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Art Market

The Differences between Prints, Multiples, and Editions

Shannon Lee Jun 30, 2020 1:11pm

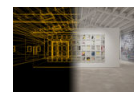


Robert Rauschenberg *Canto XXIX*, 1965
Dolby Chadwick
Gallery



KAWS *KAWS Small Lie: Set of 2 (KAWS Companion)*,
2017
Lot 180

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In the past few years, the market for prints, editions, and multiples has seen a dramatic uptick. Thanks in part to the popularity of artists who have made these types of replicated works major parts of their practices—like Banksy and KAWS—along with an accompanying surge of younger collectors whose tastes and budgets align with these media, dealers and auction houses have seen a growing appreciation for a category that long played second fiddle to painting and sculpture. Despite this marketplace momentum, one major sticking point remains: What, exactly, is the distinction between prints, editions, and multiples?

Ostensibly, these categories are fairly straightforward to define. According to Lindsay Griffith, the head of Christie's department of prints and multiples, "Prints are typically described as work on paper made with a number of examples (called an edition). Editions are often used to describe contemporary works of art made in a series. Finally, multiples are typically three-dimensional works made in edition such as Picasso ceramics or KAWS companions."



Pablo Picasso *Poisson*, 1952
HELENE BAILLY GALLERY



Sebastiaan Bremer *To Joy: Circle*, 2014
Lower East Side
Printshop

From there, however, things get a little complicated. "Importantly and confusingly, you will also find these words in places all used

interchangeably!” said Griffith. “It’s relatively rare to have prints referred to as multiples at this point, but it’s not wrong,” said Jeff Bergman, director at Pace Prints. “Editions, as far as I’m concerned, can refer to everything under the sun that’s not a one-off or unique.”

Jeff Koons, for example, will often make smaller, editioned versions of large-scale sculptures that are more affordable to the average collector. While his 10-foot-tall *Balloon Dog (Orange)* (1994–2000) sold for a record-breaking \$58.4 million at Christie’s in 2013, 10-inch versions are available as an edition of 2,300 for a relatively modest €8,500 (about \$9,500).



Keith Haring *Apocalypse (Plate 2)*, 1988
Pace Prints



Jeff Koons *Balloon Dog (Orange)*, 2015
MK Art Invest Group

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Prints are often made with a similar democratic intent. “There’s no rule of thumb for this, but you will find that a print will be something like 10 to 25 percent of the price of a unique work on paper by that same artist,” said Bergman. “In theory, the smaller the edition, the more you can charge.” There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. According to Bergman, artists who have an established printmaking practice and a high market demand, like Nina Chanel Abney, can often command price points for editioned works that are comparable to their unique works on paper.

Though it may well seem as though “editions” could simply be used to refer to both multiples and prints, there is an important catch: Not all prints are editioned. “You can create prints that are their own unique works,” said

the Lower East Side Printshop. These prints are monoprints. Monotypes are essentially created by drawing on a piece of paper and pressing a piece of paper on top of it in reverse to create a monoprint, meanwhile, linocuts, can use any number of editions to create a print, which is essentially its own, distinct, un-recreatable work.

“The idea of the art world and monotype is the same,” said Ruiz. “How these works are perceived is very up to the artist.” Artists like Andy Warhol and

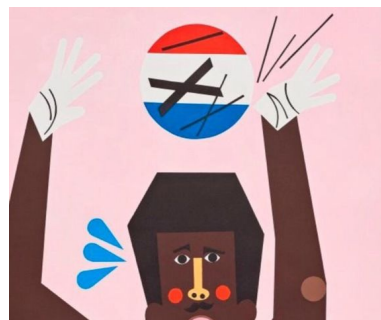
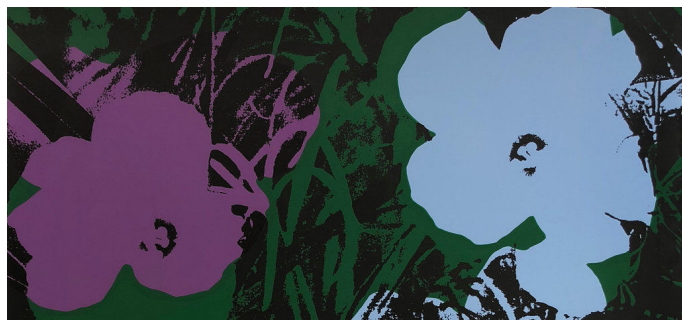
Robert Rauschenberg are prime examples of this. Though the two artists both famously used silkscreen techniques to replicate images, they printed onto canvas instead of paper and considered these works paintings, not prints.



Robert Rauschenberg
American, 1925–2008

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Robert Rauschenberg’s enthusiasm for popular culture and, with his contemporary Jasper Johns, his rejection of the angst and seriousness of the Abstract ...





Andy Warhol,
Sunday B. Morning

Flowers 11.64, 1967 printed
later
Pinto Gallery



Nina Chanel Abney
*Two Years
and...*
Marcel Katz
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That distinction is an important one. Warhol's silkscreen-on-canvas works are routinely among the top lots at auction in a given season—his one-of-a-kind 1963 work *Eight Elvises*, for instance, fetched \$100 million in 2008, placing it among the most expensive works of art in the world at the time. Meanwhile, his prints on paper tend to sell for relatively reasonable sums in the six figures, or, in the case of his unlimited editions (also called non-editioned multiples), for a little under \$400.

There are also variable editions, which, as the name implies, are editions that are varied slightly piece to piece. That could mean that they are on different surfaces, are made of different materials, are colored differently, or use slightly different techniques. Often, these are signed with the initials “EV” along with the edition number.

Far from being hard-and-fast rules, the distinctions between prints, editions, and multiples serve far better as loose guidelines that help clarify the work's value and give artists a kind of agency over their market. For artists in high demand, editions and multiples allow for greater accessibility. And while prints' overlap with the world of editions and multiples is significant in many ways, their market can sometimes be a universe of its own.

Shannon Lee is Artsy's Associate Editor.

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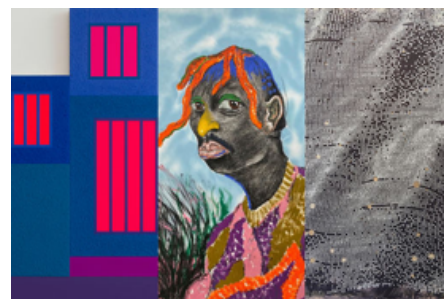
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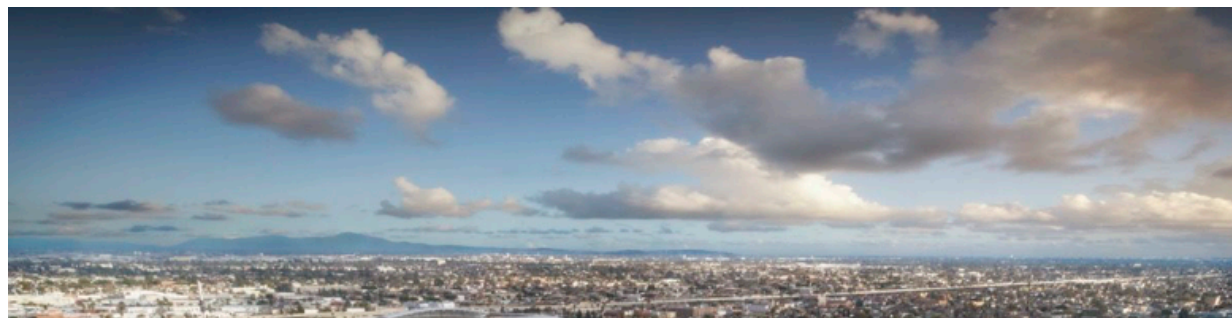
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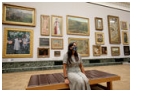




Aerial view rendering of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art. Courtesy of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art.

Calls to diversify leadership in the art world have steadily gained traction in recent years. Spurred by the police killing of George Floyd, the current reckoning with racism (institutional and otherwise) has made these efforts all the more urgent. Despite the pressing need for reform, however, art museums have proven to be reluctant to reflect diversity in their top positions. In 2018, a survey conducted by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) found that only 12% of art museum leaders are people of color, an increase of just 1% from the findings of a similar survey in 2015. Meanwhile, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated in 2019 that just under 40% of the U.S. population identifies as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

“Museums as a subset of the arts and culture sector probably have had the furthest to go and therefore are often the slowest to change as it relates to diversity in top leadership roles,” said Wyona Lynch-McWhite, senior vice president at Arts Consulting Group, a national firm that helps organizations identify, recruit, and place executive leaders. Ostensibly, bringing on new, more diverse leadership is a complicated task for a large, established institution. Most glaringly, there’s the issue of what to do with existing



presidents, CEOs, directors, and board members, the vast majority of whom are white, as studies by AAM, the Mellon Foundation, and others have shown. But what if you had the opportunity to build a major museum from scratch? Such is the case with the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. Scheduled to be completed by 2021, the museum has a rare chance to model what an equitable and inclusive institution might look like from the get-go.

Co-founded by Star Wars mogul George Lucas along with his wife and Ariel Investment co-CEO Melody Hobson, the museum's enormous \$1.5 billion budget is funded entirely by the Lucas family, granting the nonprofit certain freedoms that museums reliant on public money and subject to the oversight that comes with it don't always have. With those freedoms, the museum has made it a point to center women of color in key leadership roles. Most significantly, the board (which includes Hobson and Andrea Wishom, president of Skywalker Holdings, as two women of color among its nine members) recently named Sandra Jackson-Dumont as its director and CEO. Having previously served as the chairman of education and public programs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Jackson-Dumont has devoted her career to connecting museums with their

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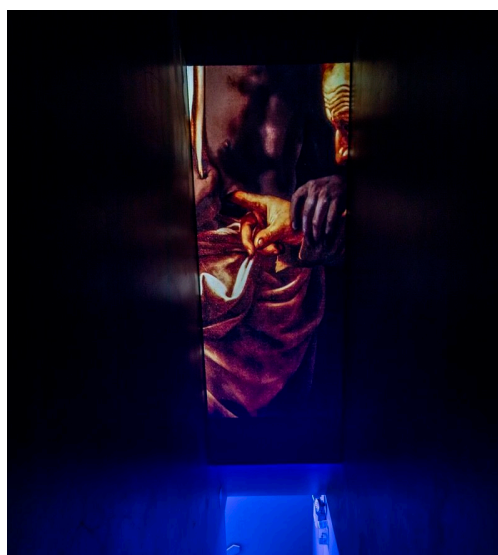
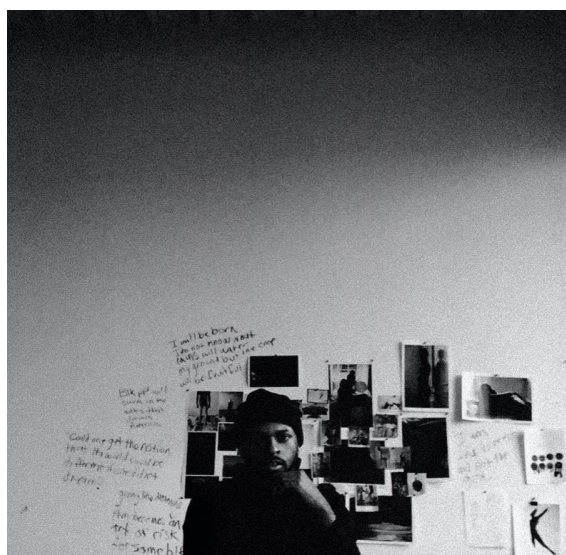
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Shikeith Reimagines Black Masculinity in a Euphoric New Installation

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Portrait of Shikeith. Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view of “Feeling the Spirit in the Dark,” at the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh. Photo by Tom Little. Courtesy of the Mattress Factory.

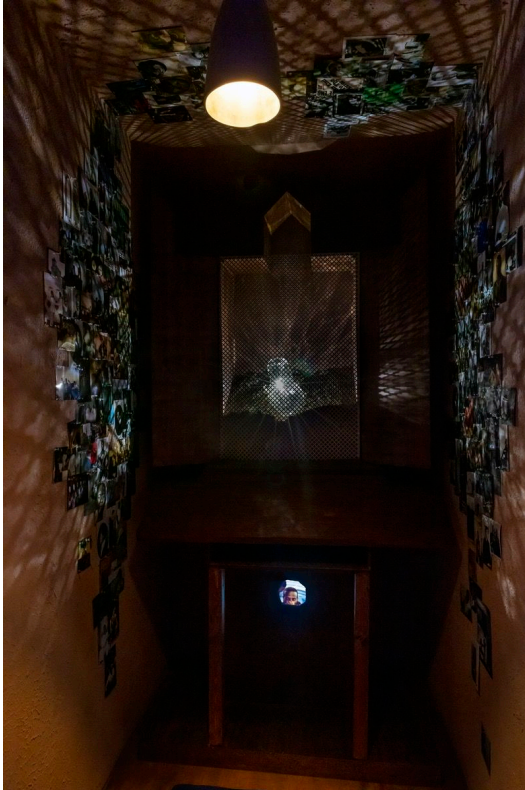
Pittsburgh-based artist Shikeith excavates the most clandestine crevices of the human psyche—both his own and that of his audience. Within his explorations of desire, euphoria, and the sensation of touch, he foregrounds expressions of Black masculinity and queer love.

In his latest solo exhibition, “Feeling the Spirit in the Dark,” on view through January 2021 at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, Shikeith examines various expressions of ecstasy. While stripping the word from its usual, secular connotations, he complicates what society deems as sacred. In this newest show—which involves photography, film, sculpture, and sound—Shikeith presents an experiential installation that guides viewers on a voyage from the transatlantic slave trade, to an abandoned Pittsburgh church.

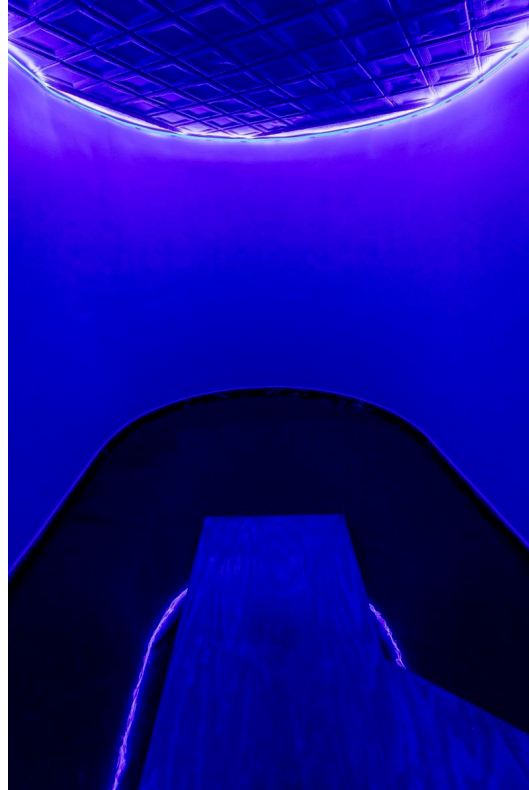
Born in Philadelphia, Shikeith has a BFA in photography from Penn State and an MFA in sculpture from the Yale School of Art. Now in his early thirties, he is best known for his photographs that reimagine dominant depictions and conceptions of Black manhood. Yet before settling into his career as a fine artist, he worked for several years in fashion photography, shooting for publications like *Teen Vogue* and *Vogue China*. Last year, he mounted several solo shows throughout the United States, including “Notes Towards Becoming A Spill” at Atlanta Contemporary and “The Language Must Not Sweat” at Locust Projects in Miami.

The title for his current Mattress Factory exhibition nods to the 1970 song

“Spirit in the Dark” by iconic soul singer Aretha Franklin, who famously began her career by singing gospel music as a child. Franklin sings in the chorus: “It’s like Sally Walker, sitting in her saucer / That’s how you do it / It ain’t nothing to it / Ride Sally ride / Put your hands on your hips and cover your eyes, and move on up with the spirit in the dark.” Though Franklin is clearly referencing the classic nursery rhyme, her lyrics can also be read with a more suggestive, even sexual undertone.



Installation view of “Feeling the Spirit in the Dark,” at the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh. Photo by Tom Little. Courtesy of the Mattress Factory.



Installation view of “Feeling the Spirit in the Dark,” at the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh. Photo by Tom Little. Courtesy of the Mattress Factory.

Shikeith himself has a background in music. He sang in a gospel choir through his early years as an undergrad and had plans to become a vocalist when he was young. He noted that while he didn’t grow up in a particularly religious household, he experienced moments of divinity through gospel music.

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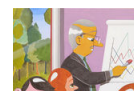
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View of the saleroom during Sotheby's 20th Century & Contemporary Art Evening Sale New York Auction on July 2, 2020. Courtesy of Phillips.

Forced to shut down their physical salesrooms and call off their major evening sales because of COVID-19, the art world's leading auction houses rebounded this summer with a series of blockbuster virtual sales that spanned multiple categories, continents, and currencies. While the hours-long affairs felt at times like telethons or Home Shopping Network programs, they also confirmed that a decade of technological innovation could be crammed into the span of a few months. Many of the changes expedited to make the sales happen during quarantine will now likely be permanent fixtures of how Christie's, Phillips, and Sotheby's do business.

Beyond the shifts in how art auctions are conducted, this summer's marquee sales can tell us a great deal about the state of the art market in the midst of a historic global crisis and the economic hardship it has engendered. I asked six astute art market observers for their insights on the auctions—what worked and didn't; what surprised them—and what they can tell us about where the art market is headed.

Evan Beard

LEVIN BOUTIN

Executive and managing director of National Art Services at Bank of America

What was your overall impression of the virtual “live” auctions?

I was actually very impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit of the auction houses. It was far from certain that people would accept not being able to see works in person, or be open to bidding on the work online. But we saw those things were possible. We also have to give credit to Sotheby's for the production values of their major sales, which I think raised the game for the entire industry. They brought in a production company and really did make it into a visually pleasing experience, which quite honestly I think will be here to stay.

What was a factor that significantly shaped how the auctions played out that less-seasoned observers may have missed?

The first one is a macroeconomic one: We should all be writing letters to the Federal Reserve thanking them for the performance of this auction season. The Fed really turbocharged this auction season—Federal Reserve policy was the real behind-the-scenes winner. The second is that all these houses were already investing in digital, but you've got to give credit to the management and leadership who fast-tracked the adoption of digital systems. It was a herculean effort in a really small amount of time.

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