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Frieze New York Moves Online With Brisk Sales and Blue-Chip Art

BY

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FRIEZE VIEWING ROOM

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A screenshot of the Frieze New York online viewing rooms.
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Most major and midsize dealers are already armed with robust online viewing platforms of their own. Where does that leave a top-tier fair like **Frieze New York**, typically an essential stop on the global

art fair calendar? Having been forced to cancel its 2020 fair because of the coronavirus, Frieze launched its own online viewing rooms this morning for the first of two preview days. (It officially opens to the public on May 8 and runs through May 15.) Early results suggested that the decision to go digital could pay off for exhibitors.

The online viewing rooms are “about getting everyone through this time and making sure everybody comes out the other side in good shape,” Victoria Siddall, Frieze’s global director, said during a virtual press conference yesterday, adding that the technology being used right now was originally meant to be just another tool for dealers to connect with clients, instead of a stand-in for the fair. Now, the stakes are higher.

But dealers reported that Frieze’s virtual edition still had some of the same energy of its in-person gathering. “This is new terrain for all of us, but we are feeling the art fair *buzz* today and it’s a good feeling to have,” Rachel Lehmann, cofounder of **Lehmann Maupin** gallery, said in an email. Within the first hour of the fair, the gallery had sold Catherine Opie’s *Rainbow Falls #2* (2015) for \$30,000. Meanwhile, a lengthy waiting list to buy a work by Billie Zangewa, who **just joined** the gallery’s roster, was growing within the early hours of the fair.

Lehmann’s colleagues also experienced the buying frenzy. Within hours, New York’s Ortuzar Projects had sold a 1972 painting by Doroty Iannone, whom the gallery will have a solo show of in 2021, for \$150,000. “The strong early sales and, candidly, the entire experience of the virtual presentation exceeded our expectations,” the gallery’s founder Ales Ortuzar said.

Hauser & Wirth president Marc Payot said the mega-gallery had also seen robust interest in its offerings, which include new work by Rashid Johnson, Henry Taylor, Lorna Simpson, George Condo, and more. “Our artists are expressing the mix of urgency, anxiety, and hope that we are all experiencing now,” he said in a statement. “There is no substitute for seeing artworks in person, but with today’s great engagement from collectors at Frieze New York online, it’s clear digital is here to stay.” Of the 16 works Hauser & Wirth sold, its highest-priced item of the day was a \$2 million Condo, titled *Distanced Figures 3*, that sold to American collector. A new Johnson sold for \$245,000, while an “Untitled Anxious Man” work from 2014 went for \$650,000.

As with the **online version of Art Basel Hong Kong** in March, Frieze New York’s online viewing rooms disclosed price for artworks on offer, and also had the functionality to filter by price range and the artist’s gender. Typically,

these prices are closely guarded. “For several years we have sold art by emailing images, so there is nothing particularly novel about this evolution,” Alison McDonald, a director at **Gagosian**, said. “The shift, however, has also led to far greater transparency across the industry, which is a recent and exciting development.” In its booth, Gagosian hosted a solo show of works by Katharina Grosse, with a price range of €40,000–€145,000 (about \$43,000–\$157,000). More than half of them sold in the early hours of the fair.

David Zwirner had some 26 works by a mix of artists on offer in its booth, a number of which had sold in the first hours of the fair. A set of 10 woodcuts from 1988 by Donald Judd, the subject of a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, sold for an undisclosed sum, as did a four-part photo-based work by Wolfgang Tillmans for \$220,000 and a new painting by Suzan Frecon for \$400,000. The gallery also had on offer a 2010 painting by the late Noah Davis, who was the subject of an acclaimed exhibition at the gallery’s New York location earlier this year, as well as two works by the ever-popular Yayoi Kusama—a 2010 fiberglass sculpture of a polka-dot flower titled *FLOWER THAT BLOOM TOMORROW (S)* and a 2015 almost-all-white painting titled *INFINITY-NETS [KSEA]*. (The latter three were available for a price available upon request.)

Pace Gallery presented work primarily by the few emerging artists on its roster, including a 2019 biomorphic abstract painting by Loie Hollowell and a Nigel Cooke painting, both going for \$250,000 each. Adam Pendleton’s black-and-white nine-part mylar montage sold for \$135,000, a new sculpture by Kohei Nawa went for \$75,000, and \$70,000 was the sale price for a 2020 painting by Torkwase Dyson, whom Pace only began representing earlier this year.

Blue-chip dealers trotted out big-ticket works—and saw sales in return. New York’s Kasmin gallery, still going strong after the recent passing of its founder, had Robert Motherwell’s all-black oil painting *Untitled (Iberia)*, from 1963, priced at \$1.7 million. Meanwhile, the star work of New York’s Acquavella Galleries viewing room was Jean-Michel Basquiat’s 1982 *Untitled (Venus 2000 B.C.)*, showing a female figure on a yellow canvas, which was available for \$5.5 million. The gallery also had a 1953 mobile by Alexander Calder for \$3.8 million, a red-and-green Keith Haring day-glo painting for \$3.2 million, a Wang Yan Cheng painting for \$1.4 million, an Urs Fisher for \$1.5 million, and a Richard Prince word collage for \$2 million.

Skarstedt also had several works by Prince, including a 1989–90 silkscreen for \$875,000 and a photograph from his famed 1982 “Cowboys” series for \$500,000. Galerie Thaddeus Ropac had a Warhol silkscreen, *Portrait of an American Lady* (1976), with an asking price of \$1.2 million, and a painting by Alex Katz work made last month titled *Ariel*

2 priced at \$500,000. Frieze's viewing rooms were rich with Katz offerings, with 11 works in total by the artist up for sale. Chicago's Gray Gallery was looking to place the artist's large-scale oil painting *Inka and Zophia* (2009) for \$725,000, as well as a floral scene for \$450,000.

Other highlights around Frieze New York include Michael Rosenfeld's three-person show of works by Benny Andrews, Robert Colescott, and Bob Thompson. Andrew Kreps Gallery was selling Hito Steyerl's 2019 *Power Plants* work, a video-based sculpture that debuted at the Serpentine Galleries in London last year, for \$86,000. And it was not the only monumental artwork marked for sale: Lehmann Maupin had on offer a transparent Do Ho Suh sculpture measuring over 16.5 feet wide.

Los Angeles's Kohn gallery brought a group of works by five female emerging artists, placing collaged and embroidered works by Los Angeles-based artist Kate Barbee with private collections for prices between \$20,000–\$25,000. San Francisco's Jenkins Johnson Gallery had key works by Ming Smith, Jae Jarrell, and Wadsworth Jarrell. London's Piano Nobile, participating in the fair's Spotlight section, reported the sale of a work on paper by Leon Kossoff for \$1.8 million to a New York collector.

New York's Alexander Gray Associates titled its online participation in Frieze New York "Meanwhile," after Luis Camnitzer's 2014 sculpture of an empty wine bottle with the namesake word around the center, which was on offer in its booth for \$30,000. By the morning, the gallery had sold for Hugh Steers's 1989 work on paper titled *Patriots*, showing a man and woman in their undergarments with paper bags over the heads and an American flag hung behind them, for \$10,000.

"Shifting from a physical to a digital framework brought unique challenges—how do we best convey the works in two dimensions, how much information should we share to best represent our artists' respective practices—but in the end we approached the fair the same as we would as if we had a physical booth," John Kunemund, a senior director at Alexander Gray Associates, said in an email. "Instead of wracking our brains to determine what individual works would show best, we felt it more meaningful to draw on the voices of the artists, bringing together a narrative presentation that reinforces the importance of connection and empathy."