

## OBSERVER

### Jessica Silverman: "FOG Design + Art Delivers Strong Sales and Institutional Momentum in San Francisco"

By Elisa Carollo  
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FOG Design + Art opened its 2026 edition with a highly attended preview gala benefiting SFMOMA. Photo: Natalie Schrik for Drew Altizer Photography

Auction houses may have only recently embraced the marketing potential of crossover luxury, experiential staging and lifestyle-inflected storytelling as a way to grow their audience beyond seasoned art-world insiders, but fairs like FOG Design+Art have been quietly refining that formula for more than a decade. Since its launch in 2014, FOG has banked on the seductive overlap between contemporary art and collectible design, crafting a seamless, tightly calibrated aesthetic experience that feels distinctly rooted in San Francisco—one that draws a broad local audience without relying on digital spectacle or NFT-driven narratives typically expected in the tech-wealth ecosystem of the Bay Area.

The fair officially opened on Wednesday evening, January 21, with its annual gala benefit in support of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's education initiatives. Earlier that day, the museum announced the acquisition of 85 works for its collection, including drawings by Ruth Asawa, paintings by Michael Armitage and works by established figures such as Firelei Báez, Dorothea Lange and Gabriel Orozco. Particularly notable was the inclusion of a strong group of Indigenous artists, including Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Kay WalkingStick, Raven Chacon and Cannupa Hanska Luger.

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With a deliberately hybrid identity, FOG connects art, design and architecture within a single, tightly curated platform that “mirrors the Bay Area’s interdisciplinary culture,” as its mission states—an ethos that felt especially tangible during the opening gala. Amid champagne flutes and fully open sushi counters, booth conversations leaned toward active negotiations rather than the familiar ritual of air kisses and polite chatter that often defines first-day openings at fairs like the Armory Show in New York. Regional representatives of major galleries arrived clearly attuned to what they were bringing to resonate with the local audience.



Wendi Norris Gallery. Glen C. Cheriton

The atmosphere defied the art world’s usual first-day pressure, cultivating instead a relaxed, almost chez-home vibe where local collectors and the broader community could celebrate themselves while engaging seriously with the work on view. “The energy at this year’s fair is unmistakable, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive from dealers and collectors alike,” FOG Design+Art director Sydney Blumenkranz told Observer the day after the gala. “Sales have been robust, exhibitor presentations are exceptionally thoughtful, and there’s a palpable excitement around coming together in person to celebrate the creativity and vitality of our community.”

What stood out—and might come as a surprise to a FOG first-timer—was the consistent presence of ambitious, institution-worthy work across the booths. Visionary artists dominated the floor, many of whom are rarely spotlighted at American fairs. Energetic abstractions, luminous cosmologies and mystical or technologically speculative approaches—often positioned at the intersection of art, science and technology—defined much of the visual terrain, appealing to both a discerning audience and to California’s enduring legacy of spiritual, metaphysical and transcendental inquiry.

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This is a territory longtime San Francisco gallerist Wendi Norris knows well. Over the years, Norris has played a pivotal role in the rediscovery of visionary artists like Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, whose practices bridged mysticism, psychology and the symbolic unconscious. At FOG, her gallery staged a conversation between these historical figures and contemporary artists such as Simone Leigh, whom Norris was among the first to champion.



Leonora Carrington, *The Last Fish*, 1974; presented by Wendi Norris. SCOTT SARACENO

A painting by Carrington, *The Last Fish*, felt hauntingly ominous with its charged, almost apocalyptic landscape that merged the increasingly imminent threat of environmental catastrophe with the specter of World War III. Also on view were the luminous, mandala-like entanglements of Marie Wilson, an overlooked artist Norris is currently spotlighting with a solo exhibition opening this week. Wilson's intricate negotiations between micro and macro cosmos—personal visions and cosmically attuned ones—emerge from the intersection of Northern California's spiritual and cultural terrain and the intellectual legacy of European Surrealism. Two of her paintings sold within the first hours for \$120,000 and \$65,000, respectively. The gallery also placed a work by Wolfgang Paalen for \$350,000 and a compelling piece by contemporary Indian artist Roshini Devasher, whose practice blends scientific observation with a more transcendent, almost magical, perception of natural life.

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Elsewhere, Gladstone Gallery showcased one of Anicka Yi's technologically hybrid, deep-fried tempura flower works, alongside the evanescent, poetic presence of Marisa Merz. Marian Goodman Gallery, in its 11th appearance at FOG, anchored its booth with a large, poetic installation by Álvaro Urbano, flanked by institution-grade works by Nairy Baghramian, Marcel Broodthaers, Ana Mendieta, Delcy Morelos, Julie Mehretu and Adrián Villar Rojas—presentations that felt notably more ambitious than the typical fare aimed at quick sales. Still, both a rare, sentimental clay sculpture by Merz and the Anicka Yi sold within the first hours for \$350,000 and \$100,000, respectively, along with works by Robert Bechtle (\$150,000), Aaron Gilbert (\$55,000), Richard Mayhew (\$350,000), Wangechi Mutu (\$60,000) and Richard Aldrich (\$35,000), plus a photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe (\$30,000) and all three Robert Rauschenberg Kyoto drawings on view, at \$110,000 each.

Another long-established San Francisco powerhouse, Jessica Silverman, presented a sharp group exhibition titled "Out of the Blue," tapping into the current collecting appetite for the color. Unsurprisingly, collectors gravitated toward the blue-toned booth, driving multiple sales, led by a painting by Loie Hollowell at \$450,000. Silverman also placed paintings by Rupy C. Tut and Clare Rojas at \$60,000 each, followed by works by Luke Butler and David Huffman at \$26,000 each, Chelsea Ryoko Wong at \$20,000 and Ana Elisa Egreja at \$16,000. Sculptural and object-based works also attracted buyers, including a glazed ceramic by Sam Falls at \$60,000, wall-based pieces by Margo Wolowiec and Davina Semo at \$45,000 each, a sculpture by Masako Miki at \$40,000 and one by Rebecca Manson at \$30,000.



Jessica Silverman. Courtesy Jessica Silverman Phillip Maisel

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In an era defined by overexposure and an overwhelming density of global events, FOG has resisted the logic of scale—opting from the outset for a relatively small exhibitor list and a curatorial approach that favors focused presentations and thoughtful dialogue with its venue. These choices enhance accessibility and sharpen the aesthetic experience for both seasoned fairgoers and newcomers. The formula has proven particularly effective in engaging the region’s tech-generated wealth, a constituency long present in the Bay Area yet historically difficult for the art world to court—let alone convert into committed buyers.

A particularly clear articulation of that curatorial stance was FOCUS, a section that was all but unavoidable for anyone entering from Pier 2. Featuring 16 expansive solo presentations by artists at earlier stages of their careers, the section was designed with a fluid booth layout that softened spatial boundaries and encouraged a more relaxed, conversational mode of viewing between galleries.

In a prime position right at the entrance, another established local gallerist, Catherine Clark, presented the curated conversation “In Between Spaces,” centered on migration, labor and ancestral traditions. The booth brought together Lehuauakea’s native Hawaiian patterns—dense with diaristic and historical traces—with Alejandro Cartagena’s works on amate paper, the material used by his Indigenous Mexican ancestors to record stories. These were placed in dialogue with Arleene Correa Valencia’s reinterpretations of landscapes as humanscapes and ecologies, examining the social, urban and environmental conditions shaping Latin America. A major textile installation by Lehuauakea sold within the very first hours to a major American museum for \$225,000. In addition, two smaller amate works by Arleene Correa Valencia sold for \$3,800 each.



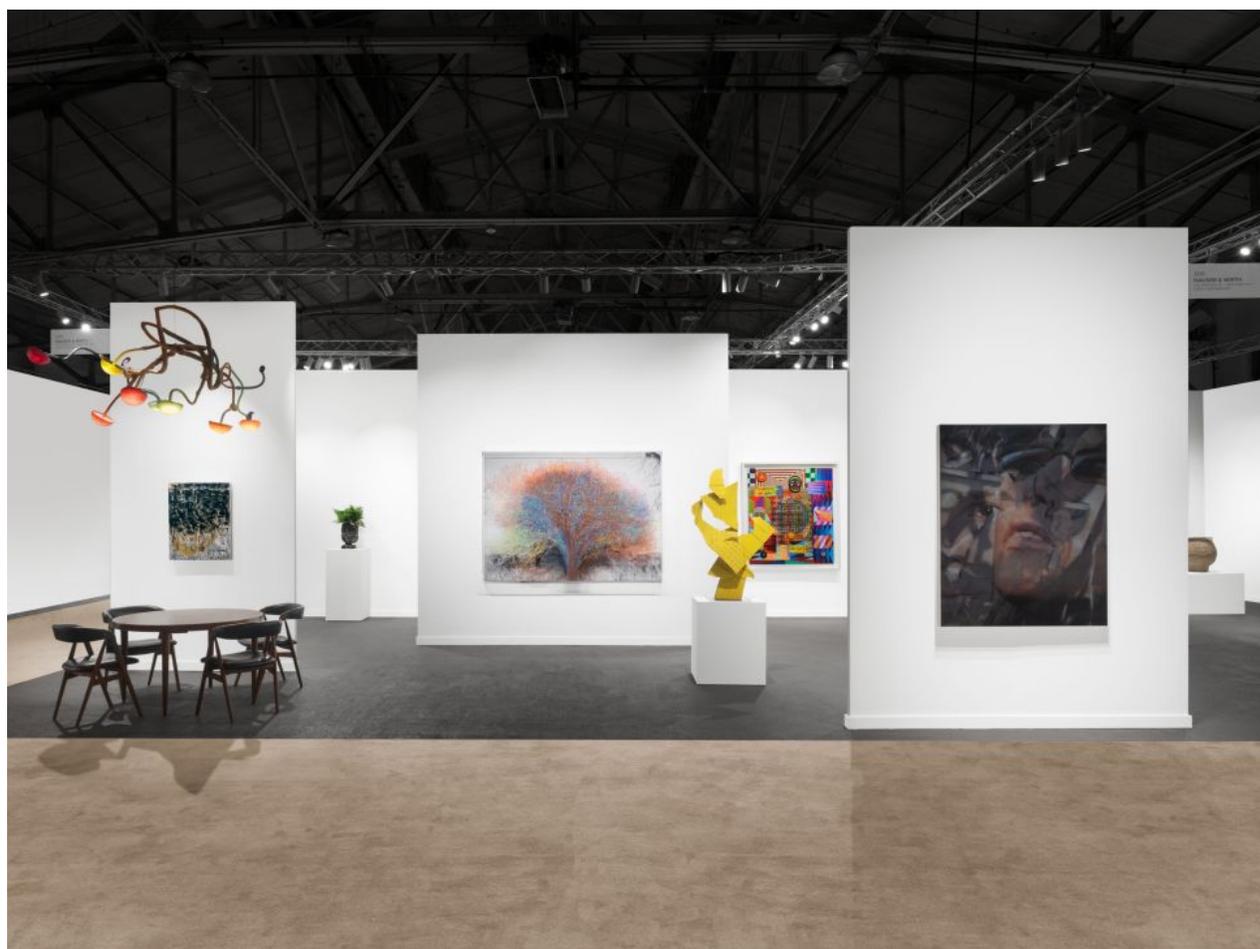
Catharine Clark Gallery. Catharine Clark Gallery

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Confirming the level of engagement among the crowd, there was a healthy number of closures on gala night across multiple price tiers, by both local and out-of-town galleries. With a broad selection, Hauser & Wirth reported several sales, led by a Jack Whitten work that sold for over \$1 million—the highest-priced transaction at the fair so far. Other standout placements included *Broken Soul* by Rashid Johnson at \$750,000 and a striking Luchita Hurtado painting from the 1970s at \$695,000, along with smaller works priced around \$40,000. Additional sales included a large tree work by Charles Gaines (\$595,000), a painting by Avery Singer (\$575,000), two works by Jeffrey Gibson (\$375,000 and \$275,000), two more works by Whitten (\$80,000 and \$45,000), a sculpture by Lee Bul (\$260,000), works by Ambera Wellmann and two Glenn Ligon pieces priced between \$195,000 and \$25,000.

Amanda Stoffel, Hauser & Wirth partner and head of sales, California, captured the spirit of the opening well, noting how the first day underscored the vitality of San Francisco as a center for art and ideas. "The energy, collaboration and growth we feel here reaffirm our long-term commitment to the region, and we're proud to be building alongside this extraordinary community," she said.



Hauser & Wirth. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Photo: Dawn Blackman

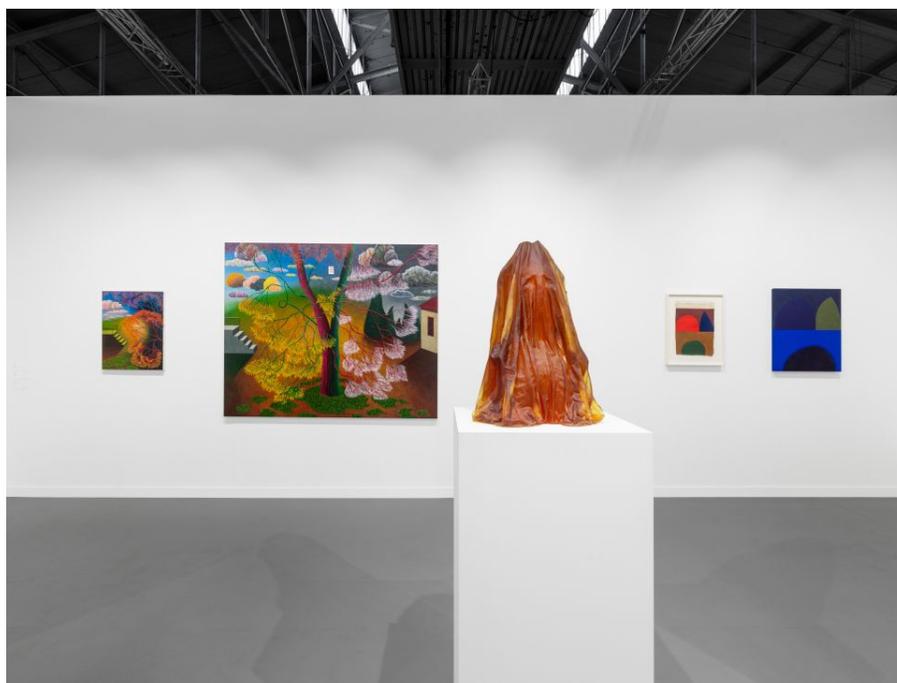
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Meanwhile, David Zwirner placed two hanging sculptures from the 1960s and two works on paper by Bay Area artist Ruth Asawa, riding the momentum of SFMOMA's extensive survey currently on view at MoMA in New York. The gallery also sold two new paintings by Scott Kahn that covered an entire wall, along with a new drawing by Toba Khedoori, two new paintings by Walter Price, a new painting by Lucas Arruda, a new bronze sculpture by Dana Schutz and a new painting by Suzan Frecon, in addition to two new watercolors by the artist.

Making their first appearance at FOG—choosing it over Los Angeles this year—Belgian mega-dealer Xavier Hufkens described the fair as aligning precisely with what they value: intimate, rigorous and genuinely conversational. The debut paid off commercially, with works by Tracey Emin, Nathanaëlle Herbelin, Tatiana Trouvé and Ken Price quickly finding homes in San Francisco.

Catering to San Francisco's extensive Asian—and particularly Korean—community, Perrotin presented a solo booth dedicated to the work of Korean-American artist Young-Il Ahn (1934–2020), with prices ranging from \$25,000 to \$250,000. Ahn spent more than five decades in California, where the landscape, light and atmosphere deeply shaped his practice. A highlight of the booth was an early *Water* painting from the 1980s, exemplifying the artist's fascination with water's refractive qualities. On gala night alone, five works sold in the \$25,000–\$170,000 range, all inspired by the interplay of light across water surfaces.



David Zwirner. Courtesy David Zwirner

Institutions from the West Coast were also active early on. Catherine Clark was not the only gallery to secure an institutional acquisition within the first hours—London-based dealer Josh Lilley had already placed one of the spiritually and mythologically charged works by Utoyo artist Rember Yahuarcani with an American institution.

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Young, dynamic San Francisco-based gallerist Jonathan Carver Moore secured an institutional placement on preview day for a monumental work by Cameroonian artist [Sesse Elangwe](#). The piece is part of a series inspired by Elangwe's time in San Francisco as the gallery's fourth artist in residence. Guided by a mission to support and create opportunities for LGBTQ and BIPOC communities, Carver Moore's integration of a residency program into the gallery's core business has fostered deeper, more human connections with artists—connections that extend to collectors, many of whom arrive at the fair already knowing exactly whom they want to support. A second, medium-sized work was placed with another prominent San Francisco-based collector. Now based in San Antonio, Elangwe is known for psychologically charged portraits that celebrate both the vitality and resilience of Black communities, resulting in powerful images that feel both emphatically intimate and expressively monumental; his work is already held in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Green Family Art Foundation.

Charles Moffett, for example, sold out its presentation of new works by Los Angeles-based artist [Hopie Hill](#), including a series of nine paintings that continue her contemporary, intimately personal engagement with the still life tradition. Prices ranged from \$8,000 to \$16,000. Nearby, Anat Ebgi reported a strong first day marked by early sales led by Gloria Klein at \$75,000, followed by two works by Jordan Nassar at \$25,000 each and a sculptural piece by Krzysztof Strzelecki at \$12,000.

Among the discoveries of the fair was the solo booth of poetic works by Mongolian and Paris-based artist [Odonchimeg Davaadorj](#). Her delicate yet emotionally visceral watercolors depict symbiotic entanglements between humans and nature, unfolding in continuous metamorphosis that blends mythic elements with personal narrative—conveying a quietly urgent message of interconnection and interdependence. Though Davaadorj has already had notable institutional appearances—including at the Musée d'Orsay and the Stedelijk Museum—her works were accessibly priced, starting at \$1,500 and all under \$10,000. Unsurprisingly, several sold within the first hours of the gala, with most of the remaining works placed on hold.

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Megan Mulrooney. Courtesy Megan Mulrooney at FOG Design + Art 2026

Megan Mulrooney, based in Los Angeles, also reported what she described as “a fantastic start,” with nearly all the ceramics by British artist Alma Berrow—works that address cigarette addiction and other pleasures—selling out. The gallery also saw strong interest in Nicolas Shake’s natural impressions of commercial signage. What at first glance might read as Ed Ruscha-inspired instead unfolds as a sedimentary meditation on time, natural cycles, entropy and human control. By collaborating with natural agents—leaving canvases exposed to the desert sun and sand—Shake allows commercial signs to imprint themselves over time, transforming into records of duration and exposure.

Although design comes first in FOG’s name, it was never overemphasized in the main section. Instead, it appeared as an integrated and often subtle presence throughout the fair. This was evident in thoughtfully curated dialogues such as the one staged by Los Angeles-based Marta, which paired the organic forms of Minjae Kim’s design objects with Dominik Tarabański’s painterly, meticulously staged photo still lifes. The pairing captured delicate moments of equilibrium between the human tension of weaving and the natural harmony of interspecies relations within cycles of decay, transformation and regeneration.

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Dominik Tarabanski is known for photographs of meticulously arranged florals. Courtesy Dominik Tarabanski

Paris-based Marie Wettergren—whose eye bridges Scandinavian and Asian design—placed several works by Gjertrud Hals on gala night, while strong interest also emerged for pieces by Hyjeong Ko, Margrethe Odgaard and Alberte Svendsen, designers who had already generated a notable response at Design Miami Paris. The London-based Gallery FUMI returned once again to the fair, continuing its long-standing relationship. "It's a fair we're deeply attached to. There's a strong community that truly understands and appreciates what we do, and engages with our ethos with authentic energy," founders Valerio Capo and Sam Pratt told Observer. For them, FOG remains one of the rare fairs where leading design galleries exhibit alongside art galleries, fostering a meaningful and dynamic dialogue.



Gallery FUMI. Stéphane ABOUDARAM

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Another project underscoring how FOG embraces fluid, cross-category practices capable of reaching beyond a narrow circle of art connoisseurs was *KIOSKO 94* by Jasko Begovic, presented by Cult Aimee Friberg. Half shop, half workshop, the interactive installation by the Bosnian-born, San Francisco-based artist recreated his Bernal Heights storefront studio as a performative, community-driven marketplace. Visitors could meet the artist, observe him sewing and purchase art and clothing in a setup reminiscent of capsule-style concept stores popular among Millennial and Gen Z audiences.

Operating at the intersection of art, fashion and sports, Begovic explores identity, belonging, spirituality and exclusion. Beneath the installation's apparent playfulness, the use of found fabrics and objects referencing countries affected by war revealed a deeply personal history while engaging questions central to the present moment. "It's my story, but it's everyone's story," Begovic told Observer while seated in front of a sewing machine. His aim, he said, is to make both the work and its message accessible, allowing anyone who resonates with it to participate—or afford to make it their own. Spanning garments, toys, tapestries, accessories and drawings, prices ranged from \$5,000 to free.



Jasko Begovic's *KIOSKO 94* is an iterative installation that was first presented in his solo exhibition "REFUGEES R US" at CULT Aimee Friberg in the fall of 2025. Photography by Nicholas Lea Bruno, courtesy of the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg

Meanwhile, the FOG MRKT at the entrance of the main pavilion further extended this ethos of accessibility—offering visibility to independent designers and creators who are often reimagining traditional crafts and mediums with a contemporary lens.

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Beyond the opening-night gloss, sales continued fluidly into the following day, as FOG remained firmly anchored within San Francisco’s often underestimated cultural ecosystem of world-class institutions and an expanding gallery scene. Through an expanded public program—including more technology-focused conversations around A.I. and artistic practice—and a schedule now aligned with other key cultural players across the city, FOG has grown into something more than a standalone marketplace. It remains locally rooted and community-engaged, yet able to attract international offerings. As it enters its second decade, the fair is already functioning as connective tissue within San Francisco’s cultural ecosystem—testing how the city’s tech-driven wealth, cultural ambition, creative energy and spiritually inflected legacy might be brought into sustained dialogue to shape what comes next.



Exhibitors reported strong early sales and sustained engagement throughout the preview evening, signaling continued confidence in the fair and the Bay Area’s dynamic cultural ecosystem. Photo: Ando Caulfield for Drew

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