

VULTURE

5 Art Shows We Can't Wait to See in 2022 Faith Ringgold, Charles Ray, and a notorious NFT-maker.

By Jerry Saltz JAN. 5, 2022

The paradigm of the 21st-century art world is paradox. On the one hand, there is the vast interconnected network of artists, collectors, curators, critics (hi!), advisers, galleries, and fairs that make up the art world as fulfillment center, with assets that can be shipped anywhere, anytime. Enormous amounts of money are pumped into this aesthetic matrix by people who came through the 2008 financial collapse and the pandemic stronger, with even more accumulated wealth. But instead of buying only modernist masters or postwar stars, many of these people are buying art as a way to signal ethical correction and self-improvement, a way to bestow beneficence on those whose lives have been a living hell under the system that generated their wealth.

Art and money have always slept together. Perhaps the art world has merely gotten kinkier about it. It's no surprise that an actual Murdoch — James, son of Rupert — is now a major stakeholder in the company that puts on Art Basel, a fair that publishes an equity-minded publication during its shindigs. It's like Laurie Anderson's lyric: "This is the hand, the hand that takes ... 'Cause when love is gone, there's always justice / And when justice is gone, there's always force."

Either way, the die is cast. Shady, disconcerting, and affected as it may be, something is blossoming in the paradox. Without renouncing the great art of the past, we may finally start to see more than 50 percent of the story. In our own backyard, the rewriting of art history could not begin in a better place than with a full-on survey of Faith Ringgold, including her giant, hand-painted narrative quilts and installations. Further uptown, the Met is putting a toe in bold waters by presenting the work of West Coast sculptural giant Charles Ray — while at the bonkers end of the spectrum, we'll see a solo show by the most expensive living artist. With shows good, bad, and very bad all within our reach, anyone who says art is merely woke and mediocre in 2022 will seem of another era.

“Just Above Midtown: 1974 to the Present”

MoMA (opens October 9)

The gallery Just Above Midtown — or JAM, as it was always called — opened in 1974. Originally located on West 57th Street, it had to relocate twice due to rising rents, finally closing in 1986. In this short period, the gallery's visionary owner/director/everything Linda Goode Bryant, who founded the space at the age of 23 (!), showcased artists who were then unknown but who are now almost canonical, including David Hammons, Howardena Pindell, Lorraine O'Grady, and Senga Nengudi. JAM was a tremendous exception to the almost all-white, all-male gallery model, showing mostly artists of color. The artists Bryant worked with went on to twist the shape of painting and sculpture in ways that altered the flow of art — proving that quality is quality, without having to be qualified as advocacy. See for yourself at this long-delayed MoMA retrospective.