

The Back Room

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This week in the Back Room: A behind-the-scenes look at art-dealer collaborations, the U.S. Department of Justice picks up a Monet and a Warhol from Jho Low, a record-setting Jordy Kerwick canvas finds a second life as a rug, and much more—all in a **7-minute read (1,809 words)**.

Summer has always been the time when dealers take a more casual approach to programming, staging (often-lackadaisical) group shows to try to sell some backstock or to test out work by young artists. But this year, there are some interesting developments.

You have heard it repeatedly: Galleries are hard-up for cash days amid the current downturn. Many are cutting costs, but the savvy are experimenting and charting new paths forward. Looking over the summer calendar, one major trend is apparent: dealers are banding together, sharing spaces and staging joint productions.

This weekend brings the opening of the Campus, a collaborative venture between six galleries—Bortolami, James Cohan, Kaufmann Repetto, Anton Kern, Andrew Kreps, and Kurimanzutto—in an old school building they bought in upstate New York. “This is writ large of something that’s happening in the art world: a new way of working,” Kreps told the New York Times.

Top of the Market International Swap Meets



This Nadia Belerique piece is currently on view in a joint group show at New York's Margot Samel gallery that was organized with the Montreal gallery Pangée. Photo by Matthew Sherman.

Meanwhile, gallery shares and swaps—practices with long histories—are popular right now. The trailblazer on that front was Condo, which in 2016 saw a group of London dealers hand over their spaces to foreign peers. The program was later expanded to Shanghai, Mexico City, and New York.

Earlier this year, the gallery share Onsen Confidential returned to Tokyo for its second edition, with local dealers hosting counterparts from abroad. Similar ventures have included Okey Dokey in Cologne and Düsseldorf and Friend of a Friend in Warsaw and Berlin.

Sonia Jakimczyk, the founder of the Warsaw gallery Import Export, participated in Condo earlier this year at Sylvia Kouvali's space in Piraeus, Greece, just outside Athens. "We reached a broader audience thanks to collaborating with an established gallery who also allowed us to interact with their loyal collector base and a network of curators through a series of events," Jakimczyk said. "Condo was a great way to foster a relationship between the galleries, as we now work together on realizing goals for the artist."

Gallery swaps are also occurring outside of formalized models like Condo. New York dealer Margot Samel has two this summer, both of different shapes. This week, she opened a joint group show with Pangée in Montreal that spans both galleries. In addition, Samel is doing a swap with Glasgow's Kendall Koppe. Samel will give her space to Koppe for the month of August (to present

Margot Samel

works by Miguel Cardenas), and Koppe is giving his space to Samel in October (to present works by Narcissister).

“As the costs of running a small or mid-sized gallery get higher and higher while the economy remains uncertain, it’s becoming more and more important that galleries think of nontraditional ways to collaborate and to support each other,” Samel said over email. “We can expand the reach of our galleries without spending additional money the way you would to participate in an art fair, for example.”

Samel said that the two shows have different structures for breaking down revenue. “With Pangée, we are sharing all the profit from sales, as well as show-related expenses,” she said. “With Kendall, each gallery pays for their own expenses and receives the full profit from sales.”

Jakimczyk said that, for these kind of cooperative shows, financial and logistical arrangements are typically handled on a case-by-case basis. “We worked out an easy agreement that gave both galleries a good incentive,” she said of her work with Kouvali. “Every gallery partnership seems to follow its own agreement.”

The Bottom Line

There are no signs that market conditions will improve soon, so expect to see more collaborative projects. Dealers say that sharing spaces provides a dynamic way to broaden their horizons without breaking the bank.