

SEANKELLY

Kazakina, Katya and Amanda L. Gordon. "Fist Bumps and Brisk Sales Rule at Virus-Averse N.Y. Art Show." *Bloomberg*. February 27, 2020.

Bloomberg



Astrid Hill, Sean Kelly and Tom Hill.

Financiers Tom Hill, Byron Wien and Tom Tuft strolled the aisles of the Art Show Wednesday night as Champagne flowed and scores of artworks sold.

But something was amiss at the fair that marks the unofficial opening of New York's art season and doubles as a fundraiser for Henry Street Settlement. Financial markets have tumbled in recent days on growing concerns about the coronavirus. As guests arrived at the Park Avenue Armory, President Donald Trump was speaking on U.S. efforts to prepare for the epidemic after the first cases were found here.

The art world was listening.

"No more kissing or shaking hands," said Lisa Dennison, chairman of Sotheby's Americas.

SEANKELLY

“If a person tries to kiss you, you give your cheek, but you don’t volunteer,” said dealer Daniella Luxembourg, whose booth displayed a large-scale mirror piece by Michelangelo Pistoletto priced at \$2.5 million.

“I am fist-bumping all day long and kissing your cheeks with my eyes,” said Chris Santa Maria, director of Gemini G.E.L. gallery in Chelsea.

It’s the latest sign of the virus’s growing impact on the art world. Exhibitions and auctions have been postponed, museums closed, shipments quarantined and travel plans scrapped. Sotheby’s relocated its Hong Kong auctions to New York for April, while Christie’s postponed some of its Hong Kong sales to May from March.

The Armory Show is set to open next week in New York with 178 exhibitors from 31 countries. Six auction houses, which typically hold sales during Asia Week New York in March, have moved most of the events to June, in hopes that Chinese collectors will be able to travel by then.

“If the virus spreads, can we go to Basel? Will people come to buy at auction in May?” art dealer Barbara Bertozzi Castelli asked while standing at her booth, where a Lee Bontecou lithograph sold for \$75,000.

Not everyone avoided physical contact. Dealer Sean Kelly planted a kiss on Hill. Arne Glimcher and Anthony Meier shook hands with clients. The artist KAWS said he was “behaving as I normally do.”

And the art was selling. Sikkema Jenkins gallery sold out of paintings by Jeffrey Gibson priced at \$95,000 each.

“We are ready to do business,” said Augusto Arbizo, partner at Van Doren Waxter gallery. “It’s a big local market in terms of collectors.”

And fear of a crisis can lead to ingenuity. Dealer Nicole Klagsbrun said she’s thinking about commissioning artists to make masks.

“Some of the sales of these things can help pay for the anti-virus efforts,” she said.