

**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, 'Immolation', 1972.

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, Mashaal 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 Bengalis** (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.

The exhibition will also feature significant works by Aisha Abid Hussain (b. 1980), Lahore, Pakistan; Ana Mendieta (1948–1985), New York, United States; 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; Mamounia Gruessi (b. 1951), Marrakesh, Morocco; Maria Khan (b. 1986), Lahore, Pakistan; Maria Kreyn, Russia; Mithu Sen (b. 1971), New Delhi, India; Samira Abbassy (b. 1964), Ahwaz, Iran; 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 rich 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 cultural collaborator who until recently was Head of South Asian art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts where she extended the museum's world-renowned modern Indian collections to include the best contemporary art referencing all of South Asia.

Sona previously worked at the British Museum for 8 years where her exhibitions included the flagship *Voices of Bengal* season (2006), which attracted more people of South Asian extraction than any project in the British Museum's history. Sona also radically 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, she wrote and presented BBC4's *Treasures of the Indus*, described as an 'adventure with engaging historical and cultural material and lifting the veil on the region's past showing you must know where you have been to know where you are going'.

Sona was awarded Cambridge University's prestigious Rylands Prize for Excellence in the History of Art. Her new book is a radical revision of contemporary South Asian art that will reset the lens on the so-called 'East'. She lives in London with her husband, two boys (and no dog).

MASHAEL AL RUSHAID British-born Mashaël 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 which is today it is considered a UNESCO heritage site and home of the Conti Benzon. Located in a prime spot on the Grand Canal between the Rialto bridge and the Accademia, the Piano Nobile reflects the classical typology of Venetian palaces of the eighteenth century. The palace has a long history of championing pioneering individuals and exciting cultural events, including one of the first female gondoliers in Venice, Alex Hai, who could practice through the support of the Benzon family. In 2015, the Palazzo hosted an exhibition uniting for the first time at the Biennale the nations of India and Pakistan through the works of Shilpa Gupta and Rashid Rana.

LAYLOW is a member's club in west London with a music and dining space on Golborne Road.