

## NEWS

## Frieze Week

## Works about Gaza get prime spot at entrance to newly designed fair

Bani Abidi is showing subtle pieces inspired by the fallout from the Israel-Hamas war at the Experimenter stand. Her series depicting public figures speaking out has been acquired by Tate. By Kabir Jhala



The work of Berlin-based Bani Abidi, whose photographic series addresses the "criminalising of anti-genocide voices" in Germany, is on the stand of India-based gallery Experimenter

Visitors to the newly redesigned Frieze London, opening one year after the Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza, are immediately confronted with the crisis. One of the galleries closest to the entrance is Experimenter from India, which has brought a solo presentation by the Pakistan-born, Berlin-based artist Bani Abidi that sees the artist address "the police brutality, censorship and criminalising of anti-genocide voices" in Germany over the past ten months stemming from the Israel-Hamas war.

In the series *Fragments from a Nightmare* (2024), Abidi photographs

herself contorted in a variety of Bauhaus chairs, "many designed by affiliates of the Nazi party", says Prateek Raja, the gallery's co-founder. One such work includes a carefully placed watermelon – a popular symbol of Palestinian resistance.

#### Constructive dialogue

Elsewhere on the stand Abidi depicts a variety of public figures voicing pro-Palestinian sentiments, such as the film director Jonathan Glazer, who addressed "the ongoing attack in Gaza" when he collected his Academy Award for his film *The Zone of Interest* earlier this year. Abidi's series was acquired yesterday by the Tate Frieze fund. "We feel it's always

important for one to be able to have constructive dialogue and open up possibilities of speaking truth to power," Raja says of the presentation.

Experimenter worked closely with Frieze London's artistic director, Eva Langret, to bring the work to the fair, Raja says. The fair provided "guidance" as to how to discuss and show these works, due to the sensitive nature of their content. Langret was unavailable to elaborate on this process or to reveal if other galleries were advised on how to exhibit politically sensitive work. A Frieze spokesperson says: "Frieze is committed to supporting artists and galleries, acknowledging the need to engage with challenging subjects, even during

times of heightened sensitivity."

Another instance at the fair of work dealing with Palestine can be found at Athr Gallery, from Jeddah, which is showing a monochrome painting, on sale for £92,000, by the Ramallah-born artist Ayman Yossri Daydban (he gained Saudi nationality a few years ago). The abstract work of black lines on a white background alludes to contested borders and national identities, according to the gallery.

The number of works at the fair related to the Israel-Hamas war is still small, and appears to be limited to galleries from the Global South, which is unsurprising considering the divisiveness of the topic within the Western art world.

## Acquisition funds get first pick of works at fair

THE FRIEZE TATE FUND GIVES £150,000 TO A PANEL OF TATE AND INTERNATIONAL CURATORS who are given early access to Frieze and Frieze Masters to select works for Tate's collection. It has been supported for the ninth year by the sports and entertainment company Endeavor, the majority owners of Frieze. This year the Tate team were joined by Nicole Yip, the director of Spike Island gallery, Bristol, and Raphael Fonseca, the curator of Modern and contemporary Latin American art at the Denver Art Museum. Seven works by four artists were purchased, with the aim of choosing works that spoke for "under-represented histories".

From Frieze London the group chose a piece made from natural pigment on stringy bark by Naminapu Maymuru-White (from Sullivan+Strumpf/Breguet), her first work to enter an institution outside her native Australia. They also bought two paintings by the young London-based Mohammed Z Rahman (Phyllida Reid) who is also entering Tate's collection for the first time, as well as a trio of works on paper by Bani Abidi (Experimenter, see story left), made last year in response to the conflict in Gaza. At Frieze Masters the panel made one purchase, a painting by the Czech Surrealist Eva Švankmajerová from The Gallery of Everything.

Now in its second year, the Arts Council Collection's £40,000 acquisitions fund at Frieze is dedicated to supporting early- to mid-career and overlooked UK-based artists. Entering the collection from this year's Frieze are works by Nour Jaouda (Union Pacific Gallery), Nicole Wermers (Herald St) and Shaquille Whyte (Pippy Houldsworth).

Nour Jaouda is also one of two artists purchased from Frieze London by the Contemporary Art Society for the Hepworth Wakefield in Yorkshire, the other being Haegue Yang (Kukje Gallery). **Louisa Buck**

## Peter Schlesinger brought out of the shadows at PAD



The Paris-based Laffanour Galerie Downtown won the fair's prize for best stand (above). Peter Schlesinger's *Untitled* (2021, inset) won PAD London's Contemporary Design Prize

THE ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF PETER SCHLESINGER—perhaps best known as the muse and former romantic partner of David Hockney—are getting a rare moment in the sun at this year's PAD London art and design fair, where his *Untitled* (2021) has been awarded the fair's Contemporary Design Prize.

The New York-based photographer, painter and sculptor's work is the focal point of a presentation by London's Tristan Hoare gallery, which is debuting at this year's fair. On view are candid pictures he took of figures in his artistic circle in London and Paris during the 1960s and 70s, including the French singer Amanda Lear, the photographer Norman Parkinson and Hockney. "I like the informality, the idea that he seems to be having a good time," Hoare says of Schlesinger.

Schlesinger began making ceramics after returning to the US, creating large-scale works that recall antiquity. The prize-winning piece, which has sold for £35,000, is a sandy-textured pot

with blue and gold patterning—and eye motifs towards the lip.

Hoare explains that despite his prolific and eclectic output, Schlesinger has stayed out of the spotlight for more than three decades, and remains under-recognised outside of the US. "We did an exhibition of his drawings with a few of his pots in the gallery in May, and he said that was the first exhibition he'd had since, I think, 1991 or 1992," the gallerist says.

Schlesinger appears in many of Hockney's works, including *Portrait of an Artist (Pool With Two Figures)* (1972), which became the British artist's most expensive painting when it sold for \$90m at Christie's in 2018. The PAD display, however, is a chance to move Schlesinger further away from his reputation as Hockney's ex-boyfriend, Hoare says. "I'm trying to approach it on the basis of, yes, that's part of his past, but really I want to focus on him."

**Alexander Morrison**

• PAD London is at Berkeley Square, Mayfair, until 13 October

#### PAINTINGS DONE IN PSYCHIATRIC FACILITY BY BORIS JOHNSON'S MOTHER TO GO ON SHOW

More than 20 paintings by Charlotte Johnson Wahl—the late mother of the former UK prime minister, Boris Johnson—are due to go on show later this year at Bethlem Museum of the Mind in Beckenham, Kent. The exhibition *What It Felt Like: the Maudsley Hospital Paintings of Charlotte Johnson Wahl* (11 December–29 March 2025) will feature works made during the artist's stay at the Maudsley Hospital in 1974, depicting life at the psychiatric facility.

Colin Gale, the director of the Bethlem Museum, says that many of the paintings have not been seen in public. "At once confrontational in their subject matter and gentle, even humorous, in their rendering, they are testament to the artist's observational skills and emotional range," he says.

**Gareth Harris**