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Affordable Alternatives to the Main Fairs

Frieze New York and TEFAF are a bit pricey, but looking is free (or nearly) at Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center and alternative fairs in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

It's Frieze Week in New York, which means big-name dealers with top-notch art — and hefty entrance fees. But there are alternative displays opening across the city this week, with modestly priced works by established and emerging artists. (These fairs are easier on the pocket and a little less overwhelming for casual browsers, too.) Here is a guide to some of them.

Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center

The Abstract Expressionist Ad Reinhardt once quipped that sculpture is what you bump into when you back up to see a painting. He hadn't met tourists with cellphones in Rockefeller Center, though. The spring wave typically pauses for photos with Paul Manship's gaudily golden "Prometheus" (1934). But this year the champion of humankind has plenty of competition: Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center, an offshoot of the Frieze New York art fair on Randalls Island, in partnership with Tishman Speyer, is offering 16 sculptures by 14 contemporary artists placed around the complex, ready for enshrinement on your smartphone.

At the complex's north end, Hank Willis Thomas's two bright metal sculptures recreate talk bubbles in comic strips. (Visitors promptly adopted them as frames for photographing themselves.) Outside 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Paulo Nazareth's tall cutout sculpture memorializes Tommie Smith raising his fist at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. It's moving to see visitors posing in a similar gesture of solidarity.

Jaume Plensa's giant white head with truncated hands covering its eyes sits facing Fifth Avenue, transforming that artery into an eerie entryway, while Ibrahim Mahama's jute sack flags around the upper perimeter of the skating rink suggest a ghostly summit. Sarah Sze's contribution is a gray boulder cracked

open with an iridescent sunset she captured on her cellphone and printed on the face of the stone. It is a smaller but effective disruption, as is Nick Cave's sculpture of an old phonograph speaker with a human hand curling out of its base.

One of the most surprising works is a hulking 1974 bronze sculpture by Joan Miró that looks like something made much more recently. Two upright panels with a chain dangling between them, they suggest some kind of existential (or real) bondage. Other notable works by Walter De Maria, Goshka Macuga, Kiki Smith and Mr. Cave are in the lobbies or outside at Rockefeller Center, and an audio guide for viewing them can be found on the downloadable Frieze app. However, it won't tell you how to craft the inevitable photograph that proves you were actually there. Despite the distractions, the sculptures do exactly what public art is supposed to do and activate the space. Through June 28; rockefellercenter.com.

—Martha Schwendener