

hello, my beloved art world.¹ Does the art world long for lost innocence?² In today's art world, has visibility in the market become as valid a measure of success as being in a museum collection?³ Why is the mainstream art world these days so afraid of that idea?⁴ How did the art world become such a vapid hell-hole of investment-crazed pretentiousness?⁵ These are the questions on the minds of many in the art world.⁶

Overheard in the art world:⁷ "Oscar Murillo is the art world's next big star."⁸

"Oscar Murillo perfectly encapsulates the current state of the contemporary art world."⁹

"I am not a star," artist Oscar Murillo said.¹⁰ "I really want to stay out of the art world right now."¹¹ Flee the Manhattan art world, that incestuous, moneyed, whirring globule composed of persons who buy and sell aesthetic *objets*.¹²

The contemporary art world is jam-packed with collectors from the halls of corporate America,¹³ prepared to make bids of more than \$100 million at auctions;¹⁴ more heavyweights from the music industry join Lady Gaga and Jay-Z in making overtures to the art world, hoping, perhaps, to conjure some cross-collaboration sales voodoo,¹⁵ while outside, beyond the shiny bubble of the art world, living standards in the rest of society stagnate or decline.¹⁶ The art world has become the new movie business—it's the new cool.¹⁷ (How do movies feel about the art world again?¹⁸) The art world is a happier place than Disney World.¹⁹

Instagram, the art world's chosen medium for keeping up with the latest hot names,²⁰ has taken over the art world.²¹ Where artists once had to first get support of the art world elite before reaching the monied masses, today artists use Instagram as their own virtual art gallery, playing both dealer and curator while their fans become critics and collectors.²² The successful art of this current generation must be Instagrammable to succeed, and if it doesn't look good on Instagram, it ain't working in this instant-gratification art world.²³

Jeff Koons...what's the art world got against him,²⁴ bypassing the inner circles of the art world, abetted by top dealers, to woo just about everybody else?²⁵ This is the S&M of the contemporary art world, with the audience angling for an opportunity to grovel at the feet of the superstar.²⁶ The Koons show is revving things up in the art world: "Jeff is the Warhol of his time."²⁷ "Jeff Koons as the art world's great white hope."²⁸ "This is a sense of community, in a way," he says. "A little bit, to me, like the art world. And it's also at the same time you get kind of the sense of loss. The loss of, I guess, loss of a location, loss of a place, identity."²⁹ In a cynical, ironic art world he comes across as a suburban-mall Father Christmas.³⁰

Ten years is a long time in the contemporary art world, long enough for a contemporary artist to no longer be, well, contemporary.³¹ (The art world has a short memory.³²) Do you ever feel like the art world is sort of like high school, or life at a small liberal arts college?³³ The art world is full of pirates, rogues, eccentrics, bullies, and snobs, or, if you prefer, passionate aesthetes.³⁴ The art world is more or less structured in a way to ensure that it resembles a high school cafeteria³⁵ (the high school with money that we call the art world)³⁶ with semi-loyal cliques all hoarding different tables of varying degrees of popularity and wealth,³⁷ operating within the brutal, parochial Darwinism.³⁸

If the art world feels like a cold, intimidating, and often very closed place—well, it kinda is.³⁹ Hello, art world—sometimes it seems impressive that people aren't only curating their lovers⁴⁰—"recent stage of individuation" is the art world's version of "conscious uncoupling."⁴¹ The art world is too small to exclude enemies: You get stabbed in the front, not the back, and then you go to dinner.⁴² The art world has rituals;⁴³ the art world takes itself far too seriously;⁴⁴ the art world deserves to be mocked.⁴⁵ [In] the circle within a circle that is the art world,⁴⁶ the art world always finds a way.⁴⁷



THE ART WORLD ACCORDING TO ITSELF

Think artspeak is hard to follow?
So do we. Alexandra Pechman
selects a few bon mots.

Illustration by Istvan Banyai