

A Chelsea mega-gallery comes West Mitchell-Innes & Nash pop-up runs through Aug. 15

By Andrew Travers
June 24, 2021



The newly opened Mitchell-Innes & Nash on Hyman Ave. Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash

When the coronavirus pandemic shuttered its influential New York gallery and canceled art fairs worldwide, the gallerists at Mitchell-Innes & Nash went looking for new ideas.

Among them was the concept of going into the hinterlands beyond Manhattan to host pop-ups and find collectors where they were as the rhythms of life were altered everywhere. Pop-ups, they believed, could replace art fairs.

“We wanted to be able to supplement what was a significant part of our business,” Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery partner Courtney Willis Blair said last week in their new Aspen pop-up.

They started with a Miami pop-up last winter and decided on Aspen for this summer, landing on the 500 block of Hyman Avenue beside Honor Fraser — among the first of the pandemic blue-chip

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galleries to land here last summer — and down the block from the Aspen Art Museum and two other international additions to the commercial gallery scene: Alime Rech and Malin Gallery.

“Aspen was really a no-brainer,” said Blair. “It was a moment for us to again show work in person and have these conversations with clients and with art enthusiasts. ... There is this wonderful ability to sit and talk about the work and the artists that we represent.”

The gallery opened June 18 with an exhibition that includes recent work from its roster of artists. The curatorial team will rotate the work, with a plan to highlight a few pieces by several artists at a time, during its two-month run here.

The influx of brand-name international galleries has quickly altered the commercial art scene in Aspen, with new players such as White Cube and Christie’s also popping up. Enough have come to town in the past year that Blair had been able to talk to colleagues who’d been on the ground here already.

“It was nice to be able to reach out to people and hear about their experiences here,” she said. “It’s nice to be able to be collegial.”



Chris Johanson, “Through.” Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash

In its Chelsea gallery, Mitchell-Innes & Nash in recent years has hosted major and acclaimed shows by contemporary artists like Pope L. and Keltie Ferris. In Aspen, they’re not staging any solo shows, but instead trying to share multiple pieces by each artists on their roster.

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“We want to be able to introduce our program, and who we are, to Aspen,” Blair said.

The opening show includes recent paintings by Ferris, playing with the aesthetics of textiles in an abstract piece using stenciled grids and fluid movements of spray paint.

Karl Haendel’s photo-realistic drawings of animals include cute cats in luxury scarves and watches, and with pistols in holsters.

“We thought these were great for Aspen — wildlife is the one thing I’ve heard about every day here,” said Blair.

Also noteworthy among this first grouping: Jacoby Satterwhite’s 3-D printed sculptures, based on drawings by his mother as she dealt with mental illness and came up with inventions that might relieve her pain. The exhibit includes some of the artist’s mother’s drawings on paper beside the fully realized works.



Keltie Ferris, "loving u rn." Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash

“We’re hoping to give a chance for the majority of the artists in our program to have their work presented here,” Blair said, “and not just one-offs, but getting a little bit of range.” Aspen has always been a magnet for collectors — Aspen often outnumbers most major cities on ArtNews’ annual Top 200 Collectors list — but Blair has still been surprised by how much of the contemporary art world is here this summer.

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“When you begin to have conversations with people, you start realizing how many people are actually going to be in Aspen this summer,” she said. “It’s been a delight to see a lot of people that we know, and that we don’t know, spending more time here this summer.”