

# SEANKELLY

Cohen, Alina. "13 Art Dealers Share the Books That Helped Them Navigate the Art World." *Artsy*. March 20, 2020.

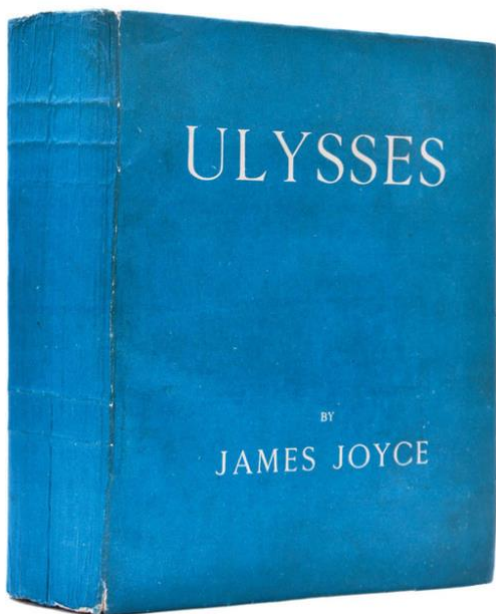


Most of us suddenly have lots of reading time on our hands. As museums, galleries, and auction houses close shop in light of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), in-person art viewing goes on hiatus. This is a spiritual and financial hit for many of us whose lives revolve around the social and physical spaces of the art world. The paintings, sculptures, and performances that move us will no longer be at arms' reach.

When I started working on this article a few weeks ago, I simply wanted to hear dealers recommend books that helped them navigate the art world. Yet when their answers began pouring in, I was surprised at the diversity of their picks (some dealers offered additional recommendations, included below). To navigate the art world, their selections suggest, one must have an imagination cultivated by fiction, a sense of romance about the business, and a keen curiosity about underlying social structures—and, apparently, an ability to broadly interpret a pretty straightforward prompt. As the news media bombards us with frightening updates at lightning speed, it's as good a time as ever to find solace in language and storytelling of a very different kind.

Book: *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce

**Recommended by: Sean Kelly, founder of Sean Kelly Gallery, New York**



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Art dealer Sean Kelly, a self-proclaimed bibliophile who reads two or three books per week, says *Ulysses* provides “a conceptual road map to how you navigate your life.” That extends to your relationships inside and outside the art world. Joyce’s modernist interpretation of Homer’s *Odyssey* follows Leopold Bloom through one day in Dublin: June 16th, also Kelly’s birthday.

Kelly estimates that he’s read the book 11 times now. “It taught me something very profound,” he says. When you read the book at different ages, “the book changes because you’ve changed. It teaches you something new every time. Only a great book can do that.” He admires the novel’s humor and humanity as it approaches such themes as honesty, morality, sex, love, and disappointment. Kelly calls it an “eternal poem” to be “listened to” (there are great audiobooks, to augment the text). Ultimately, he says, reading *Ulysses* is “a great journey.”