

The New York Times **August 17, 2010**

Online-Only VIP Art Fair Set for January

Kate Taylor

The conventional art fair — for which collectors, dealers and other art-world professionals jet into a city for several days of looking, buying, partying and networking — is about to face a challenge. The online-only VIP Art Fair, which will take place for the first time in January, is similarly time-limited (at a week long), but different in almost every other way from a normal fair. The “booths” are virtual; conversation (and haggling over prices) will take place by instant messaging, phone or Skype; and no one will get sore feet. The event is the brainchild of two couples, the art dealers James and Jane Cohan and the Internet entrepreneurs Jonas and Alessandra Almgren, who are neighbors and friends in Park Slope.

So far several major galleries have signed up, including Gagosian, David Zwirner, White Cube, Hauser & Wirth and L&M Arts. The cost to galleries in the most elite category is \$20,000, which Mr. Cohan said the founders estimated to be about a fifth of the cost of doing a conventional art fair (including booth, transportation, hotels and shipping). Asked whether people would be willing to spend money on art they hadn't seen in person, Mr. Cohan said that buyers most likely would be people already familiar with a given artist's work. For other visitors, he added, the fair would be more about education and making initial contacts with dealers. The fair will take place from Jan. 22-30. Anyone can browse, but to interact with dealers, you will have to be invited by one of the exhibiting galleries or pay a fee.