



Matt Mitchell, “Frieze New York, 2018: Looking for Love in the High End Art Market,” *Beautiful*

*Bizarre*, May 30, 2018.



## **FRIEZE NEW YORK, 2018: LOOKING FOR LOVE IN THE HIGH END ART MARKET**

[Matt Mitchell](#) May 30, 2018

Each spring Frieze Week comes to New York and whips the art scene into a frenzy. Nearly 200 galleries gather at the Frieze art fair itself, hundreds more congregate in the fairs that have sprung up around it, and galleries with bricks and mortar in the city bust out some of their best spring shows. I happened to be in town to help hang an exhibition by my wife, Rebecca LeVeille (whose art has graced the pages of Beautiful Bizarre Magazine), so I offered to take on the assignment of covering Frieze New York, 2018.

Given that Frieze Week presents more art than any human could possibly take in, the first challenge was to develop method of approach. I decided I would follow the theme “Love not War”. The concept being that much of the sprawling art world is divided into factions who can’t stand each other. For example, in some environments it is a heavy insult to call something “illustrative” while in other areas anything reeking of conceptual art is dismissed as pretentious trash. Since Frieze Week offers an opportunity for a bird’s eye view of different sections of the art world, I decided to take a fly over of the land of up-market conceptual and abstract art. Thus I launched my search at the marquis event, the Frieze art fair itself.

My mission was to look for signs that some of the population in that realm had things of value for the readers of Beautiful Bizarre Magazine. I was going into the territory of the conceptual and the abstract to look for signs of love for the human form, for myth and for narrative. I am happy to say there were some such treasures to be found. I hope the reviews below show this by bringing to light interesting new artists, crossover galleries, and provocative questions.

Yet, before diving into the reviews, I hope you will allow me to set the stage. Frieze is in a tent on an island just off Manhattan. A visitor can get to it in a number of ways. For example, it is popular to take a water taxi with a bevy of beautiful arty types. I decided, however, on a different approach that saved time and, to some degree, ended up influencing the way that I looked at the fair. It turns out that you can take the subway to the closest stop, 125th Street in Harlem, then hail a cab to bring you to the Island where the tent is located.



On May 3rd, I emerged from the subway to find the particular stretch of 125th ahead of me lined by defunct businesses and occupied by a number of homeless people. For the record not all of Harlem is like this. When I hailed a cab and told the driver where I want to go, he turned in his seat and asked, “Where?”

Usually there’s no reason to go to Randall’s Island.

Yet, minutes later, we were on Randall’s and in another world as teams of sharp traffic directors waved the taxi to a stop in front of what may be the swankiest tent in existence. This structure’s thin white walls shone in the sun and wrapped themselves around tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars worth of contemporary art. The proximity of poverty to high art is nothing new in New York, yet the fresh experience made me think I should look for one additional thing in the search I was about to undertake. I should look for a way that the art inside Frieze connected to life on the other side of the bridge. Thus, with Harlem’s dust on my feet, I stepped into the show.



**Ian Davis  
Simulator**

**Photo Courtesy of Night Gallery**



Night Gallery had a humble beginning as a late night art club in a strip mall in L.A. It now shows a wide ranging group of artists including the figurative painters Jesse Mockrin, Claire Tabouret, Derek Boshier, and Derek Fordjour.

The paintings that drew me in to their booth were entitled “Mine” and “Simulator” by Ian Davis. Even though they are clear and graphic in nature they are best seen in life because one key to Davis’ visual style is dramatic scale change. His paintings feature minute figures of men in uniforms performing prosaic duties as they are dwarfed by spectacularly engineered environments. This is the basic description for Davis’ compositional style for the past decade or so, and using these elements, he creates a related mood in each work. Yet it does not get old. The paintings vary widely in the setting and in the groupings and the actions of the figures within. It may be that they seem closely related to each other because Davis has made a visual study of something that is important and complex but that no one else seems to be studying in depth. He takes as his subject the idea of the relationship between collective human action and setting. In an interview in *Other Peoples Pixels* he describes his paintings as being about “...the messed up stuff that happens when a bunch of people get together and stop thinking.” He cites a wide range of influences, including the epic multi-figure paintings of Bruegel, the work of British naive painter L.S. Lowry, and different sources for photos of large groups of people acting in sync.