

The New York Times: -Who's Laughing Now? Banana-as-Art Sells for \$6.2 Million at Sotheby's.- [C1]

A volte, il mercato dell'arte contemporanea riesce a sconvolgere l'opinione pubblica con le spese sensazionali o le proposte provocatorie. Maurizio Cattelan, con il suo lavoro, incarna in pieno tutto questo e altro ancora.

A banana that for years has [stirred](#) controversy in the art world sold for \(\$6.2 million with fees)(## "commissioni") at Sotheby's contemporary art auction Wednesday night. It became what is [arguably](## "probabilmente") the most expensive fruit in the world — though it will likely be [tossed](## "buttare via") in a couple of days. The banana is the star of a 2019 conceptual artwork, Comedian, by noted [prankster](## "burlone") Maurizio Cattelan, which is intended to be [duct-taped](## "attaccare con nastro adesivo") onto the wall. It comes with a certificate of authenticity and installation instructions for owners to replace the banana — if they wish — [whenever](## "ogni volta che, quando") it [rots](## "marcire"). Five minutes of rapid [bidding](## "offerta") ended when Chinese-born crypto entrepreneur Justin Sun placed the winning bid, [besting](## "superare, battere") six other rivals, which experts said was a sign that even a struggling market would spend big on spectacle. "[Returns](## "rendimento, guadagni") in the market have been [flat](## "piatti") or decreasing over the last decade," said Michael Moses, who tracks the investment potential of artworks for clients. "It's a fascinating [asset](## "bene") because you can get so much joy from it that people are [willing](## "disposto") to accept lower returns. Joy is not something to be [messed with](## "interferire")." Indeed, Sun said in a statement that the Cattelan work "represents a cultural phenomenon that [bridges](## "connettere") the worlds of art, memes and the cryptocurrency community." Sun, who watched the auction from Hong Kong, added that "in the coming days, I will personally eat the banana as part of this unique artistic experience, honouring its place in both art history and popular culture." On a phone call, he predicted that since the election of Donald Trump, and a rise in the value of cryptocurrencies, "I think we are still going to see strong art-buying from the crypto community." The Cattelan artwork first appeared at

Art Basel Miami Beach, where Perrotin Gallery sold three editions of Comedian for \$120,000 to \$150,000 each. But the crowds proved so disruptive that the gallery eventually took the banana out of the [booth](## "banco, stand") after a performance artist, David Datuna, [ripped it off](## "strappare") the wall and ate it. At Sotheby's, the banana returned with an [estimate](## "stima, valutazione") between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, but the final [hammer](## "martello") price — \$5.2 million, plus **auction-house fees**, for a total of \$6.2 million — sextupled its low **estimate**. The work became a media sensation, appearing on the cover of The New York Post. Some critics were more generous than the tabloids. Writing in The New York Times, Jason Farago explained that the title Comedian is ironic “for Mr. Cattelan, like all the best clowns, is a tragedian who makes our certainties as **slippery** as a banana peel.” Back then, the artist said he conceived of his work as a satirical **jab** at market speculation, asking the question “On what basis does an object acquire value in the art system?” In a recent email interview, he added that “The auction will be the **apex** of its career. I’m **eager** to see what the answers will be.” The actual banana taped to the wall of Sotheby’s on Wednesday evening was bought earlier in the day from a nearby **fruit stand** on the Upper East Side of Manhattan for 35 cents.

Running the stand was a man from Bangladesh who did not give his name and said that he was not aware that one of his bananas was selling for several thousand times its original price. “**I bet** the Sotheby’s staff absolutely can’t wait to stop having to listen to banana jokes and pretend like it’s the first time they heard them,” said art adviser David Norman. “It has to be **excruciating!**” Cattelan, sixty-four, who in 2016 installed a solid-gold toilet in a bathroom at the Guggenheim Museum and once **duct-taped** his own **dealer** to the wall of a gallery, has often criticized the art market, saying auctions are unfair to artists, who do not generally **stand to benefit** (except in publicity.) “What bothers me is that after the first sale, the artist no longer profits as the work changes hands,” he said in an interview. “Auction houses and collectors **reap** the benefits, while the creator, who makes the very object driving the market, is left out.” Moses, the financial analyst, said that buying the banana would be a risky bet from an investment perspective; few artworks dealing in **shock value** have seen positive returns on repeat auction sales. “The buyer needs to be **bulking up** on joy utility, because it’s

not clear to me that this will be an addition to wealth utility," he said. ©

2024 The New York Times Company This article originally appeared in The New York Times

Glossary

- **asset** = bene
- **bulking up** = accumulare peso
- **duct-taped** = attaccare con nastro adesivo
- **ripped it off** = strappare
- **flat** = piatti
- **auction-house** = casa d'aste
- **fruit stand** = banco di frutta
- **dealer** = mercante
- **bridges** = connettere
- **Running** = gestire
- **I bet** = scommetto che..
- **bidding** = offerta
- **whenever** = ogni volta che, quando
- **shock value** = valore d'urto
- **fees** = commissioni
- **tossed** = buttare via
- **besting** = superare, battere
- **willing** = disposto
- **messed with** = interferire
- **hammer** = martello
- **estimate** = stima, valutazione
- **apex** = apice, culmine
- **arguably** = probabilmente
- **stand to benefit** = trarre vantaggio
- **excruciating** = straziante, insopportabile
- **eager** = ansioso
- **prankster** = burlone
- **rots** = marcire
- **Returns** = rendimento, guadagni
- **booth** = banco, stand
- **slippery** = scivoloso
- **jab** = colpo
- **reap** = raccogliere

- **stirred** = agitare