

Is Seattle the New Basel? This Weekend May Hold the Answer

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by Pat Rogers

SEATTLE—Art eyes are turned to Seattle as the first art fair to be backed by a private individual holds its inaugural edition. When that person is a cofounder of Microsoft and a major art collector, the result is some serious attention being paid to the new art fair. Opening tonight (July 30), the Seattle Art Fair is co-produced by Art Market Productions and Paul Allen's company, Vulcan, Inc. The Seattle Art Fair runs from July 30 to August 2, 2015 at Centurylink Field Event Center in Seattle, WA.

In addition to a noteworthy backer, the New York galleries attending are also causing a stir: [Pace Gallery](#), [Gagosian](#) and [David Zwirner](#) have crossed the country to exhibit in the inaugural fair. They bring with them artist star power including [Tara Donovan](#), teamLab, Helen Frankenthaler, Ed Ruscha, Frank Gehry, Chris Burden, [Dan Flavin](#), Luc Tuymans, Christopher Williams and others.

"We are incredibly proud to present such a unique and expressive group of exhibitors in our first year, and we are thrilled to steward a citywide activation of the visual arts," said Max Fishko, Director of the Seattle Art Fair and Managing Partner of Art Market Productions. "Working alongside our Seattle partners, we are breaking the boundaries of the traditional art fair to ignite the imagination of the city and the global arts community."

Speculation has been running rampant that Allen has set his mind (and directed his art world weight) into putting Seattle on the map as a major American art destination—not only one that showcases the rise of Seattle as an art community to notice but as an art fair gateway to the Pacific rim and an important stop on the national art fair circuit.

This week, it was announced that Allen hired Minneapolis curator Ben Heywood to lead Pivot Art + Culture, a new Seattle-based nonprofit, reported the [Star-Tribune](#). The new two-room gallery will occupy 4,000 square feet inside the Allen Institute for Brain Science and will integrate art from Allen's collection with experimental contemporary art, according to the story. The backing of the Seattle Art Fair combined with the new non-profit art space seem to imply a serious commitment to making Seattle a place to reckon with for discovering contemporary art.

This weekend Allen will put a fraction of his 300 artwork collection up for viewing in the exhibition "A Singularity" presented at The Living Computer Museum. Coinciding with the Seattle Art Fair, the show features 15 works by 11 artists revealing technology's impact on their artistic practice through the use of technology as a tool and influence. "A Singularity" includes 15 works

by Mark Cooper, George LeGrady, Chris Doyle, Jack Featherly, Anthony Marcellini, Joel Holmberg, Joseph Huppert, Brenna Murphy, MSHR, Michal Rovner and John Slepian. Each artist also has work exhibited in the fair.

Speculation aside on Allen's ultimate impact on the Seattle art scene, Seattle is the place to watch this weekend. The local Seattle scene has embraced anticipated influx of art interest by offering art events, fairs and exhibitions to coincide with the art fair. This includes the [Art of the City Street Fest](#) taking place on August 1 from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. The event features on and off-site events, special exhibitions, installations, art happenings, open studios and open lofts.

For the Seattle Art Fair, Allen has partnered with an experienced art fair producer: Art Market Productions. Founded in 2011 by managing partners Jeffrey Wainhouse and Max Fishko, they have been growing steadily since inception. They now produce seven national art fairs including Miami Project, Art on Paper New York, Market Art + Design in The Hamptons, Texas Contemporary and Art Market San Francisco. New for 2015 are Art on Paper New York (held March 2015), Art on Paper Miami (December 2015) and Seattle Art Fair.

For its inaugural edition, The Seattle Art Fair is presenting multiple on-site projects and citywide project in addition to the 60 exhibiting galleries, talks and programming.

For one of the noteworthy on site projects, the fair teamed up with [Leeza Ahmady](#), director of New York's [Asian Contemporary Art Week](#), to produce the exhibition "Thinking Currents" that will explore "...the Pacific Rim through video, sound, installation and digital technology," as described by the art fair.

Another project is "Creative Lab", presenting interactive spaces across the fair to highlight artists who use technology. This includes Addie Wagenknecht's use of drones to create abstract paintings in daily performances and Micah Ganske's creation of 3D printed objects to capture virtual reality from 3D kiosks.

[James Cohen Gallery](#) in New York is presenting Spencer Finch's *Sunset (Central Park)* as an on-site installation. Cloaked as a solar-powered ice cream truck, the act of giving away free ice cream with distilled colors of a sunset becomes a poetic gesture referencing summer sunsets in what the artist describes as an "edible monochrome." *Sunset (Central Park)* premiered earlier this year as part of Creative Time's project "Drifting in Daylight" in New York. Find *Sunset (Central Park)* at a pop-up cafe outside the WaMu Theater throughout the fair.



Sunset in Central Park by Spencer Finch 2015. Presented as part of Creative Time's Drifting in Daylight. Courtesy James Cohen Gallery.

Another on-site project to notice is *Conduit #1* by Ivan Navarro. Presented by Paul Kasmin Gallery, Navarro is expected to create an installation that forces viewers to contemplate the nature of the portal while peering downward into an abyss. The Chilean-born artist Ivan Navarro is known for creating installation-based sculptures whose infinite landscapes seemingly regress into fictive space. Often focused around charged words and phrases, the combination of text and form works to subtly call into question power dynamics in contemporary society.

Ivan Navarro represented Chile in the 2009 Venice Biennial and was included in "Under the Same Sun" at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in spring 2015. The artist's monumental public installation at Madison Square Park in New York in 2014, entitled [*This Land is Your Land*](#), later traveled to the North Park Center in Dallas and has been viewed by tens of millions of visitors. Navarro lives in Brooklyn.

There are six off-site projects that are part of the Seattle Art Fair with about half representing works by Seattle-based artists. Highlights include Robert Montgomery's site-specific text and light work "THE STARS PULLED DOWN FOR REAL" organized by All Rise and a series of billboard installations by SuttonBeresCuller from "The Duwamish Photo Series". The works sprung from research and test conducting for a community-focused revitalization project revolving around the polluting of the Lower Duwamish River, a 2001 federal Superfund Site. SuttonBeresCuller is represented by Greg Kucera Gallery in Seattle and Gusford Gallery in Los Angeles

SuttonBeresCuller is made up of three Seattle-based artists—John Sutton, Ben Beres, and Zac Culler—who have worked collaboratively since 2000. Their work plays on identity, perception, and

instinct. The works create playful scenarios by reinterpreting archetypal objects and transforming them in material, space, and place, according to the art fair.



“Duwamish II” by SuttonBeresCuller, 2009. Courtesy Seattle Art Fair.

Meanwhile, back at the Seattle Art Fair, there are plenty of noteworthy New York City galleries exhibiting in addition to Pace, Gagosian and Zwirner. The list includes James Cohan Gallery, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, Forum Gallery, ACA Galleries, Paul Kasmin Gallery, Danese / Corey and others. All tolled, the Seattle Art Fair presents over 60 exhibitors, with nearly half coming from New York City or the West Coast (Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, Portland and Oakland). Other exhibiting galleries are based in Toyko, Vancouver, Seoul, Miami, New Orleans and Albuquerque.

“The Seattle Art Fair is making world-class art, artists and unique hands-on experiences accessible to everyone in the community, which is important to Vulcan,” said Mary Ann Prior, Director of Art Collections for Vulcan Inc. “The fair has been designed to showcase the vibrant culture and diversity of the Pacific Northwest, and we are excited to be creating an immersive, city-wide experience for not only Seattle residents, but established collectors and international art patrons.”

BASIC FACTS: The Seattle Art Fair will be presented from July 30 to August 2, 2015 at CenturyLink Field Event Center, 800 Occidental Ave S., Seattle, WA 98134. A Preview benefiting Artist Trust takes place on July 30 from 6 to 10 p.m. Talks and programming are presented throughout the fair. The Seattle Art Fair is open July 31 and August 1 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on August 2 from noon to 6 p.m. www.seattleartfair.com.

Hamptons Art Hub will be covering the art fair and the Seattle Art Weekend. Check back for art fair and art coverage from Seattle.

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