

FORT GANSEVOORT



THE ART NEWSPAPER

‘Better every year’: Frieze opens to swift sales for Los Angeles artists

The VIP preview saw galleries big and small taking care of business, and even Frieze’s new owner making a splashy purchase

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Doves drive sales in droves: paintings by Conny Maier from Hauser & Wirth’s stand totally sold out by the end of VIP preview day on Thursday
Carlin Stiehl

After the deadly wildfires in Altadena and the Palisades, Los Angeles was reeling at the time of last year’s [Frieze Los Angeles](#). But according to Christine Messineo, Frieze’s fair director for the Americas, the collective tenderness and spirit of community that emerged from the devastation has only grown stronger.

“There’s still a throughline between the way people showed up and treated the fair as a gathering place,” Messineo tells *The Art Newspaper*. “It was the first moment after the fires where people felt they had permission to feel joy, to reflect and to be in community. That sensibility is still here now.”

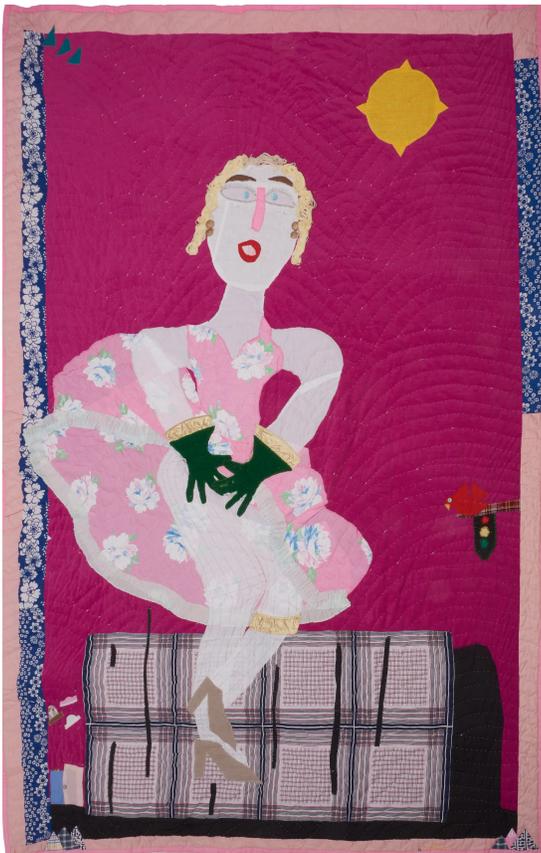
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Messineo says the fair’s greatest strength is its plurality: from artists to curators, advisers to collectors and gallerists to non-profit leaders, people of all stripes descend upon the Santa Monica Airport to rub elbows and talk shop. “You can’t walk through the aisles without it becoming a little bit of a social moment,” Messineo says.

“What stands out to me about Los Angeles is that we have a multitudinous world coming together,” Messineo adds. That spirit of openness is reflected in the pace and types of sales at the fair this year, with works by established, emerging and long-overlooked artists selling to local collectors, museums and institutions—and at least one fair owner.

In the fair’s opening hours, Ari Emanuel, the chief executive of Mari Group, which [acquired Frieze last year](#), walked into the Fort Gansevoort stand right at the fair’s main entrance and bought three figurative quilts by Yvonne Wells, an 87-year-old artist from Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The entertainment and live events mogul, perhaps unsurprisingly, was taken with Wells’s renderings of three icons of stage and screen, acquiring her quilts depicting Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley for prices between \$50,000 and \$60,000 each. This is the New York gallery’s first time exhibiting at Frieze Los Angeles and Wells’s first time showing anywhere in Los Angeles.

“At 87 years old, Wells is receiving the international recognition her work has long deserved,” says Adam Shopkorn, Fort Gansevoort’s owner and founder.



Yvonne Wells’s quilt *Marilyn Monroe* (2001), sold by Fort Gansevoort. © Yvonne Wells. Courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort, New York