



Reena Makes Lists

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# Sharks And The Art World

Financial toxicity, sustainability of art week, worthwhile reads and more.



Reena Devi

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You're reading Reena Makes Lists, a weekly newsletter by [arts journalist Reena Devi](#). This post will go out every Thursday, unless said writer is swamped with commissioned assignments or life in general. If you like this, subscribe [here](#).

## In this inaugural issue

1. Toxic Philanthropy in the Art World Extended Cut
2. Curious: Art Weeks & Gallery Weekends
3. Curiouser: Art Media
4. Worthwhile Reads Beyond the Art Scene



I would befriend this shark.

**The Extended Edition of my (surprisingly divisive) quick read analysis on philanthropy in the art world for Hong Kong art media CoBo Social includes the following:**

- This brilliant metaphor from a Business Insider article:

There's an apt metaphor for the rhetoric of "billionaires will save us" in beloved children's cartoon "Finding Nemo."

Our protagonists — both fish — come across sharks who paradoxically claim to be vegetarian. The sharks, to their credit, seem pretty nice. They're trying to reform, and don't want the fish to be scared of them. Their refrain? "Fish are friends, not food." They seem to be holding strong until Dory gets a nosebleed. There's literally blood in the water; primordial instincts win out, and the sharks attack. The fish were right to be scared.

In the case of widening inequality during the coronavirus pandemic, the refrain could become: "Lower-income people and workers are friends, not food."

- Donors wanting to be called “high capacity individuals”.



- Any references to this essay titled When Philanthropy is Uncivil.
- This thread of ongoing updates about current and outgoing museum/arts organisation board chairs and members facing public controversies, investigations and more.

## Curious: Art Week, Gallery Weekend etc

- These events extravaganza have become bigger than even biennales in some cities, making headlines for all sorts of reasons. There was the dubiousness of Miami Art Week at the end of last year. On the other hand, Gallery Weekend Beijing postponed their edition to April and May this year.
- Then, there is this tweet about the recent Singapore Art Week, which echoes murmurs I have been hearing (and ignoring) from local sources for most of January.
- (If you want to know why I stopped covering the Singapore art scene since May 2019, recent news about the long-predicted end of Substation, Singapore's first independent contemporary arts space, says a fair bit about the singularity of mainstream culture in the island city-state.)

## Curiouser: Art Media

- A month ago, I discovered the people behind the money behind Artsy, which reportedly had a great pandemic year and is at the forefront of the art world going digital. It took a minute of Googling and a few more minutes of reading Nate Freeman's very thorough ARTnews piece from 2017:

....investors in the start-up (Artsy) include Jared Kushner's brother, venture capitalist **Joshua Kushner**; Ivanka's close friend **Wendi Murdoch**, who acted as matchmaker to her and her husband; Ivanka pal and Garage Museum of Contemporary

Art founder [Dasha Zhukova](#); and [Peter Thiel](#), a member of the Trump 2017 presidential transition team.

Two years before IvankaTrump.com's "How to Start Collecting" post, [Artsy ran a Q&A](#) with Ivanka about her passion for collecting.

*(Full disclosure: I have written four articles for Artsy in the past two years and had good working experiences with the editors.)*

## Articles worth reading for their prescience in describing contemporary issues and developments beyond the insularity of the art world:

- [Davos, Explained](#) is a totally hilarious tongue-in-cheek take. The quips about Singapore and France are priceless.
- The title of this post alone is stupendous: [I Left My Career in Prestige Media Because of the Shitty Men in Charge and They Are Still In Charge and Still Fucking Up](#) by [Jennifer Barnett](#). This is like a cleansing antithesis to that falling in love with a Pharma Bro viral story.
- This is the [only GameStop analysis](#) that made any sense to me but I also haven't watched Stephen Colbert's take on it yet so jury's still out. (Disclaimer: I do not rely on comedians for my news. I just rely on them to live.)
- [Documentaries as Advertising](#) by the tireless [Tim Schwab](#) - there are a fair number of journalists I look up to outside the art world, based on their work alone, and he is definitely one of them. If you don't read anything else this decade, just read his work.

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