

Hyperallergic

At a Generally Flat Art on Paper Fair, Some Cutting Works

by [Carey Dunne](#) on March 4, 2016



Li Hongbo, "Rainbow" (2015) at the 2016 Art on Paper fair (all images by the author for Hyperallergic unless otherwise noted)

["My kid could do that"](#) is the world's most clichéd dismissal of Modern art. But at this week's [Art on Paper](#) fair, which focuses on work made with or on paper, a group of anonymous child artists are showing more original work than many well-known adults. Some of the strangest stuff at the fair is made by 8- to 18-year-old members of the Alphabet City Art School at the [Lower East Side Girls Club](#), a community center on Avenue D and 8th Street.

Front and center at Pier 36 is a sprawling installation by Beijing-based sculptor [Li Hongbo](#), which resembles a rainbow-hued Disney castle rising out of a sea of colorful paper slinkies. Behind that is "Girlville," an installation of paper doll sculptures made by members of the Lower East Side Girls Club from elementary school art supplies. Framed by crepe-paper streamers, there are "Supergirls" with twine arms, girls in tissue paper tutus, girls with yellow yarn braids, girls with black plastic bug eyes and mouthless glitter faces. Since the collection was made by a group of eight-year-olds,

most will probably see it as merely cute, but if it had been made by “[a full-grown educated adult](#),” it might have been declared a feminist outsider art masterpiece.



Detail of the Lower East Side Girls Club's "Girlville" (2016) at Art on Paper



The Lower East Side Girls Club, "Girlville" (2016), at Art on Paper

Another standout from the (anonymous) Girls Club artists is a sketch of a little dog with evil eyebrows under the scrawled phrase “Cutest, innocent Dog! Or is he.” This piece is funnier but not punnier than *Crucial Artworks Involving Animals and Politics*, a series by author-artist [Dave Eggers](#) being shown by San Francisco's [Electric Works](#) gallery,

which includes a drawing of an egret labeled “EGREGIOUS.” In terms of formula, “Cutest, innocent Dog!” is identical to most of Eggers’s artworks — a simple drawing of an animal paired with a pithy phrase. But Eggers’s works try a little too hard to be clever (and to emulate [David Shrigley](#)), and so lack the un-self-conscious weirdness of “Cutest, innocent Dog!”



Lower East Side Girls Club, “Cutest, Innocent Dog!” (2016)



*Dave Eggers, ‘Crucial Artworks Involving Animals and Politics’ (2015) at Art on Paper
(Click to enlarge)*

Work from the Alphabet City Art School is also arguably more politically poignant than most at the fair. In *The South Carolina Church Massacre Project*, part of the students’ ongoing Art and Activism series, they created pieces honoring those who lost

their lives in the mass shooting in Charleston last June. And the students' work is, by far, Art on Paper's least expensive — prices are by suggested donation and range from \$20 to \$60. Proceeds go to the Girls Club and are shared with the artists.

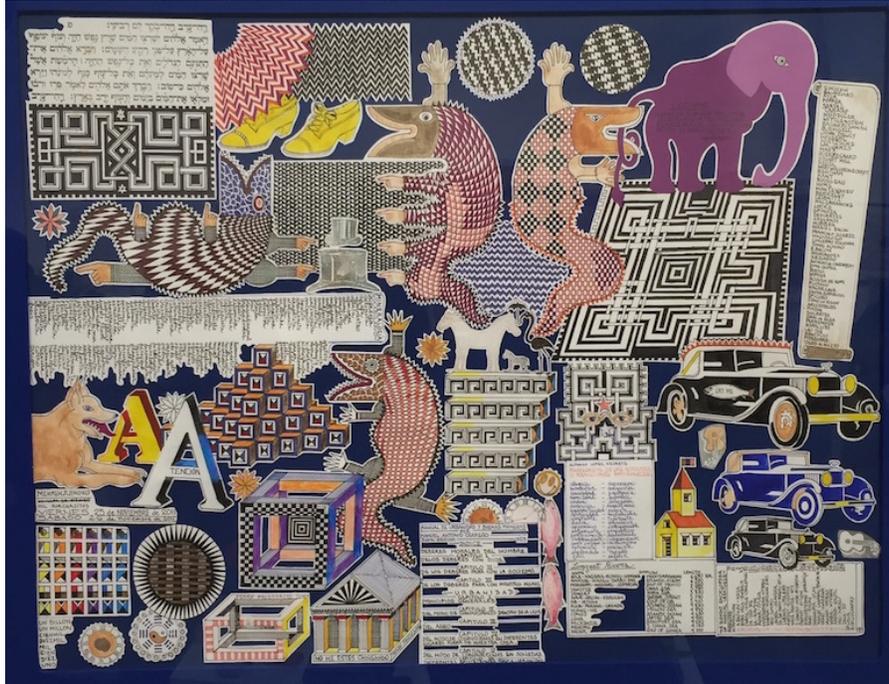


Lower East Side Girls Club, "Paper Doll Couture" and selected drawings (2016) at Art on Paper

Paper is one of the oldest media, so it's hard to make it as new and exciting as, say, [a diner full of sculptural gourmands](#). Many of the 65 participating galleries are showing safe, decorative, and trendy work. There are some hidden gems here, though: a [Mickalene Thomas](#) collage of a woman posing, odalisque-like, on a patterned couch ("You're Gonna Give Me the Love I Need," in the [Van Deb Editions](#) booth); *Six Snapshots of Julie*, a series of woodcuts by [Grayson Perry](#) on display in the [Manifold Editions](#) booth that chronicles the life of fictional Essex everywoman Julie Cope, who evolves from girl in barrettes to biker chick to world-traveling divorcee; and fantastic surrealist paintings by [Pedro Friedeberg](#) ([Lisa Frank](#) fans in the Lower East Side Girls Club might like his star-spangled neon horses) in [Ruiz-Healy Gallery](#)'s booth.



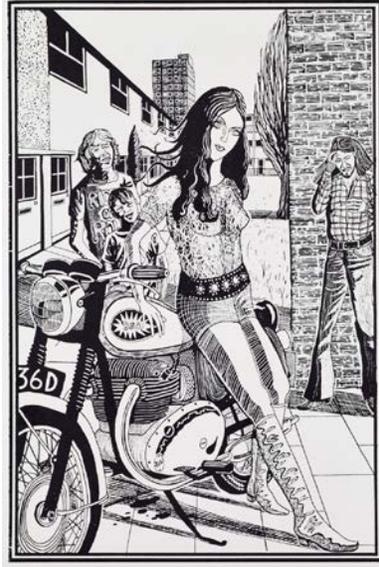
Mickalene Thomas, "You're Gonna Give Me the Love I Need" (2010)



Art by Pedro Friedeberg, featured by Ruiz-Healy Gallery at Art on Paper



Detail of work by Pedro Friedeberg at Art on Paper



Grayson Perry, from 'Six Snapshots of Julie,' series of 6 woodcuts (2015) (image courtesy Manifold Editions)

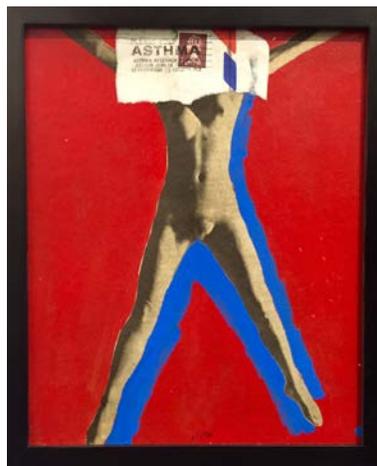
The paper pulp sculptures in artist couple [Adam Frezza and Terry Chiao](#)'s series *The Whitney Lump Nubbins*, on view in [Owen James Gallery](#)'s booth, live up to their curious names: "Glowing Loop Sprout," "Vibrating Blue-Cap Sprout," "Spotch Blossom." Painted neon and sprouting wire prickers, they look like alien plants from *The Lorax*. The fair also features some excellent 20th century throwbacks: [Galerie Fledermaus](#) is showing a nice collection of Egon Schiele prints; [Jerald Melberg Gallery](#) is showing works by Romare Bearden, Helen Frankenthaler, and Wolf Kahn; and [McCormick Gallery](#) is showing striking collages by the late abstract painter [Jack Roth](#), which feature magazine images — shots of Elizabeth Taylor, a nude mid-jumping-jack — mashed up with his signature color fields. Aside from these older and bolder works, the rest of Art on Paper's offerings pale in comparison to the likes of "Girlville" and "Cutest, innocent Dog!"



Adam Frezza and Terry Chiao, from "The Whitney Lump Nubbins"



Adam Frezza and Terry Chiao, from "The Whitney Lump Nubbins"



Jack Roth, from a selection of collages