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## Art Fairs and Museums, A Good Match

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Art fairs are quickly becoming an important space for nuanced art engagement and collaboration at all levels of the arts profession. In recent years museums have become increasingly active in the art fair scene, resulting in surprising and timely collaborations with emerging arts and galleries. As the largest American-held international art fair – [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) — rapidly approaches, we are brought to reflect on the changing landscape of art fairs from the museum perspective.



Held every October, [\(e\)merge art fair](#) is one of the fastest growing art fairs in the Mid-Atlantic Region. In the last three years it has become the premier place for organic collaborations between traditional museums, nuanced galleries, and emerging artists. One of the most successful artists from the fair, who sold 20 drawings, [F. Lennox Campello](#) is the perfect example of the hybrid-arts professional as an artist, prominent critic, burgeoning scholar, and writer who fits in comfortably with the high-art museum curator crowd and the newly developing emerging arts scene.

Hybridity is becoming a constant in the arts and museum profession. Very rarely do we find anyone who is just a (fill-in-the-blank) anymore. More often than not, successful museum professionals are curators/writers or content developers/event

managers. Hybridity is good, as it diversifies the field. But museums can do more to step outside the rigid “box” mentality to explore more collaborative opportunities.

[The Phillips Collection](#) in D.C., a “cultural partner” of the (e)merge art fair, took full advantage of the uniqueness of the art fair-museum hybrid collaboration and introduced a brand new annual program into its fold in connection with the fair. At the fair the museum announced the first-ever “Emerging Artist Award” with awardee [Si Jae Byun](#) for her piece *Wind #7 in Jungle*, which as a part of the award program is now to be collected into the museum’s permanent collection. At the time of this selection, Phillips Director Dorothy Kosinski commented, “While touring the fair, we quickly became enthralled by the organic lines and brilliant colors in Si Jae Byun’s *Wind #7 in Jungle*, and were pleased to award it with The Phillips Collection Emerging Artist Prize. (e)merge art fair provides valuable exposure for so many visual artists working in our local community and around the world. We present this prize to show our support for this talented next generation.” This new program grows out of the collaborative encouragement of the art fair, but is further collaborative in that the artist is represented by a long-standing art group focused on furthering the careers of emerging artists, the [Washington Project for the Arts](#).

In one inter-connected effort, the museum has enabled an artful exchange between multiple diverse groups. The curators who enabled this program are now hybridized as curators/program creators/artistic enablers. In the [press release](#) for the award, the Phillips’ Director of the Center for the Study of Modern Art, Klaus Ottmann, commented on the multi-faceted role of the award, stating, “This prize gives the Phillips the opportunity to support not only DC’s local creative community, but also to benefit from the international reach of this fast-rising art fair.” Several other distinguished museums partnered with (e)merge art fair, but the Phillips Collection stands out for having taken the opportunity to develop a creative and thoughtful engagement with the entirety of the art fair environment.

It should be easy for museums to find creative ways to become more involved in art fairs, because art fairs support the arts in all areas and at all levels of engagement. Art fairs are also often bursting at the seams with young creatives, including curators, writers, and gallery directors, so museum participation in such activities is another way to tap into that particular demographic. While larger museums may have clearer points of entry to these fairs, the Phillips Collection’s thoughtful and comprehensive approach to collaborating with the (e)merge fair, as well as with other local stakeholders, provides a model for museums of all sizes. The Phillips’ work has allowed the museum to reach new audiences and foster productive exchange in the service of its mission. Given many museums’ links to creative communities in their own localities, this example provides an exciting model for ongoing collaboration between museums and others in the creative sector.