

ARTSY

How Frieze Director Victoria Siddall Is Diversifying the Art Fair Experience

ARTSY EDITORIAL
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Visitors to Frieze London this week would be excused for missing the fair's single biggest change to its 13th edition. With Matthew Slotover and Amanda Sharp stepping back from the fair side of their Frieze empire to focus on other parts of the business, Victoria Siddall, who helped launch Frieze Masters in 2012, now directs all three Frieze fairs.



Portrait of Victoria Siddall by Jonathan Hokklo. Courtesy Frieze.

Several notable changes and additions are in store for visitors to Frieze London and Frieze Masters this week, at least in part thanks to Siddall's

influence. A new curator, Clara Kim, leads Frieze Masters's Spotlight section, where participating galleries focus on a single artist from the 20th century. Sir Norman Rosenthal launches a new section at Masters, titled Collections and aimed at expanding the fair outside of a strictly fine art context. And, a new publication, *Frieze Week Magazine*, guides collectors and enthusiasts alike through the fray.

Artsy caught up with Siddall as dealers began setting up their stands to hear more about those changes, the growth of the London art scene, and how Frieze is evolving along with—and in some cases in anticipation of—major market shifts.

Alexander Forbes: Has directing both fairs in London, as well as Frieze New York, allowed for any increased perspective or for adjustments to be made to unify, or for that matter, differentiate the three?

Victoria Siddall: Having an overview of all three fairs really helps to improve the others. Knowing what it takes to do a fair in London versus New York, even just working with different architects on each fair, you learn something new every time. Frieze London now looks better than it ever has. And a big part of that was incorporating things that we had learned from doing Frieze New York and Frieze Masters, and beginning to work with Universal Design Studio to make major changes to the layout in London last year.

At Frieze New York this year, we brought in a set of galleries who have only traditionally participated in Frieze Masters, like Acquavella, Skarstedt, and McKee Gallery. We had Picassos and Dubuffets in the fair for the first time. That came both out of developing relationships with those galleries at Frieze Masters and seeing that there was a demand for that kind of work in New York. It was slightly experimental but it ended up going really well. And a couple of Dubuffets actually sold at the fair.

AF: There's a lot of chatter in the art world at the moment around the cooling of the emerging, or at least the very young emerging, segment of the market. How, if at all, do you react to that as a fair?

VS: The important thing is to present the best young and emerging galleries and artists in the fair. For Focus, we have two curators working with us year-round to make sure we have the right artists and galleries represented, Jacob Proctor from the University of Chicago and Raphael Gygax from the Migros Museum. From many, many applications they help the committee select the galleries and artists who eventually show in Focus. It is a challenge, but we strive to present a selection of edited highlights that also reflects a certain geographical diversity and range of work being presented. I think it makes us one of the best places in the world to discover emerging artists.



Tunga
Xifópagas Capilares (Perform)
 Galleria Franco Noero



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One thing that we've really encouraged the past two years is for galleries to present ambitious performance and participatory works. We introduced the Live section last year, which is also advised by Proctor and Gygax. It's free space for the galleries to show this kind of work. If a gallery is among the six that we select, then they don't pay for any stand. So for example, Ken Kagami, who's being shown by Misako & Rosen, will be doing portraits of visitors throughout the fair. They're quite unexpected.

There's also the recreation of a seminal work by Tunga, a Brazilian artist who started this work in the '70s called *Siamese Hair Twins*. They are young twin girls who are joined together by their hair and will be walking around the fair. It should be a wonderful, ethereal sight. It's something that we started with Frieze Projects, but we're encouraging it even further with Live, trying to help create a more commercial platform for that kind

take that step to show performance.



Sam Gilliam
Rite, 1970
David Kordansky Gallery



Melvin Edwards
Untitled, 1974
Stephen Friedman Gallery

AF: One thing that impressed us when polling galleries over the past weeks is a quite positive shift in the balance of female artists and geographical distribution being presented. Has there been an active curatorial effort on your part to even the gender distribution and increase diversity?

VS: I think it's a combination. I hope, optimistically, that the art world is becoming more balanced in that way. Much of it is run by women, after all, including this fair. But with Frieze Masters, from the beginning, it was something that was very important but also very challenging when you're talking about Old Masters and 20th-century art. There weren't as many women making art then. The Spotlight section was key in that regard, giving the opportunity to show solo presentations of 20th-century artists who may have been overlooked or were from different geographies. But we're always striving for there to be a 50/50 split, which is quite unusual and reflective of an active desire to present things in a balanced way.

At Frieze Masters this year, we have three solo presentations of African-American artists: Sam Gilliam, Jack Whitten, and Melvin Edwards. Certain U.S. museums have been showing these artists' work, but they haven't gotten all that much exposure in Europe. I think they'll prove to be a great discovery for many who are coming to the fair from this part of the world. Two of the African-American artists' solo presentations are in Spotlight, which also includes pop artists from Japan and Eastern Europe. It's high time to do that. A lot of these artists will be discovered by people visiting the Tate's "World Goes Pop" exhibition, but it's nice to give them a commercial platform, too.



Fish Hooks of the Pacific Islands
Solomon Islands, Uki-Ulawa Area, ca. 19
 Daniel Blau



Fish Hooks of the Pacific Islands
New Guinea, Wuvulu and Aua Islands (Bismarck Archipelago), ca. 19
 Daniel Blau

AF: The new Collections section at Frieze Masters, curated by Sir Norman Rosenthal, is a particularly interesting addition this year, offering a selection of work previously unseen at Masters—like Egyptian carvings and Paleolithic stones. What drove its development?

VS: We have a lot of curated sections at our fairs, but they're often focused on young or emerging art. I was keen to introduce a curated section for historical art, but it couldn't be a solo presentation of an Old Master because no one has that amount of work by one artist. We also wanted to show people the different ways that you can collect. It doesn't have to be paintings, and it doesn't have to be sculpture. These are exquisite collections that dealers have put together themselves. And often it's their private passion rather than their business. For example, Daniel Blau typically deals in photography, but in Collections, he's showing his personal collection of fish hooks from the Pacific Islands, some of which are thousands of years old. They're incredibly beautiful. It really adds to the diversity of work that you find in the fair and opens perspectives of what you can collect.

Norman was an obvious choice when we thought of who to work with: he has such broad interests and is quite good at convincing people to do things. His vision for the section is eight presentations that could each be the beginning of a museum exhibition. It's a different kind of discovery on offer there. Even though most of the work on view was made

hundreds, if not thousands of years ago, most people won't have come across it before. There will be something to learn, talk to dealers about, and maybe start collecting.

AF: Of course a lot of it could be bluster, but as confidence in the continued growth of the market seems to have tapered off in recent months, it seems particularly important to open up ideas around what a collection can look like and how we can make that process more accessible to people who haven't necessarily collected in the past.

VS: Absolutely. And it's not just with Collections that we're addressing that. People tend to read about auction prices and get scared off by what they assume art costs. But actually, there's a huge range of prices for works shown across the fair, starting with Allied Editions, which is a free space for the London nonprofit to sell their artist editions, which start at £50. Then you have Focus, with work for a few thousand pounds, and Collections, again, where you can buy historical pieces for a few thousand pounds. And then, of course, it goes up to the millions. But I think it is important to get the message across that there are many different ways you can collect, that it's not just for the super high-echelon, very wealthy group of people.

AF: Frieze was fairly prescient of the shifting market when adding Masters in 2012. Now we're seeing the secondary market take a similar approach of combining eras and genres in single sales. Do you have any sense of a leading factor among collectors that's driving this trend?

VS: I think what drives it, if anything, is a quest to find works of great quality. If they are fantastic works, it doesn't really matter when they were made; they can all belong in the same collection. It's something we see more and more of in museums—that things are not just separated by when they were created but are mixed together and juxtaposed in interesting ways. It's something that artists are interested in as well. When you talk to a painter about what their inspirations and references are, quite often it's Goya rather than someone working at the same time as them. These things all cycle together.

AF: A lot has changed since you attended Frieze's first edition. Sales in 2003 reportedly tallied £20 million. Now, it wouldn't be entirely surprising to have a single work sell for that sum at the fair. Aside from the launch of Frieze Masters and Frieze New York, what would you say have been the most prominent developments for the fair?

VS: I think it's a combination of many things. It's understanding that we need to keep striving to make things new and fresh and improve every year, especially with a calendar, which is very crowded—there is so much to choose from. But I think it's also partly the cities that we're in. London has changed so much since 2003. It's become a really serious art capital and a place that people come to from all over the world. It's become a much wealthier city than it was. And there are so many galleries; the city almost rivals New York now in its number of galleries. There's a tremendously thriving and exciting art world in London, as

there is in New York too, which made New York the obvious choice of where to do the second fair.

—Alexander Forbes

Explore Frieze London and Frieze Masters on Artsy.