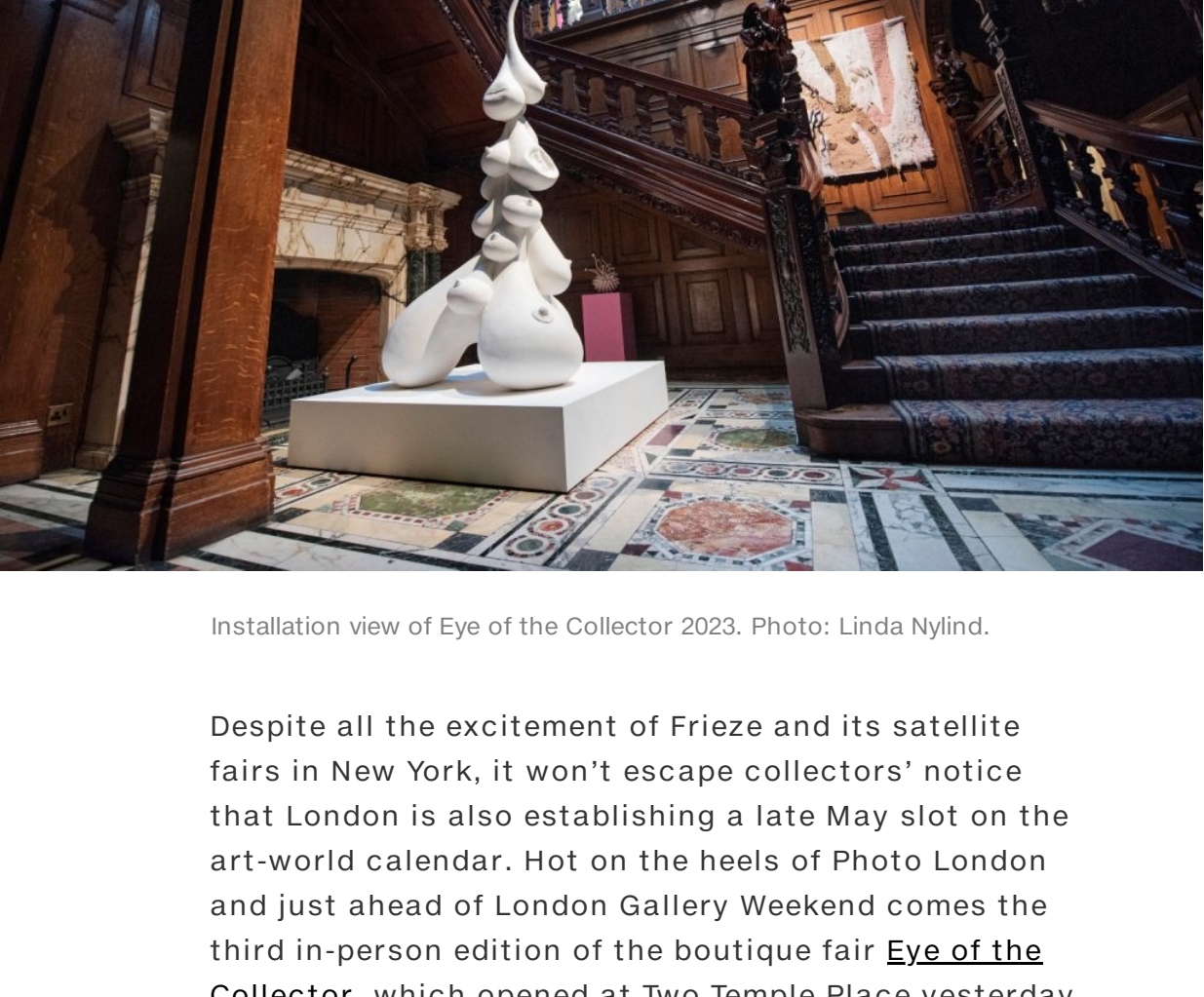


Art Fairs

London's Eye of the Collector Fair Has Opened in a Victorian Mansion Where Boothless Art Mingles With History

The boutique fair opened at Two Temple Place and runs through May 20.

Jo Lawson-Tancred, May 18, 2023

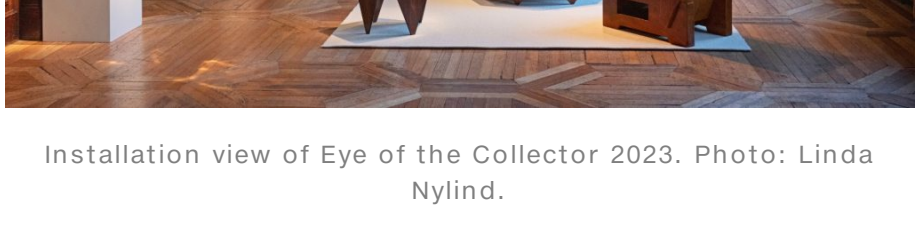


Installation view of Eye of the Collector 2023. Photo: Linda Nyilind.

Despite all the excitement of Frieze and its satellite fairs in New York, it won't escape collectors' notice that London is also establishing a late May slot on the art-world calendar. Hot on the heels of Photo London and just ahead of London Gallery Weekend comes the third in-person edition of the boutique fair **Eye of the Collector**, which opened at Two Temple Place yesterday and runs through May 20.

The boothless format pioneered by [the fair's founder, Nazy Vassegh](#) will by now be familiar to attendees, who can expect to find 160 works from 21 galleries, all freely intermingled with no obvious delineations in terms of category, style or price, which ranges from £1,900 (\$2,370) to around £1 million (\$1,250,000). Most of these figures are openly listed alongside gallery details and QR codes.

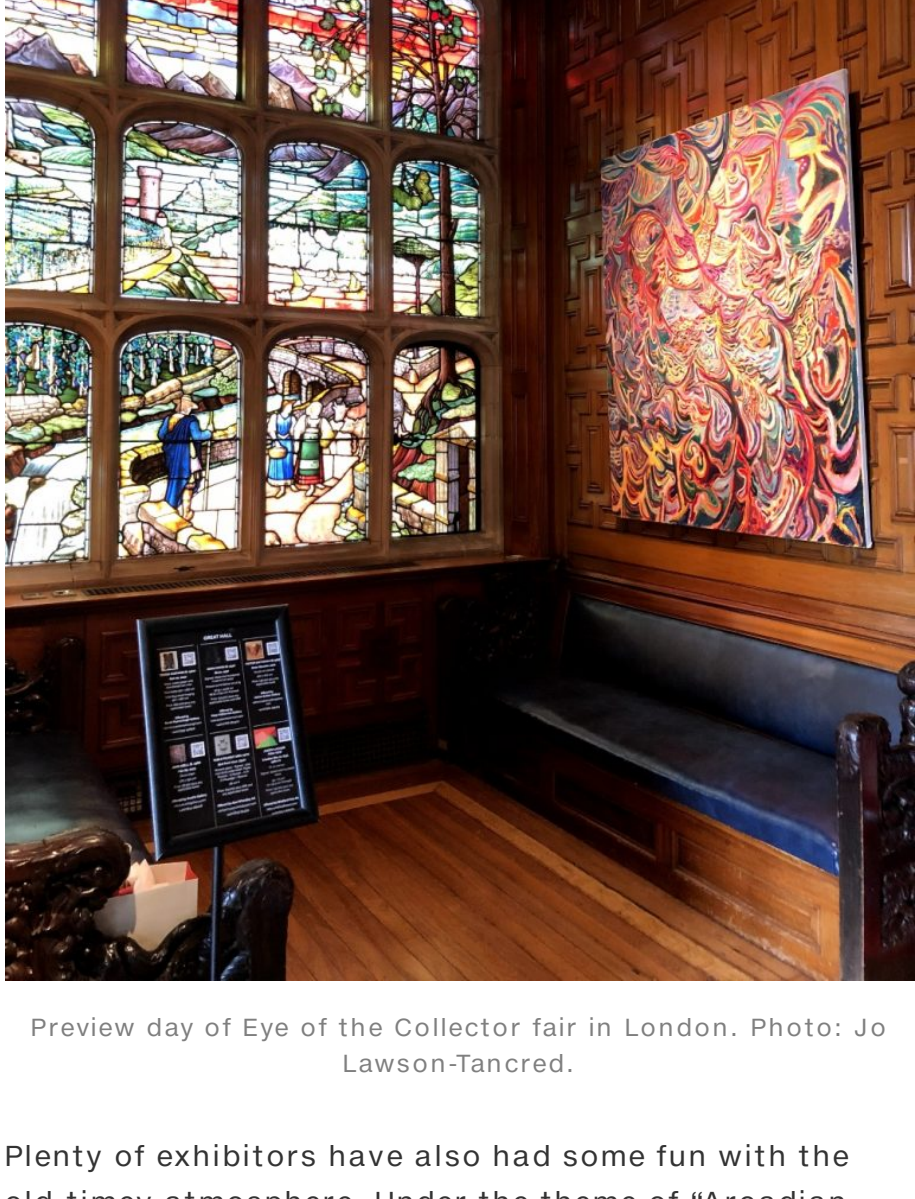
"Collectors love the idea that they walk in thinking they want to see one thing and then they also see another," Vassegh told Artnet News.



Installation view of Eye of the Collector 2023. Photo: Linda Nyilind.

One noticeable departure from last year, however, is the significantly expanded presentation of special commissions, with about 60 new pieces debuting this week. "We should be supporting talent, we should be creating new work," explained Vassegh. Though collectors will initially be lured in by irresistible names like Bridget Riley, Sean Scully, Zanele Muholi, Grayson Perry, and Ian Davenport, the presentation also boasts lesser-known artists that, added Vassegh, "we think deserve to sit alongside Warhol and Auerbach."

The concept of this eclectic hang may be inspired by an imaginary collector's house, but it's not everyday we get to see art in a setting quite as splendid as Two Temple Place, a neo-Gothic mansion looking over the Thames that was built in 1895 for William Waldorf Astor. Viewers will enjoy spotting curatorial flourishes, like Teresa Hastings's ragged wool wall hanging *Not Me* (2022), offered for £60,000 (\$75,500) by Sarah Myerscough Gallery, staged in contrast to the room's oak paneling. Similarly, some of the more swirling, multicolored paintings like John Abell's *I Go Up* (2023) from Arusha Gallery are entered into lively conversation with the intricate stained-glass windows.



Preview day of Eye of the Collector fair in London. Photo: Jo Lawson-Tancred.

Plenty of exhibitors have also had some fun with the old-timey atmosphere. Under the theme of "Arcadian Thames," Zoffany is presenting the four-panel screen *Daphnis and Pan, late afternoon* (2023), painted by Giles Round with Zoffany fabrics on the reverse, on sale for £10,000 (\$12,800). Just beside it stands *Flamingo Caryatid* (2019), a delightfully ostentatious Rococo-style porcelain by Francesca DiMattio for \$55,000.

Taking center stage at the foot of the grand staircase is *Mastectomy Mameria* (2019), a playful sculpture composed of assorted breasts by Charlotte Colbert on offer for £28,000 (\$35,200). The French artist and filmmaker attended the preview day with her husband Philip Colbert, who is also exhibiting. In the upstairs library, a huge wooden sculpture of one of his trademark lobsters is on sale for £110,000 (\$136,500).

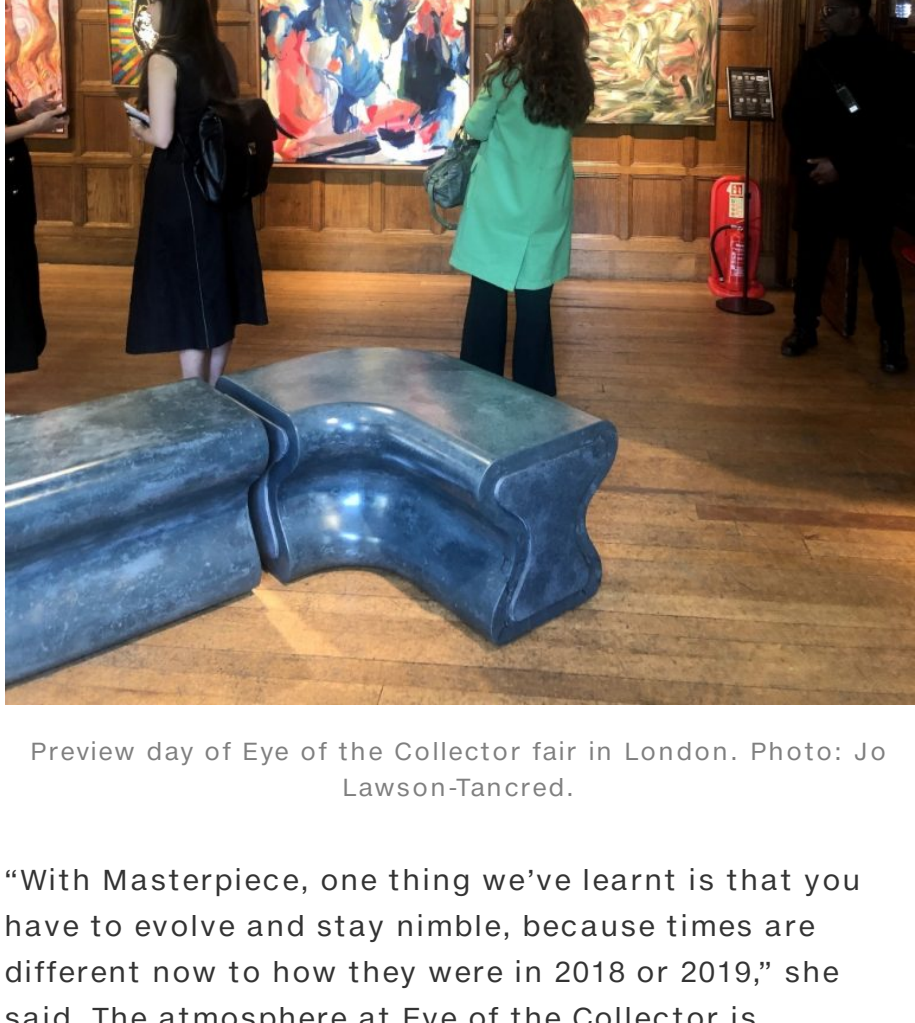


Anya Paintsil, *Clip Clop* (2023). Courtesy of Ed Cross Fine Art.

As visitors head up the stairs, they will come face-to-face with *Clip Clop* (2023), a captivatingly ambiguous textile made for the fair by Anya Paintsil, whose star has recently been ascending. So far this year, her work has been acquired by the Arts Council England and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, while those across the pond can see her in Hannah Traore Gallery's stand at this year's NADA.

At Eye of the Collector, her wall hanging is offered by Ed Cross, who is participating this year for the first time. "The fair's been extremely well organized from start to finish. The building is extraordinary. I think it's a bit of a triumph," he noted enthusiastically. "We want our artists to be seen in a fair that's beautifully put together and will allow us to engage with new collectors. It's an important step for the gallery."

As the former CEO of Masterpiece from 2013-2017, what does Vassegh make of the prestige fair's swift post-pandemic and post-Brexit demise? Its [permanent closure](#), announced in January, left most art-market professionals in London reeling but Vassegh doesn't appear to be fazed.



Preview day of Eye of the Collector fair in London. Photo: Jo Lawson-Tancred.

"With Masterpiece, one thing we've learnt is that you have to evolve and stay nimble, because times are different now to how they were in 2018 or 2019," she said. The atmosphere at Eye of the Collector is, certainly, strikingly less stuffy than that of the late fair. "We're a totally different concept. We don't really push the luxury envelope out," said Vassegh.

Another first time exhibitor is Kristin Hjellegjerde, who appeared in very high spirits off the back of two new sales that morning (and several more before the fair had even begun). "A good start, since I came late!"

One, a 2022 oil painting by Rebecca Brodskis, sold to the New York theater producer Jordan Roth while a famous British actor bought the second work, by Sara Berman, who will open the gallery's new West Palm Beach outpost in October. Another of Berman's paintings, *Tension* (2022), remains up for the taking. "I love my job!" Hjellegjerde exclaimed. "I'm sure that will be gone by today."



Sara Berman, *Tension* (2022). Courtesy of the artist / Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

"Nazy is doing such a great job promoting the fair, getting all the right people to see it and creating an atmosphere," added the Norwegian, London-based gallerist of her experience thus far. "I've met so many people. This place is very much about creating friendships for the future."

As if on cue, an exclamation of "what an incredible outfit!" was heard from across the room. After declaring Hjellegjerde's vibrant two-piece suit to have "Niki de Saint Phalle vibes," Charlotte Colbert approached eagerly and asked to take her picture. "See, I've just made another friend," the dealer said with a beam. All that's left now is for Hjellegjerde to prepare for a trans-Atlantic flight, after which she hopes to sell even more works at the preview of 1-54 in New York this morning. Phew!

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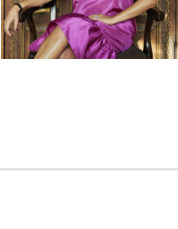


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