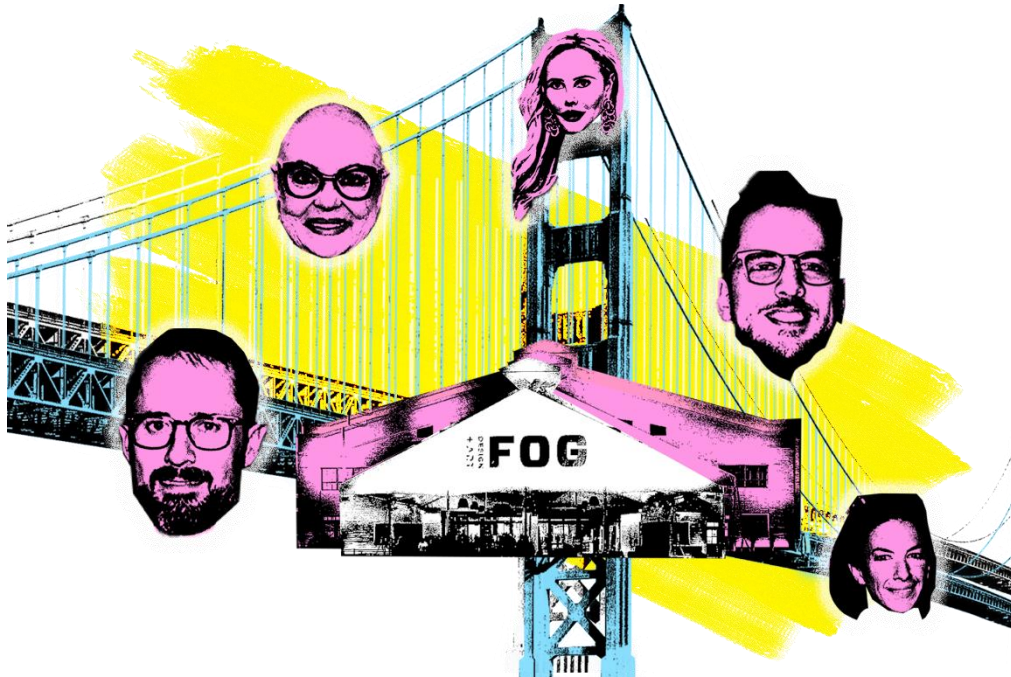


True Colors: The San Francisco Billionaire (Would-Be) Art Bonanza

True Colors is back for 2022 and on the ground in San Francisco, where Fog art fair asks the eternal question: You can bring a cash-flush tech denizen to the art market, but can you make them buy? Plus Julia Fox's party planning, the Olsens' new favorite haunt, and more in this week's column.

BY NATE FREEMAN



BRIDGE: SHUTTERSTOCK; BUELL, GETTY, KREIGER, SCHREYER, AND WILLIAMS: GETTY IMAGES; FOG: COURTESY NIKKI RICHTER; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY QUINTON MCMILLAN.

Alcatraz was looming in the background and the Golden Gate Bridge lit up in the distance, and those in possession of San Francisco's great fortunes—some new, some old—streamed into Fort Mason, the military base once used as the West Coast Union battery during the Civil War.

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The site was once again playing host to the city's major annual art fair, named Fog and often engulfed in actual fog. Wednesday night was the gala preview, where the heirs to Bay Area oil fortunes like **Vanessa Getty** mingled with the city's banking kingpin **Charles Schwab** and tech billionaires—Zynga's **Mark Pincus**, Instagram's **Mike Krieger**, Twitter's **Ev Williams**. The art adviser **Sabrina Buell** was making the rounds on behalf of her clients, one of whom is reportedly **Larry Page**, the Google founder who is currently worth around \$119 billion.

But were any of them actually buying art? One could be forgiven for overlooking an art fair like Fog, the yearly expo that goes down each January. Unlike its Southern California sister city, Los Angeles, the Bay Area is not a global gallery hub where art dealers across Europe and Asia *need* to plant a flag. Gagosian once had a gallery here. It closed by early 2021.

Those dealers who do come by San Francisco in January have one thing on their minds. This city of less than 900,000 people is home to 81 billionaires, according to the Wealth-X Billionaire Census. (The census shows London—home to more than 9 million people—has 71 billionaires.) And every art dealer in the world wants to convince these billionaire denizens to become billionaire collectors.

“The question you're asking is, does the San Francisco art collector really *exist*?” said **Theo Elliott**, the director of Ratio 3, a city-by-the-bay stalwart that's long been a reliable place to find soon-to-blow-up emerging artists. Tucked behind a no-sign black door on a block in the Mission that spouts more stellar burrito joints than all the states on the East Coast put together, Ratio 3 had just opened a new show by the 25-year-old **Daisy May Sheff**. The works had already sold out, with a long waiting list for collectors who haven't yet acquired one.

“You'd think that with 32 paintings, we'd be able to please everyone, but...” Elliott said with a pause, walking through the space.

“Well, it's a good problem to have,” Elliott said. “Daisy, she's only 25. There's more work to come.”

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He added that around half of the works sold to local collectors, many of whom sit on the boards of the city's esteemed art institutions: SFMoMA, the de Young, the Wattis, etc. SFMoMA has a particularly intimate relationship with the fair week, as it collaborates on the opening gala, a rare arrangement—market forces and institutional forces often feign a church-and-state-style separation. But SFMoMA's clingy presence isn't necessarily a great thing.

"You kind of forget how conservative the board members of this museum are," the director of one prominent gallery showing at the fair told me.

Chara Schreyer is one of the city's major collectors, but she's no longer on the board of SFMoMA. Instead she's made several promised gifts to the contemporary art museum in her other home, Los Angeles—that would be MOCA, which just made **Johanna Burton** the new director after its art star leader **Klaus Biesenbach** decamped for Berlin in the fall last year. Schreyer owns two homes in the Bay Area: one in the seaside Marin County town of Tiburon, the other an expansive residence in San Francisco, as well as several in the City of Angels—and they all play host to her next-level, multi-epoch-encompassing collection.

On Tuesday, Schreyer gave a sunset tour of her art-filled Tiburon estate—with major works by **Richard Prince**, **Frank Stella**, **Rachel Harrison**, and so many more—and led reps from Gagosian and Hauser & Wirth through her sprawling home. Burton was right beside her the whole time. Schreyer, a world-class raconteur with an eye to match, led the group through her collection, pointing out where certain works would go when, as she put it, "they take me out of here feet-first." A gigantic **Christopher Wool** painting was a promised gift to SFMoMA. Several other works would be going to Burton's museum instead.

There remain gallerists committed to San Francisco. They stayed loyal to clients who stuck around the city and kept spending money, even as it stayed in lockdown longer than other American metropolises and a not-insignificant swath of techdom decamped for places like Austin.

While sampling the city's many epicurean offerings it became clear that despite lockdowns, locals have never truly stopped spending money. The fishmonger at Swan Oyster Depot told me

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the legendary seafood spot didn't have to close for a single day of that strange year that was 2020.

“People here were sitting here working and making money from their apartments, and they would come in every day and spend \$500 on fish,” Swan’s oyster shucker said, as I ate a glorious single \$30 crab, worth every penny.

One lifer, gallerist **Jessica Silverman**, last year moved from the Tenderloin [to a new space in Chinatown](#), surrounded by great Sichuan spots and a stone’s throw from City Lights. She signed a 12-year lease.

Or take **John Berggruen**, who has been doing it longer than anybody. Born in San Francisco, the son of the collector Heinz Berggruen opened his gallery at age 27, in 1970. This week, he opened a stellar show of work by another native son, **Peter Saul**, organized with **Adam Lindemann**, the collector and art dealer who founded Venus Over Manhattan in New York. Saul, 87, flew out from his house in upstate New York, and Lindemann and Berggruen feted his arrival with a dinner near the gallery, at the steak-and-martini joint Sam’s Grill.

Saul was in good spirits, sitting across from Berggruen and Lindemann and their guests at the outdoor dinner in high-40s temperatures, everybody draping themselves in blankets made by the galleries to commemorate the show.

“I was here two years ago, but I was going to Sonoma, and I drove through the city in a taxi cab,” Saul said. “And I thought, This is great. It’s great to be back here, in this city.”

Saul looked past me to a line of people waiting to say hello to him.

“But really, I’m just happy to be wherever I am,” he said.

The Rundown

Your crib sheet for comings and goings in the art world this week and beyond...

...**Julia Fox** took a break from all things **Ye** to throw a first birthday party for her son, **Valentino**, at Lucien. No sign of the artist formerly known as Kanye West at the

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Manhattan art world's favorite bistro, but it seems now only a matter of time before Kanye's sipping espresso martinis there, or jostling up to the bar at Clandestino, or puttering around Canal Street waiting for his order of buckwheat soba noodles at Dimes Deli, or picking out a new skate deck at Labor, etc.

...Chelsea stalwart Mitchell-Innes & Nash is opening a seasonal outpost in Mexico City, timed to the opening of that city's Zona Maco art fair. Opening the space is a three-person show, featuring **Tiona Nekkia McClodden**, **Lucas Samaras**, and **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**. It will all go down on the ground floor of Galería Hilario Galguera, the site of **Damien Hirst's** first gallery shows in Mexico back in 2006.

...**Michael Xufu Huang**, the founder of Shanghai's X museum, was recently ensnared in some legal maneuvering. Huang sued a former client after that client allegedly broke a non-flipping agreement with Paula Cooper Gallery. You can read all the sordid details in the lawsuit, and trust me, it's a doozy. And in other Xufu news, there will [reportedly](#) be a character based on him in the Netflix show *Inventing Anna*, set to premiere February 11, about the notorious grifter known as **Anna Delvey**. Xufu [apparently fronted the money](#) for Anna's hotel room in Venice during the Biennale, only to later discover she skipped out on the bill for dinner at fancy SoHo fresser Sadelle's after throwing herself a birthday party there.

...Reena Gaga, the joint Los Angeles gallery run by New York's Reena Spaulings and Mexico City's House of Gaga, will reopen after an extended pause that came with the shuttering of its old space overlooking Macarthur Park Lake in May 2021. The new space will be in Hollywood, at the intersection of Orange and Santa Monica, right next to LAXART and two blocks from Jeffrey Deitch.

...**Mary Kate** and **Ashley Olsen** have become quite frequent regulars at Dr. Clark, even if they rarely order any food. They must be in it more for the vibes, which is understandable as the restaurant was designed by **Aaron Aujla** and **Ben Bloomstein**, the founders of Green River Project, which has made design objects for The Row.

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...**Tracey Emin** has asked to remove her neon artwork *More Passion* from U.K. prime minister **Boris Johnson**'s 10 Downing Street HQ, with Emin saying that "more passion is the last thing this present government needs."

...A surprising number of downtown artists, dealers, and scenesters trekked up to Carnegie Hall last week to see a performance by the Berlin-based pianist **Igor Levit**. Perhaps a gallery collaboration is in the offing.

Scene Report: Los Angeles, January 2022

January in Los Angeles hums with cultural happenings—film festivals, awards shows, fashion galas—all attended by a larger-than-usual amount of cold-averse New Yorkers in town seeking sun. Alas, that's not exactly happening this year, due to the fact that omicron is blitzing through the country. And yet, a few intrepid gallerists managed to mark the openings of the first big shows of the year.

The artist **Jeff Wall** was on hand, masked for hours, at the Gagosian outpost in Beverly Hills to take museum directors through a new show of his work, photo-based compositions mostly staged in Los Angeles during the pandemic. The party at **Larry Gagosian**'s Holmby Hills pad was canceled, but the next night, Blum & Poe founders **Tim Blum** and **Jeff Poe** gave a dinner for **Eddie Martinez**, who filled the imposing Mid-City gallery with the brassiest, brawniest paintings of his career. Fellow artists in attendance at the outdoor dinner—catered by Jon & Vinny's, the Italian joint owned by collectors **Jon Shook** and **Vinny Dotolo**—included **Jonas Wood**, **Sayre Gomez**, and **Sebastian Black**. Afterward everyone stumbled over to the Mandrake, the watering hole around the corner with artwork by **Raymond Pettibon** and **Dave Mueller** on the walls. Blum was one of the investors who [forked over](#) seed money to open the spot during the heady days of the mid-aughts birth of the current L.A. gallery scene.

On Saturday, dealer and *GQ* art writer **Arty Nelson** opened a new show at his gallery One Trick Pony, giving solo debuts to young painters **Michael Haight** and **Mickey Lee**. Keeping things in the family, the post-opening gallery dinner was also at a Jon & Vinny joint, this time at their beloved mid-Atlantic seafood place Son of a Gun. How would the L.A. art world eat otherwise?

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And that's a wrap on this week's [True Colors](#)! Like what you're seeing? Hate what you're reading? Have a tip? Drop me a line at nate_freeman@condenast.com.

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