

Guerrilla Girls, Judy Chicago, Lynda Benglis and Rose McGowan feature in all-female Venice exhibition 'She Persists' presented by HEIST Gallery

Coinciding with the 58th Venice Biennale, HEIST Gallery will bring together international artists with multimedia works exploring empowered female identities through acts of celebration, resilience and rebellion



Judy Chicago, Women & Smoke Series, 1971-72.
Courtesy of Through the Flower and Salon 94, New York.

April 2019: HEIST Gallery are delighted to present *She Persists*, a landmark exhibition of works by 22 established and emerging artists from 11th May to 10th June in Palazzo Benzon, Venice. The exhibition aims to champion the voices of trailblazing female artists who have radically altered the narrative of art history alongside a generation of younger artist-activists. Bringing together an array of artists from New York, London and Lahore, *She Persists* will offer a forum for debate and discussion during the most significant global gathering of the art world: the Venice Biennale.

Curated by HEIST Gallery founder, Mashael Al Rushaid and art historian Sona Datta, the exhibition will bring together artworks which underpin the commonality of the female experience; exploring themes of displacement and diaspora, homeland and nationhood through sculpture, painting, film, projection, virtual reality, photography and performance.

The exhibition will include:

- Judy Chicago (b. 1939) debut in Venice with a compilation of 9 pieces from the *Women and Smoke* (1971–1972) performance series and works from the *Birth Project* (1980–1985) series, greeting visitors as they enter the Palazzo.
- Sculptor Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) will also exhibit work for the first time in Venice – an unseen monumental sculpture created with spray foam which is then cast in aluminium.
- A series of Guerrilla Girls posters including *Advantages of being a woman artist* (1988); *Do women have to be naked to get into the met museum* (1989) from the *Most wanted series* and *Dearest art collector* (2007).
- *Indecision IV* (2018), a film directed by Tonia Arapovic starring Rose McGowan, an original commission by HEIST Gallery which challenges prescribed notions of gender constructs via a contemporary dance performance.
- The *Paradise Bath* (2009) photographic series by Hamra Abbas, banned from production in Pakistan, staged in a fifteenth-century Ottoman bathhouse where the artist ritualistically bathes a white European woman, contextualising colonisation with Orientalism and addressing power structures while probing Islamic ideals of purity. The work will have to be destroyed upon return unless sold.
- A new performance piece commissioned for the exhibition, Mithu Sen (b. 1971) will explore the body politic through non-lingual nonsenses which unsettle established etiquettes and institutional spaces in *(Un)Mansplaining*.

The exhibition will also feature significant works by Aisha Abid Hussain (b. 1980), Lahore, Pakistan; Anna Boggon (b.1968), Edinburgh/London, United Kingdom; Anila Quayyum Agha (b. 1965), Lahore, Pakistan; Annie Morris (b. 1978), London, United Kingdom; Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975), New York, United States; Emilie Pugh (b. 1988), London, United Kingdom; Faiza Butt (b. 1973), Lahore, Pakistan; Lalla Essaydi (b. 1956), Marrakesh, Morocco; Maimouna Guerresi (b. 1951), Italian-Senegalese; Maria Khan (b. 1986), Lahore, Pakistan; Maria Kreyn, Russia; New Delhi, India; Samira Abbassy (b. 1964), Ahwaz, Iran; Shirin Neshat, Qazvin, Iran (b. 1957); Yasue Maetake (b. 1973), Tokyo, Japan.

HEIST Gallery will take over the historic Palazzo Benzon on the Grand Canal, the site of eighteenth-century salons held by Venetian salonnière Marina Querini Benzon who hosted Lord Byron and Antonio Canova. The opening of *She Persists* continues the palazzo's history of championing women and female rebellion.

“The Venice Biennale is the heart of the global art world. As a gallerist and a Saudi woman, I felt a sense of responsibility to use this platform to spotlight a rich diversity of global artists' perspectives. Whether in London or Venice, HEIST Gallery aims to create spaces for art to be a catalyst for dialogue.” Mashaal Al-Rushaid, Founder of HEIST Gallery.

Ahead of the public opening, HEIST Gallery have partnered with Notting Hill members' club Laylow from 6th to 10th May, offering members a satellite space separate to the national pavilions during preview week and host to external events.

Private Opening (Laylow members): May 6th-9th
Public Opening: May 11th-June 10th

Palazzo Benzon
San Marco 3927 - 30124 Venezia

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

HEIST GALLERY began as an art collective and gallery at a residential property in 2014 in Notting Hill. The space was transformed every eight weeks, inspired by the art on its walls to give the viewer a sense of what it felt like to live with the art.

HEIST endeavours to redefine how contemporary art is experienced. Hosting shows in unconventional spaces together with commissions, talks and performance pieces allow different means of resonance with the artwork. This experience brings the viewer closer into the world of the art itself, giving them the opportunity to not only be spectators but also participants.

The gallery prides itself in working with and for artists. Beginning as an art collective it continues to function as such to provide its artists with a lasting, expanded visibility through exhibitions, publications and placement in key collections around the world.
www.heistgallery.com

SONA DATTA is an art historian and formerly Head of South Asian art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts where she extended the museum's world-renowned modern Indian collections.

Sona previously worked at the British Museum for almost a decade and curated exhibitions including the *Voices of Bengal* season in 2006. Sona also redefined the British Museum's engagement with modern collecting through the acquisition of contemporary art from Pakistan that linked to the Museum's holdings of historic Mughal painting. In 2015, Sona wrote and presented BBC4's *Treasures of the Indus*. Sona is currently writing a book which posits a radical revision of contemporary South Asian art that will reset the lens on the so-called 'East'.

MASHAEL AL RUSHAID British-born Mashael Al Rushaid, founder of HEIST Gallery, entrepreneur and curator, has operated the gallery since Autumn 2014.

Al Rushaid has owned and taken part in creative and enterprising initiatives including opening Raffles Riyadh, the first women's international institute of design in the Middle East to producing Oscar-nominated film, *The Square* (2013) capturing the span of the Egyptian Revolution.

Al Rushaid formed Heist in 2014 as a platform to present fine art and photography in a new and dynamic way.

PALAZZO BENZON is a seventeenth-century palace and home of the Conti Benzon which is today considered an important historical site located on the Grand Canal between the Rialto bridge and the Accademia. The palace has a long history of championing individuals and exciting cultural events, including one of the first female gondoliers in Venice, Alex Hai, who could only practice through the support of the Benzon family. In 2015, the Palazzo hosted an exhibition uniting the nations of India and Pakistan for the first time at the Venice Biennale through the works of Shilpa Gupta and Rashid Rana.