



# Comedian (artwork)

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***Comedian*** is a 2019 artwork by the Italian artist [Maurizio Cattelan](#). Created in an edition of three (with two [artist's proofs](#)), it appears as a fresh [banana duct taped](#) to a wall. As a work of [conceptual art](#), it consists of a certificate of authenticity with detailed diagrams and instructions for its proper display.

Number two of the limited edition of three was sold to the [cryptocurrency](#) entrepreneur [Justin Sun](#) for US\$6.2 million in November 2024.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Soon afterward, he ate the banana onstage, comparing it to a crypto asset and saying, "the real value is the concept itself".<sup>[3]</sup> Sun also stated that he would buy 100,000 bananas from the street vendor in front of Sotheby's<sup>[clarification needed]</sup> who sold the banana used in the most recent refresh of the artwork.<sup>[4]</sup>

The piece and another example had previously sold for US\$120,000 each at [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) to significant media attention. The third edition was donated to the [Guggenheim Museum](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

***Comedian***



<b>Artist</b>	<a href="#">Maurizio Cattelan</a>
<b>Year</b>	2019
<b>Type</b>	<a href="#">Conceptual art</a> · <a href="#">sculpture</a>
<b>Medium</b>	<a href="#">Banana</a> · <a href="#">duct tape</a>
<b>Location</b>	<a href="#">Art Basel</a> , <a href="#">Miami Beach</a> , U.S.

## Background and description [\[ edit \]](#)

[Maurizio Cattelan](#) is an Italian artist known for his [tongue-in-cheek](#) art, such as his 2016 creation [America](#), a fully functional golden toilet.<sup>[6]</sup> He previously used [duct tape](#) suspension for *A Perfect Day* in 1999, fastening the art dealer [Massimo De Carlo](#) to a gallery wall.<sup>[7][8]</sup> At the 2019 [Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain](#) art fair in Paris, the American conceptual [interventionist](#) Meth Fountain showed a half-eaten croissant affixed to the wall, predating *Comedian* by several months.<sup>[9]</sup>

*Comedian* is a piece consisting of a fresh banana duct taped to a wall<sup>[10]</sup> exactly 1.6 metres above the floor.<sup>[1]</sup> Cattelan purchased the bananas at a grocery store in [Miami](#), [Florida](#), for an estimated 30 [cents](#).<sup>[11]</sup> The work includes a [certificate of authenticity](#) along with detailed instructions for its proper display, intended for its owner to use when displaying the work. The banana and the duct tape can be replaced as needed; the physical representation of *Comedian* is not the work itself.<sup>[12]</sup> It was Cattelan's first artwork for a fair in over 15 years.<sup>[13]</sup> The piece was compared to [Andy Warhol](#)'s 1967 pop art fruit.<sup>[14]</sup> [Emmanuel Perrotin](#), the

gallerist exhibiting the work, stated *Comedian* is "a symbol of global trade, a double entendre, as well as a classic device for humor".<sup>[15]</sup>

## Reception [ [edit](#) ]

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*Comedian* was controversial; some writers, such as [Robin Pogrebin](#), questioned whether it was art at all.<sup>[16][17]</sup> *The Guardian* called *Comedian* a "questionably genius work. ... It calls to mind the old Lucile Bluth *Arrested Development* gag about rich people not knowing the price of a banana."<sup>[11]</sup> *Artnet* wrote the piece was one of the worst of the week, and that Cattelan "somehow duped a group of collectors into buying bananas duct-taped to walls for \$120,000 a pop. Seriously."<sup>[18]</sup> *USA Today* deadpanned, "This piece of art is bananas – literally."<sup>[19]</sup> *Newsweek* called it "humorous minimalist artwork",<sup>[20]</sup> while *ARTnews* asked whether the piece was cynical or thrilling.<sup>[21]</sup> *CBS News* reported, "It may be the most talked-about artwork at this year's event."<sup>[22]</sup> On 13 December 13 the *New York Post* featured *Comedian* on its cover.<sup>[23]</sup> In his 2021 book *The Devil in the Gallery*, [Noah Charney](#) stated, "*Comedian* is neither beautiful nor does it exhibit skill, so it represents the [Duchampian](#) path."<sup>[24]</sup> In his book *Beauty (and the Banana)*, the author Brian C. Nixon stated, "To say the least, *Comedian* is a commentary on the wild world of contemporary art, communicating how culture understands, interprets, and engages with the arts."<sup>[25]</sup>

## Purchases [ [edit](#) ]

The piece was released in an edition of three; two were purchased for US\$120,000 each at [Art Basel](#).<sup>[26]</sup> The third was sold for US\$150,000. The selling price garnered significant media attention. One edition was purchased by Sarah Andelman, a founder of [Colette](#).<sup>[27]</sup>

In August 2020 the artist [Damien Hirst](#) complained to the media that he was unable to purchase the piece and had offered to trade any of his own works for it with Cattelan; Cattelan replied that the piece had sold out.<sup>[28][29]</sup> The following month *Comedian* was donated to the [Guggenheim Museum](#), with instructions and diagrams for its installation and display.<sup>[12]</sup>

Following a highly publicised tour and bidding, *Comedian* sold at Sotheby's during "The Now and Contemporary Evening Auction" on 20 November 2024 for US\$5,200,000 (\$6,240,000 after fees), well above its \$1,000,000-\$1,500,000 estimate.<sup>[30]</sup> The purchaser was the cryptocurrency entrepreneur [Justin Sun](#).<sup>[31]</sup> On 29 November Sun ate the banana at a press conference at the [Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong](#).<sup>[32]</sup> He retains the right to recreate the artwork at any time, but not multiple co-existing copies.

Shah Alam, a fruit vendor from [New York City](#), United States, sold the banana used in the work for 25 cents. Alam expressed surprise and disbelief when informed of the sale, stating, "I am a poor man. I have never had this kind of money. I have never seen this kind of money".<sup>[33]</sup>

As of January 2025 the remaining piece not at the Guggenheim was on display aboard the residential cruise ship *MS The World*, which declined to name the owner when asked by a journalist.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Interventions [ [edit](#) ]

After its sale, while still on exhibit at Art Basel, the Georgian performance artist [David Datuna](#) ate the piece in [an intervention](#) he called *Hungry Artist*. The banana was replaced later that day.<sup>[35][36]</sup> No legal action was taken against him, although he was asked to leave.<sup>[37]</sup> Datuna stated, "What we perceive as materialism is nothing but social conditioning. Any meaningful interaction with an object could turn it to art. I am a hungry artist, and I am hungry for new interactions."<sup>[38]</sup>

In April 2023 the piece located in the [Leeum Museum of Art](#) was eaten by a student, Noh Hyun-soo, who then taped the peel back onto the wall. When asked why he ate it he said he had skipped breakfast and was hungry.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Interpretations [\[ edit \]](#)

Following a flurry of publicity, several commentators satirized or interpreted *Comedian*. The designer [Sebastian ErraZuriz](#) taped a [dildo](#) to a wall with duct tape and listed it for sale for US\$12,000.<sup>[40]</sup> The cryptocurrency artist CryptoGraffiti created *The Commodity*, "which instructed collectors to find and claim a banana with a bitcoin key address carved into it".<sup>[9]</sup> The actress [Brooke Shields](#) taped a banana to her forehead with blue tape and posted it to [Instagram](#) with the caption, "An expensive [selfie](#)".<sup>[41]</sup> The designer [Simon Porte Jacquemus](#) "created a merch opportunity when posting a duct-taped yellow version of [his] micro Le Chiquito bag".<sup>[41]</sup> [Popeyes Chicken](#) joined with the San Paul Gallery Urban Art in Miami to create *The Sandwich*, a chicken sandwich taped to a white wall with duct tape; it was listed at US\$120,003.99 and "became a viral sensation in its own right".<sup>[9][42]</sup> Multiple other brands followed suit, including the [New York Mets](#), [Burger King](#), [Hostess](#), [Perrier](#), [Carrefour](#), [Sweetgreen](#), [Absolut](#) and [Bobbi Brown](#).<sup>[43]</sup>

## Removal [\[ edit \]](#)

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On 8 December 2019, in the morning, *Comedian* was removed from the fair. The curators removed the piece because they were afraid other art would be damaged by queuing crowds.<sup>[44]</sup> After the removal, the gallery released the following statement:

*Comedian*, with its simple composition, ultimately offered a complex reflection of ourselves. We would like to warmly thank all those who participated in this memorable adventure, as well as to our colleagues. We sincerely apologize to all the visitors of the fair who today will not be able to participate in *Comedian*.<sup>[45]</sup>

After the removal, Perrotin created a social media account dedicated to the piece.<sup>[46]</sup> One of the walls featuring the piece was later vandalised with the text "[Epstien didn't kill himself](#)" [*sic*] in lipstick, which was soon covered by the art fair.<sup>[47]</sup>

## Court case [\[ edit \]](#)

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The artist Joe Morford filed a suit against Cattelan for [copyright infringement](#) of his 2000 work titled *Banana & Orange*.<sup>[48][49]</sup> *Banana & Orange* features plastic replicas of the titular fruits duct taped to two green panels.<sup>[50]</sup> Given Morford's claimed similarities between *Comedian* and *Banana & Orange*, Morford pursued

a claim of copyright infringement, alleging that *Comedian* unfairly copied *Banana & Orange*.<sup>[51]</sup> Morford further claimed that Cattelan might have seen his work and been influenced by it. On 9 June 2023 [Robert N. Scola Jr.](#), a [United States district judge](#) for the [Southern District of Florida](#), granted Cattelan's motion for [summary judgment](#), closing the case prior to trial.<sup>[50][52]</sup>

See also  [ [edit](#) ]

- [2019 in art](#)

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## External links [ edit ]

- [Cattelan Banana](#) on [Instagram](#)
- [Lot for auction](#) at [Sotheby's](#) November 20, 2024, with catalogue note and bibliography

Sculptures

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