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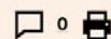
New era for augmented reality

AR art appeals; Foundation warns of Josef Albers forgeries; war-torn artists at Sotheby's; Pace signs Brazilian painter



KAWS's virtual sculpture 'Companion (Expanded)' (2020)

Melanie Gerlis 5 HOURS AGO



Collectors are snapping up limited edition Augmented Reality art, viewable only through a screen and capturing attention in an increasingly digital world. "The creative possibilities are infinite, this is the beginning of a new era," enthuses the Stockholm-based contemporary art collector Johannes Falk. He recently bought "Companion (Expanded)", a 1.8 metre virtual trademark sculpture by KAWS that was priced at \$10,000 from a now sold-out edition of 25.

Free-to-view exhibitions and downloads have helped develop a commercial appetite for art in AR, notes Jacob De Geer, founder of Acute Art, the extended reality app developer that sold the KAWS works. Unlike the free-to-download images, “If you own one of the works, you can make it public. If you put it in front of your house, say, anyone passing by can see the large sculpture in the garden. That’s a huge difference,” De Geer explains. There are some additional appeals for collectors: Falk notes “no shipping or storage costs”.

Another series of the scalable KAWS Companion is currently available to buy through Acute Art (edition of 10, \$50,000 each) as well as images by Darren Bader (edition of two, \$15,000) and Bjarne Melgaard (edition of five, \$7,000). The works are among 10 in the London-centred exhibition *Unreal City*, which Acute Art has now made lockdown-friendly with the works available to download from their app (until February 9, in partnership with Dazed Media).

Extended reality works are still a small proportion of the art world but seem to chime well with collectors and artists alike. Sylvain Lévy, who began to digitise his DSL Collection in 2005, says that “Born into a screen-based world, today’s new generation move in and out of the physical and virtual worlds at ease, believing that each world is “real” to them.” He is currently working on a social, virtual reality “art village”, similar to a video game, he says.



A forgery of 'Study for Homage to the Square' by Josef Albers

Nicholas Fox Weber, executive director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, has spoken out about forgeries of the “Homage to the Square” works purportedly by the German-born painter Josef Albers. “People think they are easy to forge as essentially they are three squares, but in fact [forgeries] are quite recognisable,” Weber says. Tell-tale signs include the way the paint is applied to the canvas — Albers used a distinct painter’s knife — and the position of his signature, he explains.

€320,000

Sale price of forged 'Study for Homage to the Square' by Josef Albers

Weber's warning comes soon after the Milan gallerist Gabriele Seno received a suspended prison sentence of one year and eight months, plus fines, for allegedly offering a forged yellow and orange "Study

for Homage to the Square" at €320,000. Weber examined the work and "immediately noticed it was an imitation", the court papers say. This was then confirmed by the art historian Jeannette Redensek, research curator and Josef Albers catalogue raisonné director at the Foundation, which was advised by the legal firm Jucker in Lugano.

The Court of Milan judgment records that Gabriele Seno said that he inherited the work from his father, who had bought the painting in 1986. His lawyer, Alessandro Sacca, says that his client has appealed the judgment and that he is "absolutely certain of [Gabriele Seno's] innocence".

Redensek says that five major groups of Josef Albers forgeries have been identified since the artist died in the US in 1976. Weber's advice: "Works must be vetted by the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation."



Jean Dubuffet's 'Le Cavaliere aux Diamants' (1945) is up for auction

The auction houses are continuing to merge categories and mix up formats to find the best ingredients for their livestreamed sales during the pandemic. Sotheby's next London-based outing will be on March 25 and will be another Old Masters to contemporary evening sale, preceded by a Paris-based day sale of Impressionist and Modern art.

At this stage there are no blingy showstoppers – which feels appropriate during a global health crisis – but a group of four works offers insights into the troubled time in France immediately after the second world war.

£2.5m-£3.5m

Estimated value of Jean Dubuffet's 'Le Cavaliere aux Diamant'

The earliest from the collection are two *Hostages* series paintings by Jean Fautrier – “Corps d’otage” (1944, est £500,000 and £700,000) and “Otage no. 15” (1945, est £350,000-£450,000) – made soon after the artist was briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo then released to a mental asylum on the outskirts of Paris. The other works are Jean Dubuffet’s “Le Cavaliere aux Diamant” (1945, est £2.5m-£3.5m), a more romantic depiction of an engagement. The latest work is “La Turquoise” (1947, est £1.2m-£1.8m) by the German émigré artist known as Wols, who spent a year in a concentration camp in France in 1939. Both these works were first shown by the Paris gallerist of the avant-garde, René Drouin, who also hosted a landmark exhibition for Fautrier in November 1945.

The group is being sold by the daughter of a late Belgian collector whose father had bought them soon after they were made. They have been kept in a bank vault since last exhibited more than 30 years ago, Sotheby’s confirms. “Such a group is as rare as hen’s teeth,” says Sotheby’s Europe chairman Oliver Barker. He adds: “The artists were getting to grips with the atrocities witnessed often first-hand and all responded with such innovation.”



Marina Perez Simão's 'Untitled' (2020). The Brazilian painter has been signed by Pace

Pace gallery has signed up the Brazilian painter Marina Perez Simão (b1981), its second, recent artist collaboration with São Paulo’s Mendes Wood DM gallery. Last summer, Pace took on representation of Sonia Gomes (b1948) and showed her work with Simão’s in its new East Hampton gallery. “It was a happy accident but the work by these two incredibly strong, talented women worked so well together,” says Pace senior director Samantha Rubell.

Pace plans an exhibition of new paintings by Perez Simão in its New York gallery between April 1 and 24 (priced between \$15,000 and \$60,000), together with the artist's preparatory watercolours. Rubell describes Perez Simão's works as "internal, imaginary landscapes that transport you to another dimension". Rubell says: "She reminds you how to pause, and to hope, which feels important at this time."

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