

Jessica Silverman: "Abundance of botanical forms and monumental paintings reflects optimism at San Francisco's Fog Design+Art fair"

By Tara Anne Dalbow

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A visitor to the gala preview of the Fog Design+Art fair's 2026 edition Photo by Drew Altizer Photography

The fair's 12th edition opened with record attendance at its gala preview and eye-catching stands blurring boundaries between art and design

The walkway between piers 2 and 3 at the 12th edition of Fog Design+Art in San Francisco might have been a red carpet for how star-studded it appeared during the fair's preview gala on Thursday night (22 January). Everywhere one looked, there were sequin capes, glittering gowns, bedazzled blazers and rhinestone-encrusted ties. The fair's director, Sydney Blumenkranz, says the gala is always high-energy but this year's mood seemed particularly buoyant. More than 2,700 guests crowded the aisles over the course of the night, the highest number of preview gala attendees in the fair's history.

First-time visitors and returning dealers alike praised the quality of the 65 presentations at the fair this year. Works by local and international emerging artists share wall and floor space with those by canonical masters like Ruth Asawa and Leonora Carrington. The San Francisco dealer Jessica

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Silverman's stand, one of the fair's most distinctive, gathers blue-hued works from more than 20 artists including a Masako Miki cloud figure and one of Loie Hollowell's biomorphic abstractions—both of which sold on opening night.



Masako Miki, *Waiting Cloud*, 2025 Photo by Chris Grunder. Courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery

Hauser & Wirth's stand includes a tender Luchita Hurtado painting of the artist's bare torso with an egg in her butter-yellow hand, as well as a kinetic mixed-media work by Rashid Johnson. The gallery reported the biggest sale of the fair's evening, placing Jack Whitten's *Solar Space* (1971) for more than \$1m. "It felt like real momentum," says Amanda Stoffel, a partner and head of sales for California at Hauser & Wirth, "and a very promising signal for the year ahead."

Another potential harbinger of a better year for the art market was the ubiquity of large-scale paintings. The 2025 trend toward tiny canvases was replaced by monumental works like Jongsuk Yoon's colourful abstraction on Marian Goodman Gallery's stand, which stretches more than 26ft wide. Lisson is showing a nearly 8ft-tall, lavender-hued painting by the San Francisco native Oliver Lee Jackson. And David Zwirner's stand includes Portia Zvavahera's dreamy figurative composition *Takasunungurwa* (2025), which spans more than 8ft.

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Jack Whitten, *Solar Space*, 1971 © 2025 Jack Whitten Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Sarah Muehibauer

Alongside all the large-scale canvases, there are also a significant number of diminutive sculptures at Fog, from a 4in woven black ash and sweetgrass basket by Jeremy Frey on Karma's stand to a host of 2in glazed ceramic pots by Doyle Lane, showing with David Kordansky.

Among the paintings on view, geometric abstractions outnumber representation—with the exception of floral imagery. Tallying botanical compositions at the fair quickly filled a page in my notebook. On opening night, the New York-based gallery Charles Moffett sold out its booth of luscious, flower-filled still lifes by the Los Angeles-based artist Hopie Hill.

The fair offers a positive potpourri of floral forms: Berrguren's stand features a rich botanical collage with poppies, gladiolas and columbines by Jane Hammond; local dealer Wendi Norris is showing a large-scale painting of yellow daisies sprouting amongst dried grass by Enrique Martinez Celaya; and mesmerising botanical abstractions by Patricia Iglesias Peco are turning heads at François Ghebaly booth. Among other verdant works on Nino Mier Gallery's stand, Tony Matelli's hyper-realistic patinated bronze sculptures of white tulips on a plinth and weeds sprouting from the space where the wall meets the floor are drawing crowds.

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Hopie Hill, *Night Blooming Cereus and The Pleiades*, 2025 Photo by Ed Mumford, courtesy of the artist and Charles Moffett

Across the fair, nature is in and tech is out—though the sector’s influence is felt in other ways. “Numerous leaders from major tech companies attended,” Blumenkranz says of the preview gala, adding that their presence has become “expected now, which is so valuable to our arts community”.

The overwhelming majority of Fog’s participating galleries have opted to offer visitors from Silicon Valley and elsewhere a preponderance of natural imagery, organic materials and traditional crafts over digital works. Almost every stand, both of design and art galleries, features works in wood, ceramic or textiles—sometimes all three.

Highlights of this materially rich cohort include a wall-sized textile installation by Lehuauakea at Catherine Clark Gallery, which has sold to a US museum for \$225,000, and fresh ceramic works like Krzysztof Strzelecki’s urinal painted with homoerotic imagery (on Anat Ebgi Gallery’s stand) and Alma Berrow’s mirrored ashtrays littered with cigarettes in various states of wastage (showing with Megan Mulrooney). All three of the above are in the Fog Focus sector, an initiative dedicated to presentations of emerging artists that has nearly doubled in size from last year. Instead of traditional three-walled stands, the sector’s floorplan is open, giving Pier 2 a more infectious energy.

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Sesse Elangwe, *My Better Half*, 2025 Courtesy the artist and Jonathan Carver Moore

Jonathan Carver Moore, the director of the eponymous San Francisco gallery, which has participated in the Focus sector for the past three years, says the San Francisco community really showed up for the fair this year. "People treated it like a civic duty," he says. "With politics being what they are, and with the sudden closure of the California College of the Arts, everyone is doubling down on supporting the arts." Moore's presentation is part of the large-scale canvas trend, with epic paintings by Sesse Elangwe that the artist made during a residency at the gallery.

The Focus sector also includes presentations that trouble the distinction between art and design objects. Blunk Space, based in Point Reyes Station, is showing handmade salvaged wood chairs by the Japanese Austrian maker Rio Kobayashi alongside abstract paintings by the late sculptor J.B. Blunk's peers like Richard Bowman and candlesticks by contemporary artists like Maryam Yousif and Dan John Anderson. And on the stand of Los Angeles-based gallery Marta, Minjae Kim's sculptural fibreglass and brass lamps illuminate Dominik Tarabański's chiaroscuro prints of botanical still lifes. Perhaps this is where Fog Design+Art is at its best: when it's challenging staid hierarchies and blurring the lines between fine art, craft and design.

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