

20 Pieces You Should Check Out at Art Fair Philippines 2020

Images and text by: Koji Arsua

I have made it my pilgrimage to visit Art Fair Philippines. I have not missed a single once since 2013 and I'm glad I made it to this year's edition. I found this run more exciting, especially the Special Projects section, which was tastefully curated by Norman Crisologo. The way the section was exhibited was cohesive, so moving from one exhibit to another felt more seamless.

This year had 61 galleries (compared to 52 last year) but the fair felt spacious and I was less overwhelmed. As a result, I was able to connect deeper to the pieces and find artwork that spoke to me. My friend Marz Aglipay, the head of digital content at Art+ magazine, has a tip: Start from the top and head your way down, ending the show with the Special Projects section.

If you're going to catch Art Fair Philippines 2020 from February 21 to 23 at The Link, Makati, here are the pieces you should check out:

1. Jellyfish Kisses' Soft Punk s/s 2020, a "safe space for queers, trans sisters, outsiders, or anyone who needs a safe environment." You can sit here and chat with the artist and take some fabrics to sew or embroider to the pieces.
2. Hauntingly beautiful works by Neil Pasilan. His works took up an entire wall and I was transfixed for a long time. They drew me in with their hypnotic quality.
3. This piece by Jaime de Guzman also drew me in
4. This special exhibit by Onib Olmedo
5. Cru Camara combined the natural world with the synthetic. He bathed plants in neon light, turning them into something alien.
6. Hokusai's Journey to the Waterfalls in Various Provinces, The Roben Falls in Sagami. Hokusai is an ukiyo-e painter from Japan's Edo period (1603 to 1868). You might know his iconic The Great Wave off Kanagawa, the print showing giant waves. This piece is for sale at P1.11 million.
7. Some Yayoi Kusama. She's a Japanese painter who has collaborated with Louis Vuitton featuring her polka dots.
8. These beautiful dead birds by Hara Takahiro, another Japanese artist.
9. These are actually sketches made by a ballpoint pen, by Mexican artist Alfredo Chamal. So beautiful.
10. I'm partial to Japanese artists during Art Fair. My favorite from this year is by Eimi Suzuki. I also got to meet her! The painting on the left? I screamed, "God is a woman!"

11. These post-apocalyptic paintings from Yavuz Gallery are also great.
12. Another set of paintings from a Japanese artist. This time it's from Tomohiro Takagi.
13. Cian Dayrit's Ego is made up of semen on paper.
14. Tin-aw's exhibit features Christina Quisumbing Ramilo's Well and Leeroy New's Dummy Dick Strap: Sheath.
15. Just a Fernando Amorsolo chilling on the wall. This exhibit had other masters like Pacita Abad, Ang Kiukok, Victorio Edades, and more.
16. Emmanuel Tolentino Santos's Shadow Earth series was pretty cool.
17. Yuka Machida's cock-eyed girls are always a highlight. This is my favorite from this year.
18. Dexter Sy's Souvenir and Do you remember when life is so simple and permanent' #1 were eerie.
19. Yeo Kaa goes straight for the jugular.
20. Remember Richard Gomez's painting that was sold for close to P200,000 at last year's ManilArt? You can now add your face to it for the perfect photo! This is actually hidden and I only found out about it when Jerome Gomez, the editor of ANC X, told me. From the ArtFairPH/Cinema section on the 5th Floor, go to the bar next to it and head out the exit. Tada! Be a art!

STORYTIME: I was having dinner on the 5th floor when I noticed I was seated next to Beauty Gonzalez, the star of the teleserye Kadenang Ginto. Just a side note, Beauty is a serious collector and is married to Norman Crisologo, the curator who managed this year's Special Projects section. Me being me, I wanted to greet her with a line from the show. I don't watch so I asked friends for help on Facebook. They were useful, offering quips like, "At bakit nandito ka na namang demonyo ka?" and "hindi ka muna papasok sa iskul, Cassie." After careful consideration, I decided to leave her alone because last night was the vernissage, a private event for collectors, curators, artists, and people from high society. So I pretended to be just as alta as the crowd and casually ignored her as people were glancing her way.

This Art Fair 2020 story is in partnership with Art Fair Philippines. For more information, visit the website or follow them on Facebook and Instagram. For more of my coverage, check out 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, and 2013.