

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

Financial Times  
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Melanie Gerlis  
10 June 2021



## Keith Haring's 1984 computer fantasy to tempt techies

Art Basel gets physical; London Gallery Weekend a hit; galleries to dot London arcade; landmark show of African American artists revived



Image: Keith Haring's untitled 1984 work, which Christie's will auction on June 30 © Christie's Images

Christie's will sell an early painting of a computer, made in 1984 by Keith Haring, for between £3.9m and £4.5m on June 30. The prophetic work, in Haring's trademark graphic street style, features a world in thrall to technology and was painted in the same year as the first Apple Macintosh was released.

The 9 sq m work is almost as familiar as its theme — it was sold from the collection of German gallerist Paul Maenz for £3.9m (with fees) in London in 2018. This time round, it meets a pandemic-savvy audience even more attuned to the dominance of tech. The work can be paid for digitally too: Christie's will accept bitcoin or ether, including for its commission, and its third-party guarantor is also open to cryptocurrency, confirms Katharine Arnold, co-head of postwar and contemporary art for Christie's Europe. "There's a tantalising aspect to auctions just now. Some collectors are curious about this moment in time and what could happen to prices," she says. The work will be offered through an auction livestreamed from London.

Art Basel has confirmed that its first in-person event since June 2019 will go ahead in Basel between September 24 and 26 (from September 20 for VIPs), albeit "with certain restrictions and adaptations". Health stipulations at the Swiss fair include proof of full Covid-19 vaccination or a recent negative test, while more space will be created through a scaled-down event and public weekend tickets will be reduced by a third.

It's questionable how full Art Basel's aisles will be, however, as travel and quarantine restrictions are lifting slowly. Other fairs have gone ahead in similar style but have mostly been in cities such as New York or Hong Kong, which boast a higher number of local art fair goers than Basel. But with Zurich Art Weekend taking place just before (September 17-19) and the remote outreach that served its Hong Kong fair well, Art Basel's organisers are banking on there being enough momentum to keep its flagship fair flying.



"It is a brave decision because it's a fair that everyone flies in to from virtually every city in the world. But if they think it can go ahead, then that's fantastic," says James Holland-Hibbert, a dealer of British art. Photo London has also confirmed it will go ahead at Somerset House (September 8-12), in tandem with a digital fair running until September 28. Tefaf Maastricht, however, has decided to cancel its postponed-to-September fair and run online only this year.

Image: Leilah Babirye's 'Kuchu Ndagamuntu (Queer Identity Card)' (2021) © Mark Blower

There was praise aplenty for the first London Gallery Weekend, which livened up activity at 137 of the city's independent spaces just when it was needed (June

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4-6). Most participating galleries were notably busier than usual, despite the London rain that graced opening day.

At Stephen Friedman Gallery, which opened three exhibitions, there was “a constant stream of a mix of visitors”, says Mira Dimitrova, director of sales. All works by the sculptor Leilah Babirye sold out (\$15,000-\$50,000). Babirye had to flee Uganda in 2015 when she was outed as gay and was granted asylum in the US in 2018.

Works by another African artist, Marc Padeu from Cameroon, had already sold out at Jack Bell Gallery (\$45,000-\$55,000), but visitors happily engaged with his eye-catching work. “Many said it was their first time in a commercial gallery,” says director Oly Durey.

Still more could be done to unite London's disparate galleries and help make the weekend a viable alternative to art fairs, which are considerably pricier for exhibitors. Suggestions include more programming of performances and talks and even “food trucks that hop between the galleries”, suggests exhibitor Lyndsey Ingram, who described the event overall as “a good first stab”. Most expect the collaboration to become an annual fixture.



Image: Saatchi Yates gallery in London's Burlington Arcade

Pilcher.

As luxury retailers rethink their stores, more spaces are available to galleries that conversely want to increase their physical presence. The latest London spots are in Burlington Arcade, a Dickensian covered shopping area off Piccadilly that was built in 1819 and bought by the billionaire brothers David and Simon Reuben nearly 200 years later. A dozen slots in the bay-windowed buildings have been earmarked for galleries, confirms David Rosen, partner at specialist estate agents

Already in is Saatchi Yates, a gallery founded on London's nearby Cork Street last year by Phoebe Saatchi Yates, daughter of the collector Charles Saatchi, and her husband, Arthur Yates. They have taken two spaces on the arcade, initially using its distinctive windows to display works during lockdown. “We wanted a way to show art that wasn't virtual. The arcade is lost in time, charming and quite magical – everything to love about London,” Saatchi Yates says.

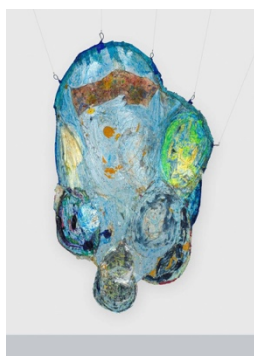


Image: Suzanne Jackson's 'Rags-to-Wobble' (2020) © David Kaminsky New York's

Ortuzar Projects opens an exhibition this week that revives the 1970 Sapphire Show, which founder Ales Ortuzar believes was the first in the US to be dedicated to African American women. The original was held in the shortlived Gallery 32 in Los Angeles and showed six artists, including Suzanne Jackson, who also ran the gallery. This month's exhibition riffs on the poster for the 1970 show – the only documentation that survives – which featured childhood photos of the artists with a caption that is the title of the revived exhibition: “You've come a long way, baby.”

Ortuzar says that conversations with the four artists who are still alive, including Jackson, made him realise that “we didn't want a nostalgic show about a moment of history, it is more about their successes since”. He notes that one of the featured artists, Betye Saar, now 94, had an exhibition to mark the reopening of New York's Museum of Modern Art in 2019. Ortuzar's exhibition pools about 35 of their works, from the 1960s to more recently, and runs until July 31 (price range \$15,000-\$250,000).