

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

The New York Times  
Frieze New York, First Live Art Fair in a Year, Kicks Off at the Shed  
Will Heinrich and Martha Schwendener  
6 May 2021

## The New York Times

### Frieze New York, First Live Art Fair in a Year, Kicks Off at the Shed

Our critics toured more than 60 booths — a sight for art-starved eyes. Here are 16 highlights to catch, in person or virtually.



Image: “Who Taught You to Love?” by Hank Willis Thomas is part of a tribute to the Vision & Justice Project, in the Frieze New York fair at the Shed. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The colossal white tent on Randalls Island — the one that occasionally threatened to uplift and blow away — is gone, along with the frenetic ferry rides up and down the East River. But Frieze is back, the first live art fair returning to New York after more than a year.

This year’s edition, taking place Wednesday to Sunday, is inside the Shed, the performing arts center on the Far West Side at Hudson Yards. It includes only 64 commercial galleries — as opposed to nearly 200 in 2019 — though some international exhibitors from Buenos Aires, Brazil and London are represented. But there is plenty of work worth seeing, spread over more than three double-height levels. All necessary health precautions are being observed, but unless you’ve made prior arrangements, you may not be able to attend in person: Tickets are already sold out. What remains is a waiting list and an extensive virtual Viewing Room with more than 160 international galleries, which you can visit free through May 14.



Image: The Shed proves a “surprisingly suitable convention center” for the art fair. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The displays on the whole are a little conservative, which is understandable enough in an uncertain moment. Many galleries are showing painting, the easiest medium to sell — or mounting dutiful roll calls of their artists. But the Shed, often criticized for its blandness, serves as a surprisingly suitable convention center, and there are gems among the cautious displays.

#### Level 2

#### Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Esther Schipper (A8)



Image: “Mondo Kane Kama Sutra (Distressed) #15A,” by General Idea at the Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Esther Schipper booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

Founded in 1969 by the artists AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal, the collective General Idea made heady but playful work that dealt with sex, art, money, and the AIDS crisis. This solo presentation offers a scattershot but substantive introduction to the group’s

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oeuvre. Their signature poodles appear both in cheerfully self-aware drawings with mounds of pasta-like curls and on canvas in a discreet ménage-à-trois. (Will Heinrich)

## James Cohan (B8)



Image: Scene at the James Cohan booth at the Frieze New York art fair, with work by Trenton Doyle Hancock. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

Cohan recently mounted a stellar show of Trenton Doyle Hancock's paintings and graphic-novel-style drawings in its two downtown galleries. Now Hancock takes over the booth in the Shed with a series of black and white paintings and collages that include hooded figures reminiscent of those in Philip Guston's controversial Ku Klux Klan paintings from the 1960s and '70s. These works set up an interesting conversation about race and imagery, from Hancock's Black superheroes to Guston's self-reflexive, self-effacing self-portraits. (Martha Schwendener)

## Lisson (B9)

To make his "cut paintings," the French conceptualist Daniel Buren sliced large rectangles of striped cotton cloth into pieces, which he then pinned up at the edges of a wall. It's a masterly way to reclaim an entire room and transform boring white house paint into art. Three pieces, from 1976 to 1980, make this booth an elegant oasis from the sensory overload that attends even this year's smaller fair. That is, until you realize that Buren's red and blue stripes are a kind of sensory overload of their own. (W.H.)

## David Zwirner (B13)



Image: "Baggage" by Dana Schutz at the David Zwirner booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

In 2017, Dana Schutz was widely criticized for her painting of Emmett Till in that year's Whitney Biennial. Since then, her work has gotten heavier and darker. The large paintings in this solo presentation — easily the fair's standout — are full of fresh bloody reds, toxic greens, and visibly frantic brushwork. Figures trudge up hills enacting scenes of medieval penance; in "The Ventriloquist" (2021), a screaming female doll is surrounded by clouds of hellfire while her reptilian operator drinks a glass of water. Three somberly colored bronze casts offer a beautiful counterweight. (W.H.)

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## Stephen Friedman (B16)



Image: From left, the uncanny nature of “Edie,” “Anthony” and “Seyon” by Sarah Ball at the Stephen Friedman booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The London gallery Stephen Friedman is showing the paintings of Sarah Ball, in which she explores gender and nonbinary people. The portraits have an anodyne, airbrushed look, which gives them an eerie appearance — but also makes them resemble portraiture from earlier eras, or folk painting in which gender was less defined. Cropped

compositions and emphasis on the subjects’ eyes adds to the uncanny nature of Ball’s paintings. (M.S.)

## Tribute to the Vision & Justice Project

Throughout the fair are objects that pay tribute to the Vision & Justice Project, which explores the role of race and citizenship in the United States, and to its founder, Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, an associate professor at Harvard. Carrie Mae Weems contributes a massive vinyl wall work featuring photographs of book covers of artists and scholars who were part of the Project. Mel Chin’s vinyl billboard pays tribute to Black Lives Matter and A.A.P.I. (Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders), and Hank Willis Thomas recreates a work from the artist-led For Freedoms billboard project he founded with Eric Gottesman. (M.S.)

## Level 4

### Canada (C1)

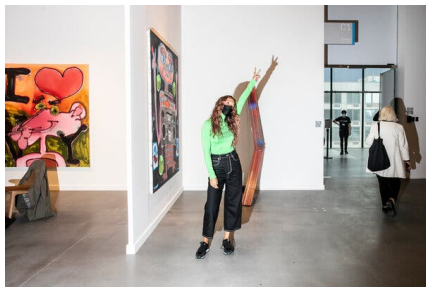


Image: Zoe Buckman at Frieze New York, with “I (heart) NY” by Katherine Bernhardt, “Mas de ti” by Bernhardt, and “Oblique Fire Path” by Luke Murphy at Canada’s booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

This fine three-artist installation boasts the brightest colors in the building, though its exuberance does feel a little calculated. Katherine Bernhardt’s delightful graffiti-like paintings — showing a boombox-laden E.T. flipping the bird, and the Pink Panther on an “I Love NY” logo — meet their match in hip sculpture by Luke Murphy and fearless mixed media wall pieces by Rachel Eulena Williams. (W.H.)

## Instituto de Visión (FR1)

The Bogotá gallery Instituto de Visión is showing the wry, funny and playful works of the Colombian artist, Wilson Díaz. A wall of record albums — some painted, some actual record sleeves — gets at the heart of his practice, which questions the real and the fake in mass media, politics and Colombian culture. A lighted sign on the wall reads “Movement of the Liberation of the Coca Plant,” as if the plant itself could stop the geopolitical turmoil. Next to this work is a goofy painting of a banana slipping on a banana peel, as if answering the futile question of how tropical plants can stop tripping up humanity. (M.S.)

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## Microscope (FR2)



Image: From left, “The Lincoln Film Conspiracy,” lobby cards for “Spitfire,” “La Tete Sans Corps” and “Tales of Hoffmann,” and poster for “Black Ants in Your Pants” by Ina Archer at the Microscope booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

Frieze Week was especially busy for the local gallery Microscope, specializing in moving images and sound art, which moved its location from Bushwick to Chelsea. The presentation here features Ina Archer’s “Lincoln Film Conspiracy Project” (2005-2021), a series of videos, watercolors and collages that explore the Lincoln Motion Picture Company (1916-23). Considered the first African-American motion picture production company, its films have virtually disappeared. In her work, Archer, a filmmaker and artist, creates fictional movie posters and promotional materials — often starring herself or family members. Accompanying watercolors explore negative representations of African-Americans, like the racist “golly dolls” of the late 19th-century. (M.S.)

## Château Shatto (FR3)

The London-based artist Zeinab Saleh makes dreamy, loosely structured drawings and paintings based on VHS home videos. In one, a round form on a pedestal might be a cake or a lavish round bed; in another, a ghostly snake slithers toward a woman’s face in a hand mirror. What’s most striking is the work’s moody range of colors, from the cloying blue of cigarette smoke to smoggy green. (W.H.)

## Bridget Donahue/Hannah Hoffman (FR6)

Using found materials in carefully chosen hues, the Ukrainian-American artist Olga Balema makes sculptures that evade interpretation. Folded acrylic sheeting could be mistaken for discarded packaging, even garbage, while a tall object shaped like a haunch of venison is wrapped in blue latex. What’s inside? You’ll never know. (W.H.)

## Barro (FR9)



Image: The artist Agustina Woodgate with her “ADM” and other work from “Don’t Trust. Verify,” at the Barro booth at Frieze New York. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The artworld fascination with cryptocurrency and NFTs (nonfungible tokens) has largely bypassed Frieze, but the Buenos Aires gallery Barro obliquely addresses these phenomenon. Agustina Woodgate’s project “Don’t Trust. Verify” (2021), which takes its name from the cryptocurrency slogan for assuming anyone can be a threat to your immaterial hoard. Woodgate has brought in an A.T.M., renamed an “ADM” (Automatic Dealer Machine). Insert your debit card and for \$100 you get an artistically augmented dollar bill (portraits and landscapes sanded off). The gallery describes the project as an attempt to “deconstruct money as a representational medium” (a nice way of skirting the fact that you’re not supposed to deface U.S. currency). (M.S.)



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## Gordon Robichaux (FR11)

Otis Houston Jr., a self-taught artist who also goes by the name Black Cherokee, is in his late 60s, lives in East Harlem, and spends hours every week displaying art and performing under the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, still popularly known as the Triborough. A few simple assemblages and spare, peculiar drawings have a vibrant immediacy, but it's Houston's text art that's really transfixing. "If you can't be the cow's head," he advises in spray paint on a towel, "don't be his tail. Be the bell that rings around his neck." (W.H.)

## Level 6

### Galerie Eva Presenhuber / Sprüth Magers (D3)



Image: Works by Karen Kilimnik at the Eva Presenhuber/Sprüth Magers booth delve into the various veins of art history, portraiture and landscape. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

I never tire of Karen Kilimnik's visionary imagery. The world, after all, is rather confusing, and Kilimnik treats it with the wide-eyed wonder of a child drawing kittens, horses and princesses with earnest adoration. Those figures are here in 35 years' worth of paintings and pastel drawings mounted on wallpaper. The presentation blurs irony with a love of kitsch and frilly Rococo decorations. That approach, in itself, remains nonchalantly defiant and radical. (M.S.)

### Printed Matter, Queens Museum, Skowhegan (D4)



Image: From left, Lucy Poe and Sonel Breslav at the Printed Matter booth. Credit: Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The three nonprofits sharing this booth offer prints and editions even civilians can afford. Printed Matter's presentation includes its first-ever video edition, by the artist Coco Fusco, while Skowhegan, the influential school of painting and sculpture in the wilds of Maine, has Christina Quarles's irresistible print "Magic Hour," in which a pair of entranced lovers, bruised with fluorescent color, embrace in a squiggly green sea. (W.H.)

### Mendes Wood (D6)

Originally based in São Paulo, Mendes Wood now has outposts in New York and Brussels. Their presentation at the Shed includes Brazilian art stars like Rubem Valentim, represented by a geometrically abstract painted composition from 1962, and Paulo Nazareth, whose sculptures of radical historical figures graced Rockefeller Center in the 2019 Frieze program. But Mendes Wood also has some other curiously weird works, like a 2017 Lynda Benglis sculpture created with handmade paper over chicken wire, decorated with sparkles, and Solange Pessoa's floor sculptures, which look like fossils of giant snails or spiraling plants. (M.S.)

Frieze New York at the Shed

Through May 5-9 (and May 14 online), 545 West 30th Street, Manhattan; [frieze.com](http://frieze.com).