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## Collective identity: Steven Learner returns to the New York design ring for round three

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By Ann Binlot

It's mid May, and the art and design worlds are starting to converge in New York. Ahead lies the annual takeover of fairs in the Big Apple, from the London-born Frieze on Randall's Island and the go-to for emerging galleries, the New Art Dealers Alliance downtown at Basketball City. Across Manhattan is the behemoth International Contemporary Furniture Fair, over at the Javitz Center.

But before all of those comes the Collective Design fair, which runs from May 13 to 17 at Skylight Clarkson Square in Soho. With its third outing, it seems that the display of 20th-century and contemporary design has officially secured its place as one of the highlights of the spring New York fairs, thanks to its ability to continually show visitors a new perspective on design. 'I just want to shake you up the minute you come to Collective,' said Steven Learner, the architect and designer behind Steven Learner Studio who founded Collective and serves as its creative director.

There's plenty of the fresh and new at the fair this year. The collective team of gallerists, curators, designers and collectors that give the fair its name selected 29 exhibitors for the 2015 edition - down from 36 last year and up from 25 for its inaugural year - from around the world. Several galleries that have been there since its inception - New York-based Maison Gerard, Philadelphia's Wexler Gallery, and Modernity from Stockholm among them - are making a return, while some - Copenhagen's Etage Projects, Paris's Galerie Gosserez and the Milan-based Memphis-Post Design Gallery - are making their Collective debut.

Patrick Parrish will recreate the Greenpoint studio of emerging ceramicist Cody Hoyt. 'It will be a glimpse into his creative process,' said Parrish. Wexler Gallery will have an intricate glass sculpture by Joanna Manousis, modeled on oculus windows commonly found in gothic cathedrals. 'We always try and mix it up with vintage galleries side-by-side with contemporary galleries; very well established galleries next to young and emerging ones,' said Learner.

Collective has changed locations for the third time in a row. Its inaugural fair was held on the water in an industrial space at Pier 57. Last year, it moved to Skylight at Moynihan Station within the grand James A. Farley Post Office. For 2015 it has headed downtown to Soho, at Skylight Clarkson Square. 'We loved the idea of being a part of Soho with all the history of design and art that Soho brings, as well as the concentration of showrooms, architects and designers and their studios - artist studios, designer studios,' said Learner. 'It's really a perfect spot for us to be. It's also such a great walking neighbourhood. Since we really try and attract both cognoscenti and people who are really new to design, we felt it was important to be accessible to a large audience.'

With more programming than ever, Collective 3 is sure to appeal to a broader audience. This year's Collective Influence is German designer Ingo Maurer, who will have a mini-retrospective that transforms the fair's entrance into a space similar to an artist's atelier, showcasing everything from the small lightbulb works that pay homage to the object that inspired his first piece, a 1996 table lamp called 'Bulb', to two never-before-exhibited suspended lights. Friedman Benda will debut their expanded design

program by showing three generations of American design that includes a collaboration between designer Misha Kahn and artist Adam Silverman, as well as colorful fiberglass works by renowned designer Wendell Castle. Editor Stefano Tonchi has curated 'Collective Focus: Italy', which will display influential designs that originated there. The Noguchi Museum, Gufram and Madeline Weinrib will have installations, and Artsy will present Jonah Takagi's 'Colosseum.' Those in need of a rest in between all that fair hopping can take a break in 'Print All Over Me' and Various Projects's NAP LAB.

'It's really important to me to have a mix of new works, so that you're always discovering something when you come to Collective,' said Learner. With the quality of exhibitors and the amount of programming, it sounds like Learner and his team have succeeded.