

The Back Room **pro**

The Back Room: Billions and Billions Served

This week in the Back Room: Billionaires give and take, Banksy prints go berserk, bidders chase youth, and much more.

Tim Schneider, June 18, 2021



Bill Gates and Warren Buffett speak at a Columbia Business School event in 2017. Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images.

Artwork of the Week

Gio Swaby's *Love Letter 5*



Gio Swaby, *Love Letter 5* (2021). Photo courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, New York.

Date: 2021
Seller: Claire Oliver Gallery
Price Range: \$25,000 to \$50,000
Acquired By: The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Gio Swaby is on a trajectory unimaginable to the art market a generation ago. A 29 year-old interdisciplinary artist hailing from the **Bahamas**, she is still in the midst of her M.F.A. studies at Toronto's Ontario College of Art and Design University. Yet she joined the roster of Harlem's **Claire Oliver Gallery** last year without ever meeting the dealer—after curator **Danielle Krysa** brokered an introduction via **Instagram**. Her inaugural solo exhibition at Oliver's space was arranged remotely during the shutdown.

That exhibition, "Gio Swaby: Both Sides of the Sun," celebrated Black womanhood through threaded-line portraits and silhouettes where textile patterns echoed the models' natural curves. It also **sold out** before the end of its run on June 5. Private buyers included author **Roxane Gay** and actor **Hill Harper**, and Swaby's waiting list now swells beyond 100 names.

More impressively, **eight institutions** acquired work (pending final board approval). A gallery spokesperson confirmed that one of those eight, the **Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**, even reworked its upcoming exhibition "Fabric of A Nation" to include *Love Letter 5*, which it officially acquired this week. Just imagine what Swaby can do now that she can meet people in person again.