

# artHOUSTON

VISUAL ARTS, CULTURE, REVIEWS



OFF THE WALL GALLERY PRESENTS

Luminous works of uncommon beauty captured by the lens of award-winning photographer

PARISH KOHANIM



*Eyes Open-Closed, 2018*

ARCHIVAL PHOTO SUBLIMATION ON ALUMINUM  
WITH WHITE GLOSS / 48 x 53 IN

**off the wall gallery**

paintings · sculpture · original prints

**The Galleria** 5015 Westheimer Road #2208 Houston TX 77056

Adjacent to Neiman Marcus' valet parking lot, facing Post Oak Blvd.



713.871.0940

[offthewallgallery.com](http://offthewallgallery.com)

# OPTIMIZING OPTIMISM

TWO REPUTABLE HOUSTON ART GALLERIES SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AS COVID-19 PUSHED THEM TO REINVENT THEMSELVES.

COMMENTS

COLLECTED BY

SABRINA BERNHARD

**EXCEPTIONALLY COMMITTED** BY DANIELLE ROWAN, *Gallery Director Off The Wall*

Off The Wall is one of Houston's most established galleries with over forty years of experience. Along the way, it has dealt with several temporary closures such as Hurricanes Ike and Harvey, the Memorial Day Weekend flood, Covid-19, and human rights protests. Covid-19's timing was very challenging for the Gallery; we had just started building a brand new, sister space inside Galleria One - across from Ferragamo to replace our older, smaller Art Boutique, next to Neiman Marcus. Although we stay supportive of our city's efforts in containing the spread of coronavirus, our Main Gallery, and the whole Galleria Mall, closed for eight weeks from March through May, and during this time, our new Gallery was under construction, and gratefully, essential services didn't stop, but as you can imagine, our daily operations, were highly affected.

In hindsight, hurricanes and floods were no match for Covid-19. Clients stayed home, and we stayed on the

phone. Two major exhibitions were canceled, one in April with Chad Smith, drummer of the popular band Red Hot Chili Peppers, and another in June, with Bernie Taupin, featuring a body of work celebrating his 50-year music partnership with Elton John. These exhibitions take time to plan, big teams, and lots of preparation; we also depend on the availability of these world-renowned artists. It was a bit disheartening having to cancel events we were so excited to share with Houston. The good news is that both artists promised to reschedule. As we waited to establish a new routine, we focused on finishing our beautiful new Gallery, sourcing and adding to our stable of artists, and incorporating new tools onto our website, such as a free virtual reality mobile app - a cool, easy to use feature, that encourages clients to preview artwork at home, independently, using their cell phones. Also, introducing art collections through

online viewing rooms.

These are unprecedented times for the whole world, but we are keeping our optimism, and believe that more than ever, our homes should be the most beautiful place to be. Our owner, Mimi, has stayed exceptionally committed during this time, Off The Wall is her passion, and she believes in the positive impact of art.

Our focus remains in making it easier for our clients to acquire new exciting art, and preview it on their wall, and to offer assistance with professional installations or help design new frames for existing cherished artworks. Our client's health and safety are important to us, free pick up's and delivery services are offered during this time, and personal protective equipment (PPE) is observed. It is essential for our business to build strong relationships, whether locally or globally. The Gallery continues to learn, evolve, and grow by persevering and adapting to challenging situations.



**THE SHOW MUST GO ON(LINE)** BY SARAH FOLTZ *Gallery Owner Foltz Fine Art*

The past few months have certainly been an adjustment for everyone, filled with constant ups and downs, and clouded by uncertainty. As a gallery owner, my main concern has and continues to be about supporting our “gallery family” of staff, artists, and friends. To this end, my goal has been clear – to keep my colleagues employed, and do our best to keep sales going for our artists; and to keep our lights on, while pivoting to adapt to the current circumstances. This forced pause has given me and my team time to stop, and reassess where we are, what we’ve been doing, and where we want to go.

When Covid-19 struck, all we could do was be responsible for ourselves, making sure to stay home, wash our hands, wear a mask, and social distance. As with other galleries, our exhibition programming stopped abruptly in March and art fairs canceled last minute, leaving the remainder of our Spring season up in the air. Months of planning by the artist and our team – not to mention the money already spent on framing, conservation, and marketing – were pushed to the side, indefinitely. Questions circled: “Should we go on we the exhibitions virtually? Should we postpone until

the fall? Will we be able to reopen ‘as normal’? How can we adapt to survive in this new climate where art (a luxury good) continues to have a place in our lives, during this crisis?”

Immediately, we suspended our in-house exhibitions, pivoting to direct our attention toward our website and online marketing (which, admittedly, has been on our “To Do” list for over a year since the rebranding, but always put on the back burner as exhibitions and projects took precedent). Now, we finally had the time to focus on the presentation and functionality of our website, and other online platforms. We quickly realized that if our clients, who vary greatly in age and demographics, are to feel comfortable purchasing art online, then we need to do a more thorough job on the front end of presenting the works virtually if they are not able to view the work in person. In short, we needed better images and more detailed information, as soon as possible. We went to work, making these improvements, and continue to work on making the virtual experience of visiting our gallery as close as possible to visiting in person.

For some of our previously scheduled exhibitions, featuring early and

mid-century artists’ works, we have decided to hold off on the shows, feeling that these works merit being seen in person, and that it would be worth the wait to be able to present these to viewers and collectors as we originally intended. While looking at art online is a wonderful option right now, we maintain that nothing can replace the in-person encounter with a work of art. It is hard to have a moment of awe or transcendence through a computer screen; however, wonderful the work and online images might be.

Similarly, we are continuing with our plan to showcase Houston emerging artists in a series of virtual exhibitions throughout July - September. While we may not be able to get together for art openings and events as we previously did, we will do our best to bring video content and virtual tours of the shows to viewers online. Through these online records, these shows will live on long after the artwork comes off the walls; thus, extending the life of an art exhibition indefinitely. This embrace of new technology has made us further realize the importance of online archives for artists and art organizations, and we will continue this practice moving forward.