




# Artsy Insider: Frieze Week's Breakout Artists

• Benjamin Sutton Oct 24, 2021 4:00pm   

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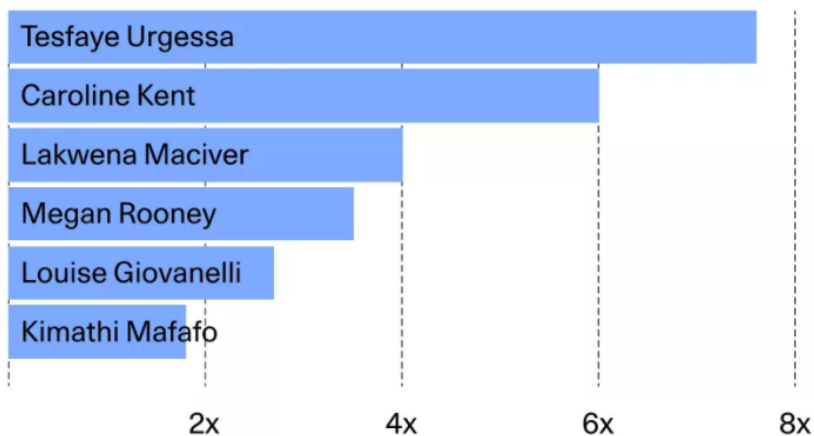


By order of appearance: Louise Giovanelli, *Plaza*, 2021. Courtesy of GRIMM; Tesfaye Urgessa, *No Country For Young Men 18*, 2021. Courtesy of Saatchi Yates; Kimathi Mafafo, *Unity II*, 2021. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery; Caroline Kent, *Through the crack under the door*, 2021. Courtesy of Casey Kaplan.

Welcome to Artsy Insider. This week, I'm looking at the artists whose works were turning heads—and driving sales—during Frieze Week. I'm also sharing a collection of their works that are all currently available on Artsy.

By the Numbers

## Frieze Week Artists Heating Up



The chart above shows the number of collectors on Artsy inquiring about works by artists who were driving sales at London's Frieze Week fairs. Foremost among those artists is the Ethiopian painter [Tesfaye Urgessa](#), whose contemporary takes on [Cubism](#) were a hit at the [1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair](#). There, [Addis Fine Art](#) sold out of the artist's monotypes, priced at £10,000 (\$14,000) apiece. On Artsy, collector interest in his work has surged dramatically over the past three years; in the first three quarters of 2021, the number of collectors inquiring about Urgessa's work on the platform exceeded the number for the same period in 2020 more than sevenfold. The Germany-based artist is also coming off his first [solo show](#) in London, with [Saatchi Yates](#), which closed in August.

Another breakout star at Frieze Week was British painter [Louise Giovanelli](#), whose four paintings in [Grimm's](#) booth at Frieze London sold for prices between \$7,500 and \$40,000—the largest, [Plaza](#) (2021), a diptych depicting curtains, will be donated to an unspecified large British museum. Giovanelli's concurrent solo show at Grimm's New York space, which closed yesterday, was entirely sold out. On Artsy, the number of collectors inquiring about her exactingly executed, serialized, and glowing paintings has been growing rapidly, nearly tripling in the first three quarters of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.

Collection

### Most Talked about Artists during Frieze Week London 2021



From left to right: Claudia Martínez Garay, [Cruz de palo](#), 2021. Courtesy of GRIMM; Rose Wylie, [The Umber Turtle](#), 2021. Courtesy of David Zwirner; Etel Adnan, [Clairière](#), 2019. Courtesy of Galerie Lelong & Co.

Last week, the streets of London were buzzing with the opening of the Frieze and 1-54 fairs. We've kept our ears to the ground, taking note of the most talked-about artists from leading galleries' fair booths. In this collection, we highlight works by the week's most sought-after artists, including [Zanele Muholi](#), [Kimathi Mafafo](#), and [Mandy El-Sayegh](#).



This Week

## Masters of Color Blocks and Embroidery



Kimathi Mafafo, detail of *Infinity*, 2021. Courtesy of EBONY/CURATED.

Galleries are known to presell the works they plan on bringing to art fairs, but they're rarely as brazen about it as Los Angeles's [Kohn Gallery](#). The day before the first VIPs arrived at Frieze London, the gallery announced it had already sold three works in its booth by Chicago-based painter [Caroline Kent](#) for prices between \$10,500 and \$50,000. Better still, one is destined for the [Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami](#). When it comes to Kent's bold, flat compositions of blocky, colorful forms on black backdrops, that level of demand from collectors and institutions is consistent with recent trends. At Frieze New York in May, [Casey Kaplan](#) sold out its solo booth of paintings and works on paper by Kent; and at the online-only edition of Art Basel in Miami Beach last December, Kohn Gallery sold one of Kent's large-scale paintings to a major U.S. institution for \$28,000.

Widespread demand for Kent's singular compositions is evident on Artsy, too. Her work was first offered on the platform in 2019, and demand surged the following year, with the number of collectors inquiring about her work jumping more than sixfold. Despite that surge, this year is already her biggest on Artsy, with that number more than doubling from 2020. Even amid all this interest, her work has yet to appear on the secondary market. But given the speed at which Kent's paintings sell at fairs (before they even open), it likely won't be long before someone tests the secondary market's interest in her work.



**Kimathi Mafafo**  
*Buhle Bamina*, 2021  
Duende Art Projects  
€12,500



**Caroline Kent**  
*A telltale sign*, 2021  
Casey Kaplan  
Contact for price

Another Frieze Week standout, whose work *has* appeared at auction, is South African textile artist Kimathi Mafafo. Cape Town–based gallery EBONY/CURATED sold her Klimt-esque embroidery *Infinity* (2021), which mixes machine stitching and handiwork, for £13,000 (\$18,000) at 1-54 to an unnamed European foundation. That price represents a significant jump from Mafafo’s first secondary-market appearance just last month, when her 2019 painting *Voiceless II* sold for \$6,000, squarely within its presale estimates. It also suggests growing collector appetite for textile art, which is in keeping with the general upward market trend of media formerly dismissed as craft.

Mafafo’s Frieze Week success extends beyond 1-54; she’s also having her first solo show in London, with Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, through early November. On Artsy, demand for her work increased dramatically in 2020 and shows no signs of slowing. In the first three quarters of 2021, the number of collectors inquiring about her work on the platform has nearly doubled from the same period in 2020. With a star turn at 1-54 and her solo debut in the U.K., the momentum behind Mafafo’s captivating textiles seems destined to increase. ●



Benjamin Sutton is Artsy’s Lead Editor, Art Market and News.