






Art Market

The Most In-Demand Artists at Art Fairs in the First Half of 2019

• Benjamin Sutton Jul 17, 2019 9:29pm   

Jeff Koons and KAWS dominated the conversation during this year's spring auctions, but Artsy data shows that Yayoi Kusama was the artist most sought-after by collectors at art fairs in the first half of 2019.

Demand for the nonagenarian Japanese artist known for her dazzling mirror chambers, disorienting canvases covered in spots, and large, dotted pumpkin sculptures not only outpaced young market stars like KAWS, Nathaniel Mary Quinn, and Derrick Adams, but also eclipsed blue-chip stalwarts like Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter.



Yayoi Kusama *Installation view of Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2017*
Seattle Art Museum

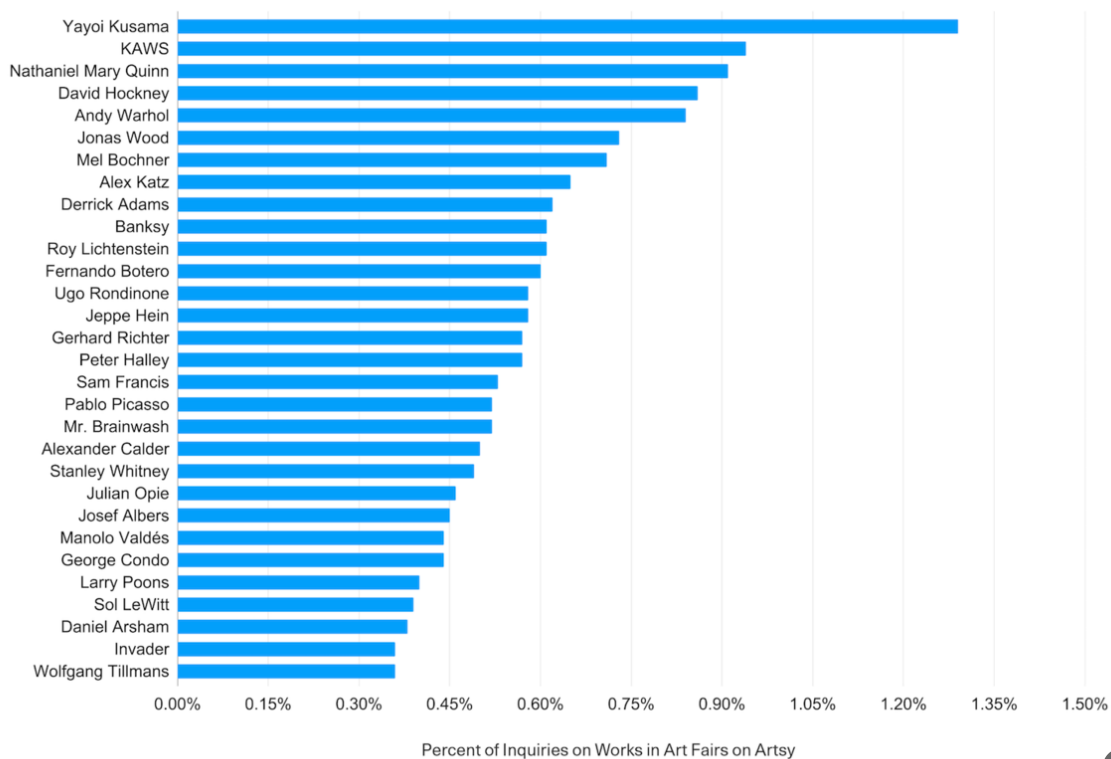
The data analyzed comprises 45 art fairs featured on Artsy that opened

between January 1st and June 30th. Over 35,000 artworks were uploaded to more than 2,300 virtual fair booths by more than 1,800 galleries participating in these fairs. Demand was judged based on an artist's share of inquiries placed on all artworks within the set.

Roughly half of all visitors to fair pages in the first half of 2019 originated in the U.S., potentially skewing results of the analysis based on the preferences of American collectors (a full note on methodology is available at the end of this article). However, just over a third of the galleries that participated in the online fair presentations are American galleries, and the fairs analyzed reflect the global nature of the art market, spanning from ZONAMACO and SP-Arte to Art Basel in Hong Kong and Masterpiece London.

Artists with Most Demand at Art Fairs in 2019

Source: Artsy Data (January - June 2019)



Street artists also figured prominently among the most in-demand established artists who showed at art fairs in the first half of 2019. In addition to KAWS—who, early on, made subversive interventions on posters and billboards in New York City—the French mosaic artist Invader and the Los Angeles–based artist Retna (known for his quasi-hieroglyphic graffiti) each drove a significant share of inquiries from interested collectors.

Another *relatively* well-represented discipline among the sought-after established artists is photography, at least compared to the emerging and blue-chip categories, which feature a single photographer between their respective top 30s. The late greats André Kertész, Vivian Maier, and Gordon Parks all figure among the top 30 established artists in Artsy’s data. Interest in Kertész’s work may have been boosted by a major solo show this spring at Bruce Silverstein in New York; the gallery also brought his work to both at The Armory Show and AIPAD. Maier’s work has been the subject of sustained interest since the 2013 release of the documentary *Finding Vivian Maier*, with museum and gallery shows the world over.



Gordon Parks *Boy with June Bug, Fort Scott, Kansas (44.001), 1963*
Robert Klein Gallery

Parks has been a towering figure in the photography world for a half-century, but a number of factors have raised his profile even further recently. The Gordon Parks Foundation has taken an increasingly active role in promoting his work and that of like-minded photographers; last year, along with publisher Steidl and the National Gallery of Art, the foundation released a major book of Parks's photos from the 1940s. Parks has also garnered attention well beyond the art world recently thanks to Kendrick Lamar, Kasseem "Swizz Beatz" Dean, and Alicia Keys. Lamar drew heavily on Parks's work for his "Element" music video last summer; Dean and Keys have amassed the largest private collection of Parks's work, which is currently the focus of an exhibition at Harvard University.

The "established" category prominently features a number of artists who might have been deemed "emerging" just a few years ago, but have lately become fixtures of art fairs and auctions. These artists include KAWS, but also Jonas Wood—who officially graduated to the seven-figure club during the May auctions in New York, and currently has a solo show of enormous still-life paintings at Gagosian's West 24th Street