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An Upstart Fair Focused on Art from the 1970s to Open Amid the Cram of Frieze Week

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Charles DuBuck, *The Wall*, 1973.
COURTESY ERIC FIRESTONE

With two weeks worth of art fairs in New York, from Independent to Frieze, the city is about to add one more, a new initiative called **That '70s Show**.

Organized by dealer **Eric Firestone** during the past month, 20 dealers will take over Firestone's loft space on 4 Great Jones Street to show works from artists who were active in the 1970s. Spread across two floors, the galleries lined up to participate include P.P.O.W., **Karma**, **Kasmin**, Ortuzar Projects, Craig Starr Gallery, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, Anton Kern Gallery, and Gordon Robichaux.

Firestone said the impetus behind the new fair was a lecture critic Jerry Saltz had given at The Church (an art space founded by artists April Gornik and Eric Fischl in Sag Harbor) in which he mentioned the important work that galleries do to keep the legacies of older artists alive.

“A lightbulb went off,” Firestone said in a phone interview last week from the **Taipei Dangdai** fair. “We have such an amazing community of gallerists who do all this historical research and I thought it would be great to gather everyone, disturb the usual fair week.”

This looser and more convivial format will allow dealers with similarly deep historical focuses to come together in a more relaxed way.

“We plan a year in advance for most of our fairs—for this one, we had a month,” Wendy Olsoff, the cofounder of P.P.O.W. told *ARTnews*. “Everything these days is planned like a military operation, so to just throw everything up and have all these dealers and artists come together I think will be really inspirational.”

That '70s Show will also be a chance to gather artists together whose work hasn't been in conversation before. P.P.O.W. will be showing work by Dotty Attie and Judith Linhares, two feminist painters who have received increased attention over the past years.

Kasmin will be bringing works by Jane Freilicher, a painter who was active both in New York and Long Island during that decade. Even though Freilicher exhibited alongside painters like Willem de Kooning, Alex Katz, and Fairfield Porter (the marshy landscapes of *Water Mill* are a subject of both artists), Freilicher never became a household name like the male artists of her circle.

“She tended to gravitate closer to the New York literary school more so than the painting milieu, so [at That '70s Show] she'll present among her contemporaries in a way she hasn't before,” said Eric Gleason, a senior director at Kasmin.

Another artist whose work will likely be seen anew at the fair is that of Robert Duran, an abstract painter of Shawnee and Filipino heritage, who will be exhibited by Karma.

“Duran never really wanted to discuss that part of his background, he wanted his work to stand for itself,” said Brendan Dugan, the gallery’s founder. “I’m sure at the time talking about your heritage—maybe that was distracting to him, but now this part of his history and how it tied to his image making is more legible,” like traditional Native American weaving and pattern making.

Duran, who died in 2005, was included in the 1969 Whitney Annual and the 1973 Whitney Biennale, and frequently showed at Klaus Kertess’s Bykert Gallery on the Upper East Side. But once it shuttered in 1975, Duran had trouble showing regularly, with his last solo show during his lifetime coming in 1977. Duran eventually moved to New Jersey where he held a variety of jobs, including being a bus driver, but maintained continuing a rigorous studio practice at home.

Duran’s story is similar to many artists from that decade. The New York art world at the time was much smaller, with a somewhat patchy network of galleries that often led to many artists falling through the cracks. Decades later, dealers, like those participating in the fair, have begun to shine the spotlight back on these artists.

But why the ’70s in particular, and now say the 1950s or ’80s? Firestone said from his point of view the ’70s was a pivotal decade was in the New York art scene. It helps too that several of the participating artists are still alive and can attend the fair. But really, it came down to the name. “That ’70s Show? It’s a great title,” Firestone said.

That ’70s Show will run May 19–21 at 4 Great Jones Street.