Art World

Wet Paint: The Mugrabis Go Big on Kenny Scharf, Jay-Z and Beyoncé Lose Out on an Amoako Boafo, & More Juicy Art-World Gossip

What supermodel went to the Boros Collection? What Soho spot did Chloe Sevingy diss for kicking out an old fave? Read on for answers.

Nate Freeman, December 4, 2020

Kenny Scharf. Courtesy of Kenny Scharf Studio

Every week, Artnet News brings you Wet Paint, a gossip column of original scoops reported and written by Nate Freeman. If you have a tip, email Nate at nfreeman@artnet.com.

DEALERS SHARPEN KNIVES FOR SCHARFS

It took a few decades, but the hottest new artist on Earth right now is none other than **Kenny Scharf**, the graffito-gone-legit painter who made his mark in the 1980s **East Village** by co-founding the performance space **Club 57** on **St. Marks Place** with **Keith Haring** and **Jean-Michel Basquiat**.

Scharf's downtown compatriots were sadly not around to see their profiles and auction prices rise steadily in the years since their deaths. Their buddy Kenny scraped by in the years after, and once Basquiats and Harings became baseball cards for collecting billionaires, Scharf settled for pop-culture relevance through the alchemy of street-art-to-real-art osmosis. New Yorkers knew him, but the work changed hands in the range of the low five figures.

Kenny Scharf and Alberto Mugrabi attend WALL STREET JOURNAL Hosts Panel Discussion with KENNY SCHARF. (Photo by MATT CARASELLA/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images)

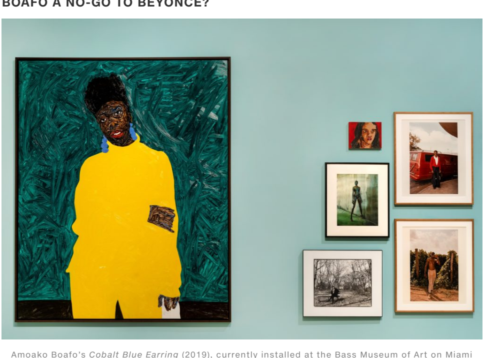
Then, after years of showing somehow quietly at **Honor Fraser** in **Los Angeles** and **Kasmin** in **New York**—along with having regular solo shows at **TOTAH**, **David Totah**'s gallery on the **Lower East Side**—Scharf had his first show with **Jeffrey Deitch** in 2017, the same year he featured prominently in '80s-themed group shows at **MoMA** and the **Whitney**. *Yahtzee*. This fall, he popped up on both coasts, with solo shows at Deitch's expansive space in Los Angeles and the outpost of global powerhouse **Almine Rech** on the **Upper East Side**. He currently has a show up in **Miami** at Deitch's pop-up space in the **Design District**, and last week, **Dior** creative director **Kim Jones** announced he had tapped Scharf as his collaborator on the brand's pre-fall line.

But the clearest sign of Scharf's emergence in middle age is his caliber of collectors. **Wet Paint** has heard that Scharf is one of the latest favorites of the **Mugrabi** family, the taste-making mega-collectors known for playing creative geniuses like stocks, buying their work in bulk with the hope that the golden geese lay more sellable eggs. (One of the sons of patriarch **Jose Mugrabi**, **Tico**, is also known for his unshakable love for the **Trumps** and the **Kushners**—he and his wife, **Colby Mugrabi**, even traveled to **Camp David** for **Javanka**'s wedding anniversary in 2019.)

Kenny Scharf and Jeffrey Deitch attend Vanity Fair And Cadillac Toast The Artists Of Wynwood Walls. (Photo by Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for Vanity Fair)

The family has more than 800 **Warhols**, and more than a hundred works apiece by **Damien Hirst**, **George Condo**, and Basquiat. It may be the case that Scharf has now joined that exclusive club. Some sources suggest that the Mugrabis acquired a number of the 250 "MOODZ" paintings Deitch showed in Los Angeles, but others insist the Mugrabis have been buying up their Scharfs elsewhere, and that a deep-pocketed collector other than the Mugrabis was behind the big buy in La La Land. Whoever it was, the price for the bundle was apparently a cool $2 million. Deitch declined to comment on the identity of clients, and the Mugrabis did not return a request for comment.

BOAFO A NO-GO TO BEYONCE?



Amoako Boafo's *Cobalt Blue Earring* (2019), currently installed at the Bass Museum of Art on Miami Beach. Photo courtesy the City of Miami Beach.

Amoako Boafo had perhaps the wildest 12-month run of anyone in the art world. Just a year ago, he was pulling back the curtain on a sold-out solo booth at **Art Basel Miami Beach** while, just across a causeway, his celebrated residency show debuted at the **Rubell Museum**. Now, after a year of complicated shadowy deals and brushes with flip-happy collectors, Boafo ended the year watching another one of his paintings sell for an unthinkable price. On Wednesday, *Baba Diop* (2019) sold at **Christie's** for $1.15 million, a new record for the artist.

But there's one previously unknown delicious detail from the Boafo saga. During last year's Art Basel Miami Beach, the **City of Miami Beach**'s **Art in Public Places** committee was deciding how to spend the $100,000 allocated for new acquisitions through its inaugural Legacy Purchase Program. The city was allowed to buy work from any booth in that year's **Nova** or **Positions** sectors and then install the pickup somewhere around the gigantic convention center.

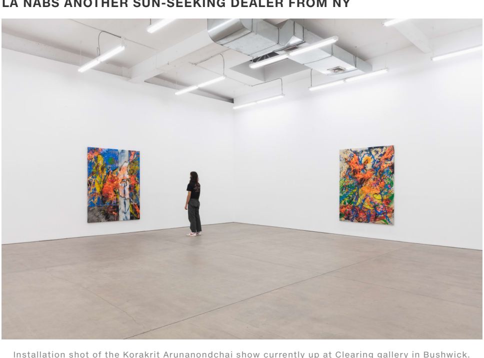
Miami Beach bigwigs earmarked Boafo's *Cobalt Blue Earring* (2019) at the **Mariane Ibrahim** booth as a potential buy, and, after allowing the public to vote, the brass found that the tally for the Boafo was just three votes behind that for a work by another up-and-comer, **Ebony G. Patterson**, at the **Monique Meloche** booth.

Jay-Z and wife Beyonce Knowles attend the Art Basel Miami Beach on December 4, 2008 in Miami Beach, Florida. (Photo by Gustavo Caballero/Getty Images)

The city ended up spending its budget on *both* works—$65,000 for the Patterson, $44,000 for the Boafo—which was bad news for the next set of collectors on the waiting list for the Boafo. Sources close to the deal tell Wet Paint the collectors next in line for *Cobalt Blue Earring* were none other than **Jay-Z** and **Beyoncé**.

It's unclear if Hov and Bey have been able to get their hands on another work by the artist, given just how in-demand they are. Ibrahim said this account was "not accurate," but declined to offer further details.

LA NABS ANOTHER SUN-SEEKING DEALER FROM NY



Installation shot of the Korakrit Arunanondchai show currently up at Clearing gallery in Bushwick. Photo courtesy Clearing.

Another New York gallery has fled to sunny **California** for the winter. This time it's **Clearing**, the hip **Bushwick** gallery that also has an outpost in Brussels, Belgium. Gallery founder **Olivier Babin** moved out to Los Angeles, renting a place in Beverly Hills with a large ground floor that will be used to stage exhibitions. First up is work by **Sebastian Black**, whose show at Clearing's Brooklyn HQ was cut short by March stay-at-home orders.

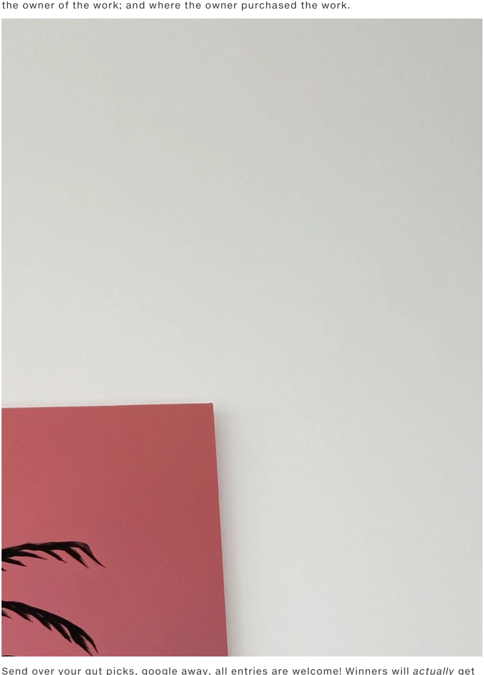
California Clearing will be in La La Land through at least February, though when asked for a definite answer as to how long he'd stay in Tinseltown, Babin said "Indefinitely." He joins **Bill Powers** in the westward expansion—that dealer is opening an outpost of **Half Gallery** in the city's **Little Ethiopia** to escape from New York during the frigid winter months.

POP QUIZ

Readers! So many of you put your art-world history to the test and answered the brain-bender from two weeks ago correctly. It was indeed a still from **Mary Harron**'s film ***American Psycho***, the work is from **Robert Longo**'s "Men in the Cities" series, and it depicts his fellow '80s art star **Gretchen Bender**.

Here are the names of the first 10 fast-typing responders who sent in the the correct answer the quickest: **Rose Whitwell**, gallery assistant at **Skarstedt**; **Pilar Corrias** assistant **Isabel Walter**; **Connor Seavey**, account manager at **Cadogan Tate Fine Art**; **Allison Card**, a partner at **Metro Pictures**; **Alexander Sentema**, a sales assistant at **Lévy Gorvy** in **London**; **Rupert Martin**, the studio manager for **Howard Tangye**; **Rob Sherer**, an art consultant at **the Orange Agency**; **Kirby Kane** from the consultancy **Riggs Cooper Art Partners**; **Lucas Casso**, founder of the gallery **Sweetwater, Berlin**; and **Camilla Johnston**, sales director at **the Lapis Press**.

Here's this week's clue. You will need all of the following: The artist who made the work; the owner of the work; and where the owner purchased the work.



Send over your gut picks, google away, all entries are welcome! Winners will *actually* get Wet Paint hats, now that one of the art world's cooler swag manufacturers has stepped up to fabricate what's set to be an historic artist-writer collab. Expect the drop at the top of 2021. Direct guesses to nfreeman@artnet.com.

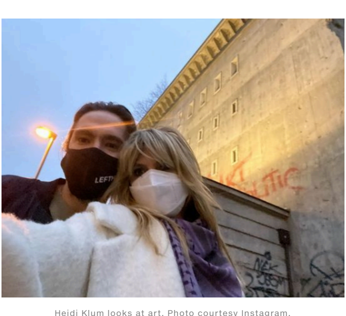
WE HEAR…

The Carl Fisher Clubhouse. Photo courtesy the City of Miami Beach.

Miami Beach will turn the **Carl Fisher Clubhouse**, which is said to be the oldest house on the island, into a rum bar set to open in time for Art Basel Miami Beach 2021, just steps away from the convention center … A certain big-time **North American** collector stopped purchasing art after losing half a million dollars at the poker table during high-stakes games with the Italian mob… While the **Delano** hotel may be closed during this most strange **Miami Art Week**, **Twist** is open and ready for visitors, with a masked doorman outside ready to let revelers into the beloved **South Beach** gay bar where, last year, **David Zwirner** made a surprise appearance … The banner for the joint **Salon 94** and Lévy Gorvy space in Miami reminds many of the branding for overpriced nepotism-flavored sweets slinger **Dylan's Candy Bar** …

It's basically a candy store anyway? Photo courtesy a tipster.

SPOTTED



Heidi Klum looks at art, Photo courtesy Instagram.

*** **Heidi Klum** at the **Sammlung Boros** in **Berlin**, checking out an **Avery Fisher** in the collection while wearing a white mask *** **Timothée Chalamet** at the **New Museum** on the **Bowery** *** **Studio Museum** director **Thelma Golden** swinging through **MoMA** on a post-Thanksgiving day off *** Ad man extraordinaire **Donny Deutsch** on **MSNBC** in front of a **Doug Aitken** he has installed in his Upper East Side apartment ***

Donny Deutsch, talking head. Photo courtesy Instagram.

*** **Cuba Gooding Jr.** drinking a martini in a booth by the bar at **Joe's Stone Crab** in **Miami** *** **Chloe Sevigny** dissing the perpetually packed but eternally uncool **Soho** eatery **Lola Taverna**, which replaced the beloved macrobiotic spot **Souen** last year ***

Preach, Chloe! Photo courtesy Instagram.

PARTING SHOT

gregorg
@gregorg

I feel like I should report this tweet.

> The New York Times @nytimes · 8h
> The David Zwirner gallery says the mystery monolith buried in the Utah desert is the work of John McCracken, a Minimalist sculptor and science-fiction devotee. If that's the case, the late artist didn't tell his dealer or friends. nyti....

8:59 AM · 11/28/20 · Twitter for iPhone

Follow artnet News on Facebook:

Like 376K

Want to stay ahead of the art world? Subscribe to our newsletter to get the breaking news, eye-opening interviews, and incisive critical takes that drive the conversation forward.