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AFC's Guide to (e)merge: A Fair with a Local Focus

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Jihyun Hong / *Welcome to the Dollhouse*

Not being a part of the [Federal Government](#), the [\(e\)merge art fair](#)'s schedule to open its third edition in Washington, DC tomorrow will remain unchanged. This is a positive occurrence for the Washington community, and at least according AFC's Paddy Johnson, who visited the fair in [2011](#) and [2012](#), despite a few caveats, it's worth a visit.

FOCUS ON BALTIMORE

So what's in store this year, that visitors might not have been able to see the last time around? More Baltimore galleries, for one. This year, we're up from one gallery to four. [Goya Contemporary](#), the only Baltimore participant from last year, returns with a show Elizabeth Vary's work. Baltimore's new kid on the block, [Sophia Jacob gallery](#), will be presenting Zoë Clark, Chris LaVoie, and Caitlin Cunningham. We're not sure what all they'll be bring, but Cunningham's installation *Tan Penis Island*, is at least promisingly titled. The actual work seems to be lacking in tan penises, but I guess nobody's perfect. This one comes in the form of potted plants bathed in purple fluorescent light and wonky paintings.

Also expect work from the self-described start-up, [Print/Collect](#). (Can a non-profit also be a start up?) The Baltimore-based limited-edition print publication runs with a mission of exposing local artists to a wider audience, so the (e)merge is probably a good venue for them. AFC's Paddy Johnson curated their contributing writer Matthew Fishel into a show at CityArts last year—his slow motion animation of an airplane was a big hit—and as the only name we recognize from that list, he gets the shoutout.

C. Grimaldis Gallery is the only Baltimore gallery we're not too excited about; looks like they're into cheeseball abstraction. Still, (e)merge has done well to increase the Baltimore presence at the fair, and we expect this will improve the overall quality of the event. Good.

THE INDEPENDENTS

Like some of the smaller local fairs, (e)merge dedicates a large amount of space to unrepresented artists. Models like this tend to fail at larger fair clusters like Art Basel Miami and Frieze—there's simply too much money to compete—but here, they can be a great way to empower artists and foster community.

[Maya Ciarrocchi](#)'s video interviews series with ex-Hasids at the Governor's Island Art Fair [got the thumbs](#) up from AFC's Gabriela Vainsencher a few weeks ago, so we're excited to see what she does at (e)merge. [Jihyun Hong](#), who is still in the MFA program at MICA, makes colorful room sized installations, assembled from discrete sculptures. From her website, it seems like those sculptures may have been informed by simple watercolor and pastel drawings. Whatever the case, we're pretty sure Hong's work will be amongst those not to miss at the fair.

LIABILITIES

Like any fair, (e)merge won't be without its share of liabilities. Don't expect to find [the headless diamond horse from last year's Scope](#), but its dealer, the London-based [Cynthia Corbett Gallery](#), will represent the international scene with art fair sellers like Ultra Violet's framed mirror, engraved with the words "Self Portrait", and Andy Burgess's paint by number Thiebauts of modern architecture. Also in the impulse-shop department, Peter Cole's showing tiny horse sculptures through Swiss gallery [Aureus Contemporary](#). If you're looking for a workhorse burdened by the weight of art supplies, this maquette has your name on it.

DISQUS

(e)merge only has two [panel discussions](#) planned during the fair, one of which is a boilerplate talk on collecting, so their program is a little thin for our liking. Compare this to Buffalo's fair, Echo, which hosted at least five panels.

Still, "Artists + Community", a discussion about how artists build communities to support themselves, may at least in part make up for the light programming though, if for no other reason than the diversity of participants invited to speak. The character of artist communities can vary significantly from city to city, so it's great to see so many different perspectives on the panel. Moderated by Silvana Straw, an artist and Philanthropic Advisor based in Washington, the panel will consist of with panelists Margaret Boozer, the director of Red Dirt Studios, Ryan Frank, and installation manager at The Wassaic Project in Wassaic, James McAnally the co-director of The Luminary in St. Louis and Abigail Satinsky, the associate director of Threewalls in Chicago.