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The Armory Show's Liz Magic Laser Focus Group Is Just Like A Focus Group

By [Marina Galperina](#) | March 1, 2013 - 10:00AM



“It’s a trade show.”

“It’s makes me feel really gross.”

“It’s trophy day.”

That’s a focus group of New York’s most respected art critics, PhDs, organizers and agents of creative institutions talking about [the 100th Armory Show](#). It demystifies the reasons why some of us feel a disconnect strolling between hundreds of art pieces in a giant warehouse and it is, simply, duh... We may be cruising for a soul fix, but a business is a business, and those are some highly niche products being sold at the Armory. Seems like the big focus of the fair isn’t to positively engage critics, promote cultural discourse and move people — it’s to move goods, to attract the lucrative attentions of people who can afford to purchase the art.

[Leading confrontational](#) performance artist Liz Magic Laser was asked to design the Armory show’s catalogue, VIP cards, t-shirts and misc swag, so she called in these focus

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groups. Some of the participants are "aesthetically repulsed" by her sterile designs. Others appreciate the "gesture of transparency" in the work — the t-shirts that reveal the average prices of the booths, the average incomes of the visitors and, in effect, class isolation. Then there are the VIP cards that let the VIPs know they are number "... " of out 12,000+ VIPs, so perhaps, not so VIP after all. It feels like Liz Magic Laser is trolling, but art critic Paddy Johnson assures me she's not: "The Armory staff come from the art world, and that world is one that largely believes that good art should question institutions and commercial ventures."

Watch the focus group. It's like any other focus group. But every ecstatic miracle of artistic creation that sits in a gallery cubicle at the Armory isn't divorced from its commercial aspiration. It's not really that bizarre. Well, maybe when the focus group starts visualizing the looks and smells of the perfect Armory catalogue.

"The Armory Show Focus Group" (official trailer), 2013, Liz Magic Laser with Ben Allen of Labrador Agency.