

Frieze New York Returns Live, Bringing Hope and Precautions

Now a hybrid affair, booths at the Shed at Hudson Yards will be home to optimistic dealers and fresh art.



By Ted Loos

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Until March 2020, major art fairs were primarily live events — you had to be there, as they say. Then fairs sensibly went virtual during the pandemic, with online offerings instead of rows of booths under a tent or in an exhibition hall.

Now art fairs are coming back in hybrid form, as evidenced by Frieze New York, taking place from Thursday through Sunday. (Tickets are sold out.)

The fair is leaving its former home on Randalls Island, which many people reached by ferry, for the Shed, the arts center in Hudson Yards on Manhattan’s West Side.

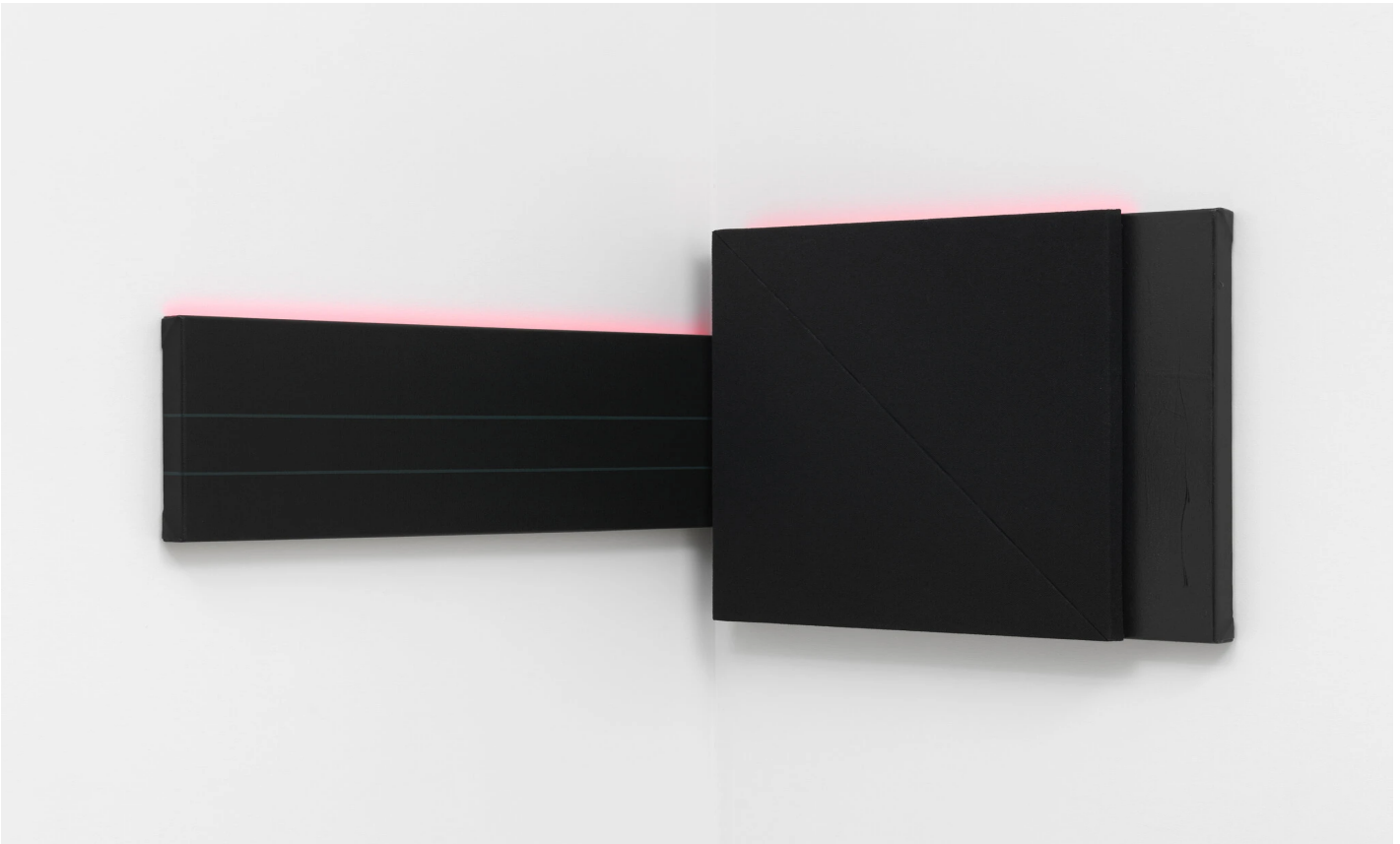
There it will host some 60 dealers, a much smaller number than usual, with many from New York. Luckily for those who didn’t get tickets, it also has a concurrent online form, Frieze Viewing Room, with around 160 galleries from all over the world (including those at the Shed) who will be showing their wares virtually. (The 2019 fair, the last at Randalls Island, featured around 190 galleries.)

The pandemic has “been an opportunity to develop new models,” said Rebecca Ann Siegel, in her first year as director of American fairs for Frieze. Ms. Siegel acknowledged that, given the circumstances, “This was not a normal start to a new job.”

The return of real-life booths to Frieze, which also has a fair in Los Angeles, in addition to the original in London, is certainly the biggest and most hopeful news.

“Everyone has had an experience at an art fair where they discovered something by being there — turning a corner and seeing a juxtaposition that’s unexpected,” Ms. Siegel said.

Moving to the Shed, where dealers will be spread over three floors, also means that Frieze is just a few blocks north of one of the art world’s hubs, Chelsea.



“Untitled (Black, Cropped, Crescendo),” a 2021 painting by Jennie C. Jones, will be presented by Alexander Gray Associates. Alexander Gray Associates

Special programming for this year's fair includes a performance-based installation by the winner of the 2021 Frieze Artist Award, Precious Okoyomon, and tributes to the activist group Vision & Justice Project and its founder, Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, which will be woven throughout the fair.

Some dealers are looking forward to the fair's more modest version. "The scale is right," the New York art dealer Alexander Gray, of Alexander Gray Associates, wrote in an email. "It's intimate in comparison with the stadium and convention center scale that became a norm for an art viewing experience."

He added that was not anticipating a return to the "prepandemic circus atmosphere," but rather a "measured and sober reunion for our community."

Mr. Gray will show a selection of his artists, including two paintings from 2021, Joan Semmel's figural "High Five" and Jennie C. Jones's more abstract "Untitled (Black, Cropped, Crescendo)."