

Galleries

New York Galleries Can Now Legally Reopen for Business by Appointment. Here's What You Can Expect If You Visit One

Wear a mask and expect some dealers to ask for your contact-tracing information.

Taylor Dafoe, June 17, 2020



Installation view of Ruben Natal-San Miguel's "Women R Beautiful" at Postmasters, 2020. Courtesy of Postmasters.

On Monday, June 8, New York City entered phase one of Governor Andrew Cuomo's four-phase reopening plan, becoming the last region in the state to do so.

For the first time since mid-March, art dealers in the city were allowed to resume in-person business, albeit in a drastically different fashion. "Delivery, curbside, and in-store pick-up service only" were the blanket orders issued by the state to those businesses (including ones in the construction, manufacturing, and wholesale supply sectors) that were allowed to resume operations.

<https://news.artnet.com/market/new-york-galleries-covid-reopening-1887805>

Yet neither the Art Dealers Association of America nor the New Art Dealers Alliance are encouraging a specific phase-one approach for dealers. Asked whether they noticed any trends among galleries that were reopening, spokespeople for both trade groups said dealers were simply doing what made sense to them.

And some are indeed reopening.

On June 16, Postmasters in Tribeca reopened by appointment, inviting visitors in for the first since March 13, when much of the city closed down just one day before the gallery planned to open two new shows.



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Invitation to view real art in real space in real time

Our two shows by Ruben Natal-San Miguel and by Joseph Beuys and Serkan Özkaya are now open by appointment. Schedule a visit!



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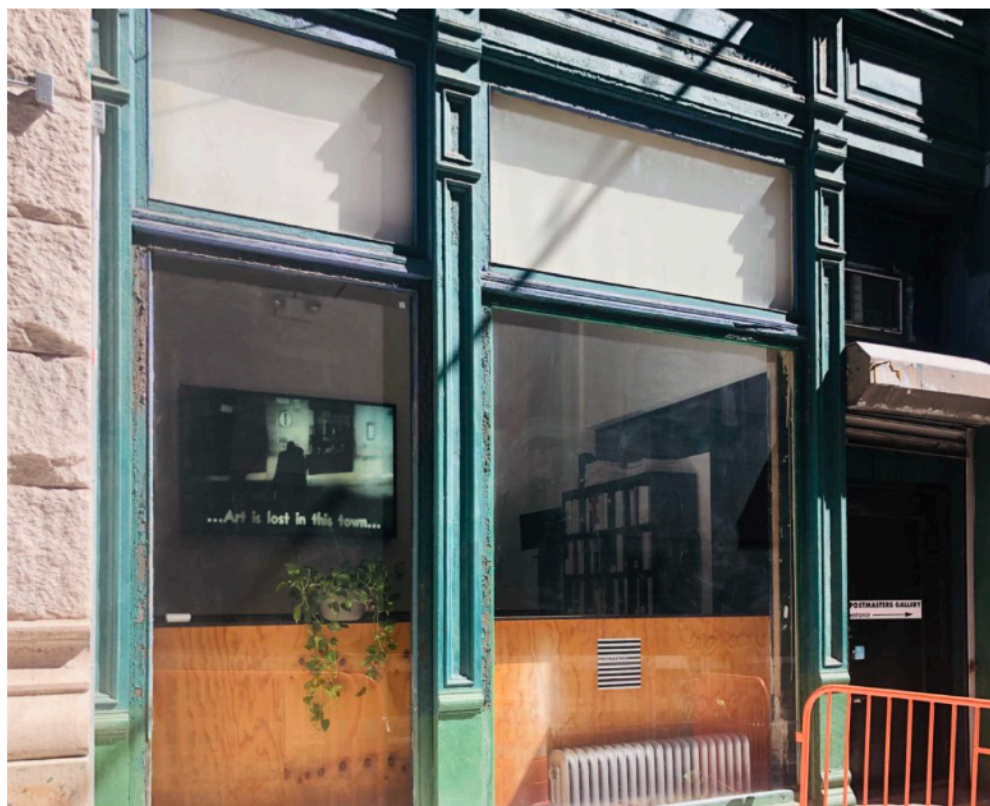
Those two shows—a solo exhibition of photographs by Puerto Rican artist Ruben Natal-San Miguel and a experiential, two-person mashup of historical works tackling notions of political power by Joseph Beuys and Serkan Özkaya—are now going on view.

“We are opening the shows for the audience that may want the experience,” Magda Sawon, co-founder of Postmasters, tells Artnet News, noting that the primary motivation is “not necessarily to sell stuff.”

The gallery has a nine-foot-long table for socially-distanced sit-downs with potential clients, and masks and hand sanitizer on deck for those in need. It also requires people to leave their personal information should contact tracing be necessary.

“This is for everybody’s safety and health, rather than a calculated effort to build a bigger rolodex to harass people for sales,” Sawon says.

As for reopening for walk-ins, Sawon says “we will reopen immediately when allowed.” (In April, she [penned an op-ed for Artnet News](#) explaining why small and midsized galleries like hers would survive this moment.)



Postmasters Gallery in Tribeca. Photo courtesy of Magda Sawon.



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Slag Gallery in Chelsea, meanwhile, which has been open by appointment since April 21, has embraced similar measures. A sign hanging on the door to the space states that masks are mandatory and available for those who need one. The gallery's director, Irina Protopopescu, records the dates and visiting times of everyone who enters, and says she will continue to do so even as more people are allowed in.

"I hope that in July we will be able to accommodate up to 10 to 15 visitors at a time, if only by [appointment]," Protopopescu says. "In terms of social distancing, 10 to 15 people seems to be a feasible number for the size of my space."

Some galleries are just focused on their internal operations. David Zwirner has a "very small selection staff back and working in [his] New York galleries," according to a spokesperson, but the space is not yet open to visitors.

The gallery hopes to reopen in a limited capacity during phase two, when a wider range of businesses will be allowed to resume operations, and small venues can welcome visitors at 25 percent capacity. Zwirner is hoping to open his New York spaces in a limited capacity during phase two.

(The dealer's locations in Hong Kong and London opened for appointment on May 5 and June 15, respectively; his Paris gallery opened to the public on May 23 and encourages, but does not require, an appointment.)

Dealer Sean Kelly, for his part, is in no rush, opting instead to double down on digital programming.

"We have learned a great deal during this time, and recognize the traditional gallery model may not be an option for a while," he tells Artnet News. He did not say whether he had a target reopening date in mind.

