

# With an Off-Site Exhibit, Armory Show Hosts Its Own Grand Slam at the US Open

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Shanti Escalante-De Mattei

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USTA's "Be Open" campaign seen at the 2022 US Open, Monday, Aug. 22, 2022 in Flushing, NY.

*Allison Joseph/USTA*

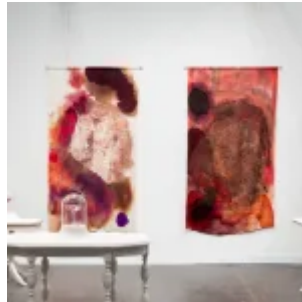
Each year, thousands of visitors make the pilgrimage to the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park in Queens for the US Open. The anticipation for this year's Open was especially high as Serena Williams, the long-reigning queen of tennis, played what many speculated would be her last Grand Slam tournament after 27 years in the game, following her announcement in a Vogue profile that she was "evolving away" from tennis.

But this edition of the US Open will have something else noticeably different all around: art. The United States Tennis Association, which organizes the tournament, has partnered with the Armory Show, one of New York's leading art fairs which has its VIP

preview Thursday, to present a series of major sculptures by a roster of diverse artists for an off-site exhibit.

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Running until September 11, the last day of the US Open, the exhibit is a way for the fair to reach locals and visitors to New York outside of the confines of the fair's new home in the Javits Center. "We look forward to building upon this partnership for many years to come—providing a platform for artists as well as a rich experience for visitors to the US Open," Armory Show director Nicole Berry said in a statement.

The USTA's Be Open campaign, which began in 2020, has been dedicated to showing underrepresented artists, and this partnership with the Armory Show continues that focus with showings of work by [Gerald Chukwuma](#) (presented by Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery), Jose Dávila (Sean Kelly), Luzene Hill (K Art), Carolyn Salas (Mrs.), and [Myles Nurse](#) (Half Gallery).

One of the most interesting works on view at Armory Off-Site is Chukwuma's piece *OGADILIGMMA* (2021), which draws from Nigerian folk traditions as a way to speak to the painful histories of the transatlantic slave trade. In the work, a crude sculpture of a head and torso is studded with pieces of metal and other media that the artist found washed ashore from the Atlantic onto the beaches of Lagos. The sculpture hearkens back to Uli art traditions of Nigeria's Igbo people; many of these traditions were brought to the U.S. via enslaved people who passed them onto their descendants. Now known as "memory ware," in Chukwuma's hands, this tradition of creating beautiful objects from found materials evokes the heartbreaking loss that echoes across the Atlantic.

Nurse's piece *NOW I WON* (2022) is a more site-specific installation. A green figure of metal, welded in a net-type pattern is about to strike with their blue racket. "I used Billy Jean King as a reference," Nurse told *ARTnews*. After sorting through several images of King mid-serve, he struck upon a dynamic image that he then rendered in 3D.

Making the work for the US Open space was a more touching process than Nurse initially expected. Because of where *NOW I WON* is sited, the bust of Arthur Ashe can be viewed right through the sculpture. “That I got to make a work for the space as an African-American-Caribbean artist,” he said, “that was pretty powerful for me. [Ashe] was the first Black man to win the US Open.”

Even still, Nurse said he was happy to see people interact with his work during the visits that he’s made to the site. “Seeing people and kids engaging with it, even hugging the leg, it’s just all been a real treat—an honor,” he said.

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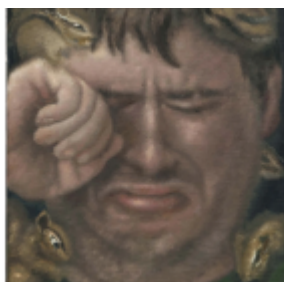
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