

Art fairs
Analysis

At a trying time for London fairs, Eye of the Collector returns for its third edition

The boutique event brings together around 150 works from more than 20 exhibitors in the striking Neo-Gothic mansion Two Temple Place

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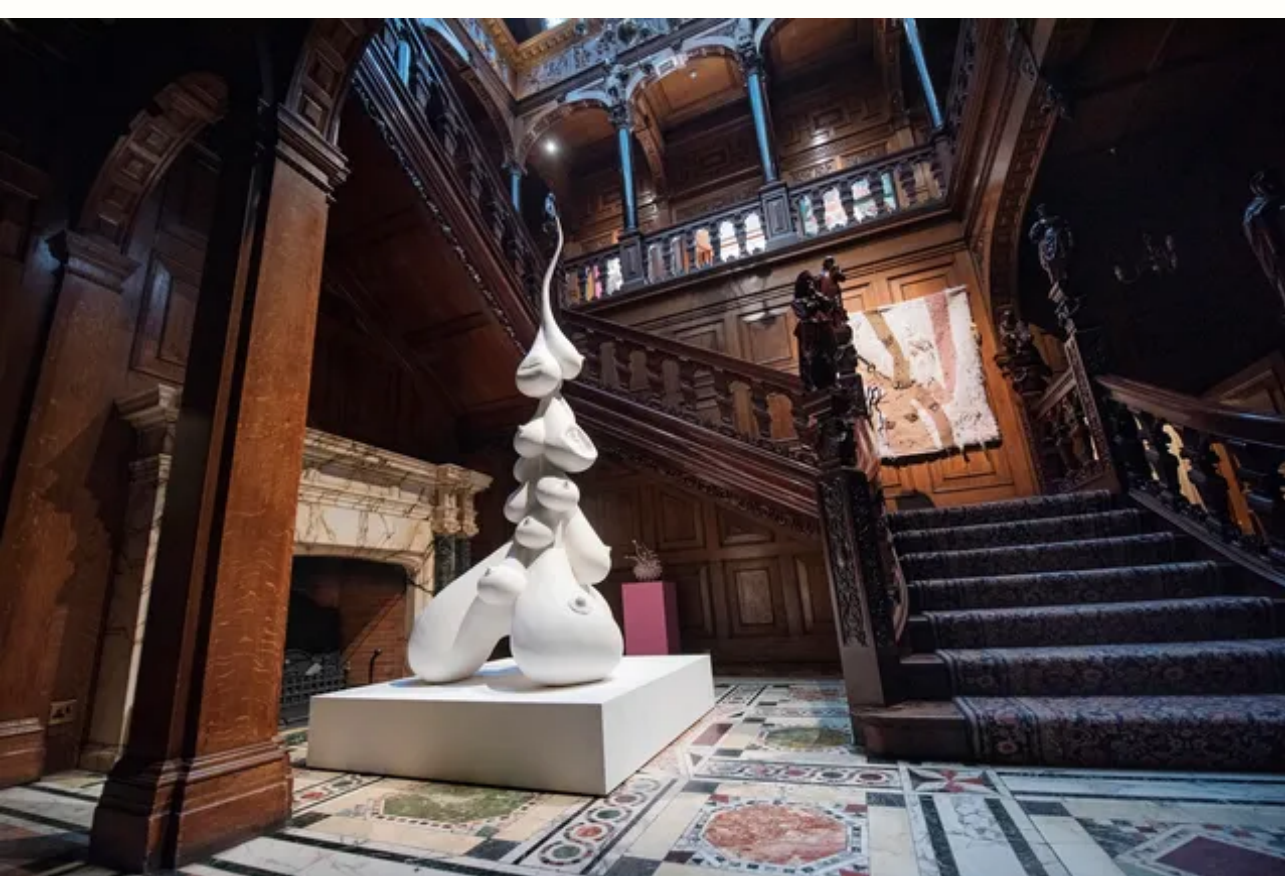
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Eye of the Collector returns to Two Temple Place in London for its third edition.
Photo: Linda Nyland

Eye of the Collector fair in London almost had a false start when it launched in 2020 and was forced to hold its inaugural edition online during the first waves of the pandemic. But the boutique, booth-free fair has now opened its third edition (until 20 May) and its second in-person event, at its regular home—the ornate 19th-century riverside mansion-turned-exhibition space, Two Temple Place.

“I would say that May 2022 was our proper outing,” said founder and director Nazy Vassegh at yesterday’s preview morning, amid a buzz of collectors and patrons. This edition is taking place at a turbulent time for art fairs in London—earlier this year Masterpiece, for which Vassegh incidentally served as chief executive from 2013 to 2017, announced it would cancel its edition planned for June. Two of Masterpiece’s original founders later announced that the new and significantly smaller Treasure House Fair will take place in Masterpiece’s location from 22 to 26 June.

Such shifts make it all the more important to establish a unique brand and vision and Vassegh feels that Eye of the Collector’s distinct model—of curated and intimate presentations of art and design—is suited to London’s art savvy collector base. “I think that’s why we can be creative, and bold, and we can present artworks across different categories—we can be confident because we have that level of knowledge.”



Nazy Vassegh, founder of Eye of the Collector
Photo: Linda Nyland

Last year Vassegh made strides to increase the number of women artists on the fair floor, and Eye of the Collector has maintained a ratio of 50% women for 2023. This year, a greater focus has been made to increase the number of emerging artists.

Prices at the fair range from £1,200 for a 2014 ceramic work by Frances Marr to £900,000 for Frank Auerbach’s *Camden Palace—Spring Morning II* (2000), and the inventory of the fair will remain available online at Artsy and Christie’s after the physical show closes on 20 May.

By yesterday afternoon, London’s Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery had sold the majority of their inventory brought to the fair, including works by Soheila Sokhanvari and Rebecca Brodskis for undisclosed prices. Meanwhile, Whitford Fine Art, also from London, sold the intriguing painting *Sea Forms* (around 1950) by Mildred Bendall for £10,000 and Cissie Kean’s painting *Red Kite* (1950) for £12,000. The fair also announced the sale of the ceramic vase work *Ethnic Cleansing Pattern*, 1994 by the Eye of the Collector Curatorial Artist, Grayson Perry, for £28,000.

A number of new artworks and objects, specially created for the fair, are also on view including those from a collaboration between the luxury homeware brand Zoffany and artists including Markus Lüpertz and Francesca DiMattio. Also on view are the emerging artists John Abel, Liorah Tchiprout, shown alongside heavyweights such as Bridget Riley, Lynn Chadwick and Barbara Hepworth, all presented by Alan Wheatley Art, which has shown at the fair since its inception.

Ed Cross Fine Art, which is taking part at the fair for the first time, brought paintings by Ade Odedina and Eugene Palmer with tapestry works by Anya Paintsil, some of which are on display at Two Temple Place, while others are displayed online. “The atmosphere between the galleries is very nice, which is a different experience for us as exhibitors” said the gallery’s director Ed Cross, who summed up his experience positively: “It is extraordinary experience to come here and sort of wind your way through the house. I think this is a much more exciting experience for visitors than a traditional fair.”