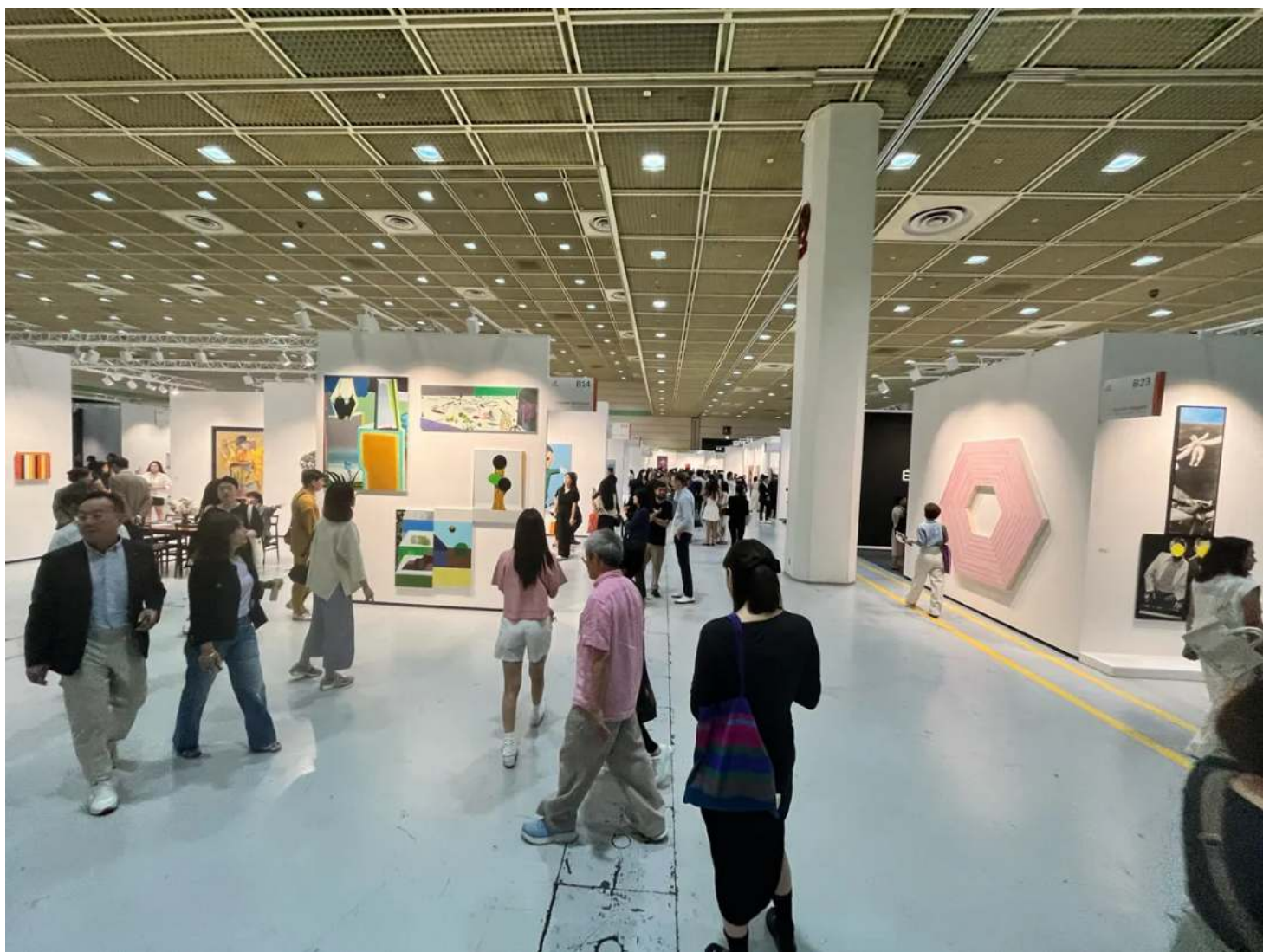


home • artnews • market

The Best Booths at Frieze Seoul, From a Christ-Like Justin Bieber to a Metaphor for Fair Fatigue

BY **MAXIMILIANO DURÓN**

September 4, 2024 8:30pm



The scene at Frieze Seoul's 2024 edition.
MAXIMILIANO DURÓN/ARTNEWS

In the press, there's always a lot of ink spilled over a fair's inaugural edition: Will it make the big splash it needs to in order to cement its place on the calendar? Its sophomore iteration tends to be met with a similar question: Can it sustain the momentum of year one into year two? But Year 3 tends to gain less notice, since it's business as usual.

That's why the biggest story to come out of third edition of Frieze Seoul, whose VIP preview was held on Wednesday, was a bit of insider baseball: a shift in the opening time. The first two editions of Frieze Seoul kicked off in the afternoon, setting off a frenzy as everyone tried to see all of the fair's booths in just a few hours. This year, however, the doors opened at 11 a.m., giving the fair a bit of a calmer vibe today.

What should we make of the event itself? A few dealers said on Wednesday afternoon that it was still a bit early to get a complete picture of it all. There were some sales reported at the end of Day 1, though it should be noted several of these were likely pre-sold to clients and that galleries rarely disclose if those buyers come from Korea, Asia, or Europe and the US.

Dealer Thaddaeus Ropac, who has operated a space in Seoul since 2021, said he does not to pre-sell works. "It's still early in the fair and it's too early to come to any conclusions," Ropac said in a statement distributed to press. "So far it's somewhat slower on opening day in terms of sales compared to last year, but we're not in any way worried about how things will go by the end of the fair. There is such a great dynamic in Seoul's art scene and Frieze has really built its presence and reach here."

Ropac's gambit appeared to pay off: his gallery reported having sold a Georg Baselitz painting for €1 million, or about \$1.11 million.

There is, at least, some great art on view here. Below, a look at the best booths at the 2024 edition of Frieze Seoul, which runs through September 7 at the COEX Convention and Exhibition Center.

Paul Pfeiffer at Paula Cooper Gallery



Paul Pfeiffer, *Incarnator (Pampanga)*, 2024.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

Among the most eye-catching works on view at Frieze Seoul is Paul Pfeiffer's new piece *Incarnator (Pampanga)*. The work, which takes up its own wall, features a wooden sculpture of Justin Bieber, split into five parts: head, torso, legs, right arm, left arm. Pfeiffer was recently the subject of a mid-career survey at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, where he showed an earlier version of this Bieber sculpture; every so often, the artist updates this work to reflect how Bieber looks at the time of the work's production. For this ongoing series, Pfeiffer has collaborated with *encarnadores* in the Philippines, who are revered for their carved wooden sculptures of Jesus, Mary, and Catholic saints. The series stems from the artist's fascination with pop-cultural representations of masculinity and how they lead us to idolize—worship, even—figures like Bieber.

Tuan Andrew Nguyen at Galerie Quynh Contemporary Art



Tuan Andrew Nguyen, *Broken Sun*, 2024.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

Tuan Andrew Nguyen's hour-long film *The Unburied Sounds of a Troubled Horizon* (2022) follows Nguyệt, who runs a junkyard with her mother in the North Central Coast of Vietnam. She makes sculptures from the bomb scraps that still litter that part of the country, and while she doesn't initially believe in reincarnation, we learn at the film's end that Nguyệt was the modernist sculptor Alexander Calder in a past life. At Frieze Seoul, Nguyen has continued exploring themes broached in that film with a massive, new, Calder-like sculpture from the very bomb metal featured in his movie. Titled *Broken Sun* (2024), this piece, like the other three others on view, has been specially tuned by the artist and a monk to provide sonic waves meant to heal all who encounter it.

Lee Jinjin and Park Youngsook at Arario Gallery



Works by Park Youngsook at Frieze Seoul.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

The stellar works featured in this booth offer visions of womanhood. Lee Jinjin presents six canvases, *Visible 30–35*, that show a woman’s face and hands (often three of them instead of two) floating on a deep black background. Obscuring her face is a sheet of white paper, burnt in varying spots in each image, that reveals different parts of her face. The black paint used is also significant. Known as Leejeongbae black, it’s a pigment made by Lee’s husband, an artist himself and the pigment’s namesake. On an exterior wall of the booth are two provocative photographs by Park Youngsook, who features in the MMCA’s “Connecting Bodies: Asian Women Artists” exhibition which opens in Seoul this week, showing the artist’s nude body (in black and white) with her face replaced (in color) with half an apple in one and the backside of an iron in the other.

Pacita Abad and Minouk Lim at Tina Kim Gallery



Minouk Lim's *Enwinded Score* (2022) and Pacita Abad's *To Paint with a Twist* (1991).

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

A textile painting by Pacita Abad and a sculpture by Minouk Lim pair well in Tina Kim's booth. Titled *To Paint with a Twist* (1991), the Abad work features collaged fabrics onto which she has added her own abstract marks. Lim's sculpture, *Enwinded Score* (2022), is imbued with recent Korean history and continues a series she began for her participation in the 2014 Gwangju Biennale. She befriended a cane maker, Eui Jin Chai, who collected felled tree branches that had an interesting look to them to create his utilitarian objects, which he would then carve. At the time of his death, Chai left more than 1,000 of those objects unfinished; they were willed to Lim. Chai survived a massacre in 1949 that killed his older brother and younger cousin, and Lim has connected this series to the Gwangju Massacre of 1980. There's almost a talismanic quality to her cane, which here acts as a way to mark two atrocities that occurred in Korea.

Kingsley Gunatillake at Blueprint 12



Works by Kingsley Gunatillake at Blueprint 12's booth.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

New Delhi-based gallery Blueprint 12 has turned its booth, in the fair's Focus Asia section, over to Sri Lankan artist Kingsley Gunatillake, whose work in painting and sculpture (both on view here) focuses on the long and terrible history of Sri Lanka's civil war, which lasted from 1983 to 2009. As a witness to these atrocities, Gunatillake metabolizes the aftermath of all this war and destruction. His sculptures resembling charred books, into which he has set toy soldiers, commemorate the burning of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981.

Hwang Sueyon at G Gallery



Works by Hwang Sueyon at G Gallery's booth.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

Also in the Focus Asia section, Hwang Sueyon's works on view focus on the fragility of the materials of her sculptures, many of which are deceptively sturdy in appearance. A looming work seems to be made of solid bronze; it is, in fact, crafted from black-painted paper and is hollow inside, meaning that it could tumble and collapse at any moment. In front of this work is a series of labor-intensive pieces made from sand. To make the works, the artist packs the sand, then adds layers of glue and lets them dry, a process that takes several months. All but one of the works is treated with clay to prevent them from collapsing. But many of them are partially submerged in water, with the untreated one left fully submerged. These, too, could seemingly disintegrate, though slowly and over time.

Lee Kang-So at Thaddaeus Ropac



Lee Kang-So, *Becoming-10-C-145*, 2010.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

Lee Kang-So, who recently joined Thaddaeus Ropac’s roster, is showing a sparse abstraction with few marks and a fascinating sculpture, titled *Becoming-10-C-145* (2010), that appears to be a clay version of a rebar column that has collapsed onto itself. Both works speak to Lee’s concept of “failures,” which he believes to be essential to creating great art. “It’s when you’ve messed up the right way that good works are produced,” Lee [recently told \(https://www.marieclairekorea.com/special/2024/09/experimental-artist-lee-kang-so-%EC%9D%B4%EA%B0%95%EC%86%8C-%EC%9E%91%EA%B0%80-%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4%EC%99%80-%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8-%EC%9D%B8%ED%84%B0%EB%B7%B0/\)](https://www.marieclairekorea.com/special/2024/09/experimental-artist-lee-kang-so-%EC%9D%B4%EA%B0%95%EC%86%8C-%EC%9E%91%EA%B0%80-%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4%EC%99%80-%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8-%EC%9D%B8%ED%84%B0%EB%B7%B0/) Marie Claire Korea. “If you’re thinking about the arrangement and the overall composition from all sorts of traditional perspectives, you’re already starting out wrong. This has been my belief since quite a long time ago.”

Niki de Saint Phalle at Galerie Mitterrand



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Ganesh II*, 1992.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

In the Frieze Masters section, Paris-based Galerie Mitterrand is exhibiting several works by Niki de Saint Phalle. The most eye-catching of them is a late-career work, *Ganesh II* (1992), that moves. Set against a bright, brushy pink background, the half-painting, half-sculpture work shows the namesake Indian deity as filtered through de Saint Phalle's palette. The mechanisms behind the painting—partially influenced by Jean Tinguely, her second husband, who was himself known for making mechanized sculptures—are activated by motion detector, causing the completed sculpture to break apart and then slowly come back together.

Morag Keil at Project Native Informant





Morag Keil, *The Price of Freedom*, 2024.

Photo : Maximiliano Durón/ARTnews

London-based Scottish artist Morag Keil is showing *The Price of Freedom* (2024), a five-part sculpture in which a white bunny appears to emerge from a magician's hat, completing a mid-air arc before descending back to where it came from. Project Native Informant founder Stephan Tanbin Sastrawidjaja connected the work to our current post-financial crisis moment, in which one may find a desire to leap out of one's current confines in a desire for freedom. But perhaps freedom isn't all it's cracked up to be. There's a tension in this work: the feeling of liberation might not match the experience of it. Maybe it's all just an infinite loop, or maybe it's just a fitting metaphor for today's endless cycle of art fairs.

PMIC