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Dealers get creative pairing artists at Duet—just don't call it an art fair

The new project, featuring 11 galleries and a group show, frames itself as an alternative to more conventional Armory Week fairs



The pop-up exhibition [Duet](#) makes its debut this week in Manhattan's Financial District with 11 galleries and a group show (until 8 September). It occupies the third and fourth floors of the WSA building—also host to the [Collectible design fair](#)—as well as a dramatically lit staircase ensconced in red velvet. As its name suggests, Duet's goal is to have galleries rethink artists' works through unique pairings in their stands. It is organised by the curators and childhood friends Zoe Lukov and Kyle DeWoody, the latter of whom is the daughter of [the collector Beth Rudin DeWoody](#).

Duet's exhibitors include François Ghebaly, Pace, Masa, Embajada, Dio Horia and James Fuentes. Each gallery occupies a glass-walled meeting room, nodding to the building's corporate past, and is showing two artists with a thematic connection. Spread among the exhibitors, the group show presents works by artists including Marina Abramović, Lynda Benglis, Maya Lin and Radcliffe Bailey alongside pieces by Karon Davis, Miles Greenberg, Carlos Motta, Sam Moyer, Brendan Fernandes and Naama Tsabar. Fernandes and Tsabar will perform throughout the weekend as part of the show.

"We are not trying to launch another art fair," Lukov tells *The Art Newspaper*. "These are gallery presentations that respond to the idea of a duet."

The gallerist Carlye Packer, for example, is showing a suite of lush abstract paintings by Jools Rothblatt alongside a small Lee Lozano work that it has on loan. The two painters have similarly dense compositions, but the pairing also winks at Rothblatt's surprising resemblance to a young Lozano. "I see Duet as an incredibly liberating format, which invites experimental presentations, encounters and collaborations across distances," Packer says. "It is also an incredibly inviting way of buying, selling and looking at art that is serious without rigidity."

Duet's strength lies in its pairing of experimental newcomers with established blue-chip artists. Pace has paired work by the conceptual artist Nina Katchadourian with that of the multimedia artist Matthew Day Jackson. Their mutual interest in the butterfly effect links two otherwise disparate practices. Pace president Samanthe Rubell says that Duet's "refreshing format and a compelling approach to the space offers a great opportunity to highlight the idiosyncratic inventions of two of our artists through an unexpected but beautifully resonant pairing".

Galerie Sardine—run by the art-world couple Valentina Akerman and Joe Bradley—puts tactile clay sculptures by the French artist Jenna Kaës in conversation with similarly gestural, semi-abstracted landscapes by the London-based painter Anthony Banks. This is a New York debut for both artists.

Meanwhile, Francois Ghebaly playfully juxtaposes the shared muscular tension of Holly Lowen's tennis paintings and Jeffrey Meris's mixed-media syringe sculptures. And in the group show, Karon Davis's life-size plaster ballerina figures are placed adjacent to the painter Ouattara Watts's hypnotic abstraction.

"There's more room for experimentation than people thought," Lukov says.

As market instability keeps many on their toes during [Armory Week](#), unique ventures like Duet continue to attract galleries and collectors alike. "The intersection of intellectual life and commerce is a fraught one," Lukov says. "We are all trying to find our way in it."

Will Duet be back next year? "We are trying to be nimble and responsive to the times," Lukov says. "It could be a recurring concept, but we will have to see."