seen in three-quarter profile from the waist up, the shirtless man is draped in an impressionistically rendered fabric and backed by brushy flowers while his face and body are finely executed. It is a startling example of early Klimt, before his best-known works. But it also points at the future ahead in which, as a member of the Vienna Secession, he would scandalize and change the art world, retaining figurative elements and finer details in his subjects' features while enmeshing them in ever-abstracting eddies of color and rich gold. With an asking price just over \$16 million, it's an artwork worthy of the royalty it depicts.

NADA

The Starrett-Lehigh Building, through May 11

TEFAF New York

Park Avenue Armory, through May 13

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Further Reading



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