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CORK STREET 100 YEARS

FEAR GIVES WINGS TO COURAGE

CATALOGUE

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AN INITIATIVE FROM THE POLLEN ESTATE

06–09

10–19

20–25

26–33

34–41

42–51

52–55

56–58

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
DEAN MAYO DAVIES

The imposed morality of a bystander resulting in artist censorship. In 1938, Jean Cocteau's *La peur donnant des ailes au courage* was impounded at Croydon airport and Peggy Guggenheim and Marcel Duchamp had to take action in securing its liberation.

In November 2024, Phoebe Collings-James, who features in this issue, saw their installation at Kunstverein Hamburg vandalised when a visitor erased the word 'Palestine' from a list depicting countries affected by conflict, leaving the words 'Congo', 'Sudan' and 'Haiti' untouched.

The work was restored. The museum saddened and supportive.

It is sacrosanct that art remain truly free, and we can travel with it – or let others do so. For the 100th anniversary of Cork Street, the spiritual home of modern and contemporary art lends an English translation of the former work, 'Fear Gives Wings to Courage', to this magazine. And in the run up a group show across the galleries as well as a new banners commission in the open air, curated by Tarini Malik of our neighbour the Royal Academy of Arts. Since its inception, the sky above Cork Street has become the capital's most central public art space.

How we arrived at today is very much Louisa Buck's oratory, recalling our fondly thought-of characters and their ways that made Cork Street what it is. While Gareth Harris shines light on the suppression of LGBTQ+ artists in 'illiberal democracies', sharing an extract from his essential book *Censored Art Today.*

It is our privilege to publish Phoebe Collings-James in conversation with Anthea Hamilton. To feature Jenkin van Zyl. Hear Shirin Neshat the Iranian-born artist speak to an Iranian-born writer, the New York Times contributor Farah Nayeri. All incredible artists, and not all of them are represented by galleries on Cork Street. Because life and art has panorama. We'll never stop celebrating that.

CATALOGUE

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Fear Gives Wings to Courage Parts I & II
Curator: Tarini Malik

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FEAR GIVES WINGS TO COURAGE

TEXT BY TARINI MALIK, CURATOR OF FEAR GIVES WINGS TO COURAGE PARTS I & II

"It was only through Guggenheim and her advisor Marcel Duchamp's incessant petitions to the government that the artwork was eventually released on the condition that it would be shown out of public view, and in a back office of the gallery."

TARINI MALIK

Taking its title from Jean Cocteau's seminal 1938 work *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, 'Fear Gives Wings to Courage' celebrates 100 years of Cork Street and the transformative potential of artists' voices both within gallery spaces and outside of them. Gesturing to the street's long-established cultural history, the exhibition's theme recalls Cork Street's pioneering role in transforming London into a hub for international art practices in the 20th century, while also making it one of the key platforms in Europe for the expansion of Surrealist and Dadaist movements.

It was at 30 Cork Street that legendary art collector and patron Peggy Guggenheim established her gallery space, Guggenheim Jeune, in 1938. While hosting her first show with the famed polymath Jean Cocteau, the gallery stirred up significant controversy due to his painting *La peur donnant des ailes au courage*, which was confiscated by British customs authorities upon arrival in the United Kingdom. Featuring a pencil, crayon, chalk and – notably – the artist's own blood in a drawing of bandaged and bloodied figures, one of which is said to be a portrait of his lover Jean Marais, on a cotton bedsheet, the work was labeled obscene due to its depiction of nudity and pubic hair. Highly influential to both the Surrealist and Dadaist movements, Cocteau's intention behind the painting was also to reflect his staunch support for the antifascist Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War. It was only through Guggenheim and her advisor Marcel Duchamp's incessant petitions that the artwork was eventually released on the condition that it would be shown out of public view, and in a back office of the gallery.

'Fear Gives Wings to Courage' therefore nods to the necessity of the gallery ecosystem in encouraging, upholding and presenting artists' practices that are assertions of agency in the face of societal and political pressures. Fifteen galleries on Cork Street were asked to respond to the theme with artists' work that can be thought of as emblematic of Cocteau's unabashed vigour, and Guggenheim's abiding belief in supporting artists. The galleries were also encouraged to profile artists who continue to draw from the legacies of Surrealism, not as a mere style or movement within the Western canon, but rather as a state of mind; a fluid, boundless approach of navigating notions of the self and society that transgress borders and temporalities. For this centenary exhibition, the galleries have chosen a single artwork to be represented as a suspended banner on Cork Street and a presentation of artwork within their spaces.

THE BANNERS: UNTIL THE CLOSE OF 2025

PARIS

NEW

ORK

> **“Such is the gallery ecosystem harboured by Cork Street, one whose persistence in supporting artists from across generations and cultures is central to London’s arts ecology.”**
>
> TARINI MALIK

Tiwani Contemporary’s nomination of contemporary Zimbabwean artist Virginia Chihota’s (b. 1983) painted biomorphic forms and Alon Zakaim Fine Art’s presentation of American cartoonist, muralist and political radical William Gropper (1897–1977) speak to the transhistorical and transcultural legacies of the Cork Street area. For both artists, the body is represented as a mutable form, suspended in space and evoking Surrealism’s interest in the subconscious self. The movement’s aspiration to inspire change through the fantastical and subversive also reflects the fact that many associated artists looked to disrupt politically oppressive structures, with a number having concurrent practices as activists. Such is the case with Goodman Gallery’s presentation of Iranian photographer and moving image artist Shirin Neshat (b. 1957), Stephen Friedman Gallery’s British counter-culture activist and artist Caroline Coon (b. 1943), Nahmad Projects’ Spanish painter Juan Gris (1887–1927), and MASSIMODECARLO’s presentation of Chinese-French painter Yan Pei-Ming (b. 1960). Across different generations, these artists have challenged monolithic and hegemonic ideas of representation, especially where freedoms of expression and identity have been complexified by all manners of risk and censorship.

Waddington Custot’s nomination of British artist Peter Blake (b. 1932) is indicative of the gallery’s long-standing relationship with an artist who, whilst a prominent figure in the Pop Art movement, also engages with surrealist tendencies in his work. Often juxtaposing urbanity and the everyday with the uncanny, Blake’s work resonates with The Redfern Gallery’s presentation of British artist Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003), who developed a personal iconography mined from different art historical periods, but reflecting the political milieu of a rapidly shifting and culturally fraught 1960’s Britain as an unfettered painter of the queer experience. Also echoing Procktor’s commitment to challenging hegemonic representations of the figurative in art is Flowers Gallery’s selection of British painter Lucy Jones (b. 1955): an artist who addresses ideas of femininity, vulnerability, aging and disability. The dreamlike quality of Jones’ paintings is echoed in Alison Jacques’ display of British painter Sophie Barber (b. 1996). Here, the artist’s interest in the natural world is depicted through her surreal and folk-like compositions. By comparison, Indian artist Biraaj Dodiya’s (b. 1993) work that features in Frieze No. 9 Cork Street’s collaboration with New Delhi-based Vadehra Art Gallery is a study in abstraction as a visual language that has the potential to disrupt and transform. Messums London’s showcase of Chinese-British photographer Yan Wang Preston’s (b. 1976) landscapes are mediations between the unknown and the sublime, exploring constructs of memory and identity.

Sam Fogg’s presentation of art of the Middle Ages, including a stained glass panel from circa 1230, gestures back to the foundational role Cork Street plays. Reflecting the gallery’s dedication to the meticulous preservation and care of medieval artworks, Fogg champions objects whose historical potency is undoubtedly vital. Such is the gallery ecosystem harboured by Cork Street, one whose persistence in supporting artists from across generations and cultures is central to London’s arts ecology.

Cork Street Banners Commission 2025, ‘Fear Gives Wings to Courage’, in collaboration with Tarini Malik, Courtesy of Cork Street Galleries and The Pollen Estate. Photo: Luke Hayes

Cork Street Banners Commission 2025, 'Fear Gives Wings to Courage', in collaboration with Tarini Malik, Courtesy of Cork Street Galleries and The Pollen Estate. Photo: Luke Hayes

TWO PARTS

THE EXHIBITION: 11–25 JULY 2025

Staged within the galleries on Cork Street, Alessandro Raho (b. 1971) has created a new body of work at Alison Jacques that responds to the exhibition theme. Raho shares Jean Cocteau's fascination with magic and sees his *Playing Cards* (2025) and *Levitating Woman* (2024) as reminiscent of Cocteau's love for illusion, and the magic that permeates his films. Caroline Coon's (b. 1945) works at Stephen Friedman Gallery are presented in dialogue with ceramics created by Jean Cocteau. Inspired by feminism and the politics of sexual liberation, Caroline Coon's unique paintings contest binary notions of gender and oppressive patriarchal values. Three decades of Lucy Jones' (b. 1955) intimate self-portraits at Flowers Gallery challenge societal constraints of femininity and conventional aesthetic norms. The British artist has established herself for her distinctively provocative portraits, identified by raw and expressive brushwork paired with vibrant colour. Alon Zakaim Fine Art highlights the pioneering Impressionist artists who, despite facing intense criticism and rejection from their contemporaries, overcame these challenges to lay the foundations for a new visual language. The work of Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (18410–1919), William Gropper (1897–1977) and Albert Gleizes (1881–1953) is on view. Tiwani Contemporary feature the works of Virginia Chihota (b. 1983) and Felix Shumba (b. 1989). Both artists present surreal interpretations of liberating emotional and historically traumatised landscapes, echoing some of the aesthetic, critical, and political themes associated with the Surrealist movement and the interwar period.

Juan Gris' (1887–1927) *Le joueur de guitare (Arlequin à laguitare)* (1918) encapsulates the defiant spirit of artistic reinvention and resistance at Nahmad Projects. In addition, Wassily Kandinsky's (1866–1944) *Pfeil zum Kreis* (1930) commemorates Peggy Guggenheim's pioneering programme at Guggenheim Jeune, the site of his first U.K. solo exhibition in 1938. Messums London's presentation of work by Yan Wang Preston (b. 1976) questions the socio-political forces that shape our environment, pushing back against dominant narratives of place and belonging, the tension between power and vulnerability, and touches on censorship. Invitation to the *Voyage* is a series of five prints made in 1969 by the painter and printmaker, Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003) at The Redfern Gallery. These lyrical and dreamlike compositions of his boyfriend, Gervase Griffiths, and friends – the designer, Ossie Clark, and the actor, Eric Emerson – relate to poetic reverie, and the spiritual ascent into the unknown. Waddington Custot showcase Peter Blake's (b. 1932) enduring practice which continues to explore the subversive potential of visual culture through collage, portraiture, and the appropriation of everyday imagery. New works will be exhibited alongside a selection of the artist's earlier works. Goodman Gallery present one of the films from Shirin Neshat's (b. 1957) *Dreamers* series, the U.K. premiere of the work. *Dreamers* is a trilogy of black-and-white video installations which explores the world of dreams through the perspectives of three women. The films are semi-autobiographical and are inspired by Neshat's own dreams. Nodding to the history of Cork Street and the pioneering artists whose work was first showcased here, MASSIMODECARLO's display of works by Yang Pei-Ming (b. 1960) is a series that focuses on Francis Bacon while Osborne Samuel celebrate the legacy of the street with the presentation of work by Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) and Henry Moore (1898–1986) who were included in an exhibition titled *Unit One* in 1934. Holtermann Fine Art exhibits a painting by Michel Pérez Pollo (b. 1981), whose minimalist aesthetic reimagines a Surrealist vision for contemporary audiences.

Tarini Malik is Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

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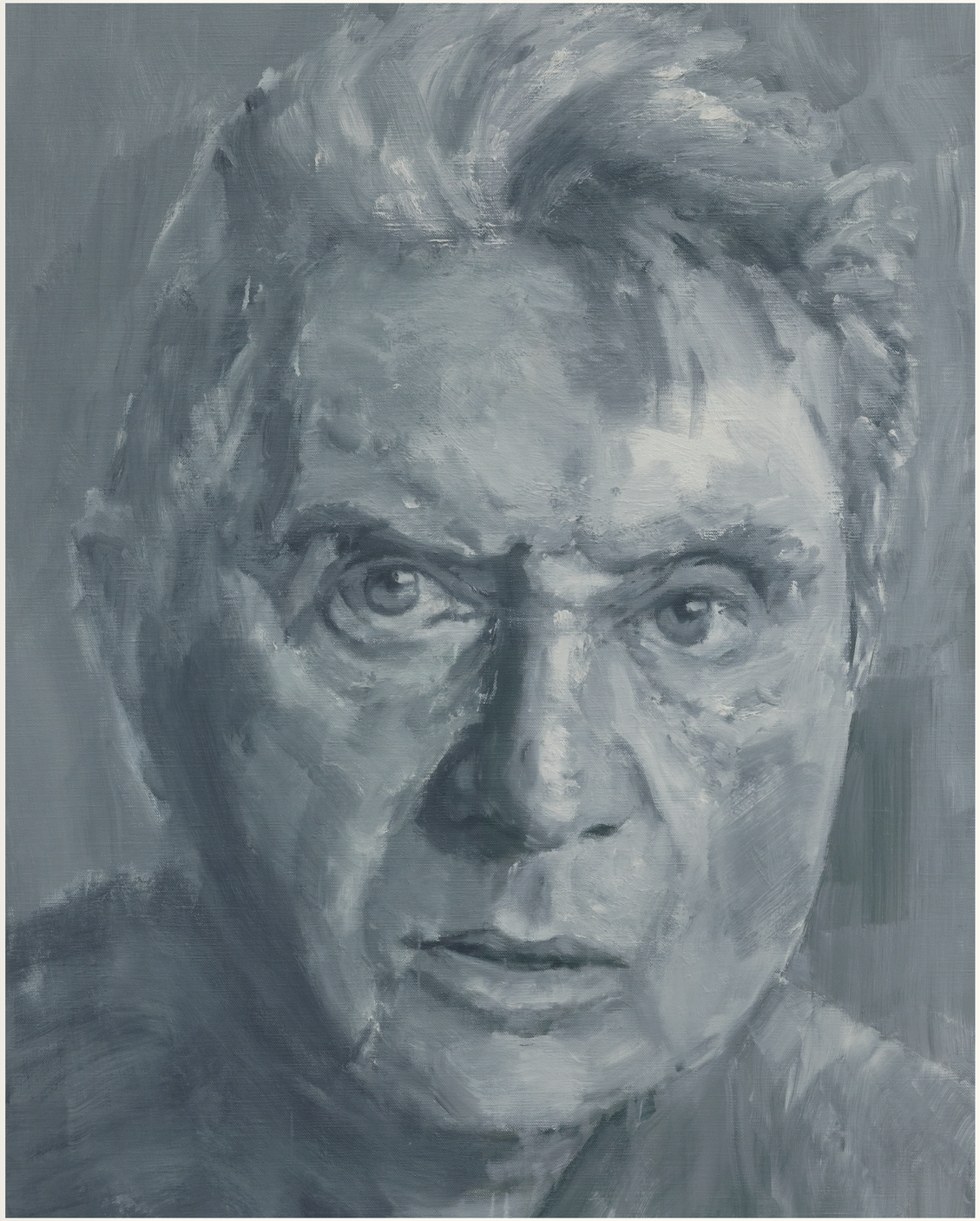
← Previous page:
Caroline Coon's work was presented alongside ceramics by Jean Cocteau, initiating a conversation across generations between two spirited artists. Caroline Coon and Jean Cocteau, installation view, 'Fear Gives Wings to Courage' Cork Street Centenary, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, 2025, Courtesy Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York, Photo: Rory Black

1 Yan Pei-Ming, Installation view, 'Wanted', 2025, Courtesy MASSIMODECARLO, Photo: Todd-White Art Photography

2 Michel Pérez Pollo, *Two Box*, 2015, Oil on canvas, Overall: 200 × 260 cm / 78 ¾ × 102 ⅜ ", Two parts, each: 200 × 130 cm / 78 ¾ × 51 ⅛ ", Holtermann Fine Art

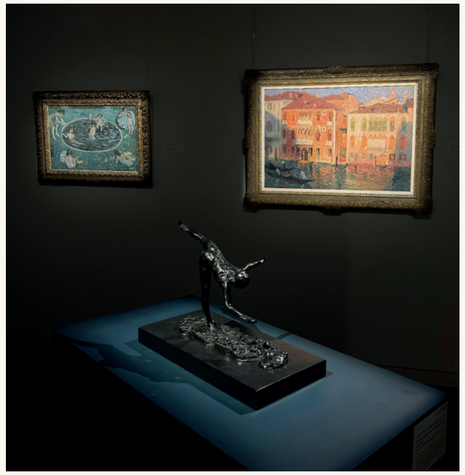


Yan Pei-Ming, *Wanted Francis Bacon*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 126 × 91 cm, Courtesy Yan Pei-Ming, MASSIMODECARLO, Photo: Clérin-Morin

2

3

1 Yan Wang Preston, *Allotments under Caiyuanba Bridge*, Chongqing, China, 92 x 105 cm, Chromogenic print, Edition of 6, from Forest series (2010-2017)
2 (top left artwork) Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003), *Sadie and Prudence*, 1969/70, Aquatint, 25.4 × 45.1 cm, Courtesy of The Redfern Gallery, Photo: Alex Fox
(top right artwork) Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003), *My Gardenia*, 1969, Lithograph, 33 × 67 cm, Courtesy of The Redfern Gallery, Photo: Alex Fox
(bottom left artwork) Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003), *Ossie, Gervase and Eric*, 1969, Aquatint, 27.8 × 88 cm, Courtesy of The Redfern Gallery, Photo: Alex Fox
(bottom right artwork) Patrick Procktor RA (1936–2003), *Departure*, 1969, Etching and aquatint, 40.5 × 75.7 cm, Courtesy of The Redfern Gallery, Photo: Alex Fox
3 Felix Shumba, *The yard friezes at the unknown (in thought of hymn rain)*, 2024, Charcoal on Fabriano paper, 40 × 30 cm / 15 ¾ × 19 ¾ ", Courtesy Felix Shumba, Photo: Deniz Guzel, Tiwani Contemporary
4 Pierre Bonnard, Henri Martin & Edgar Degas, installation view, 'Fear Gives Wings To Courage', 11 July – 22 August 2025 (*extended to 7 October 2025), courtesy Alon Zakaim Fine Art, Photo: Alon Zakaim Fine Art, Alon Zakaim Fine Art



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1 Lucy Jones, installation view, 'Totally, completely, and absolutely Lucy Jones', 2025, Flowers Gallery, 21 Cork Street, Courtesy Flowers Gallery, Photo: Antonio Parente

2 Wassily Kandinsky, *Pfeil zum Kreis (Arrow toward the circle)*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 80 × 110 cm, Courtesy Wassily Kandinsky, Photo: Stephen White & Co, Nahmad Projects

3 Alessandro Raho, installation view, 2025, Alison Jacques, Courtesy Alison Jacques & Alessandro Raho, Photo: Michael Brzezinsk

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2

3

1 Peter Blake, 'Fear Gives Wings to Courage', Courtesy the artist and Waddington Custot
2 Osborne Samuel Gallery, 'Modern British Art', August 2025
3 Shirin Neshat, *Land of Dreams*, 2019, Video and sound installation, Goodman Gallery

BIGGER THAN ASPHALT

THE FABULOUS HISTORY OF CORK STREET AS TOLD BY LOUISA BUCK

It may be a small street, but it has had a big impact. And continues to do so. For a hundred years Cork Street has been a crucial centre for the commercial art world and a showcase for the most progressive contemporary art and artists. As Savile Row is to tailors, or Harley Street to doctors, so Cork Street is to art, with an illustrious track record for presenting groundbreaking work and giving many of art history's greats their first-ever showing in the U.K. – and sometimes anywhere at all. Over the past century the route to gaining this illustrious status has been an eventful one, with a rich history embellished with colourful characters, unforgettable events and much bad behaviour, and of course all accompanied by an array of astonishing artworks.

La peur donnant des ailes au courage ('Fear Gives Wings to Courage'), is an apt choice of title for the programme of exhibitions and events that's been put together across all fifteen of Cork Street's current galleries to celebrate this centennial year. For as well as implying some of the more audacious activities that have taken place on the street over the years, *Fear Gives Wings to Courage* is also what Jean Cocteau called the scandalous artwork that he made especially for the inaugural exhibition of one of the street's most significant early galleries, Peggy Guggenheim's Guggenheim Jeune Gallery which opened at No 30 Cork Street on January 24, 1938.

In her memoirs Guggenheim remembers visiting Cocteau in his hotel room in Paris to discuss the show whilst the renowned polymath poet, artist, novelist and filmmaker lay in bed smoking opium. "The odour was extremely pleasant though it seemed a rather odd way of doing business," she recalled. Out of these stimulated conversations came *Fear Gives Wings to Courage*, a large, dreamily allegorical drawing on a linen bedsheet rendered in charcoal, pencil and – reputedly – splashes of Cocteau's own blood. Even

“Now London is such a vibrant art hub it seems hard to believe that for many years it was only a handful of pioneering galleries run by a few enterprising and often eccentric individuals that kept the pilot light of radicalism alight this side of the Channel.”

LOUISA BUCK

more controversial, however, was its depiction of a languorous group of five lolling near-naked figures, three of which were prominently displaying copious amounts of pubic hair. Never mind that their genitals were coyly concealed by fig leaves and drapery, this provocative content was deemed sufficiently shocking for the work to be impounded by British Customs at Croydon Airport. It took a last-minute dash to Croydon by Peggy and her friend Marcel Duchamp to negotiate its release – but only on condition that the offending piece was kept from public view in a back office. Such a drama only acted to fuel the buzz around Guggenheim Jeune, with Peggy resplendent at the packed opening, wearing in a pair of much commented-upon earrings made from six brass curtain rings linked together on each ear.

Stuffy official conservatism was the norm during the first few decades of the twentieth century when Britain was still both socially and culturally a provincial backwater while many of the major art movements – Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, to name but a few – were flaring across Europe. (Let’s not forget that Tate only acquired its first Picasso in 1933, and a conservative flower painting at that). Now London is such a vibrant art hub it seems hard to believe that for many years it was only a handful of pioneering galleries run by a few enterprising and often eccentric individuals that kept the pilot light of radicalism alight this side of the Channel. And nearly all of those galleries were on Cork Street. It was to this modest thoroughfare tucked behind the Royal Academy that those in the know would make a pilgrimage to catch a glimpse of the most recent artistic developments taking place on the continent. And it wasn’t only the big names of international modernism who often received their first British showing here: Cork Street also offered a much-needed platform for homegrown talent, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Paul Nash. Later on Cork Street also distinguished itself as one of the earliest places in Europe to see the major figures of American Abstraction and Pop Art; and it continues up to today in its current role as a place to see the very latest in all art from across the globe.

The first art gallery to set up shop on Cork Street was the Mayor Gallery, founded by Freddie Mayor in 1925. Freddie was a flamboyant presence, described by the jazz singer George Melly as “a short, rubicund cigar-smoking bowler-hatted bon viveur whose admirable taste in pictures was equalled by his enthusiasm for the racecourse.” But despite its owner’s love of the track, the Mayor Gallery at 18 Cork Street quickly established itself as a groundbreaking beacon of avant-garde art, exhibiting artists such as Alexander Calder, Paul Klee and André Masson in England for the first time. In July 1933 it staged Jean Miro’s first U.K. solo exhibition and in the same year a young Francis Bacon also had his first London showing in a group show at the Mayor. It was around this time that the

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← Previous page:
Cork Street Attack, grey paint cans, London, 1985

1 Group Photograph at the ‘International Surrealist Exhibition’, 1936, Left to Right: Rupert Lee (Chairman); Diana Brinton Lee (Secretary); ELT Mesens; Roland Penrose (Hon. Treasurer); Nusch Eluard; Stelllan Mörner; Herbert Read behind Eileen Agar; Paul Eluard; Edward James; Salvador Dali, Louisa Buck archive

2 Max Ernst, Poster for the ‘International Surrealist Exhibition’, 1936, Private collection

Mayor Gallery also became the headquarters for the Unit One group of progressive British artists that included Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Paul Nash and Edward Burra, who united to promote truly modern art, architecture and design.

Where Freddie Mayor led, other galleries followed. In 1936 the Redfern Gallery set up shop at No. 20 Cork Street, where it still remains to this day, now renowned as a major outlet for Modern British art. The same year saw the opening of the London Gallery at No. 28, which was originally a trailblazing outlet for Bauhaus and Constructivist art before being bought by Roland Penrose, artist, poet and Surrealism’s major promoter in the U.K. Penrose, who would later go on to found the Institute of Contemporary Art, remained the London Gallery’s backer and supporter but handed over the day-to-day running to Edouard ‘E.L.T.’ Mesens, a stout, irascible Belgian artist and good friend of the Belgian Surrealist Rene Magritte. Under Mesens’ directorship the London Gallery became the official HQ for the Surrealist movement in Britain, with Magritte, Man Ray and Paul Delvaux just a few of the movement’s major figures who received early exhibitions there.

A Surrealist spirit permeated every aspect of the London Gallery and its openings were notoriously excessive and riotous. Much press coverage accompanied the midnight private view of their ‘Surrealist Objects and Poems’ exhibition in November 1937, with guests – who included Henry Moore and Paul Nash – being served sausages and whiskey while Julian Trevelyan, one of the contributing artists gave a speech dressed as a blind explorer, complete with white stick and blacked-out glasses. Wandering amongst the guests was Shelia Legge, self-styled ‘Surrealist Phantom’ who spent much of the evening hitching up her skirt to reveal a leg painted with a grinning mouth and a demon figure; and another appearance was by Herbert Read, the leading art critic of the day, who urged the inebriated gathering to appreciate the bizarre collection of exhibits describing them as “angels of anarchy and machines for making clouds.”

But none of these shenanigans come close to the high jinks that accompanied the ‘International Surrealist Exhibition’. This landmark event took place in the heatwave summer of 1936 in the New Burlington Galleries, situated on the Corner of Cork Street at No. 5 Burlington Gardens – where Cecconi’s restaurant is now. More than 25,000 people crammed into the galleries which were filled with a dazzling display of exhibits that combined masterpieces by Ernst, Magritte, Picabia and Picasso with some hastily recruited local talent such as Henry Moore, Eileen Agar and Graham Sutherland. André Breton, the Pope of Surrealism, presided over the private view throng, clad in a green suit that matched his wife Jacqueline Lamba’s emerald fingernails, while the poet Dylan Thomas offered guests cups of boiled string, asking them whether they wanted it “weak or strong?” It was during this opening that Shelia Legge made her first

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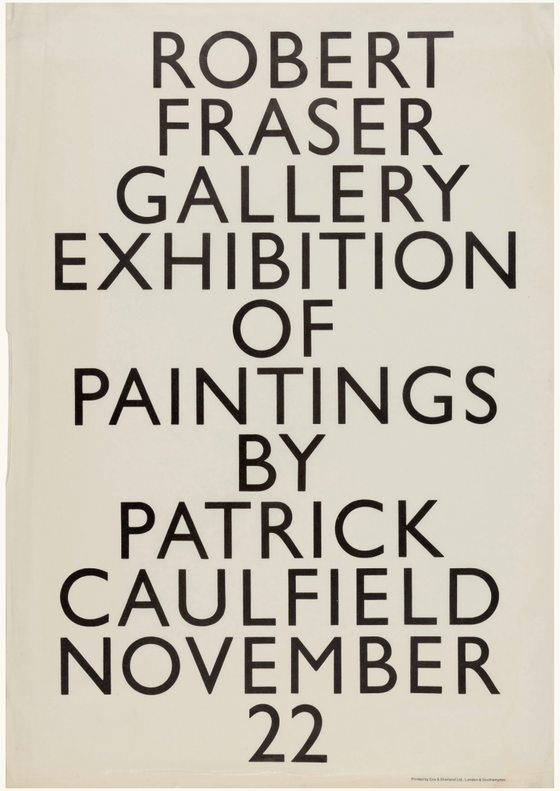
‘Surrealist Phantom’ appearance, in a Dalí-designed costume with her face covered in a mask of rose petals and brandishing a pork chop which became increasingly pungent as the evening progressed. Not to be upstaged, Salvador Dalí was sporting his *Aphrodisiac Jacket*, a tuxedo covered in liqueur glasses, each containing a measure of crème de menthe and a dead fly. A few days later Dalí nearly suffocated when, at another packed Surrealist event, he delivered an inaudible lecture on ‘Authentic Paranoiac Phantoms,’ whilst bolted inside a diving suit and holding a pair of leashed Irish wolfhounds. Disaster was narrowly averted by Roland Penrose, who suddenly realised Dalí’s extravagant arm waving was not part of the act and managed to prise open his helmet. All these excesses were lovingly reported in the press with the result that the queues to get into the show sometimes stretched all the way down to Piccadilly Circus: Surrealism had most emphatically arrived.

This was the context into which Peggy Guggenheim came two years later to open her Guggenheim Jeune Gallery in what had been a pawnshop on the second floor of No. 30, bang next door to the London Gallery. The opening drama over the crotch-baring Cocteaus gave her an immediate badge of honour, and the rest of the show, which featured the avant-garde superstar’s less controversial theatre designs and furniture, was overall well received. It didn’t hurt that the exhibition catalogue contained a specially written Cocteau essay translated by one of Peggy’s many paramours, a young and little-known writer named Samuel Beckett. This and many other Guggenheim Jeune shows also owed much to the input of Marcel Duchamp, the king of conceptual art, who had agreed to act as Peggy’s unofficial art tutor and gallery advisor. “At the time I couldn’t distinguish one thing in art from another. Marcel tried to educate me. I don’t know what I would have done without him,” she admits in her memoirs, *Out of this Century: Confessions of an Art Addict*. “He introduced me to all the artists. They all adored him and I was well received wherever I went. He planned shows for me and gave me lots of advice. I have him to thank for my introduction to the modern art world.”

Guggenheim Jeune made no money and it was only open for eighteen months. But it packed a considerable punch. Both Wassily Kandinsky and Yves Tanguy had their first London solo exhibitions there, and it hosted the first ever show devoted to collage in Britain. As Roland Penrose put it, “Cork Street was where the important things were happening. Everybody came there, and Peggy brought an international flavour to it all.” Guggenheim Jeune was also the first gallery where Lucien Freud ever publicly presented a work: the teenage artist’s 1936 painting *Old Man Running* was included in an exhibition devoted to children’s art. Then there was another profile raising scandal when Guggenheim Jeune yet again fell foul of the British customs over a stellar sculpture exhibition selected by Duchamp, which involved works by Jean Arp, Constantin Brancusi, Henri Laurens and Alexander Calder needing to be shipped into London from Paris. This time the authorities refused to accept the works into the country as art, attempting instead to charge prohibitively expensive duties on each as individual pieces of wood, metal and stone. A petition was rustled up by Henry Moore and Herbert Read (which Tate Gallery director J.B. Manson refused to sign) and the matter was raised in the House of Commons. It was eventually decreed that the pieces were indeed works of art and, in another blaze of publicity, the exhibition went ahead.

Along with Guggenheim Jeune’s impressive programme, Peggy was also making her own personal mark. As well as the relationship with Samuel Beckett, her many affairs – she racily described them in a letter to a friend as “hoaring” [sic] – included flings with Surrealist artist and film maker John Tunnard, who she remembered as “a sort of a genius [who] looked like Donald Duck”; the artist Julian Trevelyan, and even her London Gallery neighbour E.L.T. Mesens, who, according to Peggy was “a gay little Flamand, quite vulgar, but really very nice and warm… the affair did not last long.” Yves Tanguy was another conquest, and his drawing of Peggy and the exquisite pair of painted earrings he made for her can now be seen in the Guggenheim Collection in Venice. Peggy even had a fling with Roland Penrose before he settled down with the renowned photographer Lee Miller, and in *Confessions of an Art Addict* she recounted that Penrose had a particular “eccentricity,” as she put it. “When he slept with women he tied up their wrists with anything that was handy,” she recalled. “Once he used my belt, but another time he brought out a pair of ivory bracelets from the Sudan… it was extremely uncomfortable to spend the night this way, but if you spent it with Roland it was the only way.” One wonders how Penrose, who in old age became an establishment grandee, and was knighted in 1966 for his service to the arts, felt about this revelation.

The outbreak of the second World War in September 1939 put paid to all this fun and games and brought the spread of all radical art



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to a halt with the mass closure of commercial galleries across London, including those in and around Cork Street. But in the post-war years Cork Street slowly returned to life. The Mayor and Redfern Galleries re-opened at their original addresses, with the Mayor Gallery receiving an additional reboot when Freddie Mayor's son James took in 1973. This ushered in a transatlantic phase spanning Abstract Expressionism, American Pop Art and much more, initially achieved via a fruitful collaboration with the legendary New York art dealer Leo Castelli. James Mayor ushered in his new regime with a show of Warhol Chairman Mao screen prints, and some of the other major names who had important early – or first – U.K. shows at 18 Cork Street at this time included Cy Twombly, Eva Hesse and Roy Lichtenstein. The Mayor gallery also went on to establish itself as a major centre for Conceptual art and only left its longtime Cork Street home last year, to reopen on the other side of Piccadilly in Bury Street.

Over the years there have been to-ings and fro-ings in the gallery lineup too numerous to detail. However some do stand out. The name Waddington is an indelible part of Cork Street with the venerable Dublin art dealer Victor Waddington opening his first Cork Street gallery in 1958, which was notable for representing the Irish artists, especially Jack Yates. Due to the influence of his son Leslie, during the 1960's the gallery broadened its horizons to show the Cornish school of St Ives artists, as well as being largely responsible for introducing post-war American Colour Field, Abstract Expressionism and – along with the Mayor Gallery – Pop Art to London.

In 1966 Leslie Waddington broke away from his father and opened his own Cork Street gallery at No. 11 where, over the next decade, he was instrumental in raising the profile of abstract art in the U.K. The gallery premiered Anthony Caro's coloured welded steel sculptures and works by the so-called 'New Generation' of artists such as John Hoyland and Patrick Caulfield. By the 1980's Waddington Gallery was showing the latest new European and American painting and sculpture by such figures as Georg Baselitz, Mimmo Paladino, Barry Flanagan and Michael Craig-Martin, and into the next decade freshened up its stable with Fiona Rae and Ian Davenport, two of Craig-Martin's Goldsmiths protégés. Since Leslie's death in 2015 the gallery now operates at No. 11 Cork Street under the directorship of Stephanie Custot, but continues to be named Waddington Custot in his honour.

Many of the major names of contemporary art have had a Cork Street address at some point. These include the leading contemporary print maker Alan Cristea, who for many years had two galleries on the street, and Victoria Miro between 1985–2000. Plus, for a brief spell in the mid-80's, Maureen Paley. When the legendary 1960's art dealer Robert Fraser decided to open up a new gallery in 1983, the address he chose was 21 Cork Street and the crowd who turned up for the private view of Brian Clarke's abstract paintings seemed like a celebrity roll call which included Paul and Linda McCartney, Marianne Faithfull, David Bailey and his then wife Marie Helvin along with Jasper Conran, Manolo Blahnik and Malcolm McLaren. So large was the spilling throng that the police had to close the street.

During the 1980's Cork Street's star began to wane as the main contemporary art action began to shift away towards London's East End. From being a cutting edge crucible, the street and its galleries increasingly became regarded as a bastion of the art establishment. In May 1985 young artist collective the Grey Organisation targeted Cork Street for one of their acts of anti-commercial 'art terrorism', which involved the sharp-suited, shaven-headed GO crew rampaging down the street and splashing grey paint across the windows of all the major galleries – including Waddington's, Mayor, and Bernard Jacobson. A couple of months later it was the turn of

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1 Exhibition posters from Robert Fraser Gallery
2 Cork Street Attack Photography, Andrew Catlin, London, 1985
3 Cork Street Attack Photography, Andrew Catlin, London, 1985

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artists Christine and Jennifer Binnie and Wilma Johnson to disrupt the annual Cork Street Summer Party with an exuberant Neo Naturist Protest in opposition to what they (correctly) saw as the elitist, white, male dominated art world. Naked except for lashings of vivid, elaborately applied body paint, the trio cavorted in galleries and sprawled across the bonnets of parked cars, gatecrashing the festivities, literally making their mark wherever they went.

Wind the clock forward to December 2019 and the Neo Naturists were back again on Cork Street, still baring all, but this time rather more amiably as special guests invited to decorate the festive tree and provide performative entertainment for artist studios and gallery space Studio Voltaire's festive fundraising Christmas pop-up at No. 31. Other participants in this event of merriment and mayhem included Gina Birch and the post-punk band The Raincoats and this writer, saucily clad as Mother Christmas and ably assisted by Tate curator Linsey Young and artist Julie Verhoeven, who were both dressed as elves.

It was around this time that Cork Street began to regain its mojo. After a lull during the nineties and noughties when only a few stalwarts remained, the galleries started to come back and even the onset of Covid could not stem the momentum. A landmark moment was in October 2021, when Frieze took over the entire building of No. 9 Cork St as a permanent exhibition venue that now houses an all-year programme of temporary shows and events put on by a changing roster of leading international galleries. The last few years have also seen the arrival of more heavyweights such as Stephen Friedman, Alison Jacques, Goodman Gallery and Tiwani Contemporary, all of whom have consolidated Cork Street yet again as a major global art hub. And I'm sure that Peggy would be delighted that the esteemed powerhouse Marianne Holtermann is now at No. 30, with a programme that balances generations, media and locations – from Nick Cave to Claes Oldenberg or Cuban artist Miguel Pollo and subversive British sculptor Olivia Paz. Right from the get-go Cork Street was devoted to a courageous cosmopolitanism, but the difference is that now its scope is truly global, with the fifteen galleries currently in residence offering a span of work that covers every continent, not just the historic art centres of Europe and North America. As Cork Street marks its hundredth year, it has truly moved with the times and shows no sign of stopping.

OSCILLATING WORLDS

SHIRIN NESHAT INTERVIEWED BY FARAH NAYERI

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← Previous page:
Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence*, 1994, Gelatin silver print & ink, 118.4 × 79.1 cm / 46 ⅝ × 31 ⅛ ", © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy the artist and Gladstone
1 Shirin Neshat, *Land of Dreams*, 2019, Film Still, © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy the artist, Gladstone, & Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, Cape Town and London

Shirin Neshat has few vivid memories of her childhood in Iran. Yet one particular afternoon in the city of Qazvin, her birthplace, remains forever etched in her mind.

As she sat sipping tea with her family under the trees in the garden, the call to prayer suddenly echoed across the city. Hearing the Koranic chants ring out from a nearby mosque, young Shirin began weeping uncontrollably. In that singular moment, the two worlds she knew collided – the secular, Westernised reality of her middle-class family, and the deeply religious reality of the people in the surrounding city. It filled her with a deep sense of melancholy.

Neshat has been oscillating between those two worlds ever since: in her life, and in her art. Having moved to the U.S. aged seventeen (only a few years before the Iranian Revolution), she is now a U.S. citizen living and working in New York. Yet she frequently reexamines the contradictions and complexities of being a woman of Iran.

Farah Nayeri: Identity is at the heart of your work. You're an Iranian-born artist living in New York, yet one with a deep connection to your homeland. You're torn between East and West, between your past and your present. It sounds like that same duality existed in your childhood home.

Shirin Neshat: I lived in a house that was like an oasis: very simple, but with a beautiful garden. My father and mother were more European and progressive at home. They kept up a Westernised atmosphere inside the house. Outside, everybody was very religious and conservative and strict. My parents were different people in public. So I was caught in the duality of these two very opposing worlds: looking to the past versus looking forward, Islam versus the West.

Then came the dream of America. My father was educated. He had travelled outside Iran. He had a fascination with the West, and he wanted the same for his children. So my brothers and sisters and I grew up with this vision of America, of Utopia, this vision of perfection: a place where everything was sunny and perfect, the houses, the beautiful cars. We were watching Hollywood movies, and Hollywood embodied America.

The Iran of the 1970's was the breeding ground for the Revolution to come. There was a lot of underground activity among people of my generation, and religious fervour against the government. Yet there was also this fascination and obsession with the West, which was happening in Tehran, but also in my house.

FN: Can you describe what it was like when you arrived in the U.S. in the mid-1970s?

SN: It was a true nightmare. What I saw was nothing like what I had imagined. I was living in an apartment building outside Los Angeles, which was nothing like Hollywood movies. I missed my family. I missed my home. I was like a fish out of water. I was begging my family to send me back to Iran. Then, soon afterwards, the Revolution happened.

In 1990, after eleven years of not seeing my family, I finally went back to Iran with my one-year-old son. I couldn't even recognise my family, or the country.

FN: Why couldn't you recognise your family?

SN: The last time I had been with my mother and sister, they were Westernised women wearing European fashions and hairstyles. Now they were all covered with a veil. In the city, there were anti-Israel and anti-U.S. banners and slogans. The Revolutionary Guards were everywhere. Once, they arrested my sister on the street because she had too much makeup on. It was so extreme, and I was really frightened. But there was something really fascinating about what I was seeing.

I went back to Iran a few times, with my son Cyrus, and started to reconnect with old friends who were very active during the Revolution. I started to buy books, to really learn about what happened while I was gone. I ran into an old friend who had written a philosophy paper on the concept of martyrdom in post-revolutionary Iran – really dissecting what it took for people to stand at that intersection of life and death. The idea of martyrdom was something that the government had encouraged before and during the Revolution, and that had become institutionalised. This subject really stuck with me.

I then saw a book called *Female Warriors of Allah* by Minou Reeves, with a cover showing a woman with a hijab holding arms. I researched the resurrection of female militancy during the Iranian Revolution. When I got back to New York, I felt I needed to do something for myself. I got a little residency and started to develop this idea of making images.

FN: Can you talk about your very first gallery exhibition?

SN: A very small non-profit gallery called Franklin Furnace was looking for proposals for exhibitions. I had never made any art. I wrote a one-page proposal to make an exhibition about women of Iran, the Revolution and militants. I got accepted. That's how I got started.

I photographed my face, my full body, my feet, my hands, and then I wrote on them, playing with inscriptions on the body. I was very inspired by how text is integrated with image in Islamic and Persian art: inscriptions of poetry or religious texts over architecture, in Persian miniatures.

FN: Why were you photographing yourself?

SN: My obsession was with the woman's body, especially the body of the Iranian woman. And I thought, I'm available. I'm the only one I can photograph.

The woman's body represents so many other things. It becomes a sort of contested space for political rhetoric. It's a place of shame and guilt.

It's a place that women are meant to conceal so that men are not provoked sexually. It's such a loaded, problematic subject. It represents desire, repression, disgust, this incredible temptation. The veil is this bounda ry between the inner and the outer world.

My images would not have been born if I had not read the poet Forugh Farrokhzad and her writings about the female body and challenging the traditional system. Her books were banned for a while, because she always talked back to the system. She was famous for having a married lover. She talked openly about her desire for the opposite sex. I started seeing images through her writings.

FN: You got noticed with that first gallery show.

SN: A Bronx Museum curator, Betti-Sue Hertz, saw the show and decided to include me in a group show about artists who were immigrants. That's when I decided to make work dealing with female martyrdom, 'The Women of Allah'.

When the Bronx Museum show opened, it blew up. Everybody noticed my work, and people started calling me. I didn't even have a portfolio. I was included in the Venice Biennial.

FN: Why did people react in that way? Iran in the mid-1990s was shut off from the world, and people in the West imagined Iranian women as enslaved, jailed by the veil.

SN: It was the contradictions in the image: the sensual body of a typical Iranian woman wrapped in the veil, being armed, being violent and being dangerous. People found that crazy, provocative. It didn't fit their description of the submissive, passive, victimised woman of Islam.

I was trying to understand the mindset of a woman who could stand on that threshold of love and hate and cruelty and violence. How could a woman who gives birth, who loves God and has this much sense of sacrifice be willing to commit so much cruelty?

I was never trying to impose my own view about whether this religious ideology is good or bad. I was trying to raise a question but never to provide an answer.

FN: What about people in the West who took your images literally?

SN: A lot of people thought that this represents all Iranians. I kept saying that I was talking about a minority group of women who were voluntarily armed.

What's interesting is that, to this day, these images, which were made in 1994, are very relevant. The whole idea of fanaticism, the idea of suicide bombers, the idea of dying for your faith, ISIS, the Taliban... not only in Islam, but everywhere. The way in which fanaticism has this philosophical, moral, political way of brainwashing people is so powerful.

FN: This issue of CATALOGUE has, at its heart, the theme of courage in the face of adversity. Can you talk about the bravery involved in making art?

SN: When I look at all of the work that I've done, I feel that I don't hold back, that I really don't have a filter or calculation. I don't worry about whether this is going to sell or not. My work is not easy to sell. It takes sometimes forever to sell. But I think that that is something that has saved me.

FN: Can you talk about your most recent work? You have been looking at America – at blue-collar communities, immigrant communities.

SN: Something happened to me about ten years ago, at around the time of Donald Trump's first presidential term. I thought, what am I doing? I keep traveling to Morocco, Turkey, Mexico, Egypt, and I make work about Iran. Meanwhile, hell is breaking loose in the country where I live,

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1 Shirin Neshat, *Zarin Series*, 2005, C-print, 139.7 × 120.7 cm / 55 × 47 ½", © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy the artist and Gladstone
2 Shirin Neshat, *Women Without Men*, 2009, Film Still, © Shirin Neshat, Courtesy the artist and Gladstone

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"When the Bronx Museum show opened, it blew up. Everybody noticed my work, and people started calling me. I didn't even have a portfolio. I was included in the Venice Biennial."

SHIRIN NESHAT

“My work is not easy to sell. It takes sometimes forever to sell. But I think that that is something that has saved me.”

SHIRIN NESHAT

Shirin Neshat, *Women Without Men*, 2009 , © Shirin Neshat, Film Still, Courtesy the artist and Gladstone

and there’s so much to examine and say about being an immigrant.

The ‘Land of Dreams’ came from my trying to share my point of view as an Iranian-American about the U.S. ‘The Fury’ came from my asking myself: can I actually make a work in my own town? Now I am releasing a trilogy of videos.

FN: You recently said that as an artist, by getting close to other people’s pain, you cope with your own. Can you speak about that?

SN: It’s been very impactful for me, the last few years living in Bushwick, Brooklyn, which is almost 90 percent Hispanic – because it’s extremely poor, and I see a lot of struggling people. I’m surrounded by undocumented migrants who are working for pennies.

I like that contact with reality. I don’t want to be one of those artists that lives in a bubble. I don’t want to have an office that’s like a corporation, or be in a studio where I have a manager. I don’t want to be a person who avoids protests or voicing her opinion about political situations because she’s worried about collectors not buying her work. I don’t want to be an activist, but I don’t want to be filtered either.

As an artist, there is this bigger world that you are a part of. Art is the thread connecting the two realms.

FN: You’re also a filmmaker: You won the Silver Lion at the 2009 Venice Film Festival for your movie *Women Without Men*. Can you speak about cinema?

SN: You talked about bravery. I don’t think I’m very brave, but in the case of entering the film world, I was very brave. The minute I felt like I was repeating myself in the art world, and just making one video after another, one photograph after another, I took a six-year hiatus, and turned this complicated book *Women Without Men* into a movie.

It was the most challenging but also the most gratifying experience of my life, and I will never regret it. The film is not perfect, but I’m glad I did it, and it also gave me a sense of confidence and independence from the art world: the sense that I can make a film that actually wins at a major festival.

FN: You describe your work as melancholy, and that is a feeling that also runs through Persian art, music and culture as a whole.

SN: There’s so much to be sad about. We’ve had a very dark history in Iran. Look at how many millions of people are separated, divided, fighting – war, executions... It’s been a terrible modern history.

I haven’t seen or been in my country for years. I will never see my mother again. The melancholy comes from this sense of loss: the disconnect. We keep repressing those emotions, because we have to live in the present, because it’s unbearable emotion and melancholy. Then comes a piece of music, a line of poetry, a movie or an artwork, and all of those emotions resurface. They bring you back to what you haven’t wanted to face.

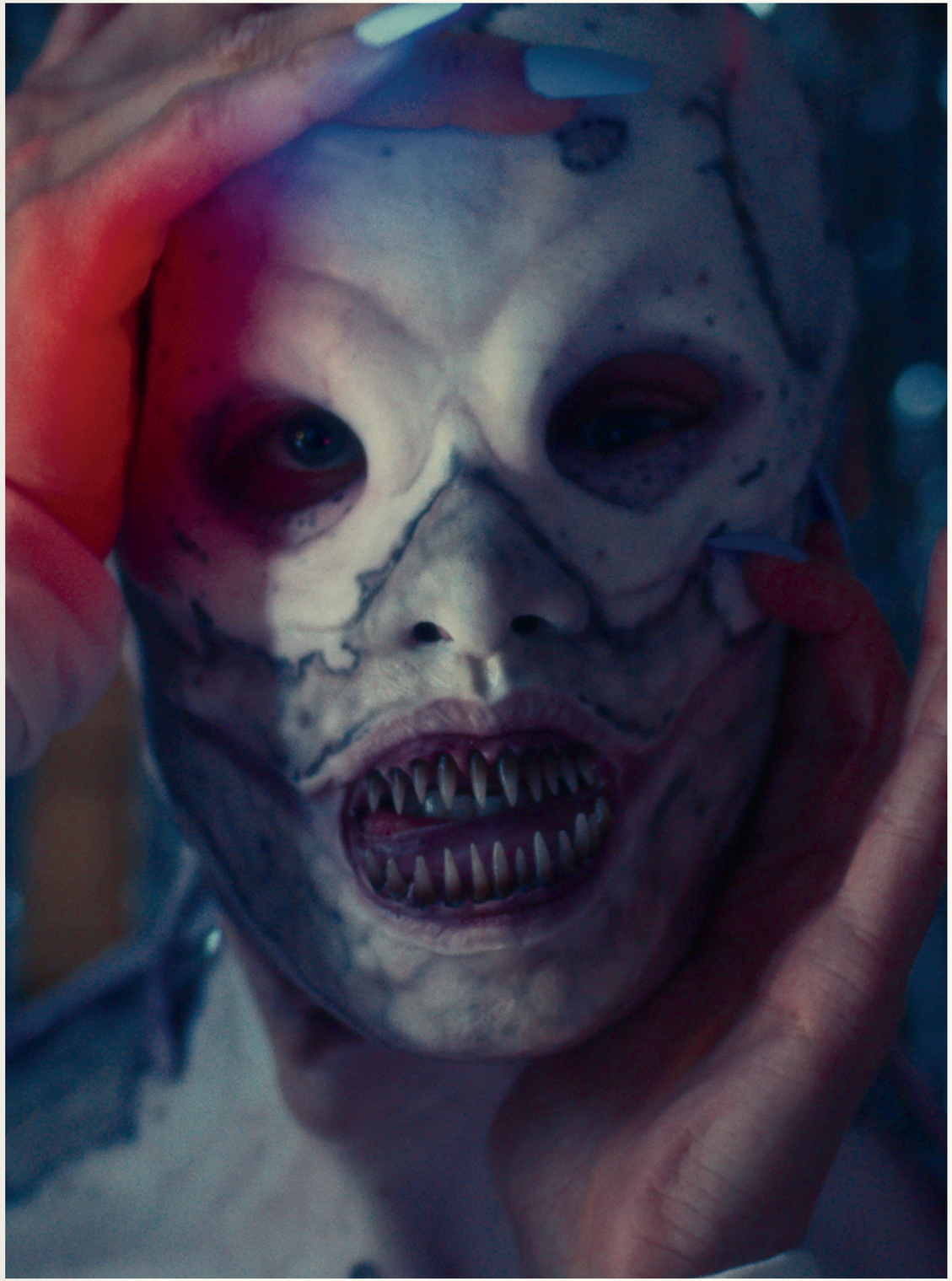
FN: How do you view your career as an artist, looking back on it today?

SN: I’ve been very lucky, because there are people who supported my work in major museums all over the world, collected my videos. As an Iranian woman in a male-dominated Western culture, I think I did pretty well. I have a decent name, and I do sell enough to live and support my team. So I’m happy. As long as I have money to make new work and pay my bills, I have done fine.

JENKIN VAN ZYL

INTRODUCTION BY DU INQUE

IN PICTURES



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“He’s the greatest because there is no ‘off’ switch. This is his world all day in all ways”

DU INQUE

Everybody’s talking about Jenkin van Zyl’s show ‘Lost Property’ at ARoS, Aarhus, Denmark. Because it’s mega. It opened in June, but is hanging around until April 2026, so you’ve still time to book a flight and swear under your breath as you stuff your correctly sized bag into the metal jaws of proof at the airport.

Working with film, performance, sculpture and writing, Jenkin’s art is difficult to wrap in a shiny, silky bow. Which is just as well: I don’t think it’s trying to be. Communities, resistance, belonging and not are some words that’ll pop into your mind as you’re enthralled by his hallucinatory and immersive installations.

If you’re new here, Jenkin has been like this forever, you’re just lucky to be finding out. He’s the greatest because there is no ‘off’ switch. This is his world all day in all ways. Like Yayoi Kusama who has no perforation as to be detached from her art. Or Leigh Bowery. Or Trojan. But not because Jenkin is simply incomparable to anyone.

Jenkin graduated from the RA in 2021 but I’d have thought he educated them and not the other way around. They love him too as he was awarded the RA Gold Medal Prize. He lives in London and is represented by Edel Assanti.

Here are some pictures he sent us. Gorgeous and compelling, aren’t they?

← Previous page:
Jenkin van Zyl, *Lost Property*, 2025, film still, Courtesy of the artist

1 Jenkin van Zyl, installation view, *Sweat Exchange*, 2024, Courtesy of the artist

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← Previous page:
Jenkin van Zyl, *Lost Property*, 2025, making of production, Courtesy of the artist

1 Jenkin van Zyl, installation view, *Surrender*, 2023, Courtesy of the artist

2 Jenkin van Zyl, *Lost Property*, 2025, film still, Courtesy of the artist

3 Jenkin van Zyl, *Vore*, 2022, two-way mirror, windolene, latex, mild steel, LED lights, MDF, wiring, PVC breathing tube, 215 × 201 × 157 cm, Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Theo Christelis

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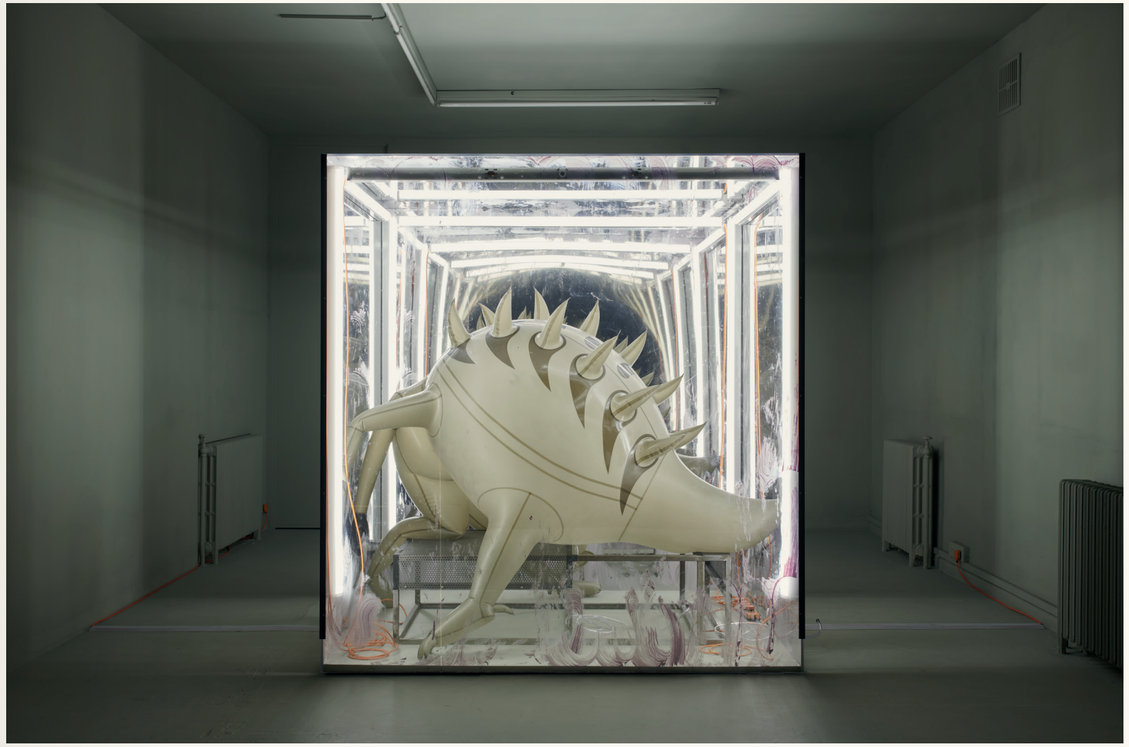

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Jenkin van Zyl, *Lost Property*, 2025, film still, Courtesy of the artist

HOW THE BASS MOVES

PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES
IN CONVERSATION
WITH ANTHEA HAMILTON

Introduction by Phoebe Collings-James

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Anthea Hamilton is a Londoner, and it is from this place that the carriages of western image making collide and are remixed within her work. Ranging widely from a brick reproduction of Gaetano Pesce's vision of a pursed butt, to splayed perspex legs hinged together and topped with rice crackers. Her layers of artistic production handle the often iconoclastic materials in a fantastic and performative way.

We first met in my studio in the summer of 2023, in the shape of a mentorship visit organised by the East London Art Prize. An award I was delighted to be connected to as a lifelong east Londoner and advocate of the ends. Anthea was immediately generous in her conversation with me, reflective on what could be useful to know and aware of how time impacts the politics of our lives, even between the narrowest of inter-generations. And encouraged going big and sometimes rogue in exhibition ideas. As I described wanting to cover the entire floor of Hamburg Kunstverein in a raw clay painting and debated adding ceramic black roses. Too much? No.

Anthea is currently in the echo of reflection, having recently produced an iteration of Shakespeare's *Othello* at DE SINGEL theatre, Antwerp with long-term collaborator Delphine Gaborit as co-director. It is not the first time she has choreographed works: in 2018 she transformed the Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain with a white tiled floor and dancers wearing various squash masks, the costumes created in collaboration with Jonathan Anderson.

We share a weaving interest in performance and sculpture, I have been especially devoted to working in ceramic in the past decade. Alongside producing sound works for installations and being a member of Black Obsidian Sound System. B.O.S.S. is a queer sound system collective made up of artists and music heads from London. My collective work has also drawn me to create Mudbelly Teaches, a free educational space for black people in London taught by black potters and artists.

Our next meeting would be in a jam packed pub full of Guinness and fashion, for a JW Anderson launch. Squeezed in a corner we chatted about things that will likely never make it in print, the kind of mundane morsels of truth that keep me in conviction that to be an artist is to be on a path that defies professionalisation. No matter how elegantly you can play the game.

1 Anthea Hamilton, installation view, 'Mash Up', 2022, MUHKA, Antwerp, Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and kaufmann repetto, Milan/New York, Photo: Kristien Daem

2 Anthea Hamilton, *Rankaku Desk*, 2025, Fondazione Memmo, Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto, Milan/New York, Photo: Daniel Molajoli

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1 Phoebe Collings-James, *The subtle rules the dense*, 2021, Glazed ceramic, 53 × 40 × 12 cm / 20 ¾ × 15 ¾ × 4 ¾ ″
2 Phoebe Collings-James, Installation view, 'In and Out of Place. Land after Information 1992–2024', Kunstverein in Hamburg, DE Commissioned by Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, DE, Courtesy the artist and Kunstverein in Hamburg. Photo: Edward Greiner

"I find myself noticing the formulas and languages and methodologies that a lot of artists seem to create for themselves. I could say some things about what I think it means spiritually and creatively. I also definitely identify with this outsider artist position, what it has signified throughout history, a mystic or a jester..."

PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES

Phoebe Collings-James: What does being an artist mean to you right now and how has that changed from any moments in the past?

Anthea Hamilton: There's a significance of you asking that question, as a fellow artist of a different artistic generation. I realise that I've been working professionally for a long, long time now. Practically in the work, I'm going back into early signs and symbols that I have made, working with these early motifs to see if they still make sense or if they're just me being nostalgic either for the type of exhibition making I was doing then or having a sense of achieving something in terms of complexity of an artistic practice. Looking back it all feels really fragile.

PCJ: Well, I just turned 38, that feels like a significant twenty years of trying and imagining what being an artist could be. I find myself noticing the formulas and languages and methodologies that a lot of artists seem to create for themselves. I could say some things about what I think it means spiritually and creatively. I also definitely identify with this outsider artist position, what it has signified throughout history, a mystic or a jester... I'm curious how this question changes over decades. What are the ambitions once certain things have been experienced? Do you still care? And what do you care about?

AH: Yes, What do you care about? I think that's it. I wrote myself a hit list just after graduating from my MA in 2005 of things that I wanted to do, and I think I've pretty much achieved all of them and the ones that I haven't were often that I recognised were false prophets of goals and more representative of what the markers of success are. I agree about the outsider. At the time in which I was coming into being as a professional artist, it was a role that held quite a different position in the cultural fabric as such, it was following the YBA's in a hyper-optimistic era of New Labour and all the educational funding opportunities that came along with that. I came into my adulthood really thinking anything was possible.

PCJ: Do you have any thoughts on the explicit representations of identity in art right now, especially post the realities of New Labour coming to light, with the crest of the wave having crashed and burned?

AH: I find myself super joyous about there being many more voices and not feeling like I'm the only black person in the room, which happened so often for so long. It's actually different to fifteen years ago, you look back to commercial gallery rosters, so many of the biggest galleries

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with only white artists or only very Western focused artistic practices, this has changed. I'm between feeling very cynical about it being a trend, but very much hoping that it's not.

But in terms of making and exhibitions and what people are doing, I see that there's a sense of a lack of concreteness in makers' works. I feel that in your work a lot, or in how you talk about the use of materials, which is a true lesson for me, in terms of how art making can exist or have a kind of strength in not being like a skyscraper or goals towards being monolithic, of work not being made of materials which are deeply inflexible.

To think that there are longer histories of these materials that somehow cycle back through modernity and other levels of cognition into these other, other spaces, which gives them strength, which I find full of brilliance. I see it as functioning from elsewhere – not 'other'. I'm not native to that language. My work tends towards being very concrete, or at least pretending to be so. I do come from a different social material kind of space, I find.

PCJ: How would you describe that space, that social material space?

AH: It deals more with the certainty of the image which I don't think exists anymore. What images mean is something really different, definitely compared to a time pre-Instagram. I think the Facebook image, if we're going to talk about it in that way, still suggested something concrete as its premise as a platform was about friendships not networks. The idea of the fluidity of the context of the image has shifted, definitely from the 60's up until the 2000's, I felt it was a lot like iconicity.

But also a very Western sense of image making: in a visit to New York last year the city appeared like an almost ruins. Looking down from the top of the Rockefeller Center was like a mirage of an ancient Assyrian city, I guess that's what it was trying to harness the power of in the first instance of it being built – all the Art Deco flourishes. Wow, this 20th century architecture seemed so old fashioned, it's greatly antiquated. I was watching *Ghostbusters* (1984) on TV the other day (this is something to say in itself) and the identity of New York as a vibrant, symbiotic geopolitical site of cultural production, ideologies, melting pot, the American Dream seemed distinctly to belong to the past. Of course, there's still lots of incredible ideas happening within that, but it's not the space of innovation it used to be, it now stands as a keeper of wealth. I think formulation of innovation is happening elsewhere and there aren't images of those terrains, i.e. Palo Alto. In a way, I think the role of the image for me is something somehow to do with that. Maybe it's like a hard plastic image.

PCJ: That's so interesting. It reminds me of a distinct moment, maybe 10 or so years ago, when I realised that I didn't understand how to read fashion magazines anymore. Publications like *The Face* or *i-D* or *Vogue*, the whole breadth of it. I don't often know what I'm looking at anymore.

1 Anthea Hamilton, *Full Stone Wavy Boot*, 2019, Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, Photo: Ben Westoby
2 Anthea Hamilton, 'Mash Up', 2022. MUHKA, Antwerp, Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and kaufmann repetto gallery, Milan/New York, Photo: Kristien Daem

Whereas I remember there was a time where I would be like, 'oh my God, this is it, this is it!' And had a concrete idea of what it was. And I don't think I had really thought about the materials that I use or the way I think about some of the materials that I use in that way of not being concrete in relation to the kind of the material language that you're talking about.

AH: You talked about clay as a material that leads you. I was thinking about how I really don't think in that way. I think I saw what to do with the sense of control. Not necessarily about a mastery of something, but the idea of seeing where a three dimensional material may lead you. I think that's just not a way in which my brain, which has been organised by my life experiences, would allow me to do. I come from something much more two dimensional. So I wondered if you felt like that was in line with what your peers, this idea of allowing things to be true?

PCJ: With my close artist friends that has been part of our conversation. This sense that things are less tangible and more reciprocal, I think it is part of incorporating viscerally, questions around decolonising and anti-assimilationist practices and these kinds of politics, that have led to a material sensibility around what that kind of tension and reciprocity can look like.

I think about Jamila's [SERAFINE1369] performance work and our conversations about the audience members having their own energetic charge, or contribution when they enter the space, they are not neutral. They're there and then you're there and that is a physical material that's also part of the work. I think about performance a lot because there was a time in 2018 to 2020 where we made a touring live work called 'Sounds 4 Survival', which involved a choreographed dance score and also music that we created, and performed live. It was really impactful to have happened as I was getting deeper into working with ceramics, to have my own body implicated – which I had never done before and also to think about what it is to be in relation sensorially, atomically and continue that thought into my approach to objects, sound and exhibition making.

AH: I feel a bit like I've moved to a different country and have a basic understanding of the language, but I'm not fluent. It's an interesting moment in that way. I hear you speaking and you're fluent and articulate. I'm always really happy to meet another artist who's from London. You know, I think there's not many of us who actually grew up here. And I think it does something very particular to your sensibility.

That idea of seeing people as a non-neutral material as understanding yourself as part of something, but also like an author of something, I think a lot of these things are particular to artists who have grown up in the city – you don't even need to discuss it. It's already assumed as a basis. When I speak to arts professionals who often aren't from the city and they've come here to study then it seems like what you're saying is really amazing, there's an inverted exoticisation. It's like, 'wow, that's incredible'. There's this kind of superpower that comes from being a London artist.

PCJ: I'm wondering what, especially in light of this, about the certainty of the image you spoke about.

AH: It could also be the found image or the existing image. I'm interested in images that can be like an essay to me. Ones I can pull apart and dig into and find ways to reconfigure how one

2

might look at them. The historical occurrence of the image was somehow special with intrinsic value, now it's like a slurry. Making art doesn't fit into this space. When talking about looking at the realm of image making – outside of artistic practice – sometimes I get it how they function in a technological sense. When I see things now which touch me it's because the image offers up facilities for styles of looking rather than the actual references visually present. I don't consider images to be visual.

When I check back on something I thought was amazing I'm like, 'does it still hold up say three months later?' Or was it just a temporary sensation (hype), is it enduring in the way that other images used to have more kind of durability or not? And if they do maintain themselves, what has constituted that?

PCJ: There are so many things I am thinking at once, I want to ask you about Jamaica. I want to ask you about choreography. I want to ask you about Surrealism. Where to go next?

AH: Well, I think that's I think that's emblematic. I used to almost have compartmentalised ways of thinking about those things. It's like, 'let's think about Surrealism, let's think about choreography'. But now they've become very interchangeable within me. I notice it in the titling of works – before I would name things according to the motif that they were, but then over time, suddenly they started to have almost have all the same title, you know, it was like because it would be a kimono boot wavy squash, A body of work compressing into one thing, an inversion of the immersiveness of installations. And with that metamorphic shift the trails of research that went into all these very specific areas becomes a smoothie of things.

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PCJ: I wonder if that's partly the accumulative nature of time and things in relation to one another, making more sense over time.

AH: I think also maybe it's quite practical because I don't keep things from previous shows or bodies of work around me on a day to day because well, you know, there's not the space. It was almost like an epistolary kind of practice where you would have to respond through the success of writing somebody a proposal, in a way the dialogue was the most important part of it.

After having made 25+ years worth of work, you look back on it and it's like, 'oh, it was all just kind of me, actually.' It was just this weird cosplay self-portraits, using yourself as a tool as a way to navigate life and then forgetting all the detail of time in between the documented punctuation points of shows.

PCJ: Do you have any feelings about A.I.? I'm interested in it as a proposed new technological epoch. Maybe I'm also romanticising my curiosity for it because I'm working with clay which was potentially one of the other significant moments of this kind, millennia ago. The language models of A.I., which have the ability to scour through data and then differentiate at a broad and fast pace.

People I find now, they don't talk publicly about the contradictions in what they believe and what they actually think or what they're actually doing. This becomes viscerally animated when it comes to A.I. as you may push back on it as an accelerationist tool against the earth's resources and social fabric, while also using it in private to solve love life dilemmas or latently on Google searches. It is preventing rigorous political conversations about it based on the reality of its existence. It also makes me wonder how it might infiltrate an artistic imagination because it is a new material. It is a significantly shifting realm and landscape.

AH: Love the notion of clay as OG A.I. I'm aware that in terms of my artistic output, there's already a new generation of artists that have already processed everything that I have done, which is as it should be. So in that way, I have to already recognise and metabolise myself as content.

I've always really valued that I'm so slow, you know, like, I'm really, really, really slow. And I'm at my best when I'm going say 40 bpm. I think the speed that things run at now are almost like when you can't tell if something's living or dead because it's almost in hibernation mode and it's just not beating enough that you

2

think this thing might not be functioning. There's an inorganicness to 2025. I'm wondering if I can function within that with a reptilian tortoise kind of mode because there's no way I can keep up.

PCJ: You talking about pace made me think about DJ'ing, the fact that when you're beat matching, you can mix a track with another that's exactly half the speed and it flows.

AH: It's also a way of reacting to aggressiveness or institutional aggressiveness. Often the way that those things have a hold over us is through their scale. And so in thinking in terms of matching energies in a mathematical way, if you are small, you can go slow and the institution has to shift its gears towards you. There's always ways to match something. Does that make sense? Can I nerd out? Think about the formula *speed × time = distance (d=st)*, you can resize the values to produce equal output.

This is a jump, but I was thinking about when we had met previously, you were talking about your show and the 'Black Roses' after the Barrington Levy song. I was listening to it the other day as a way to reconnect our first conversation and loving the idea of these riddims that exist within Jamaican music. You can recognise so many songs that share these common roots or reactivation by different people and I think I've always connected with that idea of co-authorship as a way to counter the erasure that happens when originality is seen as the greatest virtue. To go back through generations, those are the fundamentals that we can reconnect with. I know the '*revolution riddim*' of 'Black Roses' from other songs and am happy to bring Levy's version into my world. There's a legitimate, open bond because the bass moves you in a similar way. The bass is like the slowest, deepest part of a tune, right? That's the register you can hear from the farthest away. Like if your neighbours are having a house party, you can often recognise whatever it is through that. It's never me having the house party. I want to live in that space.

PCJ: The bass is also the part that you can feel deepest in your body, it can make your insides tremble and your chest reverberate. I definitely have hearing loss from wanting to be close to the speakers to feel that, over many decades. I love 'Black Roses' too as an instructional poem, the repetition of words bringing to life their meaning. In this case, the lyrics guide on how to live, by tending your garden, doing the best you can do. It's speaking about slowness again and a kind of intimate tranquility that is possible with yourself.

Can you talk more about how design and architecture find their way into your work and your ideas. You have also been working on an adaptation of *Othello*.

AH: Looking at these different spaces allows me to find other ways to make sense of myself. I work in design that is never actually functional. So they're all about the idea of something. If I work on choreography, it's because I want to speak to someone else who understands bodies better than I can. It's all of us, those kind of educated ways of educating. I think it's really important.

1 Phoebe Collings-James, Installation view, 'bun babylon; a heretics anthology', Arcadia Missa, London, Courtesy the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Josef Konczak
2 Phoebe Collings-James, *The Preacher*, 2023, Stoneware glazed ceramic, nylon cord, 36 × 15 cm / 14 ⅛ × 5 ⅞", Arcadia Missa

CENSORED

~~ART~~

TODAY

THE SUPPRESSION OF LGBTQ+ ARTISTS IN ‘ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACIES’

“Of great concern is the masking of oppression through conceits such as ‘gender ideology’, devices used by nationalist administrations to convince a populace that radical art is a destabilising influence – and, at times, the new common enemy.”

GARETH HARRIS

As a study of censorship, my publication *Censored Art Today* captures how and why freedom of expression is under threat in a “new age of suppression”. The perfect storm of a pandemic, the advancement of anti-intellectual populist governments worldwide and uprisings against discrimination and inequality such as Black Lives Matter brought about a reset of perspectives and principles, I write. Chapters unpick topics such as political censorship in China, Cuba and the Middle East along with the purging of art works on social media platforms.

Another key focus of the book is the suppression of LGBTQ+ artists in ‘illiberal democracies’ such as Brazil where “democracy is being tested and minority groups are forced to take cover”. This area seemed particularly urgent and fraught at the time of writing (in 2021–2022) but is even more concerning in the Trumpian era 2.0.

In July, the artist Amy Sherald cancelled her exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC after leaders at the museum suggested removing a painting of a non-binary transgender person posing as the Statue of Liberty. In an opinion piece published by *MSNBC* (24 August 2023) Sherald explained why this moment is so dangerous, saying: “When governments police museums, they are not simply policing exhibitions. They are policing imagination itself.”

Meanwhile in its 2023 report *The State of Artistic Freedom*, the human rights organisation Freemuse says that “conservative and religious elements across the world wield their power to shut down creative expressions of women, the LGBTQ+ community and minorities”. Tracking and highlighting when artists’ voices are erased is now more vital than ever.

Chapter 2: The Suppression of LGBTQ+ Artists in ‘Illiberal Democracies’, an extract from *Censored Art Today* (2022)

Shoring up authoritarian rule by denigrating queer and trans individuals and groups has become a trademark of ‘illiberal democracies’; in the past two decades, there has been a perfect storm of mitigating factors that have sparked the growth of these regimes described as democracies ‘with clear despotic potential’.[1] The late US diplomat Richard Holbrooke defined these establishments as ‘democratically elected regimes . . . routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedoms’.[2] This has consequences for artists trying to navigate their way through systems that may be endemic with corruption and a basic disregard for civil liberties. This chapter examines how such governments have, over the past two decades, ramped up efforts to quash LGBTQ+ voices via numerous pathways including draconian legislation. The way in which queer artists, and art with a queer orientation, have increasingly become scapegoats against the backdrop of far-right ideology is examined, along with the consequences of politicians determined to enforce their own value systems in the age of COVID-19. Under the veil of family values – bolstering a hetero-normative vision of society – governments have sought to eradicate artistic and aesthetic expression that veers from this norm. As authoritarian, populist regimes take root worldwide, queer communities and artists are on their guard. Insidious censorship under the cloak of religious conservatism is encroaching across countries such as Brazil, Turkey and Poland, where democracy is being tested and minority groups are forced to take cover.

The Brazilian curator Gaudêncio Fidelis visibly winces recalling the day in autumn 2017 when Banco Santander issued a statement denouncing Brazil’s biggest ever exhibition of queer art. The Spain-based banking giant had sponsored the show ‘Queermuseu: Cartografias da Diferença na Arte Brasileira’ [‘Queermuseum: Cartographies of Difference in Brazilian Art’], which opened at Santander Cultural Institute in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, in August 2017. The bank’s *volte-face* followed the closure of the exhibition a month ahead of schedule after protestors from the Free Brazil Movement (Movimento Brasil Livre) – a right-wing pressure group – accused the exhibition, and by extension Fidelis, of promoting blasphemy, paedophilia and bestiality. The bank said in a statement that it sincerely apologised to anyone who felt offended by the exhibition content: ‘We have heard the demonstrations and we understand that some of the works of the ‘Queermuseum’ exhibition disrespect symbols, beliefs and people, which is not in line with our world view. When art is not capable of generating inclusion and positive reflection, it loses its greater purpose, which is to elevate the human condition.’[3] Fidelis was taken aback by the cancellation but was just as startled that sponsors could be swayed by politicking. ‘The Santander Cultural does not support one type of art, but art in its plurality, grounded in the profound respect we have for each individual’, added the Santander statement.[4] In other words: art in all its forms is a boon but not all works can be stomached. [...]

As nationalism increasingly takes root across continents, LGBTQ+ artists will continue to bear the brunt of this ongoing backlash and be the sustained target of religious and conservative campaign groups. ‘Suppression of LGBTQ+ expression has particularly been pushed at a governmental level with the growth of nationalism, including religious nationalism and far-right groups, as seen in Brazil, Russia, India and Hungary’, says the Copenhagen-based human rights organisation Freemuse;[5] in their statistics, LGBTQ+ figures stand out sharply amongst the data. The organisation’s research throws up some sobering details: out of 133 artists detained in 2020 across 26 countries including Cuba and Russia, LGBTQ+ orientation was the rationale for detaining practitioners in 10 per cent of cases.[6] Russia has a concerning track record; artists are regularly fined or detained under the notorious ‘gay propaganda’ law passed in 2013 (Yulia Tsvetkova, an LGBTQ+ artist and activist, is facing six years in prison for posting feminist drawings online). Freemuse also draws parallels in its 2020 report *Painting the Rainbow* between the conservative regimes of Brazil and Turkey, which are ostensibly fixed on stifling LGBTQ+ activity.[6] The Brazilian artist Victor Leguy’s take on the emergence of authoritarianism across Brazil and Turkey is illuminating. Periods of crisis are ideal times for authoritarian coups and launching political candidates, he opines. For him, the COVID-19 pandemic offered the perfect excuse for the establishment of illegitimate flows of capital, influence, power, information.[8] Censorship has embedded itself within both regimes, he stressed. ‘It is a process that now finds its best moment to settle down, [establishing] a critical historical moment in its 2.0 or 3.0 version.’

Self-censorship as survival

Artists and curators across both Brazil and Turkey have devised different mechanisms for surviving within this 2.0 version of censorship. The persecution of LGBTQ+ communities is taking place against a backdrop in Turkey that has, like Cuba and China, mutated in the wake of the pandemic. The Egyptian civil society organisation Maat warned UNESCO in July 2020 that ‘in Turkey, the authorities are still continuing their systematic and arbitrary campaign against the Turkish people, including the repression of fundamental freedoms and rights under the umbrella of the anti-terrorism law that was passed in 2018 after the continuation of the state of emergency in the country for two years in the wake of the July 2016 attempted coup’.[9] Crucially, self-censorship prevails again. ‘Self-censorship for some artists is a means of preservation in this game, even if indirectly’, Leguy asserts. Antonio Obá fled Brazil and moved abroad, others stayed but faced death threats and intimidation. In Turkey, artists have steered clear of criticising President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the art scene continues to buckle under a prolonged crackdown on free speech, especially after the failed coup attempt in 2016. But not everyone is afraid to vocalise their concerns. Ömer Koç, a director of the Vehbi Koç Foundation responsible for the Arter contemporary art museum in Istanbul, insists that ‘uncensored art is indispensable to real democracies’.[10] At the launch of Arter in 2019, it was notable that Turkish artists seemed tired of discussing politics but many acknowledged that they ‘autocorrect’ their works, both consciously and at times unconsciously. [...]

Conserving conservatism

Protecting religion is just one of various levers used by the governments of Brazil, Turkey and also Poland to clamp down on LGBTQ+ communities. In a growing trend, the human rights organisation Freemuse found that religious authorities are holding sway even in countries where homosexuality is legal. As seen above, the Evangelical Christians of the Free Brazil Movement propped up [former] President Bolsonaro, while Turkey’s President Erdoğan adopted a familiar strategy when the students at Boğaziçi dissented, accusing the protesters of being disrespectful to Islam, a smear tactic that has proved popular with AKP’s (Erdoğan’s party) conservative base in the past, says the journalist Clare Busch. ‘But this time’, Busch adds, ‘the AKP’s criticisms failed to convince religious students to turn on their fellow protestors.’[11] The [former] right-wing government in Poland (Law and Justice, PiS) also throws the statute book at individuals who dare to subvert religious icons. In May 2019, the LGBTQ+ campaigner Elżbieta Podleśna placed images of the Virgin Mary – the Black Madonna ‘Our Lady of Czestochowa’ icon – adorned with a rainbow halo around the city of Płock in central Poland. Podleśna and two other activists put up the posters after seeing a display in St Dominic’s Church which described ‘LGBT’ and ‘gender’ (the Polish term for gender ideology) as sins. Under Article 196 of Poland’s criminal code, a person who ‘offends the religious feelings of others by publicly insulting a religious object or place of worship’ may face up to two years in prison. In June 2020, the three were officially charged before the Regional Court in Płock under the aforementioned law for publicly insulting an object of religious worship. The artist was detained, prompting Joachim Brudziński, a member of the ruling Law and Justice Party, to tweet: ‘No fantasy about freedom and tolerance gives anyone the right to offend the feelings of believers.’[12] But, as with other quasi-authoritarian administrations, in Poland censorship is taking on strange and unfamiliar new forms. ‘Perpetuating the notion that gender equality and LGBT rights threaten Polish society doesn’t protect anyone – it only feeds dangerous intolerance, homophobia and misogyny’, says Hillary Margolis, a researcher at Human Rights Watch.[13] [...]

Censorship is clearly on the rise under the value systems implemented by governments in recent years in Brazil, Turkey and Poland; artists are suffering under regimes that subjugate populations through ideological channels based on foundations such as religious conservatism. In latter years, this has been conflated with the clampdowns in such countries sparked by the coronavirus pandemic. Of great concern is the masking of oppression through conceits such as ‘gender ideology’, devices used by nationalist administrations to convince a populace that radical art is a destabilising influence – and, at times, the new common enemy. Illiberal democracies depend on a perfect storm to succeed. The rise of fundamentalist policies championed by right-wing governments has coincided with a breakdown in societies riven by COVID-19. The pandemic has become a useful prop for populist governments, with LGBTQ+ artists a convenient target in the ensuing turmoil, resulting in an upsurge in censorship in the illiberal democracies of Brazil, Turkey and Poland.

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← Previous page: Rainbow Black Madonna of Częstochowa by Elżbieta Podleśna

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30 CORK ST

2ND FLOOR: GUGGENHEIM JEUNE

Peggy Guggenheim's first gallery opened at the address in January 1938 and was active until June 1939

Over eighteen months Guggenheim Jeune became a lodestar for the avant-garde movements of the time, championing local and international artists, abstraction and Surrealism.

Marcel Duchamp was artistic adviser, and close too were Samuel Beckett, the subject of a liaison, and Mary Reynolds. The distinction between Guggenheim's business and private lives was famously indistinct.

This and more informs 'Peggy Guggenheim in London: The Making of a Collector', the first large-scale museum exhibition celebrating her years in the U.K., a crucial period that contributed to defining Guggenheim as a patron and enthusiast.

Opening April 2026 at Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, the exhibition will travel to the Royal Academy of Arts, mere steps away from Cork Street, in autumn.

During its short, incandescent spell, Guggenheim Jeune hosted over twenty exhibitions, including Vasily Kandinsky's first solo show in London; a monographic exhibition of Jean Cocteau; the first group exhibition dedicated to collage in the United Kingdom; and a controversial contemporary sculpture exhibition.

Bringing together key exhibited works, 'Peggy Guggenheim in London: The Making of a Collector' features archival material bearing testimony to this period of intense experimentation and cultural vibrancy in the lead up to World War II.

Plus works from the period by artists including Eileen Agar, Salvador Dalí, Barbara Hepworth, Kandinsky, Rita Kernn-Larsen, Piet Mondrian, Henry Moore, Cedric Morris, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and more.

Peggy Guggenheim described the taking of the photograph seen here in her memoirs:

"One day a young woman came into the gallery [Guggenheim Jeune]. She looked very masculine and said she had been sent by Marcel Duchamp, so we treated her well… I thought it would be amusing to give her a chance to show her slides in my gallery. I combined this with a farewell party [for the closing of the gallery, June 22, 1939]… After that Miss Freund photographed Mr. Read and me in my little flat… Behind us was a painting by Tanguy. We had to choose whether to cut this or ourselves in half. We decided to favour ourselves."

The painting is The Sun in Its Jewel Case (1937), which Guggenheim purchased from her July 1938 exhibition of paintings by Yves Tanguy.

Gisèle Freund, *Herbert Read and Peggy Guggenheim*, 1939, Colour photograph, 46 × 35 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection Archives, Venice. Purchase courtesy Ikona Gallery, Venice, 1988

Vasily Kandinsky, *Dominant Curve*, 1936, Oil on canvas,
129.2 × 194.3 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

TARINI MALIK LOUISA BUCK SHIRIN NESHAT
FARAH NAYERI JENKIN VAN ZYL PHOEBE COLLINGS-JAMES
ANTHEA HAMILTON GARETH HARRIS GUGGENHEIM JEUNE