

Art Industry News: A New \$150 Million Fraud Claim Raises the Stakes in the Nasty Battle Over Robert Indiana's Legacy + Other Stories

Plus, the photography festival Rencontres d'Arles is cancelled and foundations team up to launch a relief fund for unemployed art workers.

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Robert Indiana's *The Great American Love (Love Wall)*. Photo: Timothy A. Clary/AFP/Getty Images.

Art Industry News is a daily digest of the most consequential developments coming out of the art world and art market. Here's what you need to know on this Wednesday, April 29.

NEED-TO-READ

Royal Academy Cancels Two High-Profile Exhibitions – The coronavirus pandemic is forcing museums to play a round of musical chairs with their exhibition schedules. London’s Royal Academy has pulled the plug on its highly anticipated Angelica Kauffman and Paul Cézanne shows, which were scheduled for June and July. Both shows were on view elsewhere when the coronavirus forced them to close, and the revised schedule means it might be possible to extend their run. The RA will instead extend its current Léon Spilliaert exhibition, which will subsequently delay the exhibition’s scheduled presentation at the Musée d’Orsay in June. (*[The Art Newspaper](#)*)

Foundations Launch Relief Grants for Art Workers – The Willem de Kooning Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the Teiger Foundation, and the Cy Twombly Foundation have created an emergency grant program offering \$1.25 million to arts workers in the New York tristate area. The fund, administered by the New York Foundation for the Arts, will offer arts workers who have sustained financial hardship due to the outbreak individual grants of \$2,000. The first application cycle runs May 5–6, and there will be two more rounds on May 19–20 and June 2–3. (*[ARTnews](#)*)

A New Fraud Claim Targets Robert Indiana’s *LOVE* – The pandemic has not tamed an ongoing legal fight over Robert Indiana’s legacy. Michael McKenzie, the founder of the New York-based publishing firm American Image Art, recently filed new claims against the Morgan Art Foundation, accusing the organization of “one of the most massive art frauds in history.” McKenzie claims that Indiana’s most famous work, *LOVE*, has been in the public domain since its creation and that the Morgan wrongly affixed copyright to the series with “a total retail value believed to be well above \$100 million.” An additional one million items “representing at least \$50 million in retail sales” are also alleged to have been fraudulently licensed, according to McKenzie. Lawyers for the Morgan describe the new filing as “legally incoherent” and an attempt to distract from the serious claims Morgan filed against McKenzie over the sale of works they allege were falsely attributed to Indiana. (*[The Art Newspaper](#)*)

Rencontres d’Arles Is Cancelled – The photography festival, which has been held annually for 50 years, has officially called off its 2020 edition, due to open in Arles in June. After considering “every possibility to adjust to an unprecedented situation and keep the festival going while maintaining social distancing,” organizers said in a statement that they realized it would be impossible. The exhibition will pay participating artists and curators any agreed-upon fees for this edition and resume in 2021. (*[Press release](#)*)

ART MARKET

Is the Art Market Headed for a Great Depression? – The art industry should brace for market conditions worse than those in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, according to one report. While collectors haven't deserted the market en masse yet, many buyers are expecting discounts of as much as 40 percent in exchange for their support. It's possible that the art market's recovery over the past ten years will be wiped clean. ([TAN](#))

Bonhams Releases Revised Auction Calendar – As auction houses begin to develop plans for live auctions in the social-distancing era, Bonhams has announced its global sales schedule for May and June. The sales will be a mixture of online-only and live events, but the latter will be held behind closed doors with only the auctioneer in the room and entirely remote bidding. (*Press release*)

COMINGS & GOINGS

FotoFocus Puts Its 2020 Budget Toward Grants – The nonprofit arts organization behind America's largest photography biennial has called off the fifth edition of the month-long event in order to repurpose its \$800,000 budget to give financial relief to local arts institutions. The event was scheduled to run in October. ([Artforum](#))

Deborah Cullen-Morales Joins the Mellon Foundation – The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York City has appointed the former El Museo del Barrio director and [short-lived director of the Bronx Museum](#) as a program officer for arts and cultural heritage. She takes up her new post, which involves helping shape the direction of the organization's visual arts grants, on May 1. ([Artforum](#))

YouTube Is Launching a Digital Film Festival – Tribeca, Cannes, Sundance, and the Toronto Film Festival are among the major film festivals collaborating on the upcoming "We Are One: A Global Film Festival" via YouTube. The event is scheduled to run from May 29 through June 7. ([Hyperallergic](#))

Artist Yves Corbassière Has Died – The Paris-based abstract painter, who was close to the American Action Painting movement, has died at the age of 94. He was renowned for sending works into space with NASA, like his famous piece *Charlie in Infinity* from 1984. ([Franceinfo](#))

FOR ART'S SAKE

How Frida Kahlo Coped With Confinement – Looking for role models in quarantine, some artists have turned for inspiration to the story of Frida Kahlo, who was confined to her bed for much of her life and transformed her home into a sanctuary and menagerie that helped fuel her powerful artwork. "Being contained not just in her house

but in a bed for so long meant her art was almost like a metaphysical resistance,” said author Jessie Burton. ([*Guardian*](#))

Wendy Williams Gives John Oliver a Michael Lee Painting – Television hosts John Oliver and Wendy Williams have engaged in charming banter on their respective shows while homebound. Now, Williams has raised the bar by gifting Oliver a painting of her eating a lamb chop. (This must make more sense if you’ve seen the shows.) The painting, by the show’s art director Michael Lee, also features a plate of one of her favorite food combinations, Doritos and caviar, which the TV host urged Oliver to sample on his show. ([*Hollywood Life*](#))

On Revisiting “Gallery Girls” – The 2012 series was quickly cancelled, but eight years on, it somehow serves up deep nostalgia for what the pre-social distancing, pre-Instagram art world used to be (not that long ago!). As it gets re-aired on Bravo, the *Observer* considers the trials and tribulations of Chantal Chadwick, Claudia Martinez Reardon, Lara Hodulick, and the others. ([*Observer*](#))

Travis Scott Unveils KAWS Album Cover – “The Scotts,” a top-charting new track by Kid Cudi and Travis Scott, has harnessed some cover art from none other than KAWS. It is the third and final cover edition the artist made in collaboration with Scott; copies of the other two swiftly sold out. ([*Complex*](#))

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