



Kenny Schachter(<https://news.artnet.com/market/columns/kenny-schachter>)

When Gagosian Goes So Do His Galleries, How Hockney's Swimmer Swam Away, and Green Shoots in the Gallery World

Columnist Kenny Schachter on the latest talk of the town.



David Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* is displayed at Christie's in New York November 15, 2018. Photo by Don Emmert/AFP via Getty Images.

Kenny Schachter (<https://news.artnet.com/about/kenny-schachter-289>) September 22, 2025

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Trump's escalating, multi-billion-dollar legal onslaughts against the likes of *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, ABC Network and others has and will continue to have directly measurable chilling effects on free speech, the integrity of the Constitution and the very foundations of democracy itself.

Continuing reference over the years to the “experiment of democracy” alluding to the nation’s founders’ notion as to whether the U.S. system would work in the long run has always eluded me; I was under the impression that, by any explication, it had. Nine months into the present administration has proven how unequivocally misplaced I was.

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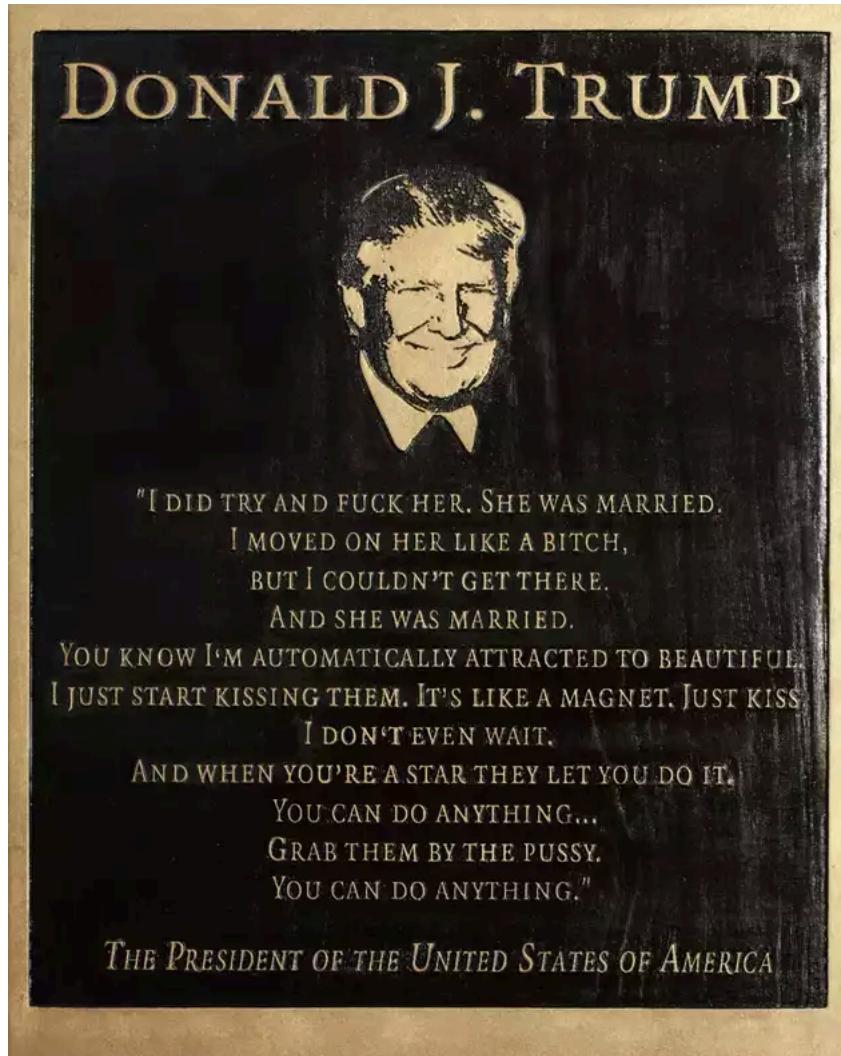
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JFK jr playing in what was the Rose Garden in 1963, since uprooted and replaced by Trump's white concrete abomination replete with tables and umbrellas—many are turning in their respective graves as a result. Photo by Cecil Stoughton, JFK Presidential Library and Museum, Boston

Recent events are making **McCarthy's Red Scare** seem tame by comparison, even scandal-scarred **Senator Ted Cruz**, who infamously packed his family off to a sun soaked Cancún vacation smack in the midst of a deadly Texas cold snap, inveighed against Trump. Risky business, nowadays. There has been no announcement to date of the U.S. representative of the 61st **Venice Biennial**, highly unusual

about seven months shy of the opening in May, 2026. Perhaps Trump will stage a solo drawing installation of his works prominently featured in Epstein's obsequious birthday tome (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-epstein-drawing-2669870>), the reporting on which landed the NYT a \$15 billion lawsuit.



Marylin Minter's protest piece from Trump term number one. Let us not forget, though it's hard to with Epstein's wingman up to his old tricks, but worse this go round. If that's possible.

Harry Truman described **Winston Churchill**'s flattering, manipulative—on occasion, insincere—rhetorical style as “soft soap,” alluding to the fact he’d neither be swayed nor cajoled in such a manner. Trump, by contrast, will only countenance fawning accolades, disingenuousness be damned, from within his cabinet, mass media, and international and business leaders. To sum it up better than I could, **Cornel West** posited the following in an article entitled Why James Baldwin Matters More than Ever (<https://lithub.com/cornel-west-on-why-james-baldwin-matters-more-than-ever/>):

“...in an age of mendacity and criminality, which is our own, just telling the truth and having integrity is revolutionary. It’s subversive. It’s countercultural.”



Kenny Schachter, after Francisco Mora.

Benign by comparison, but casting a pall over the entirety of the art world, has been the barrage of rhetoric-baiting clicks, consuming attention within and outside our hermetically sealed little ecosystem. The onslaught of press negativity about all that concerns the market and those that patronize it (or used to), and why, has been as unflagging as stifling. Granted, the world is in a state of turmoil politically, socially and economically; but it always has been, and will be. Sadly, that's seemingly the best human nature has on offer. The time is ripe to release some of the pent-up pressure in a world at bursting point, though critique must never abate or be thwarted.

As relatively inconsequential as it is (not to us that engage on all levels), art and its minuscule market have been resilient from the onset of humanity and will continue to be, save nuclear conflagration. Frighteningly, now's not the time to tempt such fate. In the words of a sage taxi driver I had the other day, we need to fix things and stop blaming. Looking for outside help, rather than within, isn't a solution either.



A woman looks at David Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* at Christie's New York. Photo by TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/Getty Images.

Casting longing glances to the Middle East as a panacea for what plagues the art business is foolish and will be proven wrong. Censorship and instability on par with, and in some instances far exceeding, our own will give short shrift to that prospect. According to a source close to the work's current owner, Saudi Arabia's inaugural minister of culture, **Badr bin Farhan Al Saud**, was said to have been the buyer of **David Hockney's** *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, which sold for \$90.3 million in November 2018. The same source claimed that the painting was later resold for less than its purchase price to Taiwanese collector **Pierre Chen**. Artnet has reviewed documentation confirming that the work is in Chen's **YAGEO Foundation** collection, though it could not independently confirm the purchase price or identity of the seller. Nor could the source's further suggestion—that the timing may have been linked to the Saudi oil company's 2019 IPO—be independently verified.

If you don't believe me, read the recent article in **Graydon Carter's** Air Mail mag by **Phin Jennings: Is the Gulf Art Boom a Mirage?** (<https://airmail.news/issues/2025-9-6/is-the-gulf-art-boom-a-mirage>). In the piece, he states: "The art market is abuzz over the Middle East—but when autocrats are footing the bill, how long can it last?"

Charles Pocock, a dealer who has worked in the region for nearly two decades, "is incredulous about the Middle East's positioning as the market's next savior. 'The client base is less now than it was 10, 15 years ago'" Pocock told Phin, who concludes that "In due course we'll see closed galleries, abandoned fairs, and the dealers and auctioneers leaving for their next apparent savior."

How do you turn an orange dictator green?

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Eric Idle acquiesced (in *The Life of Brian*, **Monty Python**'s 1979 film) while impaled on a cross facing certain death: *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*, stoically beseeching the pick-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps pluckiness that characterizes the British. Let's put aside the glum, self-perpetuating prophecy of what's merely another cyclical downturn and get on with it. Don't forget what we are left with in an art market strip-mined of the financial component—the art. Besides, recessions make dealers friendlier since they have something they don't in the midst of stupid, frothier periods: time.



POSTBOX, my upcoming art, furniture and writing exhibit and in-real-time-residency October 1-12 at The Sentinel newspaper in Marfa, Donald Judd's home turf.

If it's anything to go by, I had a great start to the season, and the Fall schedule with **Frieze**, **Basel Paris** and the November New York auctions will be a walloping return to form, mark(et) my words. I've been saying that all summer and with the recent white glove \$100 million, 100 percent sold **Karpidas** auction at **Sotheby's London** last week—admittedly, I don't get the **Les Lalanne** craze, but that's just me—it already has picked up. In the vein of rebuilding things, **Carol Greene** lowered prices for some of her artists and I predict many others will follow suit. **Matthew Brown** is expanding in L.A., carving out a space in his father-in-law **David Zwirner**'s gallery in **Melrose Hill**, the upside of a powerful art marriage. Matthew Brown confirmed the L.A. upgrade but wouldn't go as far acknowledging that it would be within "dad's" gallery.

Returning, as I often do, to the charismatic, swashbuckling, maverick that is **Larry G**, the 80-year-old dealer who continues his forward marching charge, forever chomping at the bit for another deal. I don't believe in an after-life, barely believe in this one, but if there is, **Gagosian** will be selling access. After confiding with multiple past and present employees, I can reveal his long speculated upon succession plan: there is none! In any guise, it's my opinion that after his death whatever remains won't last. He's chock-a-block geared up with bank leverage and living his best life, which is pretty darned good—trust me, I was invited once to his Hamptons compound for dinner and it was everything you'd imagine (and some). I'm fully cognizant I won't be returning anytime soon for obvious reasons.



When legend Larry G summoned me for dinner at his Hamptons spread some years ago, I am well aware I won't be invited back anytime soon—for obvious reasons you have read about today and regularly in the intervening years since the quite glorious occasion.

Larry could stuff an advisory board far and wide with luminaries from **Daphne Arnault**, **Sofia Coppola**, **J. Tomilson Hill**, **Snapchat's Evan Spiegel**, and others, all he wants, yet it's only window dressing to present the appearance of continuity. Gagosian's pace of growth is hardly abating in the meantime, he not only lives transactionally, I wouldn't be surprised if he concocts deals in his sleep. After being forced from his upper floor spaces at his flagship gallery at **980 Madison Avenue**, making way for **Michael Bloomberg** to reclaim the trophy building evicting multiple galleries in the process, I grabbed a nearby hardhat and snuck into the construction zone which includes an expansive basement excavation beneath his former ground floor bookstore (in the same premises) that's akin to a vast archeological probe or new subway line.



Art advisor Philippe Ségalot famously had himself fitted with full prosthetics to evade security at Art Basel in Switzerland (when there was no other recourse for early admittance—and anyone cared for that matter). I didn't have to go to such lengths, rather only sport a hardhat I surreptitiously picked up off Larry G's 980 Madison Avenue new ground floor gallery, opening soon.

In the meantime, I bet Larry G persuaded Michael B to cover at least a sizeable chunk of the construction cost, which resembles a quarry now, as I'd gather it won't be long till the prime real estate reverts back to Bloomberg after the fateful day many will mourn, and history will longingly remember. Gagosian lives for the moment, which entails selling a lot of art which he indubitably loves, cares about, and gives a great deal of thought to. Don't doubt the master of ceremonies is firmly at the helm and will relinquish control only when hell—which he'll be controlling a portion of—deeply freezes. As usual, like another famed Chairman of the Board, **Frank Sinatra**, he's doing it his way, till the final curtain.



Punk art dealer Alex Berns' rammed full new gallery opened to much fanfare in New York's Tribeca and spilled into the street overflowing with not just crowds-to-capacity, but sales too to match.

There's a handful of international galleries that have recently cropped up, there invariably always are; including my favorite of the lot, the punkish **Alex Berns**, all of 30, who worked at **Meredith Rosen Gallery** for three years before striking out solo. Rosen incidentally just moved to new, larger quarters this month on **West 36th Street**. I am particularly partial to Berns, not exclusively because I am in his jam packed, spilling-onto-the-streets group exhibit, which remains on view through October 7.



My work in Alex Berns' new exhibit Art Peace, featuring our very own Roberta Smith and Jerry Saltz protesting for art peace, which we need more today than ever. Roberta, please come out of retirement—I implore you!

Berns, naughty by nature—which I can relate to (for obvious reasons)—steadfastly refuses to participate in art fairs and, as admirably, rebuffs all entreaties to send out PDFs for his first or any shows henceforth. Says Berns on why he won't capitulate on the PDF front: "I'm not an e-commerce site." He also unwittingly kicked out **Max Lakin** of the *NY Times* who wouldn't back off from standing too close to an artwork after repeated rebukes. I can commiserate with such gaffes (I've committed too many to recount) though Berns was unrepentant relating Lakin's recalcitrant reaction to being admonished.



The Wyatt Kahn opening at Felix Rodder's new gallery on East 80th Street in NYC, green sprouts popping up all over the city in NY and abroad. Art and the market for it is as intrepid as ever and in rude health thank you very much.

Then there's 33 year-old **Felix Rodder** on **East 80th Street**, who (as previously reported on [Artnet](https://news.artnet.com/market/meet-felix-rodder-aby-rosen-more-juicy-gossip-2674989) (<https://news.artnet.com/market/meet-felix-rodder-aby-rosen-more-juicy-gossip-2674989>)), was a practicing entertainment lawyer that actually began his art sojourn advising and working for German photography dealer **Thomas Zander** before working at Zwirner. Rodder will showcase a single historical exhibit per year in addition to his contemporary program, while also engaging in secondary market dealing to afford the uptown digs. Rodder presented **Wyatt Kahn** last Thursday, who briskly sold new hybrid painting constructions from prices ranging from \$50,000 to \$75,000. Wyatt reached an auction record of nearly \$200,000 back in 2014, when that was still a thing.



Alex Berns, the punk of the spate of new gallerists fearlessly going where many have gone before them, hosted a jam packed opening which I am grateful to be a part of. Business was brisk to boot!

Donald Ryan, another young'un heading for the staid reaches of New York's **Upper East Side**, characterizes his program as specializing in 20th Century artists grounded in thoroughgoing art-historical research, despite his youth (he's 35, lord I feel aged). Nevertheless, he's equally as committed to emerging talents as well. Ryan co-curated **Peter Doig** at the **Musée d'Orsay** in Paris, and **Cy Twombly** at **Maison d'Art** in Los Angeles; and, previously founded a London based project space for multi-generational artists. All three newcomers mentioned above are welcome and much needed additions to the already febrile, burgeoning New York gallery landscape.

Private I, A Memoir (published by ZE Books, 2025), penned by artist and writer **Lynn Hershman Leeson** is a book I couldn't recommend with more conviction. I beg, instead command, you to read this elucidating eye-opening chronicle of a prescient historical figure heralding a cultural period decades before it's come to pass. The only thing worse than being behind the times is to be this far ahead. Even at 84 years-young, Leeson is and has been for...ever, resilient, tenacious and relentlessly progressive.

Singling out one quote among a profusion I could have referenced, underground filmmaker and artist **George Kuchar**

“...taught all of us to search for our soul in a better world, to not be afraid, to live in the raw, to be honest, naked, and funny, and to express the irony of our frailty as we all approach extinction.”

Unquestionably something to ponder—I only wish I could compose an account as forthright and philosophically insightful as Lynn; even if I could (I can't), who on earth would publish such a folly.

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The Vanderbilt Family's Gilded Age Treasures Hit the Auction Block

Anchoring the sale is the "Vanderbilt Sapphire," poised to fetch \$1.5 million.



"The Vanderbilt Sapphire" was made in the early 20th century. Photo: courtesy Phillips.

by Richard Whiddington (<https://news.artnet.com/about/richard-whiddington-26560>) September 21, 2025

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When Gladys Vanderbilt married Count Laszlo Széchényi of Hungary on a cloudless day in 1908, it was the talk of New York city. Teeming crowds and hungry reporters thronged at the gates of the family's Fifth Avenue mansion, America's leading industrialists and politicians were in attendance, and Pope Pius X sent his blessing (<https://www.nytimes.com/1908/01/28/archives/miss-vanderbilt-now-a-countess-she-becomes-the-bride-of-count.html>) via cable. Before Gladys dashed off on a continental honeymoon, her mother gifted her a Cartier tiara studded with amethysts and diamonds—a present befitting a newly minted member of European aristocracy.

A diamond lily brooch, once part of that tiara, is one of 12 jeweled items formerly owned by Gladys Vanderbilt that is heading for sale at Phillips Geneva on November 10. The auction house calls the assembly "rich in historical resonance" and indeed it isn't hard to imagine the lots accompanying finest satin and lace and drifting through the sumptuous halls of the Gilded Age.

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Cartier Tiara given by Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt to her daughter, Gladys Vanderbilt. Photo: courtesy Phillips.

But the wedding brooch, which is set with a pear-shaped diamond and given an upper estimate of \$150,000, is just an appetizer. The real star is another brooch, which has been given the definitive title of "The Vanderbilt Sapphire." Mounted by Tiffany & Co., it was another gift from Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt and places a royal blue Kashmir sapphire at the center of diamonds masquerading as flowers. It's estimated between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.



Cartier diamond brooch from tiara. Photo: courtesy Phillips.

Gladys was the youngest daughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt II. Her family had built its fortune in the 19th century by consolidating control over first New York city's waterways and later the America's railroads. By the time of Cornelius "The Commodore" Vanderbilt's death in 1877, the family had amassed a fortune of \$100 million, close to the holdings of the U.S. treasury at the time.

Gladys grew up in the Vanderbilt's Fifth Avenue mansion, the largest New York has ever known, had five children with Széchenyi, and spent much of her later life at the estate she'd inherited in Newport, Rhode Island. Her image is memorialized (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/john-singer-sargent-the-gilded-age-hbo-2660432>) by a 1906 painting by John Singer Sargent.



Gladys Vanderbilt, Countess Széchényi, wearing the tiara at the Coronation of Emperor Charles and Empress Zita of Austria in 1916. Photo: courtesy Phillips.

Elsewhere, there are slightly more personal items that evidence a life of ultimate luxury. There's a monogrammed Cartier vanity case with a ruby at its clasp and studded with a crown of diamonds (estimate: \$8,000–\$12,000). It pairs well with delicate gold Cartier wristwatch with rubies at its lugs (\$3,000–\$5,000). Completing the set is a Cartier traveling clock which was gifted to her as a Christmas present in 1913 (\$5,000–\$8,000).

"The Vanderbilt Family Jewels stand as the purest embodiment of Gilded Age elegance," Benoît Repellin, head of jewelry at Phillips, said in a statement. "It promises to capture the imagination of collectors worldwide. This comes at a time when the market is particularly enthusiastic for period jewels—Belle Epoque and early-20th-century masterpieces are in especially high demand."



Cartier, Gold, ruby and diamond vanity case. Photo: courtesy Phillips.

This demand saw the auction house's sales of jewels double between 2022 and 2024. It reached \$60 million last year a more than 50 percent increase from 2023.

Earlier this year, another assembly of Vanderbilt jewelry appeared at Sotheby's. It belonged to Emily Vanderbilt Wade, a distant cousin of Gladys, and was a showcase in exquisite early 20th-century jewelry design. The marquee lot was an elongated necklace with a dazzle of rubies and diamonds that sold for \$1.8 million.

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