

## Ben Davis Picks His 10 Best Booths at a Bubbling Expo Chicago 2015

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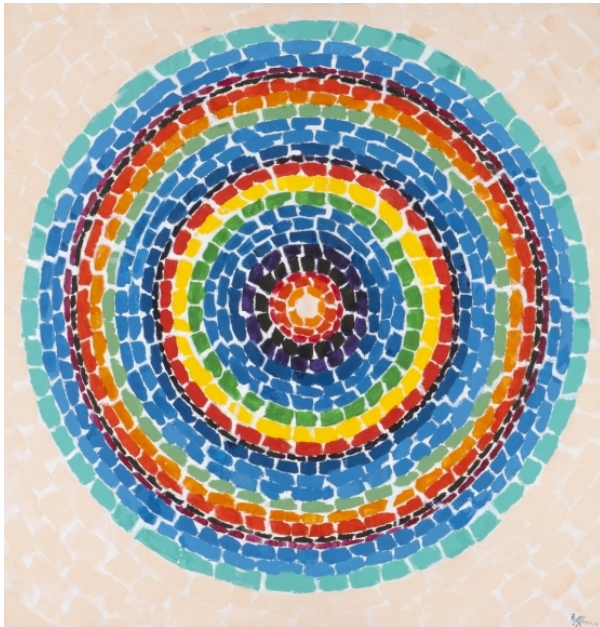
Over the next few days, the fourth annual Expo Chicago expects to draw tens of thousands of visitors to Navy Pier with the promise of a deep-dish Chicago-style serving of art. Below, a few of the artworks that stood out above the hubbub at yesterday's preview.

### 1. Mickalene Thomas at Kavi Gupta

This early self-portrait as an alter ego ("Quanikah"), done while Thomas was at Yale, lets you see in raw form the combination of artifice and vulnerability that later became threaded in as the very texture of Thomas's later, dazzling paintings.

### 2. Martin Wong at PPOW

A number of great Wong paintings are on hand at PPOW, but these works—actual road signs remade to feature his signature painterly motif of cartoon hands gesticulating in American sign language, created during a residency at the Department of Transportation—represent a quirky stage of a fascinating career that deserves to be better known.



Alma Thomas, Wind Dancing with Spring Flowers (1969)

### 3. Alma Thomas at Connersmith

The African-American color field painter is under-recognized today, even compared to the renown she found in her own time: This vibrant, rainbow-hued bullseye was actually featured on the cover of the exhibition catalogue for her 1972 Whitney Museum of American Art retrospective.

4. Doris Salcedo at White Cube

The Colombian artist's particular form of gritty eloquence is currently given the museum treatment at the Guggenheim. Salcedo's furniture packed with concrete and rebar insinuates brutality lurking in the everyday—while also conveniently standing here as the spiritual opposite of another cabinet-based work at White Cube, a slick display of shiny metal instruments by Damien Hirst.

5. Robert Gober at Matthew Marks

This small, resonant self-portrait in drag is the origin of a morphing motif that threads in and out of Gober's work: the depicted dress forming part of an installation in the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

6. Natalie Frank at Rhona Hoffman

Frank's fairy tale gouaches arrive at her Chicago gallery via stops at the Drawing Center and Blanton Museum of Art, pulling the guts out of the Brothers Grimm's dark tales and frying them up in unholy colors.

7. Joe Brainard at Pavel Zoubok

An all-around great booth, dedicated to serial works tapping Zoubok's signature staple of collage greats. But Brainard (1941-1994), the New York School poet and maker of witty collages, provides a cool centerpiece with this 104-piece summation of a career's worth of motifs in miniature.

8. Toshio Shibata at Laurence Miller Gallery

The Japanese photographer (b. 1949) captures with lovely precision the subtleties of wind tickling the water, the clear-eyed image projecting a cool serenity even above the cacophony of the fair.

9. Sara Greenberger Rafferty at Rachel Uffner

Rafferty's wonky layering of acrylic and print-out images of stockings suggests an ego spinning around and pulverized in the washing machine of contemporary culture, while still managing to be deftly individual.

10. Steve Lambert at Charlie James

Lambert is a sometimes collaborator with the Yes Men, the Graffiti Research Lab, and Greenpeace. He's a man on a mission to use art to discomfit the powerful. As for this particular image, literally a flashing sign, dealer Charlie James said, "It's classic Lambert."