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The Drawings of John Currin: A Look Back at Frieze New York Art Fair 2017 By JAN GARDEN CASTRO, JUN. 2017



JOHN CURRIN, Untitled, 2005, Ink on paper, 9 x 6 inches © John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.

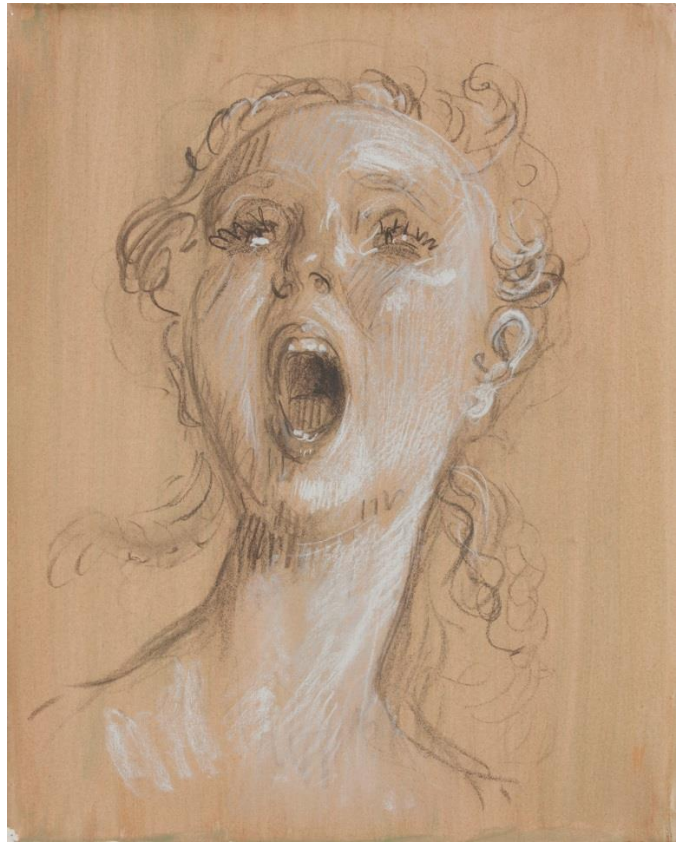
Want to discover the next Rembrandt? The next Andy Warhol? Go to [Frieze](#) New York. Frieze is about agendas, priorities, and art world contacts. This year, beauty, retro, and figurative symbolism reigned. Frieze, the annual fair on Randall's Island, has iterations in London and Berlin, and ties to the [Venice Biennale](#) and to the upcoming Pacific Standard Time LA/ LA project. Also a multi-million, multi-institutional Latin American art exhibition and programs to launch in Los Angeles in September, 2017. On May 4, press and VIP attendees flew in from all over the world; everyone seemed to know each other in several languages. My agenda: find the best of Frieze.

John Currin's small portraits, hung gallery-style by the hundreds at Gagosian's space, won my heart. Covering thirty years of work, they are modest, retro, and super-contemporary all at once, taking in a range of 19th, 20th, & 21st Century facets with 'old master' facility. Some are quaint family portraits, some are females with super-huge breasts (a male fantasy OR a critique of same OR both), and some, such as a breast-feeding mother, are pure beauty. These intimate works must be studied close up. John Currin was on hand, but instead of talking about himself, he enthused that his wife Rachel Feinstein has big upcoming art projects.



John Currin and Rachel Feinstein.

Photo by Jan Castro for Whitehot Magazine.



JOHN CURRIN, Untitled, 2003, Gouache and watercolor on paper, 12 × 8 3/4 inches, (30.5 × 22.2 cm) © *John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.*

JOHN CURRIN, Untitled, 2003, Charcoal and chalk on paper, 17 7/8 × 13 7/8 inches (45.4 × 35.2 cm), © *John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.*

In [Marian Goodman](#)'s large open stand, her audiovisual coup was upsidedown snare drums on the ceiling. Anri Sala's *Bridges in the Doldrums* has drumsticks "playing" sounds from wind instruments. The drums are real and "fake," a keen metaphor for politics today. Albanian-born Sala lives in Berlin and has several forthcoming international projects.

My favorite body part image was a huge asshole on one wall by an up-and-coming Brooklyn-based artist. I'm not sure if she intended it as a metaphor for one person in particular. To me, this was part of the political art that was abundant but masked, mostly in symbols and images.

At the [Martos Gallery](#), Aura Rosenberg 1993's headshots of Mike Kelley having sex with her (first printed in 2017) were actually old. Kelley called their fling his "longest orgasm to date." Rosenberg photographed sixty men for this headshot series.

Amid the dazzle of celebrities at Frieze, 88-year-old Gerd Stern stood out. His 1965 collective USCO (Company of US) created a colossal 112.2 x 110" optical canvas *Spheres-Time*. Its circles of circles move toward viewers in a soft, fresh way. Stern's positive wordplay as a poet is seen in

a square canvas NO OW NOW -- two circular poems inside each other. The “unified,” holistic paintings were done by a 1965 collective of up to five people.

Salon 94 Director Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn has a genius for discovering cutting-edge women artists such as artist Francesca di Mattio, whose *Boucherouite II*, 2017, shows an elbow, a breast, and a toe amid a swirl of hues, abstract shapes, and nubby textures. Di Mattio’s colorful glazed ceramics were an original mix of textured, smooth, figurative, and abstract. Marilyn Minter, who has a big solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, was represented by a misty nude photo.



JOHN CURRIN, *Untitled*, 1995, Pencil on paper, 6 x 3 13/16 inches, © *John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.*

Latino and South American art was abundant, much of it abstract and elegant, timeless and contemporary. Two of my favorite artists were Vivian Cancurri at A Gentile Carioca in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Virginia Jaramillo at Hales Gallery (New York and London). Jaramillo is an older Texas-born Latino artist who has lived in Los Angeles and Europe and whose Frieze work was selected for purchase by the Brooklyn Museum. Jaramillo’s backgrounds seem monochrome but contain many hues mixed together and traversed by one to a few boldly-colored slender curving lines. Cancurri is a younger artist known for musical and performance art; the works here are delicate, motion-filled, and universal.

Among the many artists and arts pros were Sotheby’s star Senior Vice President for Fine Arts and former Andy Warhol Museum Director Eric Shiner; artist Leo Villareal and his wife Yvonne Force Villareal; Jan Rothschild, Director of Rothschild & Associates; Jason E. Kaufman, creator of *InView* Culture Bulletin; and Artforum Publisher Knight Landesman.



JOHN CURRIN, Untitled, 1993-1994, Ink on paper, 10 3/4 x 8 inches © *John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.*



JOHN CURRIN, Untitled, 2006, Ink on paper, 10 x 6 1/4 inches, © John Currin. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.

The stand prize for the best gallery presentation went to [P.P.O.W.](#), New York for its retro exhibit showing the influence of immigration, street art and Hip Hop on our epoch. A car-shaped pigeon coop by Anton van Dalen, originally exhibited at Exit Art in 1988, was surrounded by pioneering works by artist-activists Martin Wong and David Wojnarowicz.

Instead of information on paper, Frieze provided journalists with a flash drive of images, programs, and maps. Sponsors Deutsch Bank and BMW Group in New York, London, and Berlin seem to benefit from the interconnections between fine arts, luxury goods, and banking. The Frieze Projects, Programs, Talks, and indoor and outdoor site-specific interactive art, included special works from Latin America and Rome and new artist commissions. **WM**



Jan Castro [Jan Garden Castro](#) is a contributing editor for Sculpture Magazine (17 cover stories) and blogs at [sculpture.org](#). She has curated exhibitions for IAA

(International Arts & Artists), Jane V. Zimmerli Museum, JAMA (Japan Association of Art Museums), and ICPNA (Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano – Lima). Her books include *The Art & Life of Georgia O’Keeffe*, *Sonia Delaunay: La Moderne*, and *The Last Frontier*. Her work has appeared in *The Nation*, *American Poetry Review*, and *American Book Review*. [view all articles from this author](#)