

Stephen Friedman Gallery

The Guardian
Pop-up space odyssey: how to do Frieze with no Frieze
Hettie Judah
9 October 2020

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Thanks to the pandemic, the art fair has gone online – but private galleries across London have put their best work on show regardless. Here's how to see it all



Image: Challenging directness... the images in Larry Achiampong's series *Speckle* are all sourced from his extended Ghanaian family photo albums. Photograph: courtesy the artist and Copperfield, London

In 2018, David Shrigley issued a laconic print for the Frieze art fair – *News: People Gather in Large Tent* – because, really, what could have been more mundane? Two year later, that's wild behaviour that might get you a fine and a warning. Ergo: no tent, no wacky outfits, no gawping at plastic surgery, no labyrinth of samey-samey art, no gibbering art blindness.

Weirdly, despite my annual whinge that it's a terrible way to see art (it is), I miss Frieze. For collectors there are online viewing rooms, but I'm nostalgic for the smell of paint and hyperbole. London's galleries are open. Might the Frieze experience be reproduced freestyle?

Yes-ish, but it takes military-grade planning. Unlike Tesco, you can't just walk into a gallery these days, you need a timed appointment. Before I could step out with mask, hand gel and thermos, my route through London's art world needed to be tightly choreographed.



Image: Doors of perception ... Lubaina Himid's *Five Conversations*, 2019. Photograph: Stephen White/Frieze

Regent's Park was eerily denuded, though Frieze sculpture carries on. Kalliopi Lemos's severed plait stands tall as a tree: a symbol of girlhood abandoned or perhaps taken. Fabio Lattanzi Antinori's LED screens reel off local rates for Google ad words: unsurprisingly this is a hot market for property and art.

When is a door not a door? When it's art by Gavin Turk and Lubaina Himid. Himid's five reclaimed doors carry portraits of stylish women engaged in conversation – the brass knocker on one becoming a large hoop earring. Turk's painted bronze, *L'Age d'Or (Green & Red)*, is tantalisingly ajar, and monumental – a literal large door, as per the title.

In South Kensington, Cromwell Place is a swanky new rental complex for visiting galleries. Lehmann Maupin have installed the real, live Billy Childish on the top floor with his paint and brushes like a skilled zoo animal, surrounded by photographs and paintings reminding him of his natural habitat. Edinburgh's Ingleby are showing recent Scottish paintings, including Caroline Walker's series of her mother tending home.

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Image: Melancholy beauty ... Oliver Beer's Oma. Photograph: Ben Westoby/Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London

A large annexe hosts this year's Mother Art prize, including winner Helen Benigson's film *Jude* – about life-changing choices faced by the wife of an orthodox rabbi – and pregnant Madison Hendry knitting a womb.

Back in the “real” world of Mayfair, Kiki Smith (Timothy Taylor) sticks with the procreative theme with a memorable bronze of rutting deer. Toby Ziegler (Simon Lee) has two exhibitions in one: when the lights go down his paintings disappear behind an intense, jarring video made using images and sound-recognition software. This is what happens when the world is reduced to visual

cues: a Jackson Pollock becomes a photo of the stock exchange, becomes a puddle of vomit, becomes military camouflage.

Larry Achiampong's *Beyond the Substrata* – filmed in an empty supermarket – pointedly occupies a store in Piccadilly Arcade, one of many central London pop-up spaces (Copperfield). Surrounded by crumpled newspaper, Achiampong's dancer is rendered black as a paper silhouette, sliding and spinning through the aisles and over the checkouts.

Achiampong's spoken-word soundtrack decries the endurance of old myths, though old myths seem safe and well at White Cube Mason's Yard, which Georg Baselitz has filled with near identical sad gold hands (presumably one in every size a collector might want). Less self-aggrandising is Richard Tuttle (Modern Art, Bury Street) who has constructed tiny white platforms like breathing spaces around fragile miniature assemblages. They feel refreshingly unhyperbolic.

At Thomas Dane, Dana Schutz's painting and sculpture carries the not-very-comic violence of a *Punch and Judy* show. Her vast, fantastical figures have the heightened colour and animal dynamism of fireside fable, cut through with distinctly contemporary menace.

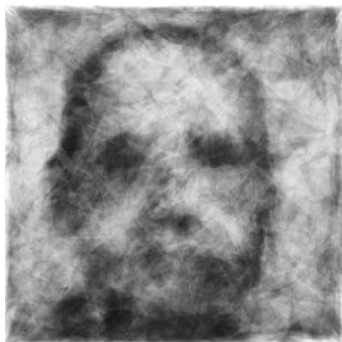


Image: Technology is always political ... Trevor Paglen's AC, 2020. Photograph: courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery

The melancholy beauty of Oliver Beer's *Oma* (Thaddaeus Ropac) lifted my heart. A pianola plays a tune composed by the artist with his grandmother while telling the story of its own making. Around it, Beer has arranged sliced sculptures holding her paintbrush, books and cane, hinged like devotional pictures.

Josh Smith at David Zwirner has painted a colourful landscape of depopulated buildings, a jaunty ghost town eerily like the empty streets of New York during lockdown.

On the top floor, Portia Zvavahera's paintings are modern Klimty expanses of pattern concealing human couplings.

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Gary Hume feels bad about the world at Sprüth Magers: he's reproduced pictures from destroyed school buildings, some with decorative floral frames. New paintings and sculptures are formed from repetitions of a simplified life vest motif, which feels like we're being told off for not noticing them.

Over at Pace, Trevor Paglen plays with surveillance by artificial intelligences. His facial recognition software did not appreciate my (I thought quite chic) knotted headscarf, identifying me as "charwoman, char, cleaning woman, cleaning lady". Tsk. As Paglen would point out, far grosser offences than fashion crime are committed daily as a result of machine learning bias: technology is always political.

Cork Street is packed with pop-ups. Sadie Coles has a film installation about videophone (mis)communication by the brilliant Martine Syms. Ryan Gander's stuffed cat welcomes you to Lisson Gallery. Frieze Live has been reimagined as the Institute of Melodic Healing and includes a 111-hour electronic work by Haroon Mirza, and live performances to watch online.

Stephen Friedman has taken over half of Burlington Street for its 25th anniversary: there is a celebratory group show and a display of fleshy and emotional kinetic sculptures by Holly Hendry.

Goodman Gallery's Living Just Enough earwormed me (brilliantly) with Stevie Wonder. The exhibition honouring Black Lives Matter includes political posters by Carrie Mae Weems and Faith Ringgold, a colour-chart version of Sonia Boyce's afro wig work The Audition, and the first UK screening of Arthur Jafa's akindoncomethas.



Image: Miscommunication ... Martine Syms' installation Ugly Plymouths. Photograph: Mario de Lopez/courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London/Bridget Donahue, New York

Opposite, Charles Saatchi's daughter Phoebe has opened the huge Saatchi Yates gallery for pricey art by new talents. A lot to unpack there. Another time. Breathing space came on Savile Row, and John Stezaker's uncanny collages at Luxembourg & Co which are quietly, elegantly disturbing. Young painter of the moment Jadé Fadojutimi has a handful of dynamic abstract canvases at Pippy Houldsworth.

Daphne Wright mines domestic tensions at Frith Street. Her fragile clay sculptures suggest a home prone to shatter at any moment. Matthew Krishanu tackles big subjects – religion and modernist abstraction – in a small show of gorgeous new paintings at Niru Ratnam. I rudely intruded on Jenkin van Zyl installing what looked like aircraft fuselage in the tiny gallery at Amanda Wilkinson.

The rain held off long enough to cross Soho to pop-ups on Charing Cross Road from Project Native Informant (an excellent group show, including work by Flo Brooks) and Southard Reid (Neal Jones's assemblage sculptures with functioning lights). Celia Hempton has filled Southard Reid's main space with dripping walls for paintings inspired by fuzzily obscure online imagery. Hempton's paintings have become more gestural and loaded: her brushstrokes look like bloody lacerations.

At Hauser & Wirth, Rashid Johnson's big ceramic collages mix municipal tiles, paint, oyster shells and glazed clay. There was just time to cross Oxford Circus to Christina Quarles's fantastic touchy, feely, fleshy new paintings at Pilar Corrias. Twenty-eight venues in 11 hours: nothing, really, by comparison to Frieze. Unlike a day at the fair, I was still excited by art at the end of it.