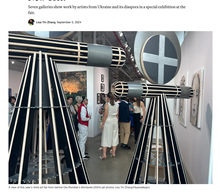
Art

Volta's Ukraine Pavilion Brings the War to New York

Seven galleries show work by artists from Ukraine and its diasporas in a special exhibition at the fair.

Lisa Yin Zhang, September 5, 2024



A view of Volta Art Fair, 2024 (courtesy Volta Art Fair and Hyperallergic, with thanks to Lisa Yin Zhang)

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"There workers are all about the war," Marta Stanishesha, who helped organize Mirja Gallery's showing at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta, told me as we toured the exhibition on opening night this Wednesday, September 4. She paused for a long moment. "Sorry," she said, shook her head, and continued. "And this painting is by Dmytro Strazhnyk…"

Take a hard left from the crowd that greets you at the fair's 20th Street entrance, and you'll find yourself in a special section of Volta devoted to Ukraine. Or, eventually, you'll find yourself in an aisle space. On the walls to each by artists from Ukraine and its diasporas, presented by Epic Small Business galleries the Naked Room and Dymchuk; Yi Gallery in Los Los Angeles-based Art Azure, Lisbon-based Pove, and Mirja and Black & White in New York. (Ha Kondak's large nude Moments (2024) sculptures, inspired by Ukrainian rug-little symbolizing fortune and crystal in collaboration with Kristina Krynytska and a team of artisans, stand guard in the corner.

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Until a particular Ukrainian exhibitionist, Yaz Cavalcante, who was appointed curator of the Volta fair summer, told me, "It's a bit weird" to be the Ukrainian an exhibition of what's happening in Ukrainian art right now.

Volta also holds a yearly fair in Basel, Switzerland. Why a specifiers here, and not there? "In Europe, we're closer to Ukraine," Cavalcante said. "I think we understand a lot more. Ukraine was invaded, and my gas prices went up. I think it's more satisfy here."

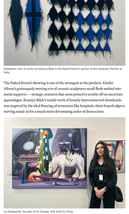
Volta's new to-do lists editing, this year's fair features more than 70 exhibitors across five continents and 25 countries and hundreds of works on view for a $30 ticket through September 8. This iteration of the contemporary art show, however, is the first to include a pavilion dedicated to a particular region, nation, or group.

Installation view of Volta Art Fair, 2024 (courtesy Volta Art Fair and Hyperallergic, with thanks to Lisa Yin Zhang)

Galleries seemed to confirm this sentiment. "It's important, being here, in New York," Stanishesha told me. "It means a lot."

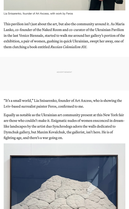
The significance of a sponsor also can't be underestimated. Volta partnered with Razom, a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting Ukraine, to invite Ukrainian organizations to participate in the fair. Razom's Kostyantyn Gryzunov, of the pavilion. While Cavalcante is planning on centering other regions, groups, or dimensionalities in future iterations of Volta, we are unlikely to see a Gaza or Palestine Pavilion with such a model, which relies heavily on external sources of funding.

Installation view of works by Kirsten Mauch in the Naked Room's section of the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta



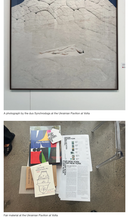
Installation view of works by Hanna Mytsyk in the Naked Room's section of the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta

The Naked Room's showing is one of the strongest at the pavilion. Kirsten Mauch's gorgeously moving oil ceramic sculptures recall Rick Owens's mid-aughts metal-esque — strange creatures that seem poised to scuttle off an uncertain apocalypse. Kostyna Mytsyk's exotic work of mostly monosexual thumbnails was inspired by the ritual flaying of sacrificial lambs, their frayed edges a moving stand-in for a much more devastating order of destruction.



Lia Tymoshenko, founder of Art Kyiv, with work by Pavlo

This photo isn't just about the dress, but also the community around it. As Marta Leshko, co-founder of the Naked Room and co-curator of the Ukrainian Pavilion in the last Venice Biennale, started to walk me around her gallery's portion of the exhibition, a pair of women, guiding my guide Ukrainian, swept her away, one of them clocking a book entitled *Russian Colonialism #10*.

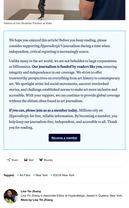


Installation view of Volta Art Fair, 2024 (courtesy Volta Art Fair and Hyperallergic, with thanks to Lisa Yin Zhang)

"It's a small world," Liz Sobieraska, founder of Art Azuma, who is showing the Lviv-based surrealist painter Pavlo, confirmed to me.

Equally as notable as the Ukrainian art community present at the New York fair are those who couldn't make it. Emigrants makes of women renowned in dreamlike landscapes by the artist duo Synchronology adorn the walls dedicated to Dymchuk gallery, but Marina Kovalchuk, the gallerist, isn't here. She is of fighting age, and they're not going on.

A photograph by the duo Synchronology at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta



Fair booth at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta

Booth at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta

Booth at the Ukrainian Pavilion at Volta

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Lisa Yin Zhang
Lisa Yin Zhang is Associate Editor at Hyperallergic, based in Queens, New York.
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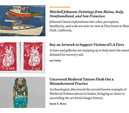

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Dr. Jo Lathe, reading Hyperallergic Dynasty's book made me consider how we can draw inspiration from Egyptian art without engaging Orientalistic — unwanted, even.
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Kathleen Ryan's large, things sculptures of resting fruit are a contemporary reckoning with the feeling of our cultural and media bombarding sensations, dazed.
Bridget Quinn

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Works critical of Germany and works by Palestinian artists were most likely to be "politically" labeled "politics, survey respondents said.
Pilar Vaquer

Mitchell/Johnson: Painting from Matisse, Rodin, Impressionism and Post-Modernism
Johnson's work, in particular, has been in conversation, familiarity, and scale can seem as vivid as Pina Bausch in Studio Park, California.
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