

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Kufer, Katrina. "Contemporary Istanbul: A Preview" Harper's Bazaar Arabia. (September 12, 2017)

BAZAAR
Harper's
ARABIA

Contemporary Istanbul 2017: A Preview



Mehmet Sinan Kuran. Fiftysixdoublezero. 2016. Waterproof ink on paper. 70 cm in diameter. Courtesy of Pg Art Gallery, Istanbul

The 12th edition of Contemporary Istanbul will open 14 September with a renewed approach, design, dates and an even more diverse group of 60-plus galleries, reports Katrina Kufer

1-87, Alserkal Avenue Al Quoz 1, Dubai, UAE | 568 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001 USA

www.leilahellergallery.com

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Contemporary Istanbul (CI) has had some revisions since last year — a new fair design has been implemented by award-winning architects Tabanlıoğlu Architects, and CI is introducing The Fifth Element, a sculpture sector to be held at the nearby Sanatçılar Park. “[We] are very much focused on the awareness of current trends and modes of how people engage with fairs as well as the galleries and art we display,” explains CI chairman Ali Güreli.

“Through this, we have taken new initiatives such as redesigning the fair, to create a more fluid park-like environment for visitors to enjoy.” CI also is engaging in an Art Week to fully involve the city and diversify beyond commercial aims, as well as “[restructuring] the dialogue of the fair and creating an open platform for people to engage with the fair by both physically attending or digitally through our social media platforms,” says Güreli. Fair director Kamiar Maleki adds that the initiatives are the result of travel and research to “determine the factors that work and don’t work in a fair environment, and we have in turn created a compact, enjoyable and highly informative experience for the public and collectors.”

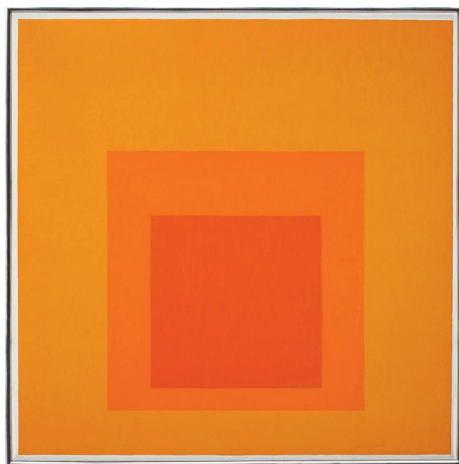


Michelangelo Pistoletto. 11 Rispetto. 2016. Mirror, coloured wood and gilded frame. 250x150 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua. Photography by Philippe Servent

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

The new sculpture section, curated by Professor Hasan Bülent Kahraman, is the city's first outdoor contemporary sculpture exhibition. Maleki shares that it will feature museum calibre works by Jan Fabre, Jannis Kounellis, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Tony Cragg and Wim Delvoye, among others, and is one of the must-sees this year. “The Fifth Element is a confrontation with the adventure that befalls earth, air, water, fire, and man over the ages, surpassing time and matter,” explains Kahraman. “It is a reckoning! And above all, it is matter and imagination.”

A step forward for the Istanbul public, Güreli says the city is at one of its most culturally exciting times. “15 years ago there were only a small number of galleries and very few private art collecting initiatives in Turkey — there weren't as many players in the market, and the ones that existed were not concerned about international exposure,” he says. The milestone opening of the Istanbul Biennial in 1987 led the way for the influx of art museums, including the Sakip Sabanci Museum and Istanbul Modern. “Over the last decade we have worked hard to turn the Turkish art scene into an internationally acclaimed market, and Istanbul is now a key cultural and artistic meeting point,” he adds, justifying the move to have the fair dates coincide with the opening of the Istanbul Biennial this year.



Josef Albers. Study for Homage to the Square – Me Too. 1969. Oil on Masonite. Image courtesy of Archeus Post Modern, London

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

The development has not been without its struggles, however. “We cannot deny that political instability takes its toll on all markets,” continues Güreli, “however, the collectors are extremely loyal to the galleries that are represented both internationally and within the city and understand the role art has in reconciliation and mutual understanding.” Indicative of this are the 90,000 visitors last year, and the 20 new participating galleries this year, including Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai/New York; Vigo Gallery, London; Victoria Miro, London, Anna Laudel, Istanbul; Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana; and Gallery Tableau, Seoul, who join fair mainstays such as Dastan’s Basement, Tehran; Dirimart, Istanbul; Galeri Nev, Istanbul; Galerie Mark Hachem, Paris/Beirut; Zilberman Gallery, Istanbul and Gallery One, Ramallah.

The fair’s revamp seems to reinvigorate its programming, which will continue to host its usual segments alongside the Galleries and Emerging Galleries sections, featuring galleries pre-2010 and post-2011, respectively. The fifth edition of the Plugin section, dedicated to new media art that intersects with science, technology and politics, will be curated by Ceren and Irmak Arkman for the third consecutive time. “It is a future-friendly extension of the fair and champions the amalgamation of arts, culture and creativity with technology, which has evidently risen in recent years,” remarks Güreli.



Navid Nuur. Untitled. 2014-16. Hand cut glass, acid, climbing grips, minerals, aluminium. 113 x 93 x 16.5cm.

Image courtesy the artist and Galeria Plan B, Berlin

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Solo Shows will highlight single artist presentations; CI Dialogues will bring together over 50 creative professionals to discuss the theme Movement under talks entitled Movement in Space, The Interconnected Art of Taste and Human Aesthetics in Future Technologies; and following the Collectors' Stories exhibition last year featuring 120 works from 60 leading private collections, CI is releasing a special follow-up publication entitled Collectors' Stories Book, exploring the dynamics of taste, the building of collections, and the collectors' personal and anecdotal motivations.

Contemporary Istanbul runs 14-17 September at Istanbul Congress Centre and Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Centre, Istanbul, Turkey. Contemporaryistanbul.com