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Independent Keeps Its Cool

by Scott Indrisek
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Left: JTT Gallery, Borna Sammak, Not Yet Titled, 2015. Television, powder coated metal, extension cord, drywall mounts, video. Right: JTT Gallery, Borna Sammak, Not Yet Titled, 2015. Heat applied t-shirt graphics on canvas

Priding itself on being a boutique alternative to the main fairs — streamlined, sexier, and with a cucumber-cool curatorial eye — the Independent moves this year from its former home in Chelsea’s Dia building to a new site at Spring Studios in Soho. We anticipate, though, that the same outside-the-booth thinking will inform this new incarnation, the clichéd truism about Independent being that it feels much more like a sprawling group exhibition than a typical art fair. (Independent is evolving in other ways, too — in April, it will debut its inaugural edition in Brussels.) Part of Independent’s flair derives from its top-notch team, which includes co-founders Elizabeth Dee and Darren Flook, as well as creative advisor Matthew Higgs, the artist-curator brains behind White Columns. As Higgs told *Modern Painters*, Independent’s unique flavor partially derives from its precedents and influences. “I was always a big fan of the ADAA, and the Outsider Art Fair, and the Frieze fairs,” he said, “and it seemed logical to align all of these ideas simultaneously. We were also interested in going

back to the earlier days of gallery-led art fairs — thinking about Unfair in Cologne in the early '90s and the early days of the Gramercy Fair before it became the Armory Show.” The roster of 40-some galleries skews heavily toward New York — spaces like CANADA, JTT, and Maccarone — but likeminded peers from London (the Approach), Los Angeles (David Kordansky), and Brussels (Office Baroque) also fly in for the occasion.

Independent New York 2016 runs March 3-6.