

## Flavorwire January 21, 2011

### The World's First Exclusively Online Art Fair

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The VIP Art Fair — an acronym for “Viewing in Private” — is the first art fair to take place exclusively online. Opening tomorrow, the 8-day fair offers a broad range of international artists and galleries, video tours of artist studios and private collections worldwide, and daily news updates from the Art Newspaper. Organized by James and Jane Cohan of New York’s venerable James Cohan Gallery and Internet entrepreneurs Jonas and Alessandra Almgren of One Art World, the fair is accessible to anyone, anywhere via its website. We recently sat down with VIP Art Fair co-founder Jane Cohan to get the details on this innovative platform for making fine art more reachable to a worldwide audience.

**Flavorpill:** What is the VIP Art Fair?

**Jane Cohan:** As the Internet exists today, there is no one location where someone can find the leading contemporary art galleries in the world. We wanted to change this. We aim to realize the potential for the Internet in reaching new audiences, as an active platform for introducing artists and artwork, and for working in a direct way with viewers and collectors.

**FP:** How did the idea for the fair come about?

**JC:** The idea came to us three years ago when we developed a private room as part of our gallery website. There, we offered works to a select group of our clients and were able to include supporting materials so that they could learn more about the works. Three years ago, we met our partners Jonas and Alessandra Almgren, who are art collectors and who have a long history with development of new projects on the Internet, and started to work together to develop the online art fair project.

**FP:** What is the geographic diversity of the galleries and artists represented?

**JC:** There are 138 galleries from 30 countries participating in the fair. With three online exhibition halls, visitors to the fair will encounter a wide range of contemporary art galleries — all leaders in the field. The VIP Premier hall for well-established galleries, representing international and critically acclaimed artists; VIP Focus galleries, presenting works by a single artist; and VIP Emerging, representing some of the most exciting and cutting edge artists working today. With galleries from 30 countries, VIP Art Fair is a truly international fair.

**FP:** What’s the level of the artists that galleries will present?

**JC:** The artists presented by the galleries will range from established to emerging. The very well known artists include American minimalist John McCracken at David Zwirner, Damien Hirst at L&M Arts, Jenny Holzer at Yvon Lambert, Hiroshi Sugimoto at Gallery Koyanagi, Anselm Kiefer at Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, and John

Chamberlain at Anthony Meier Fine Arts. Visitors can also expect to be introduced to talented newcomers to the scene, such as British installation artist Sean Edwards, who will be presenting *It's Not Me, It's You*, which consists of floor-to-ceiling stacks of packing tape at Limoncello Gallery, and New Delhi-based Thukral and Tagra, a collaborative team that are at the forefront of the Indian art movement, at Bose Pacia/Nature Morte.

**FP:** How does viewing art at VIPAF differ from looking at art in gallery websites?

**JC:** It was a key goal of our partners Jonas and Alessandra Almgren and ours to improve the experience of looking at artwork online. On the VIP Art Fair website artwork is presented on a wall (or in the case of a sculpture on the floor) in relation to other works of art and to the human figure. So here, collectors can understand the size of the work. Then, with a simple click, the visitor can zoom way in to see the surface of an artwork; collectors can see the important details and textures that give each work its character. In addition, for every artwork on view, the galleries add supporting materials about each artist and artwork, including multiple views, video presentations, biographical information, and detailed written descriptions, plus more. We are taking advantage of what the Internet does very well — provide lots of information.