



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Jessica Silverman: "San Francisco's Fog art fair returns with rapid sales of tangible works and rising interest in the digital"

By Leora Lutz

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Inside the 2022 edition of the Fog Design+Art fair in San Francisco. Photo by Nikki Richter, courtesy Fog Design+Art

The fair, which was canceled in 2021 due to Covid-19, has seen strong participation from local galleries and collectors, as well as institutions

The sentiment on everyone's masked lips at Fog Design+Art this week has been a variation of, "it's nice to see people again and have face-to-face time". Fog was cancelled in 2021 due to the Delta variant of Covid-19, but this year, despite the Omicron variant, it returned with 48 galleries filling the Fort Mason Festival Pavilion. There was an air of camaraderie at the 19 January preview gala benefiting SFMOMA, with gallerists able to have meaningful conversation with collectors and visitors enjoying the offerings without the packed crowds of previous years due to strictly enforced timed entry and capacity limits.

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"It just proves how important the event has become for the ecosystem of the Bay Area art scene," said Claudia Altman-Siegel, the San Francisco dealer. She sold an impressive new large-scale bronze sculpture by local artist Koak, whose 2020 solo show was cut short by the pandemic.

Jessica Silverman, another heavyweight of the local scene, shared a similar sentiment in a post-gala announcement. "Over the past two years we've grown so much as a gallery and the return of Fog is a very hopeful moment reminding us how art builds and sustains community," she said. Early sales for her gallery totaled over \$300,000, including the Clare Rojas painting *Just Watching* (2021), Samuel Falls's *Spring to Fall* (2021) and several Pae White ceramic pieces. A Woody De Othello sculpture from Silverman's stand was also earmarked for consideration for the Fog Forum Fund, whereby funds from its sale would go toward supporting SFMOMA's architecture and design department.

The early rush of sales may reflect pent up collector demand two years into the pandemic; perhaps compounded by the absence of Fog's usual satellite fair, *Untitled*. This has already been one of the most successful editions Fog has had, according to the organisers—and judging by the sales exhibitors have reported. Gladstone sold one of Richard Prince's *Hoods* for \$1.7m, as well as a Keith Haring bronze and an Elizabeth Peyton painting, among other works. By the afternoon of 21 January, Blum & Poe had sold more than half of its stand, and David Zwirner reported selling works by Josef and Anni Albers, Oscar Murillo, Lisa Yuskavage, Bridget Riley and others. Tina Kim Gallery reported sales in excess of \$300,000 in its second outing at Fog, placing works by Ha Chong-Hyun, Park Seo-bo, Kim Tschang Yeul, Kibong Rhee and Suki Seokyeong Kang. SFMOMA acquired a Liam Lee chair from Patrick Parrish Gallery.



The exterior of the Fog Design+Art fair at the Fort Mason Center. Photo by Nikki Richter, courtesy Fog Design+Art

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There are several first timers at Fog this year, including Britain's White Cube, as well as a number of local exhibitors. Oakland-based pt.2 Gallery, which opened in 2018, is showing works by Kelly Ording, Liz Hernández, María Paz, Muzae Sesay and Soumya Netrabile. "This ecosystem resulted in a thriving and rich community of artists, makers, thinkers and musicians that deserve a seat at the table," says Brock Brake, a director at the gallery, which in the past has offered studio space to local artists for cheap rents. His gallery enjoyed a successful start to the fair, with almost all of the work in its stand selling for more than \$125,000 in all.

Friends Indeed Gallery, based in San Francisco's Chinatown, reported selling works by Jiab Prachakul and Lauren Quin to museums. San Francisco's Rebecca Camacho Presents is also presenting a stunning solo exhibition of crocheted and assembled copper wire and mixed media pieces by ektor garcia, which almost entirely sold out to local and national collectors, while also generating interest from multiple institutions.

Although early sales from the fair were predominantly of paintings, sculptures and tactile objects, there was also buzz in the air about NFTs (non-fungible tokens). And though they were noticeably absent in the stands, NFTs will be discussed in two talks as part of the weekend's programming.

"I love that NFTs are in some ways a new form of media and art, which is a relatively rare occurrence," says Ethan Beard, co-founder and chief executive of Yoz, over email. And NFTs were not the only popular digital technology on attendees' minds at Fog.

"People want to express their individual tastes, styles, and preferences. This drive exists in the metaverse as much as in our physical lives," said Zesty Meyers, a principal at New York-based exhibitor R & Company. "I think that there is a real potential to inspire knowledge of and love for collectible design in the metaverse that can translate into real life collecting."

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