

XCELLENCE

LUXAVIATION QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



ISSUE 3

THE CURATED COLLECTION™

Significant historical changes in Iran in the last century have drastically shaped Iranian artistic expression. Before Reza Shah officially changed the name of the country in 1935 to what is now known as Iran, the nation had a rich cultural history as Persia, one of the world's oldest civilisations dating back to 3200 BC. During the Persian period, artists conveyed a more introspective observation about the world around them and traditional art based on rigid customs reigned. Determined to present itself with a more Western ideal and outlook, this newly named Iran pushed aside the time-honoured intricate processes of academic painting and meditative works for a more contemporary style, at times with no reference to Middle Eastern aesthetics. A more vibrant art scene prospered, mainly supported by experimental, more expressive artists who started to look outward, critical of tradition and at times even subtly denouncing Islamic law. The spirited art explosion in Tehran of the 1960s and 1970s with its flourishing art galleries and global art fairs culminated with the opening of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 1977. With some of the most prized collections of both Western and Iranian masterpieces in the world, Iran was starting to make its mark in the art world as a force to be reckoned with, until a more ferocious force of the 1979 Revolution displaced the last Persian monarch and the country changed its name yet again.

Unveiling the Face of Modernity

For almost the past forty years, the Islamic Republic of Iran created a life full of constraints. But as Iranian universities were purged of Western influences and women started wearing chadors again, the same veils were placed over artistic freedom. Contemporary Iran as we know it today has been plagued by a revolution, war, sanctions, corruption, high unemployment, inflation and a constrained economy, all of which became fodder for a new movement in artistic expression. Although more guarded, a new generation of the Art Savant emerged, responding to their Iranian experiences and struggles with new methods of creativity that would not offend the watchful eyes of Islamic rule. Traditional miniature painting transforms into a boldly painted version imbedded with digitally manipulated video; formal calligraphy is altered into modern forms to represent pain and violence; and imposing Islamic architectural figures are composed of delicate shadows. This new wave of Iranian art unifies the ancient cultural roots with the newfangled ones, neither denouncing the one for the other. Today, Iranian contemporary art assumes, interprets and reinvents the language of tradition in a contemporary idiom. The veil has lifted, and behind the curtain is a nostalgic world rich with Persian tradition in a loving embrace with the face of Iranian modernity.

— Patrice Faramah

The Influentials

Leila Heller

Founder and President of Leila Heller Gallery (New York, Dubai)

Lately there have been many signs that Iran is opening up culturally to the Western world, such as the first ever foreign exhibition of their most prized modern works by European and American artists from the museum's permanent collection, that was largely hidden until now. [It is scheduled to run from December 2016 to February 2017 in Berlin]. There have been a lot of historic events coming from the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art recently.

Recently, I worked closely with a curator and the director on the solo exhibition of the Iranian modernist Farideh Lashai, the first solo female show ever at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, that just ended this past March. We were also involved with another show with the first living non-Iranian artist to be ever featured at the museum in a solo exhibiton, Wim Delvoye. [Leila Heller represents both the estate of Farideh Lashai and the artist Wim Delvoye].

Do you feel there is a sense of self-censorship with Iranian artists that affects the international reception of their artwork?

People keep talking about censorship in Iran, but this is not the case. Unless the artistic expression and symbolism that are not consistent with Islamic values are blasted outright in their face, I truly don't believe that censorship exists to that extent today anymore. The artists in Iran today have become very savvy in using pretty obvious metaphors and symbolism to convey their ideas. The government in Iran today supports the flourishing myriad of galleries in Tehran and elsewhere, and there is a huge, active and vibrant art scene. I also represent artists of Iranian origin that are living in the diaspora that have received worldwide recognition in museum collections and shows, such as Afroz Amighi, Hadieh Shafie, Shoja Azari, Reza Aramesh, Leila Pazooki and Shiva Ahmadi.

Since art usually mirrors cultural complexities of the world's present problems, in regards to the Iranian artists you just mentioned, who are the artists you feel that truly depict what was going on in Iran at this time?

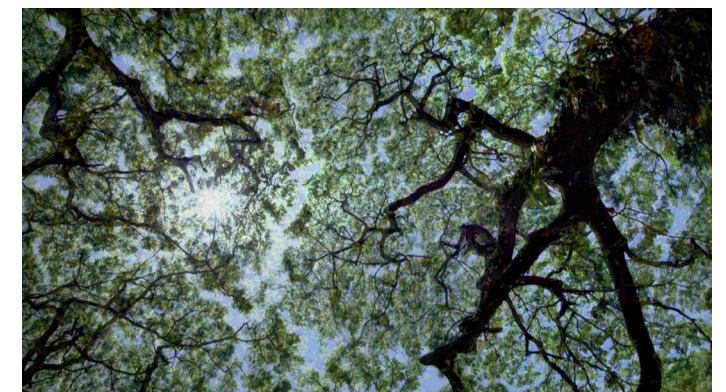
One artist would be Shiva Ahmadi, whose show *Spheres of Suspension* is currently on exhibition at the Charles Wang Center [Skylight Gallery in Long Island] and also participated in the group show *Global/Local 1960-2015: Six Artists From Iran* at Grey Art Gallery [at New York University], who basically uses her artwork as a medium for political commentary, where she talks about the politics of oil, war and nuclear programmes in the government with representations of all of these issues placed in the background of her work. You see grenades and blood in her work, nuclear plants and oil refineries in the background, and she uses oil barrels as part of the medium used. She is an artist we have placed in major museums such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art [New York] and the Museum of Contemporary Art [Los Angeles]. There is also Hadieh Shafie whom we have placed in fourteen museums around the globe. She is very much influenced by Sufism and

meditation in her work, where she also uses calligraphy in all her scrolls. She is a lecturer in major venues about her art practice as an Iranian woman living in the diaspora. We also represent Afroz Amighi whose show, *Māngata*, is currently on view in my Dubai gallery until 15 June who is also part of major museum collections. She uses architecture from the region of East India and Syria with the use of light and shadow in her work. In Iran, light and shadow are such an integral part of our landscape in the sense there were the lace curtains that were the division between outside and inside; you had privacy from looking within but could still see the outside. There was always this power of light and sunshine, so there were always shadows, and she uses so much of that in her work. And she used all of this with the memory of the Iranian architectural landscape. Her work is quite monumental and speaks of the entire architecture of the region, as well as how architecture has been destroyed, like in Palmyra. The forms are beautifully shaped in lace with metal, but in the form of missiles, with a lot of symbolism incorporated in the works. Another significant artist is Pouran Jinchi who is also placed at twelve museums globally. Her last show that we exhibited in New York was based on the first page of the *Boof-e koor* [The Blind Owl], a

Throughout the past several decades following the Iranian Revolution, mainstream media constructed an image of Iranian society that made it difficult for many collectors to associate Iranian art with the broad-minded artistic tendencies and burgeoning cultural scene needed to compete with the West. Leila Heller was able to bridge this knowledge gap with her work with Iranian artists through the past thirty years as a reputable art dealer and owner of her eponymous gallery. Her tireless devotion has gained her well-deserved international recognition in bringing an Iranian voice to the Western art market, given that Iranian art is just as sophisticated, complex and diverse as their Western counterpart. Here Patrice Faramesh speaks with this undeniable force of the art world about the profound work produced by artists coming from Iran, her favourite present-day Iranian storytellers and her new large outpost in Dubai.



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1 | Pouran Jinchi. *Wound 4*, 2015. Mixed media, Inks on linen, 121.9 x 121.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery (New York, Dubai)

2 | Reza Aramesh. *Action 131: Dying Iranian Soldier, 1987*. Installation view at Santos Party House 1, 2013. Polychrome: Hand-carved lime wood, glass, paint, steel, 66 x 35.6 x 22.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery (New York, Dubai)

3 | Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi. *Dreamscape VI*, 2016. Mixed media on canvas with video projection, 127 x 226.1 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery (New York, Dubai)

4 | Farideh Lashai. *Dear, Dear, How Queer Everything is Today* (video still), 2010. Painting with projected animation and sound; oil, acrylic and graphite on canvas. Canvas size: 200 x 100 cm. Overall size, including projection: 200 x 200 cm. Video edition of 6, 1 AP; unique painting. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery (New York, Dubai)

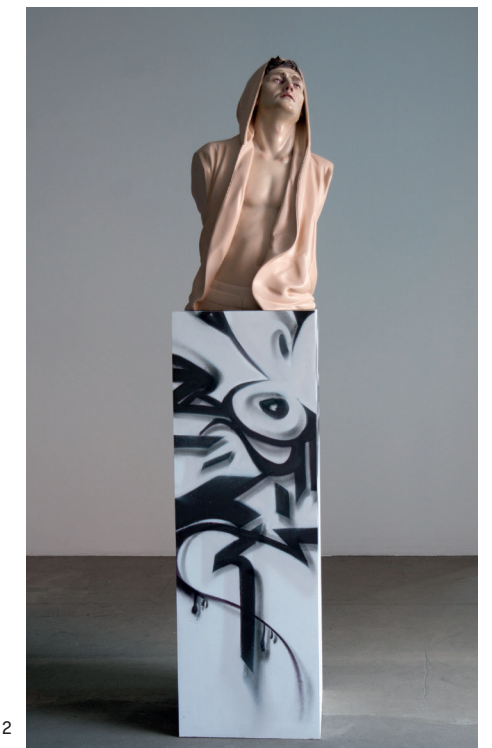
5 | Hadieh Shafie. *10 colors*, 2015. Ink, acrylic and paper with printed and hand-written Farsi text Eshgh ["Love/Passion"], 152.4 x 101.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller (New York, Dubai)



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major literary work by Iranian author Sadegh Hedayat. She did a number of body works in different mediums including sculptures, painting and works on papers that all have to do with the letters and words of the *Boof-e koor*.

There are so many reflections of Persian cultural themes and key defining characteristics of the Persian spirit in many of the works coming out of Iran today, be it calligraphy, miniature paintings or a look at rigid social customs. What are some of your favourite artistic cultural reinterpretations from Iranian artists you have seen lately that personally move you today?

There is so much storytelling going in all these artists especially when you get to know them and study their art. The art from Iranian artists brings so many memories for me, for my culture, my background and my country. Shoja Azari for instance brings back memories of the traditional coffeehouse paintings *gahveh khaneh* [“house of coffee”] by bringing to life different storytelling scenes but with up to date animated video clips from the Internet, such as scenes from the Iran/Iraq war or Khomeini speaking to a mosque during the Iranian revolution. These modern renditions of “coffeehouse paintings” have been placed in major museums. There are thirty-three scenes, each one from an event in the Middle East, such as the bombing in the mosque in Pakistan. These events come to life within these 19th-century folklore paintings. Shoja Azari and his partner Shirin Neshat have produced many videos and films together; they are now

currently working on a new film about the internationally famous Egyptian singer Umm Kulsūm, who is always making references on women’s liberty and human freedom in her songs.

Please tell us a little about the art market in Dubai, the reason why you recently opened up your gallery there, and about your most recent exhibitions in Dubai.

I have been going to Dubai for over a decade now, attending both Art Dubai and Art Abu Dhabi. Dubai has a very international community made up of many people from the Middle East, United States and Europe, with a lot of Iranian expats as well. I feel very much at home there. There is a very burgeoning art scene with its fifty-five galleries. As I developed clients in Dubai, they encouraged

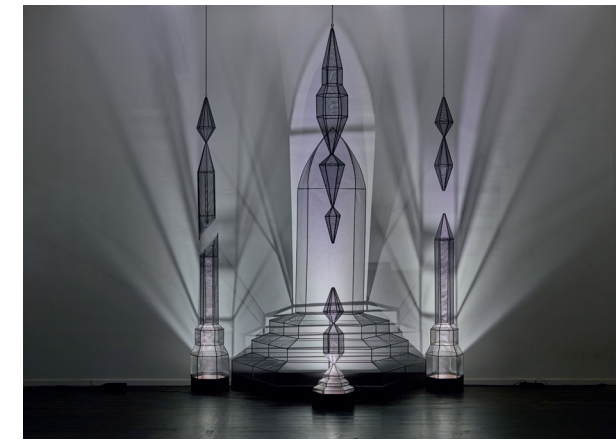
me to open a local gallery. I have planned a very global programme there, consisting of artists from the Middle East, the Emirates, Iran, as well as global artists that may have used references to the Middle East, such as my recent show [ended 15 June] with Ross Bleckner who has been very much influenced by the multiple domes of Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia mosque. I started my gallery in Dubai with an exhibition of Wim Delvoye with Ghada Amer; in our past shows, we exhibited Y.Z. Kami next to a retrospective of Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Zaha Hadid, her last one, with Sohrab Sepehri, his first gallery show since 1978. I am returning to the Dubai gallery in late June for the opening of the show for the Muslim African photographer Seydou Keita [showing until 1 September] exhibiting all the photography from his estate in conjunction with a show of Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi in a group show of all our artists. We have a big 1,400-square-metre space, so we are able to exhibit three shows simultaneously.

Do you see yourself ever setting up a gallery in Iran if the doors are fully open for you?

Hopefully. It is always a dream of mine and I hope one day it comes true.

www.leilahellergallery.com

Leila Heller in her Dubai gallery during the inaugural show of Ghada Amer
Portrait © Leila Heller Gallery



1 | *Spiral*, 2016. Aluminum radiator banding, base metal chain, 182.9 × 10.2 × 10.2 cm each. Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery New York, Dubai
2 | *Nameless*, 2014. Steel, fibreglass mesh, Wenge wood, ultra-suede, invisible thread, gun-metal chain, LED lights, 426.7 × 335.3 × 243.8 cm. Courtesy of Leila Heller Gallery New York, Dubai

Afromighi

Fascinated by the power of the shrine as “places of refuge,” Amighi’s art is an effort to recreate the sensation of grandeur that exists in both Gothic and Islamic art and architecture. Working predominantly with the theatrical elements of light, her *Night Paintings*

(2016) series consists of wall-mounted geometric architectural forms made of steel. Another installation of Amighi’s shadow pieces, called *1001 Pages* (2008), was created by cutting Islamic motifs into refugee tent material. All of her intricate installations convey dramatic shadows forming an almost three-dimensional perceptual experience.

Iranian-born but raised in New York, the artist describes how her distanced view based on historical books led to her inspiration, where “shadows give me a way of expressing this knowledge and range of emotions in a way that does not feel absolutely definitive, for the shadows themselves are intangible.”

Just two years after receiving her MFA in 2007, she was awarded the Jameel Prize for Middle Eastern Contemporary Art by the Victoria & Albert Museum. Today, Amighi’s work is included in several permanent museum collections around the world.

www.afromamighi.com



1 | *Green*, 2015. Mixed media on aquaboard, 88.9 × 114.3 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery New York, Dubai
2 | *Oil Barrel 22*, 2014. Mixed media on steel, 99 × 60 × 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Leila Heller Gallery New York, Dubai

Shiva Ahmadi

Iranian-born, Shiva Ahmadi’s dark and almost whimsical art employs the use of detailed, vividly coloured scenes to reference modern day conflicts. Her most recent work was inspired by traditional Persian miniature paintings. While traditional techniques are no longer

widely employed, Ahmadi uses watercolours, ink and acrylic applications on stiff absorbent paper to create her inspired works, often finishing her paintings in metallic gold ink.

Heavily influenced by political discourse, Ahmadi’s works are infused with a lot of narrative content and her compositions express her distrust of power. Her

creations tend to feature faceless authority figures sitting on gilded thrones while subservient animal minions and servants juggle grenades and express reverence.

Visually appealing but emotionally sobering, her highly prized triptych *Lotus* (2013) was partly influenced by an uprising in Iran inspired by the Arab Spring; a faceless Buddha morphs into a tyrant

as colourful bubbles turn into bombs that burst into blood spatters. In an exploration of the global connections that fuel corruption, Ahmadi decoratively painted a series of steel oil barrels with lively scenes that upon closer inspection actually contain drops of blood from war wounds.

www.shivaahmadi.com

Forecast

Simin Keramati

Born in 1970 in Tehran, Simin Keramati lives between her birthplace and Toronto. Her work draws on the feelings and anxieties that come from living in the tumultuous backdrop of the political and social conflicts in the Middle East. The focus of her work deals with the evolution of the self and female identity within the constraints and influences of external factors. Her work is a visual attempt to join the inner and the outer world simultaneously.

Although she has been shown internationally since 1993 and is mostly known for her paintings, Keramati became established in the Iranian art scene in the early 2000s with her video installations. She was able to convey the notion of losing one's identity through the use of her own image in a digital medium like *Self Portrait* (2007–2008). In the video, her face fades into a background beneath handwritten English and Farsi phrases.

In a style often compared to the pop art movement, Keramati is inclined to put

herself at the centre of her work. *The blue backgrounds* (2015) is a series of self-portrait paintings in which she interacts with popular cultural icons such as Michael Jackson, John Lennon and Andy Warhol.

The evolution of identity is explored further in drawings and paintings in her *Identity* series of works. Individual works like *Reunion* (2015) and *We were all smiling* (2015) depict faceless men and women in different social scenes. The idea in these works is that by limiting their identity to body, hair

and clothes, there will be little left over in which to be “recognised or judged.”

The global art world has welcomed Simin Keramati's artwork in various solo and group exhibitions in France, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, United States, Japan and China to name a few, proving that an artist working in an atmosphere heavy with artistic limitations can still transcend their message on an international scale.

www.siminkeramati.com



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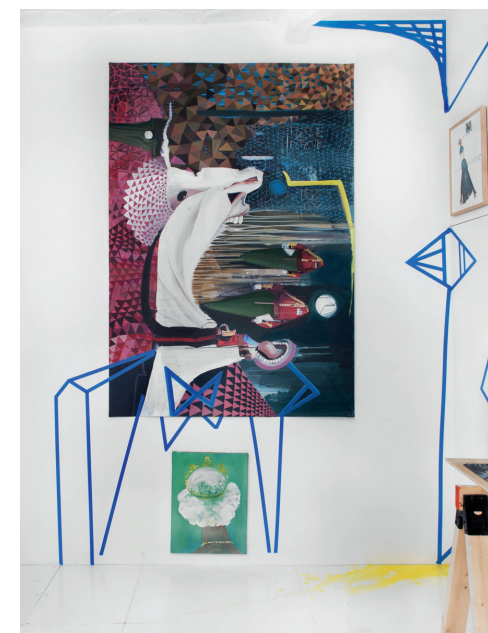


1 | *We were all smiling*, 2015. Identity series. Acrylics on canvas, 101 × 137 cm. Courtesy of the artist

2 | *John Lennon, Me, New York City and Heech by Tanavoli*, 2014. The blue backgrounds series. Acrylics and spangles on canvas, 81 × 114 cm. Courtesy of the artist

3 | *Self Portrait #N*, 2015. Identity series. Acrylics on canvas, 142 × 172 cm. Courtesy of the artist

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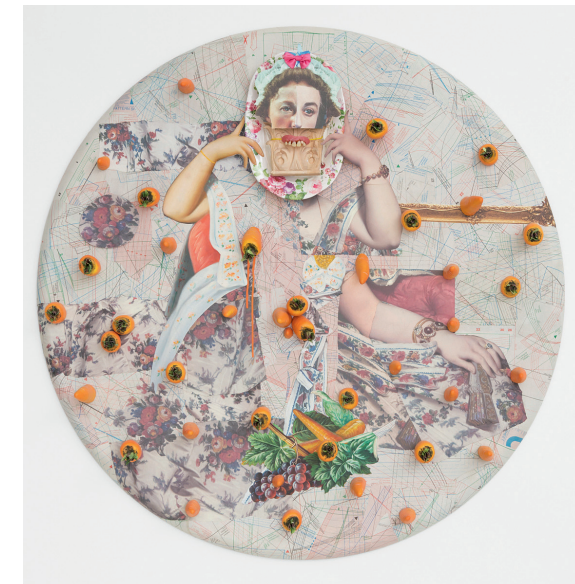
1 | Installation view: Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, and Hesam Rahmanian. *I Won't Wait For Grey Hairs And Worldly Cares To Soften My Views*, Callicoon Fine Arts, 2015. Courtesy of the artists and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

2 | Installation view: Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian. *Slice A Slanted Arc Into Dry Paper Sky*, Kunsthalle Zürich, 2015. Photo © Gunnar Meier. Courtesy of the artists and Kunsthalle Zürich

3 | Ramin Haerizadeh. *Carrot Cake, Carrot Cake, Do You Have Any Nuts?*, 2014. Collage of various plastic ready-mades, paper, cardboard and carved wood on canvas, 113.7 cm diameter. Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York



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Ramin & Rokni Haerizadeh

The highly creative brother duo Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh together with artist Hesam Rahmanian were all born in the late 1970s at the height of the Iranian Revolution. With closed borders and numerous sanctions, they were raised in a culture of limitations.

Eventually it became necessary to create a space in Iran where they would feel safe to practise their art. Soon they began inviting underground musicians and

producing photography sessions in this space, eventually calling it “Warhol's Factory” because it was open for people to freely come and go and experiment with their own creativity.

This was an idyllic solution until their participation in Saatchi's 2009 exhibition, *Unveiled: New Art From The Middle East*, raised alarm at the Ministry of Islamic Culture. Aware of the potential dangers of returning to Tehran after friends cautioned them that their gender-bending artwork could be seen as sacrilegious in nature, they applied for temporary residence in the United Arab Emirates that

year. They viewed Dubai as the heart of progress, and invigorated by the energy of the city, this art collective spurred into high production.

Their first collaborative exhibition *I Put It There You Name It* (2012) recreated the fantastical atmosphere of their Dubai home of carefully curated accumulated objects in a gallery. The result was a complex and provocative assemblage of painted floors and collaboratively created pieces that came together to form an intriguing satiric narrative about modern-day rituals and the concept of ownership.

Just last year, Kunsthalle Zürich hosted their *Slice A Slanted Arc Into A Dry Paper Sky*; soon after Callicoon Fine Arts in New York presented *I won't wait for grey hairs and worldly cares to soften my views*. Their work has also been showcased in other international venues such as the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art along with a show at the Queensland Gallery in Brisbane. Just this past July, the trio participated in the 9th edition of the Liverpool Biennial.

www.callicoonfinearts.com

Itinerary

Art Copenhagen

Presented as two art fairs under one roof in Scandinavia's largest exhibition centre, CODE and Selected strive to engage the visitor with the best performers in the art world. CODE is a carefully curated platform designed to present an international roster of galleries together with the world's top echelon of artists, writers, curators and collectors. The Selected art fair has a loyal following among the affluent Scandinavian market with a rich selection of artwork of modern and contemporary art for discerning collectors.

Bella Centre | Copenhagen
26–28 August

Cosmoscow

The only international art fair in Russia is located inside the large naturally lit hall of the 18th-century indoor market Gostiny Dvor near Red Square. This well-organised professional event features over thirty local and international galleries, as well as an "Off white" charity auction that supports the Naked Heart Foundation which is supported by Christie's. In addition, this year the fair will feature its Russian artist of the year, Svetlana Shuvaeva, with a specially commissioned project.

Gostiny Dvor | Moscow
9–11 September

Vienna Contemporary

Among the 105 galleries who are presenting over 500 young and established artists from around the globe, this year they will also feature

a special presentation focused on contemporary art from former Yugoslavia and Albania. The well-established ZONE1 will include solo presentations from young Austrian artists; Nordic Highlights will feature selected galleries from Finland, Denmark and Sweden.

Marx Halle | Vienna
22–25 September

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair

Returning for the fourth year is an event that strives to represent the diversity of the fifty-four countries that represent the African continent. It is dedicated to showcasing the multiplicity of contemporary African art and cultural production on an international stage.

Somerset House | London
6–9 October

Korean International Art Fair (KIAF)

As one of the leading art fairs in Asia hosted by Korea Galleries Association, KIAF aims to represent and promote contemporary Asian art by continually fuelling the cultural exchange between Asian countries and its participating art galleries. Though the focus is mainly Asian contemporary art with over one hundred domestic galleries [another eighty are international], a guest country of honour will be invited to introduce a meaningful cultural perspective to its thriving domestic art market.

COEX Hall A & B | Seoul
12–16 October

Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain (FIAC)

For its 43rd edition, almost 200 galleries representing over twenty countries will exhibit an exciting roster of international artists divided into General Sector and Lafayette Sector, both at the Grand Palais in Paris. For the special complementary *Hors Les Murs* (beyond the walls) outdoor exhibition throughout Paris, you will find artworks in the Tuileries Gardens, Jardin des Plantes, Place Vendôme and Berges de Seine.

Grand Palais | Paris
20–23 October

"Incite, inspire, evoke." This is the mission of Patrice Faramé, a creative director and consultant based in New York City who has also produced an exclusive number of limited-edition art books annually under *The Curated Collection* line as well as for international corporate clients. *The Curated Collection* is in the business of management, consulting, publishing and licensing for the creative sector, where savvy insiders in the areas of art, fashion and design lend their expertise as "curators" to each exciting project.
www.thecuratedcollection.com