

## GALLERIES

# Slowly, and responsibly, returning to the gallery scene

By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated September 9, 2020, 7:33 p.m.



Artist Marjorie Kaye, left, talked with visitor Brian George and artist Deniz Ozan-George at Galatea Fine Art last Friday. ARAM BOGHOSIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Boston's gallery district is sputtering back to life. COVID-19 shut down the SoWa area in March. A water main break in April [flooded galleries on the ground floor of 460 Harrison Avenue](#). Months of renovation followed.

But last week, the fall season opened rather tentatively. Developer GTI Properties, which owns the SoWa buildings, didn't officially stage a First Friday event to kick things off.

Rather, individual gallerists decided whether to open, with safety protocols in place (such as occupancy limits depending on gallery size).

Some galleries have closed or left the area (A R E A, Beth Urdang Gallery, L'Attitude, InFusion Art Glass). Other galleries, still in business, were empty over Labor Day weekend. A few art dealers kept their doors open Friday evening to see what happened.

Cooperative galleries, such as Galatea Fine Art, Bromfield Gallery, Kingston Gallery, and Boston Sculptors Gallery, touted their First Friday opening receptions, inviting visitors.

Galatea had been damaged in the flood. Carolyn Letvin, vice president of that cooperative's board, said members were offered three options: Find a new space, go entirely virtual, or stay put.

"Thirty-eight of 58 members said they wanted to go back in the same space," Letvin said. And so, a socially-distanced reception was afoot. A new show, "Light From Above: Emerging Out of Isolation" was on the walls.

"Who knows what will happen?" Letvin said.





Artist Deniz Ozan-George talked about one of her works at Galatea Fine Art last week. ARAM BOGHOSIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

As with everything COVID, First Friday was a judgment call. I chose to visit galleries Friday afternoon rather than risk crowds — particularly around galleries with entrances inside, and hallways to wait in. I stopped back Monday. I'd heard buzz about a pop-up.

GTI had the savvy to offer artists space in four vacated galleries rent-free, mostly at the Albany Street end of 460 Harrison Ave. There, too, [LaiSun Keane had just opened her new gallery](#), and Abigail Ogilvy Gallery welcomed visitors with juicy tattoo ink paintings by Amanda Wachob.



Visitors perused Amanda Wachob's "How to Make Cool Rainbows" at Abigail Ogilvy Gallery last week. ARAM BOGHOSIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

“Once 7 p.m. hit, we had some great attendance,” said Ogilvy’s assistant director, Kaylee Hennessey over the phone the next day, estimating that 30 people came through. “It was

pretty smooth. People came in groups of no more than three or four. People would look in the window, and if they saw people, they circled back later. Everybody was very respectful.”

“The pop-up down the way ... had great traffic,” she added. “There was a piano.”

Kim Smith, the artist with the piano, has a show, “Spaces Between Edges,” featuring abstract paintings, a video installation, and performance art, which anyone can see by appointment through Sept. 20 ([www.kimsmithart.com/news](http://www.kimsmithart.com/news)).

When I went, she sat down masked at an old upright and played Felix Mendelssohn’s “Agitation,” from his “Songs Without Words (Lieder ohne Worte)” series — wearing welding gloves. Notes jammed together, but the melody was not lost, nor the nearly intravenous effect of live music and art. The disquieting performance was an affecting metaphor for our time, with us all cloistered from touch, communicating from afar and through masks.





Artist Kim Smith played piano in a pair of thick welding gloves. Smith has a pop-up in the SoWa gallery district called "Spaces Between Edges." ARAM BOGHOSIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Commercial art dealers along the mezzanine at 450 Harrison Ave. were more cautious Friday. Frank Roselli, owner of Soprafina Gallery, has limited hours, Thursdays to Saturdays, and like most other galleries, is open by appointment and hosts small events with featured artists. Nona Hershey, who has a jittery show of watercolor cloud paintings on view, will be in the gallery on Sept. 26, 2-4 p.m. Going forward, Roselli said, he'll share the space with Alpha Gallery, moving from its previous quarters in the flood zone to higher ground.

Friday night, he took the lay of the land, didn't see many people, and locked up around 6 p.m. Down the street, Susan Lanoue at Lanoue Gallery decided to stay open to show off translucent paintings by Carrie McGee.

"It was sparsely attended," she reported over the phone the next day. "I probably had four individuals or pairings come into my gallery."

One visitor, she noted, wore a face shield and a mask. "How interesting, this person felt the need to take very strong precautions, but also felt the need to get out and see art," Lanoue said.

Photographer Debby Krim, who, along with artist Stephen Silver runs the SoWa Artists Guild, said she welcomed 50 to 60 visitors to her studio upstairs at 450 Harrison Ave. on Friday night. She said when she started opening her studio on Sundays in June, she had only a handful of visitors. But SoWa's Sunday open market has been picking up steam since then.

"It feels like we're on our way back," she said. "We still have a long way to go."

## **SOWA FIRST FRIDAYS**

Next event: Oct. 1, 5-9 p.m., 450 and 460 Harrison Ave., [www.sowaboston.com/sowa-first-fridays](http://www.sowaboston.com/sowa-first-fridays)

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