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WIDEWALLS

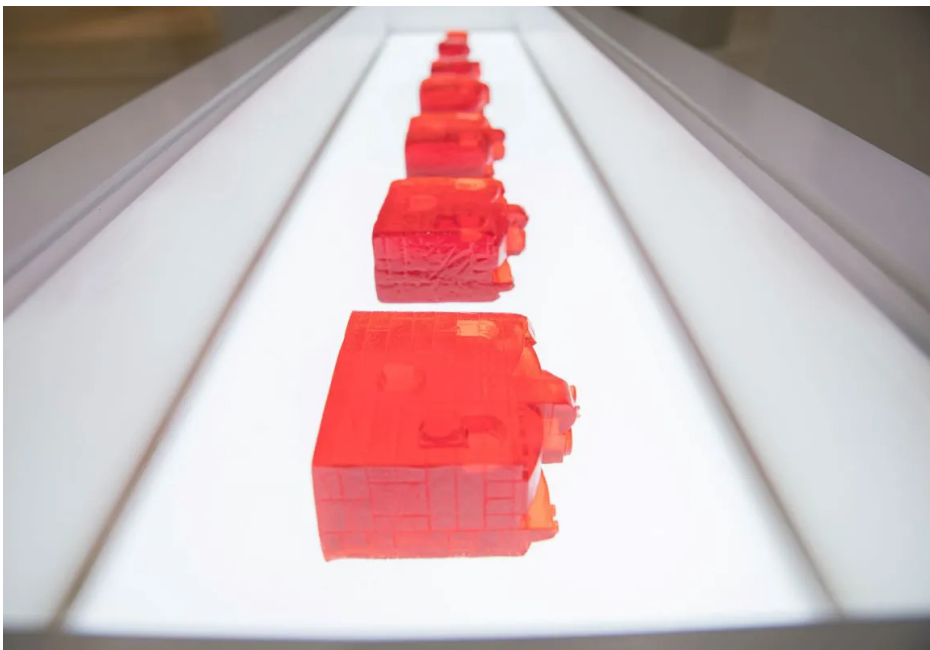
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Presenting TheArtists, A New Platform Dedicated to Supporting Artists

Interviews



March 18, 2022

While the contemporary art market is predominantly profit-oriented and dominated by

Eli Anapur big galleries, auction houses, and fairs, occasionally emerge initiatives that aim to throw its power structures off-balance, introducing new operational models and forms of engagement.

Among the new and exciting art platforms that recently entered the market is **TheArtists**, a non-profit online venue developed to support and promote the work of emerging contemporary artists who are not yet represented by a gallery.

Based on the principles of solidarity, transparency, and openness, TheArtists works both as an online marketplace and a support venue

for artists, giving them a voice and visibility. TheArtists also provides assistance, offering to selected artists mentoring and coaching programs and consultations.

Working with renown curators and adding professional texts to each selection and artist, the platform is an innovative and much-needed alternative to market-driven artist representation and sale models. Based on principles of solidarity, deep engagement with art, support, and community, TheArtists aims to become a reliable and exciting source for contemporary art collectors and enthusiasts.

To learn more about the platform, its aims and goals, and current selections available on its website, we talked with TheArtists team.



Afra Alsuwaidi - Sweet, 2021, Candy, resin on canvas, Ø 35 x 9 cm / 13.8 x 3.5 in, Unique

Supporting Unrepresented Artists

Widewalls: TheArtists is a new non-profit platform dedicated to supporting contemporary artists and offering a novel commercial model for collectors. Can you give us a brief overview of its concept and what does it bring to the art market?

TheArtists: We open windows and create new perspectives for artists whose practice is not (yet) accessible or seldom seen, either because they are not yet represented by galleries, or they are at the beginning of their career. Through our platform and the information provided, we enable exposure and simple access to everyone

interested in contemporary practice.

All visitors can use the platform from anywhere around the world. The different viewpoints are generated and provided to us and all those who are interested by a carefully selected group of world-renowned curators who willingly share their expertise, knowledge, and experience with us.

The initiative is based on three aspects: At its core lies TheArtists.net, an online platform to discover and support seldom seen artists and collect their carefully selected works. We also provide individual coaching and mentoring to the artists themselves – as all participants receive practical assistance and advice on how to further develop their practice, expand their network, as well as guidance on how to navigate the art world in the long run. The third aspect of our initiative are the on-site events, so to speak, studio visits, physical exhibitions, one-day residencies, and other activities.

We see the artists with whom we collaborate as partners; their practice is at the heart of what we do – hence the name TheArtists. Our collaboration lasts approximately one year for each of the selections and artists, and there is no claim of exclusivity regarding any of the artists.

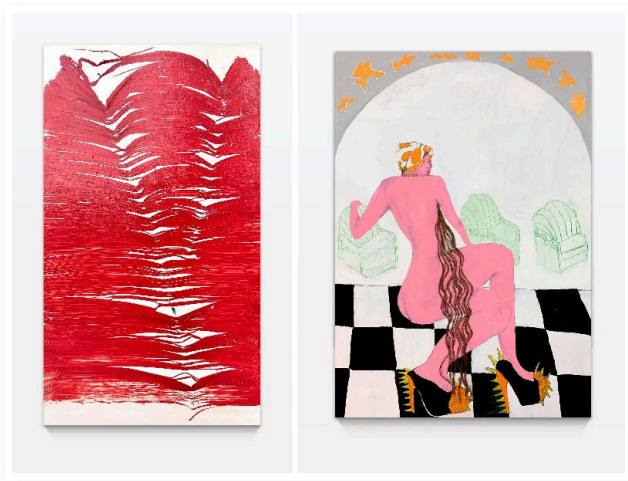
Our initiative also serves as an invitation for galleries and other professionals to discover works and practices that they would like to support. It is also about getting a fair share – that is why artists receive more than two-thirds of the revenue of each sale, of which a portion is distributed equally among the artists from the same selection to create a sense of community and togetherness.

Widewalls: The platform mirrors the fair model and is based fully on the principles of transparency, accessibility, and support. Can you tell us more about the platform's mission and set goals?

TheArtists: We strive for transparency with our partners, including clear agreements, respectful business, personal relationships, and no hidden agendas. The overall goal is communicating and mediating the work of each participating artist, as well as creating visibility because art needs to be seen and experienced.

To us, living with art is a natural necessity, and it should be an experience that whoever is interested can engage with. We want to increase engagement by strengthening the three aspects mentioned earlier and simultaneously acting less opaquely, as is sometimes the case in the art world – the mystery should surround the work of art and not the relationship between the artists and the people who communicate and mediate it.

We aspire to be a place for everyone interested in contemporary art who want to broaden their horizons without sacrificing quality.



Left: Peng Li - Ohne Titel, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 93 x 54 cm / 36.6 x 21.3 in, Unique / **Right:** Gemma Solà-Sotos - La reina del burlesque, 2021, Acrylic, charcoal and oil pastel on canvas, 91 x 66 cm / 35.8 x 26.0 in, Unique

TheArtists Team

Widewalls: Behind the platform is a team of dedicated and experienced art professionals. Could you introduce them to us?

TheArtists: Behind TheArtists are Maren Brauner, Julie Delnon, Martin Heller, Michael Oswald, Beat Raeber and Nathalie Weilbächer. We work in Zurich, Basel, and Berlin and all come from different backgrounds, compelling us to contribute something more direct and unpretentious to the art world.

Beat Raeber is an enabler and supporter of contemporary artistic practice and has worked with internationally renowned artists with his former gallery RaebervonStenglin. Michael Oswald is the Creative Director of his agency OSW. Martin Heller is a Berlin-based lawyer and a long-time experienced consultant and counselor for artists, galleries, and institutions worldwide. Maren Brauner is a curator, art mediator, and editor who has been working for Kunst Halle Sankt

Gallen for many years. Julie Delnon is a young Zurich-based curator who co-founded the off-space 'Kein Museum' in Zurich. Nathalie just joined the team and will be managing our social media channels. So far, we are a small team and will grow when necessary and affordable.

Widewalls: TheArtists creates an alternative space for a more accessible art market centred on the artists. Why do you think this is particularly important today?

TheArtists: There appears to be a vast amount of information about artists, which has already been filtered in many ways: fashionable positions, market interest, power play, money and investment, media hype, but also serious and high-quality information and representation through a variety of galleries and museums.

In a globalized art world, we intend to provide a secure and well-thought-out venue for artists and art. As one participating artist said: "You are my safe space." This was one of the best compliments we have ever received.

We believe it was and is time for additional models of how to approach, especially for those who do not attend galleries or who do not have the kind of budget that art publications want to cover. It is also an attempt to pave the way for a bigger conversation. It is now or never, and we are certain that many will follow our lead.



Franz Stein - in rub al khalil, 2021, Styrodur, 56 x 645 cm / 22.0 x 253.9 in, Unique

Providing a Different Viewpoint

Widewalls: Besides promoting artists and selling art, the platform also provides professional texts and materials that contextualize artworks. How is the educational aspect incorporated with the commercial one? Do you see it as something that will become a standard in the future?

TheArtists: It is already a standard and a sign of significant respect for artists to express their profession and give a different viewpoint to the interested people in high-quality galleries. This may assist in connecting people or simply introduce a discussion about a work or a practice. This aspect is essential to us.

We not only want the artists to express their work directly by utilizing the words written by highly excellent authors, but we also want them to be able to provide an insight into their practice by using the texts on any given occasion.

Short videos of the artists working in their studios, for example, provide powerful impressions of the production process and technique and are used to contextualize the artworks. This technique brings artists, audiences, and collectors closer together, and it is both in-depth and sensual.

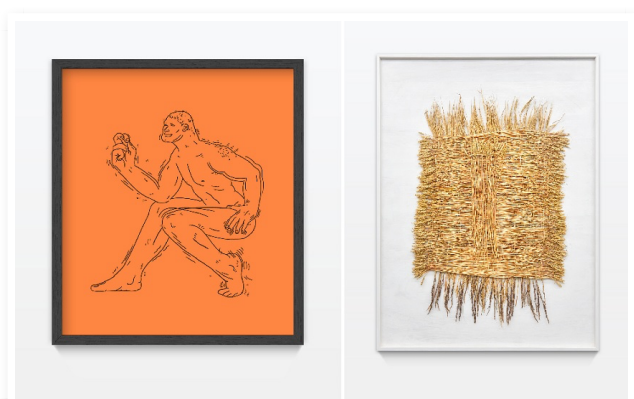
We think that both the emotional and cognitive parts of the art experience must be nurtured in order to produce true art enthusiasts.

Widewalls: You also provide individual assistance to artists,

from coaching and mentoring to consultations. Who can join the platform, and how is the selection process organized?

TheArtists: As for the online platform TheArtists.net, the selection process is very clear: We invite renowned curators, artists, and other experts to select international artists without constant gallery representation. These unique selections are then presented online for a limited time.

Art is individual and subjective. We wanted a diverse range of individuals who continuously think about art and have unique perspectives based on their own thoughts and experiences as interested and involved professionals. We do not intervene with their choice or suggestions but make the partnership between the artist and us compatible. We are grateful to the curators for their generous share of their insight. So basically, everyone can join if a curator selects them.



Left: Rafal Dominik - Deep Stress, 2021, Pigment print on paper, 29 x 29 cm 11.4 x 11.4 in , 31.4 x 31.4 cm 12.4 x 12.4 in (framed), Edition 130 / **Right:** Renata Rara Kaminska - First value (Grain), 2020, Wood, grain, pure gelatine, acryl, 200 x 150 x 11 cm / 78.7 x 59.1 x 4.3 in (framed), Unique



Building Lasting Relationships

Widewalls: You already feature an impressive list of contemporary creatives. Can you tell us more about the first three curated selections?

TheArtists: The first selection is curated by German artist Gregor Hildebrandt, who currently lives and works in Berlin. Hildebrandt has selected 15 artists. They are graduates and students of his class at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and are represented with about 200 works on TheArtists.net.

The second selection of artists is curated by the internationally renowned artist collective Slavs and Tatars and consists of artists from Eastern Europe. Five artists from Poland, Slovenia, Belarus, and Germany present around 100 artworks in various media, including sculpture, experimental photography, and digital painting.

Internationally renowned curator Maya El Khalil, a connoisseur of the Saudi art scene, presents the third selection featuring four artists from the Gulf region, approximately 40 of their works are offered on TheArtists.

We will continue further with selections by artist Ahmet Ögüt, by museum director Bettina Steinbrügge, and many more to come – it is going to be an exciting line-up of curators who will participate in the future!

Widewalls: The platform is created for both art connoisseurs and amateurs. How do you balance the expectations of such a diverse group of collectors?

TheArtist: We do not balance any expectations; we think the diverse selections create a unique balance that avoids any elitist approach, though it is of high quality. We take the artists' perspectives and try to find an interesting range of curators to form an exceptional and diverse selection of works.

Widewalls: How do you see the platform evolve in the future? Also, what is your take on the future developments in the art market?

TheArtists: The first question is easy to answer: the platform and the whole initiative, including the other aspects of coaching, mentoring, and the physical events and exhibitions, will thrive and become a reliable and exciting source for those interested. We are confident that TheArtists will create an open and generous trade and market ecology. Patience is required since we think long-term and want to build lasting relationships with our collectors.

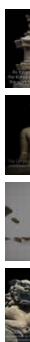
The second question is more complex to answer. We only want to mention that we are sure that the internet will play a more significant role. Aside from the small percentage of the market that is fixated on prices and attracts a lot of media attention, dedicated galleries and collectors – those who take a very personal approach to art and view it as part of their lives – will continue to grow in importance as a sense of community and generosity spreads beyond the dominant Northern hemisphere.

Art as a very human expression of individuality and freedom will regain its strength, but a back-and-forth struggle to concentrate on content rather than the idea of investment will remain. The artists who will partner with us will add their unique perspective to it!

Featured image: Aziz Jamal - Playground, 2019, Soap, resin, 7 pieces ranging from 5 x 5 x 3 cm to 10 x 12 x 6 cm / 2 x 2 x 1.2 in to 3.9 x 4.7 x 2.4 in, Unique.
All images courtesy of TheArtists.

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