

Jessica Silverman: "How Major Galleries Have Revamped Their Art Fair Strategies"

By Annie Armstrong

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Installation view of Tina Kim Gallery's booth at Frieze New York, 2021. Photo by Casey Kelbaugh. Courtesy of Casey Kelbaugh and Frieze.

As summer winds down and concerns over the Delta variant and vaccination rates intensify, there is a growing uncertainty over whether the art market will continue operating as it has been for the past few months. The Armory Show, the first art fair of the fall, is set to open next week at reduced capacity at New York City's Javits Center. There are no plans for that to change, though

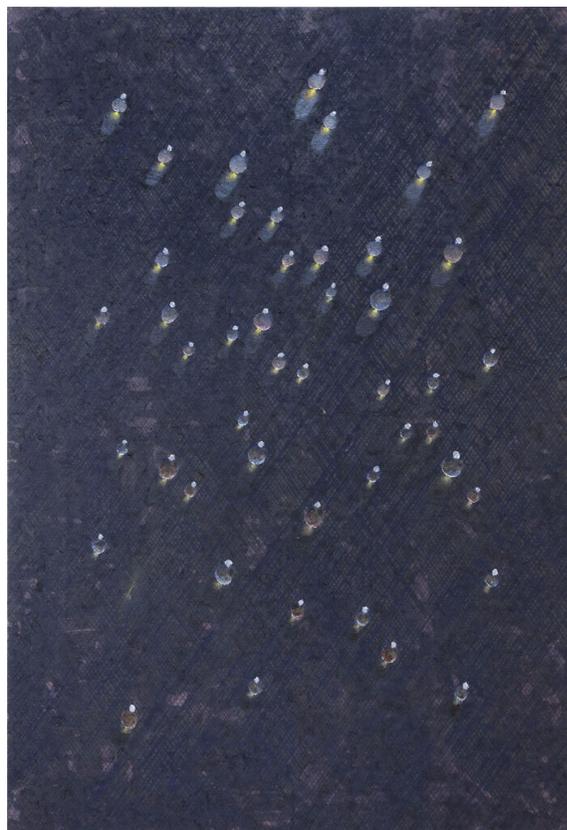
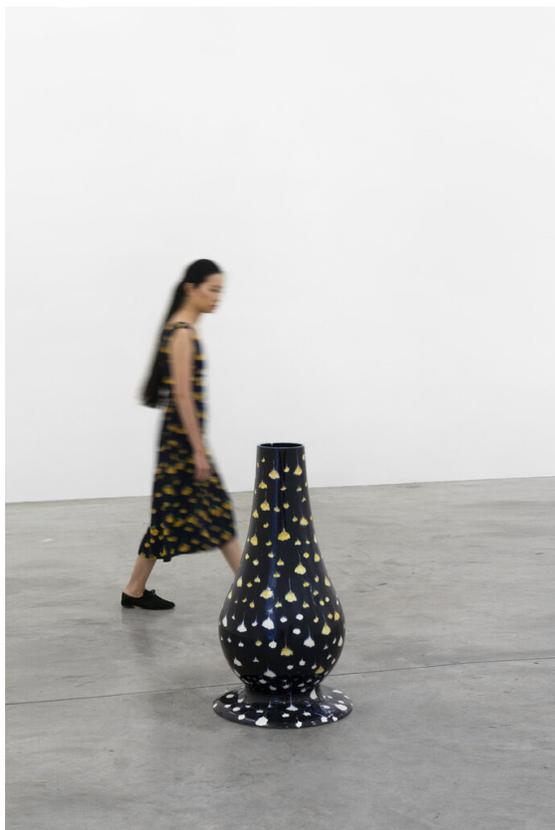
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the fair's executive director Nicole Berry recently told the *New York Times* that her team has "a Plan A, B, C, D and E."

Gallerists are feeling a mix between confidence and trepidation about proceeding. In addition to The Armory Show, among the upcoming major art fairs this fall are Frieze London, FIAC in Paris, and Art Basel in Miami Beach, and gallerists are waiting with bated breath to see how COVID restrictions will adapt and change in each region over time.

Tina Kim, who will be showing at this year's Armory Show, told Artsy, "I feel that as long as everyone is wearing their mask, it is safe to proceed. Clients want options, and clients are happy to see the works in person within a safe environment."



Tania Pérez Córdova

Portrait of a Woman Passing By, 2019

Tina Kim Gallery

US\$15,000-US\$20,000

Kim Tschang-Yeul

Night, 2019

Tina Kim Gallery

US\$50,000-US\$75,000

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As it stands, The Armory Show will require either a vaccination card at the door to be matched with the attendee's ID, or a negative COVID-19 test result from within 72 hours of entry. Guests will also enter on a timed basis to stagger crowds, and masks will be mandated for all guests regardless of vaccination status. Beyond that, they've also installed high efficiency particulate air (a.k.a. HEPA) filters to "improve filtration and ventilation," according to the fair's website, and the layout of the center has been designed to allow for optimized social distancing.

Kim also participated in this year's edition of Frieze New York, which took place this past May and was among the first in-person events to return after lockdown. It did so by maintaining a strict vaccine card requirement long before it was mandated by New York State. "Frieze New York this past spring was successful because of how [it] structured visitor entry, so everyone felt safe while viewing works within a lively environment," said Kim.

Still, some dealers have accepted that in-person events are not necessarily part of the new normal. Jessica Silverman, who owns her eponymous gallery in San Francisco, told Artsy that she thinks online viewing rooms and digital sales are here to stay.



Judy Chicago

Study for Pasadena Lifesavers Yellow #5, 1968

Jessica Silverman

Contact for price

Judy Chicago

Find It In Your Heart, 2000

Jessica Silverman

Contact for price



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"My clients appear more comfortable buying work off of JPEGs, experiencing its scale in mock-ups or viewing rooms, and its texture through high-res details," said Silverman. The gallerist is currently hosting a show of new work by Judy Chicago in person, which is supported by an in-depth sales inquiry system on the gallery's website, indicative of Silverman's decision to integrate sales online.

That said, the gallerist is currently participating in this year's Armory Show where she will be presenting works by Hayal Pozanti, Davina Semo, Claudia Wieser, and Margo Wolowiec. She also plans on showing at Art Basel in Switzerland in late September with a solo booth of work by Rose B. Simpson. "I enjoy seeing clients and colleagues face-to-face," she said. "I also love discovering work by new artists. Fairs are still the quickest way to understand the art zeitgeist."



Rose B. Simpson
Zip, 2019
Jessica Silverman
Contact for price

Another upending result of the pandemic was an acceleration of mega-galleries dominating the market landscape, forcing many small and mid-size galleries to close. To combat this, earlier this week, the *New York Times* reported that Dominique Lévy, Brett Gorvy, Amalia Dayan, and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn would be joining forces to create LGDR, a "consortium that will represent artists, organize exhibitions, advise collectors and broker auction sales." In merging, the four also

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decided to eschew participating in fairs in Europe and North America, citing the enormous costs. They will, however, continue to participate in fairs in Asia, where fairs "remain an important gateway to a wider array of young collectors."

Gallerists around the world are facing new challenges specific to their region. For Linda Pyke, the director of Cape Town's THK Gallery, the current lockdown in South Africa drove her decision to open a space in Cologne, Germany, and much of its fall programming will be catered to a European audience. "While we will take all precautions, meeting collectors, curators, and institutions in person remains essential," she said.



Jake Michael Singer
Chromakey Dreamcoat, 2020
THK Gallery
€30,000–€40,000



Nonzuzo Gxekwa
Yellow Jacket, 2020
THK Gallery
€1,050–€1,380

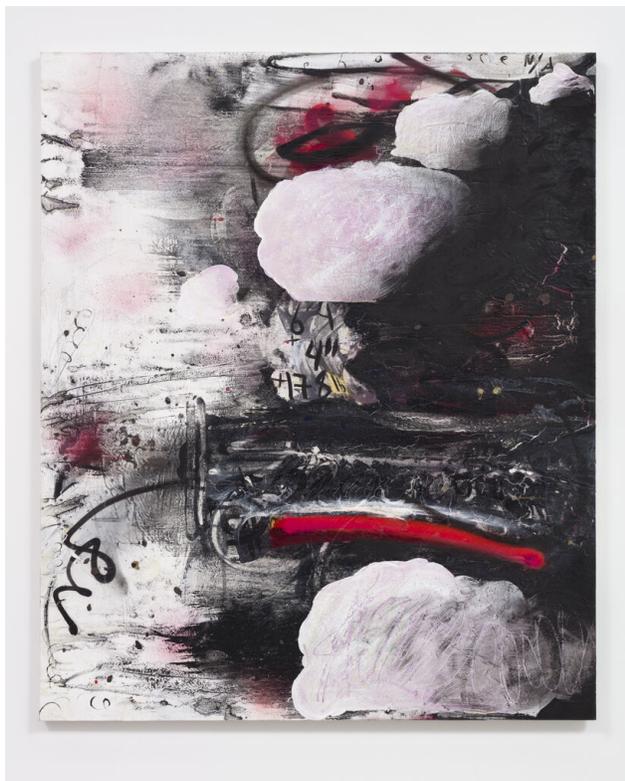
Other gallerists aren't so keen to continue operating with a global dialogue and are instead taking a more localized approach. New York's Marianne Boesky said, "I think a change to come out of COVID was a reckoning around the absurd amount of travel and carbon footprint we all had become too used to."

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Certainly, part of the new normal for sales going forward will be a hybrid model between in-person operations and online. Among the plus sides to this model is a reduction of travel costs and booth fees to participate in fewer in-person fairs. Of this approach, Kim explained, "This hybrid model has worked well for us. We continue to make strong online sales and will present digitally in conjunction to the upcoming in-person fairs."

Boesky echoed these sentiments. "I think we realized that certain communications can be done effectively virtually and that physical travel really can be reduced and saved for necessary in-person visits and special events," she said.



Suzanne McClelland
Net Worth World Leader? Putin \$200,000,000,000.XX, 2017
Marianne Boesky Gallery
US\$50,000-US\$75,000



Thiago Rocha Pitta
Phosphorum amplificatio, 2021
Marianne Boesky Gallery
Contact for price

Still, the necessity of participating in fairs isn't going anywhere. Both Boesky and Kim plan to participate in several fairs this fall, internationally and locally, including the upcoming Armory Show. Both noted, however, that they're accounting for changes in travel restrictions, and the galleries' plans will evolve with each area's specific recommendations.

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The resounding approach among gallerists seems to be to proceed with caution when it comes to signing up for fairs, as restrictions become more touch and go. Earlier this week, it was announced that American travelers have been dropped from the European Union's safe list for travel due to the increased COVID rates stateside, which could throw a wrench in European fairs.

Despite the uncertainty, hopes remain high that fairs are back for good. As Pyke summarized, "The art world is inherently social, and relationships are key to success. We found fascinating how quickly we developed new ways to connect and communicate, even in lockdown. I believe these new engagement models will further develop, and hybrid in-person and online experiences will become the norm."

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