

Culture

Frieze still has echoes of its subversive roots

LONDON

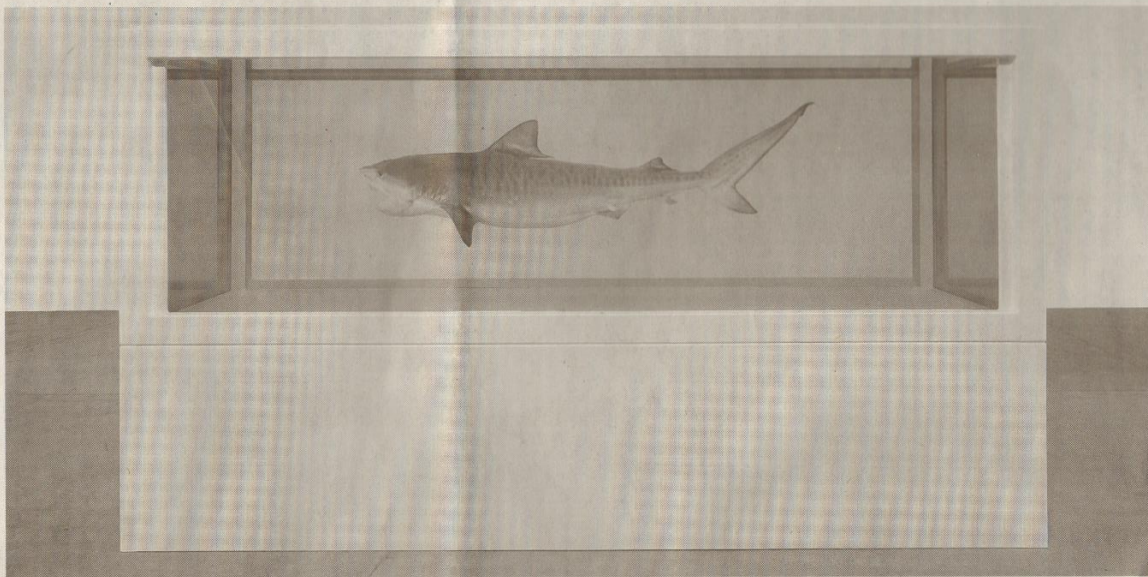
Well-heeled collectors and established artists coalesce at London fair

BY SCOTT REYBURN

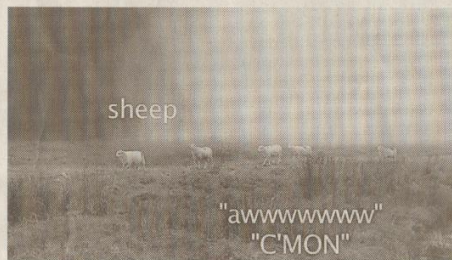
Over the past 13 years Frieze has grown into one of the biggest weeks in the art market calendar. The sprawling scale of the event, centered on a fair in a tent in Regent's Park, reflects how dramatically London, and its commercial relationship with art, has changed.

The etymology dates back to 1988, when a Goldsmiths College student named Damien Hirst organized an exhibition called "Freeze" in the disused offices of the London Port Authority in SE16, a run-down area close to the river Thames. The pop-up show of works by 16 young artists that included Mr. Hirst, Sarah Lucas and Gary Hume was visited by influential curators and collectors like Charles Saatchi, Nicholas Serota and Norman Rosenthal.

The rest, as we know, is art history. Today Frieze, which opens to the public Wednesday, is a must-attend fixture for many. The fair, which was officially begun by the Frieze magazine publishers Amanda Sharp and Matthew Slotover in 2003, has become a unique combination of a destination fair (or two, now that the more historical Frieze Masters has joined the mix since 2012). It combines high-end auctions (nine this



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COURTESY OF JIMMY MERRIS AND SEVENTEEN

week at Sotheby's, Christie's and Phillips, estimated to raise at least 180 million pounds, or about \$276 million), museum exhibitions and gallery shows.

While Frieze has thrived, SE16, like so many areas of London, has been transformed by luxury redevelopment. The real estate agent Foxtons is offering a new two-bedroom apartment in the original "Freeze" district for £975,000.

With its prefabricated venue and quirky projects, the Frieze Art Fair still retains a faint residual flavor of the grungier London that produced the Young British Artists. But nowadays the six-day fair, which this year features 164 galleries from 27 countries, caters to pretty much the same international crowd that attends the previews of Art Basel and the Venice Biennale. Prices for artworks typically range from about \$10,000 to \$1 million.

"Frieze is no longer a fair where the feeling is young and cutting-edge," said Abigail Asher, partner in the New York art advisory firm Guggenheim, Asher, Associates Inc., in a telephone interview. "The people who descend on London for Frieze Week are looking for more established artists."

In 1997, "Freeze" exhibitors formed the core of the provocative "Sensation" exhibition of works by Young British Artists at the Royal Academy of Arts. Mr. Hirst's meteoric rise culminated in September 2008 with the two-day auction of his artworks at Sotheby's that earned £11.5 million.

Mr. Hirst is no longer the force he was in the market. Instead, he has reverted back to his role as curator by opening his own private museum in Lambeth, south London. But memories of the glory days

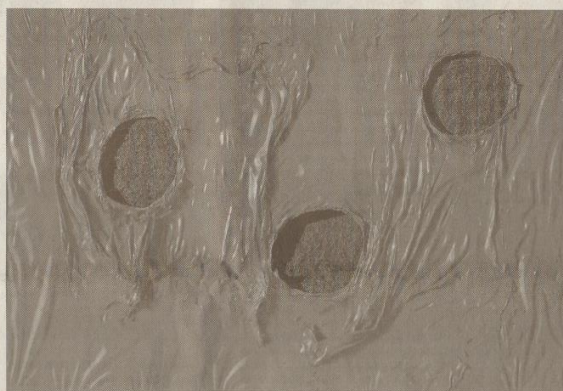
of his "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" auction will be sparked this week by the presence of his 2008-9 shark-in-formaldehyde piece, "Heaven," in an exhibition on the theme of the sea at the Mayfair dealer Ordovas.

One of 11 made, and the only left in private hands—which happen to be Mr. Hirst's—it carries a price tag that will only be disclosed to wealthy collectors.

London provides any number of opportunities to buy respected names. First, there are the fairs. Hauser & Wirth, for example, is devoting its entire booth at Frieze to a range of sculptures by artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Subodh Gupta, Phyllida Barlow and Paul McCarthy. The latter's 1992 sculpture "Pecker Leg" is priced at \$375,000. Tellingly, unlike the week of Art Basel in Switzerland or Miami Beach, London's Frieze Week lacks a supporting network of well-regarded satellite fairs that showcase emerging galleries and artists (though the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair at Somerset House does give some regional perspective).

Frieze's most successful sidekick is in fact PAD London, a boutique fair in Berkeley Square primarily devoted to upscale 20th-century art and design that benefits from its proximity to luxury hotels such as the Connaught and Claridge's. The ninth edition, featuring 62 galleries, runs from Wednesday through Sunday.

Sharing the same dates, the SUNDAY fair, near Regent's Park, is the week's one non-Frieze-branded event that attracts serious collectors in search of undiscovered talent. The London gallery Seventeen is one of 25 galleries from 11 countries exhibiting in its sixth edition.



FONDAZIONE PALAZZO ALBRIZZI, COLLEZIONE BASIL, CITTA' DI CASTELLIA VIA MAZZOLENI LONDON TORINO

Damien Hirst's 2008-9 shark-in-formaldehyde piece, "Heaven," in an exhibition at the Mayfair dealer Ordovas, above. "Rosso Plastica," 1968, by Alberto Burri, left, priced at more than £4 million. A screenshot from "Untitled Pressing On," 2015, a video work by Jimmy Merris at the gallery Seventeen, far left. "Self Portrait in Progress," 2015, by Elmgreen & Dragset, below left.

some pretty amazing shows.

In Albemarle Street, the Turin dealership Mazzoleni is holding a retrospective of 23 works by the Arte Povera artist Alberto Burri. These include a trademark 1968 "Rosso Plastica" composition, priced at more than £4 million. Down the street, the fellow Italian dealer Tornabuoni is inaugurating its London gallery with a show of more than 50 works by another Arte Povera star: Lucio Fontana.

These include a white 1963 version of the artist's revered egg-shaped "La Fine di Dio" canvases from a private collection. Another version, in black, has been guaranteed to sell for at least £15 million, or about \$23 million, at Sotheby's on Thursday.

"Our collector will decide if he wants to sell over the next few days," said the gallery's director, Ursula Casamonti, in an interview. "If he does, the price will be higher than at Sotheby's."

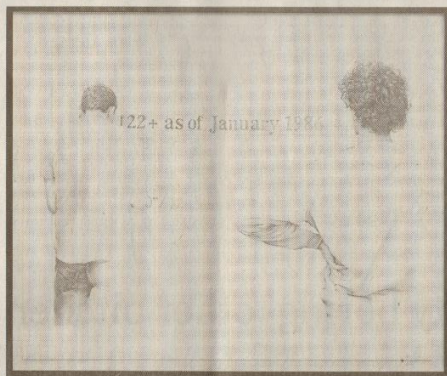
Nearby, the Mayfair branch of the New York dealership David Zwirner is holding its first London show of new works by the Colombian artist Oscar Murillo, born in 1986 and based in London. Mr. Murillo was one of several emerging artists targeted by speculators in 2014. Zwirner's "binary function" show, with prices as high as \$280,000 for new paintings, will confirm that he is now an "established" artist.

And then there is the loan show of Cy Twombly works from the Cy Twombly Foundation that inaugurates Gagosian's new state-of-the-art 18,000-square-foot gallery at Grosvenor Hill in Mayfair, and the first London show of paintings by the Los Angeles artist Jonas Wood, born in 1977, held in Gagosian's equally imposing space at Britannia Street, near King's Cross.

With the auction prices of many once-fashionable young abstract painters now in decline, Mr. Wood has become the figurative painter of the moment. A monumental and typically accessible 2008 painting, "Untitled (M.V. Landscape)," depicting houses at Martha's Vineyard, is estimated to sell for £250,000 to £350,000 at Christie's on Friday.

Can the market absorb so much material? Last year, 1,638 properties priced at more than \$5 million were sold in London, more than any other city in the world, according to a report published this month by the realtors Knight Frank.

There's plenty of money in London that could be spent on art. There's a lot less for the people who want to make it.



COURTESY OF ELMGREEN & DRAGSET AND VICTORIA MIRO, LONDON

An east London gallery specializing in video art, Seventeen will be showing the 2015 video, "Untitled (Pressing On)," by the British artist Jimmy Merris, born in 1983, priced about £2,000 to £3,000. "It's more experimental. I can take

risks," said David Hoyland, director of Seventeen, in a telephone interview. "I can set the tone for a solo show, and it doesn't matter if I don't sell anything." Mr. Hoyland, along with many other gallerists, is concerned about the effect

London's spiraling property prices is having on the artistic life of the city. "Rents have tripled in east London. You just can't find cheap spaces anymore. The bottom of the art world pyramid is being eroded."

Similar sentiments were expressed by Michael Elmgreen, the London-based half of the artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset, who are exhibiting new works at Victoria Miro Mayfair. "It's a fantastic place to show, not a fantastic place to live," said Mr. Elmgreen, who has made London his home for the last seven years, in an interview. "I don't think there's such a strong art scene in London anymore. It's a theater without actors. The artists aren't there, but the institutions give amazing shows for the tourists."

Mr. Elmgreen said he was moving back to Berlin, where Ingar Dragset lives. The duo's "Self-Portraits" at Victoria Miro expand the museum wall-labels of works by artists such as David Hockney and Martin Kippenberger into independent works of art, priced at as much as £40,000.