

LONDON CRAFT WEEK & FRIEZE WEEK 2020

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Reinventing the art fair, by embracing the domestic space

This week sees the opening of London Craft Week (30th September -10th October), while next week, a new kind of Frieze Week launches (5th-12th October). While some events have been forced online (the Frieze viewing room runs 9th-16th October) and joyous opening parties in galleries across the capital have been replaced by more focused and sober timed visits, other elements have remained in place. Frieze Sculpture is on view in Regent's Park (5th-18th October) and 1-54, the Contemporary African Art Fair, is taking place in the elegant rooms of Somerset House (8th-10th October), albeit on a reduced scale, alongside an online iteration through Christie's auction house. Nevertheless, the temporary collapse of the large-scale tented art fair and event-filled peripatetic art week has produced some unexpected and welcome innovations.

Objects and artworks require encounters in person. Although the mind can be impressed by online imagery, the heart only begins

to race in the physical presence of art, craft and design. Then the true conversation begins. While we might always have understood this in theory, lockdown has given us more time to become intimate with the objects and artworks in our own homes, and to take sustenance from that daily encounter.

Although, for years, the white cube gallery has been the default display case for prestigious art, increasingly we have become aware of how much some objects, furniture, paintings and sculpture benefit from a dialogue with domestic architecture. This autumn, a number of galleries, whether dealers in craft, design or fine art, have taken the opportunity to show their latest artworks in a London townhouse, rather than an empty art space, or online. There, the currents of communication between objects, architecture and furniture, for smaller groups of visitors, can be quietly intensified.

In February, Modernity welcomed the first visitors to its new home in a grand and romantically distressed 18th century Cavendish Square mansion. Next Monday (5th-28th October), the gallery opens a collaboration with London dealer Adrian Sassoon. The expansive space extends over five storeys, so visitors will be able to admire, in different rooms, new works by Sassoon's artists (many created during lockdown), alongside Modernity's 20th century masterpieces of Nordic design.

There is a chance to marvel at the graphic qualities of the blown and wheel-cut glass vessels from Australian maker Tim Edwards, presented by Sassoon, and Japanese artist Hitomi Hosono's intricate shallow porcelain vessel, 'Pine Tree Pool' (2019). Monumental hand-painted vases by British ceramicist Felicity Aylieff are also shown, as well as a brand new large bowl, glistening with crystal-line glaze, by acclaimed British ceramicist Kate Malone, entitled 'Atomic Snow Bowl' (2020).

Meanwhile, Modernity will show, among other pieces, an iconic 'Chieftain Chair' (designed in 1949), by the late Danish architect Finn Juhl; and a pierced brass 'K2-33 model Ceiling Light' designed by Paavo Tynell for Taito Oy (designed in the 1950s). Although originally created to hang in the interior of a Finnish church, its intricate botanical details make it equally suited to a domestic space.

Over in Fitzroy Square, in an elegant townhouse space, print dealer Lyndsey Ingram and contemporary art dealer Tristan Hoare have turned their original Frieze Masters presentation – a dialogue between the early work of American twentieth-century master Ellsworth Kelly and the Korean Moon Jars of Kim Yikyung – into a more wide-ranging display of works on paper and ceramics.

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The tightly-focused exploration of Ellsworth Kelly's fascination for Korean ceramics has broadened to encompass an example of Neolithic Chinese pottery, a 17th-18th century ceramic Moroccan jug and a wooden Minianka sceptre from Mali, dating from the early 20th century. These are shown in conversation with Kelly's lithographs from the early 1960s, and abstract American post-war graphic work on paper by Helen Frankenthaler, Jasper Johns and Donald Judd.

SoShiro Gallery, a new enterprise run by Kenyan-born, Italian-trained interior architect Shiro Muchiri, is launching during London Craft Week. Exhibiting from another stately townhouse (in Marylebone), the new collection inspired by the Ainu people of Northern Japan includes textiles, ceramics and furniture. During London Craft Week, the gallery will be offering sake and tea tastings, along with a personal tour, encouraging visitors to feel at home.

Meanwhile, Sarah Myerscough Gallery's latest exhibition, The Natural Room, in her converted Old Boathouse, long rather than tall, with its sympathetic wooden ceiling and simple brick walls, offers an entire environment of furniture and objects made from a wide variety of organic materials. The show, running until 7th November, is a culmination of many explorations with her artists of the potential of crafted design to reconnect us with the natural world. Featuring makers from across the globe – including Fernando Laposse from Mexico, Max Frommeld from the USA and straw-artist Arko from Japan – The Natural Room is a vision of benign collaboration with nature. It provides an ideal space for cocooning, but also invites us to think about the world outside the home.

In further recognition of the virtues of authentic spaces, and of the role of craft within them, craft retailer The New Craftsmen has invited three interior designers with three very different aesthetics and approaches – Maria Speake, Founder of Retrouvius; Emma Burns, Senior Design Director at Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler; and Sasha von Meister and Tom Bartlett, Directors of Waldo Works – to produce imagined designs for interiors incorporating the beautifully crafted pieces from their latest collection.

In the absence of full physical realisation, they have invited illustrator Caroline Aitken to conjure these distinctive interiors in drawing, accessible online. The pieces are also arranged in vignettes in the showroom.

As auction houses also try to find new ways of selling to their audiences (who have shown remarkable resilience during the crisis, continuing to buy from their homes), Sotheby's is launching its new London showroom. This will sell directly to collectors, outside the auction calendar, and will feature exhibitions of artworks curated by artists, designers and tastemakers. The first guest curator is Adrian Sassoon, who has worked with Dutch artist Bouke de Vries to design a bespoke installation for the space. Here Sassoon will present over seventy works of art from his roster of artists, from de Vries to Japanese artist and metalworker, Junko Mori.

L Y N D S E Y I N G R A M

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