

Yona Friedman.  
*Projet pour un musée  
sans bâtiment*. 2017.  
Photography by  
Christophe Brachet

# A MATTER OF SCALE?

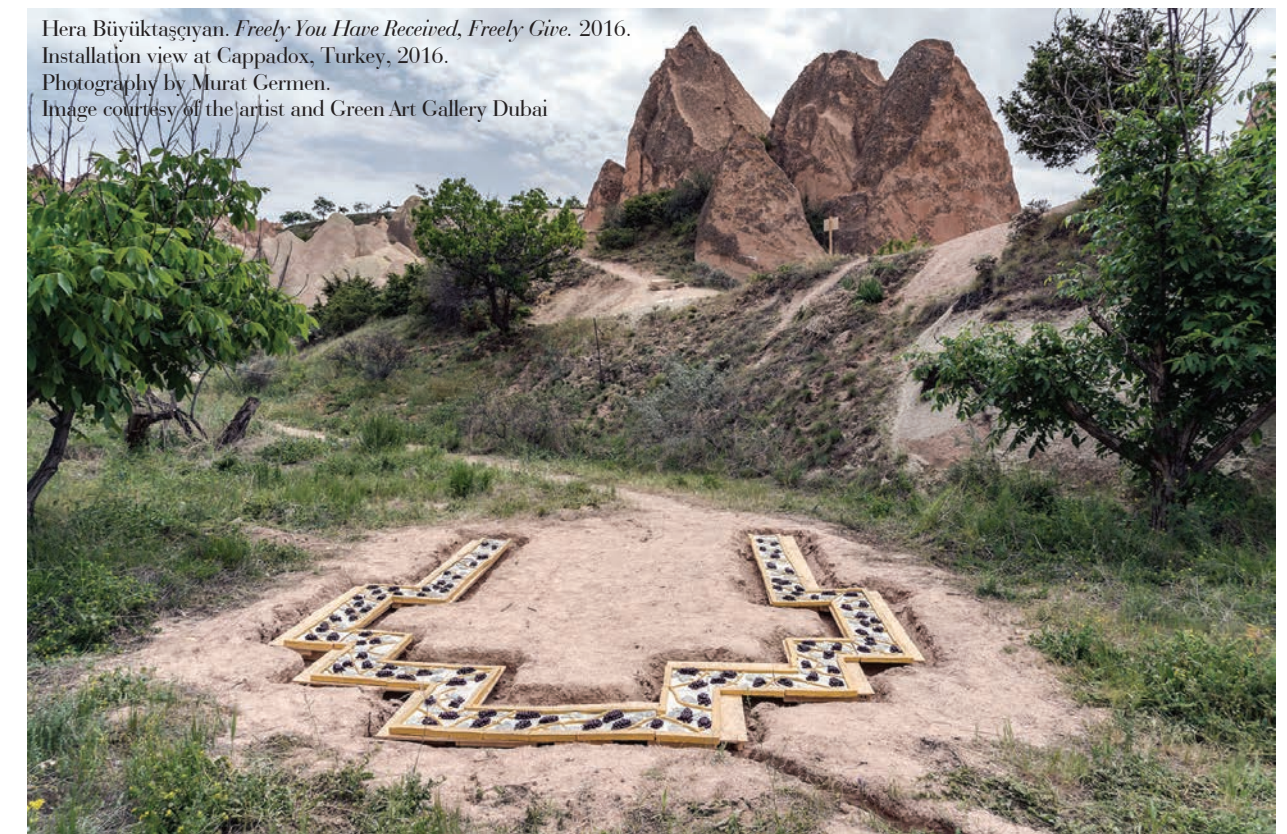
The 44th edition of FIAC Paris (Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain) opened its doors on 19 October, barely two weeks after Frieze London in the now customary autumn art scrum. **Judith Souriau** reviews what has become an institution attracting a largely European crowd, with 193 exhibitors from 30 countries in the Grand Palais and with performances, satellite events and parties all over the French capital.

**A**rt fairs may not be the best environment in which to question new ways of exhibiting art. Although galleries have to leave their white cube behind on such occasions, their main aim is to sell, and so they tend to display artworks that would go nicely in the living rooms of collectors. Art Basel broke the mould in the 2000s, with an *Unlimited* section

dedicated to large-scale works in the city and with containers on the beach in Miami. Being French (and democratic, as such), FIAC soon followed suit with a public sculpture *parcours* in the Tuileries garden, commissioned for each edition since 2006 and the On Site section launched in 2016, with large-scale sculptural works and installations around Petit Palais and Avenue



Installation view at Green Art Gallery's booth of Kamrooz Aram's *Ornamental Composition for Social Spaces* and Seher Shah's untitled iron cast sculptures. Image courtesy of Green Art Gallery, Dubai



Hera Büyüktasçıyan. *Freely You Have Received, Freely Give*. 2016.  
Installation view at Cappadox, Turkey, 2016.  
Photography by Murat Germen.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery Dubai



Jeppe Hein. Installation view of 303 Gallery's booth.  
© Jeppe Hein. Image courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 2015 (demain est la question)*, 2015.  
Screen printing on table tennis and racket, 76 x 152.5 x 274 cm.  
Image courtesy of Chantal Crousel Gallery

Winston Churchill. Jennifer Flay, the fair director, explains: “The FIAC *Hors les Murs* (Beyond the Walls) has given artists an opportunity to exhibit in a different context, one that is both historical and open to everyone. It is an amazing heritage site, and it also connects FIAC to a public that may not otherwise be familiar with contemporary art.”

This year, there’s little doubt that children and passers-by enjoyed Pugnaire & Raffini’s 24 playful, distorted mirror sheets lined up facing the Place de la Concorde obelisk (*L’Onde*, 2017) and Oscar Tuazon’s four sculpture PVC pipeline installation *Une colonne d’eau* (2017) on the Place Vendôme. “You must be moving to experience that work,” Flay said about *L’Onde*. “In a gallery, such as the Natural History Museum’s Grande Galerie de l’Evolution, it would mean something completely different.”

Also in the Tuileries gardens, the young Lebanese artist Ali Cherri displayed his first outdoor installation, *The Flying Machine* (2017), a very poetic evocation inspired by the attempts to fly of Abbas Ibn Firnas in Andalusia c.850 AD, 600 years before Leonardo Da Vinci’s own inventions. The project is a utopia, and the object both fragile and full of ageless dreams. “The idea of the work came to my mind because I knew it would be exhibited outside,” explained Cherri. “It is made of bamboo, which can be exposed to rain. Thinking out of the gallery challenges your process as an artist.”

As ever, the actual ‘High Mass’ of the fair took place under the glass dome of the majestic Grand Palais. Right at the entrance, gallerists perpetuated the game of large-scale works with a glaring Takashi Murakami golden flame at Perrotin, a subtler Robert Morris curved felt sculpture at Sprüth Magers, and a reddish inflatable corner piece by Otto Piene – an overlooked, out-of-fashion artist who reflected upon art in motion in the 1960s. The theme of artists pondering on how to show their art continued with a newer, more *avant-garde* movement a few booths further along at Chantal Crousel, featuring an emblematic ‘relational aesthetics’ table-tennis table by Rirkrit



Oscar Tuazon: *Une Colonne D'eau*. Installation at FIAC *Hors Les Murs* at Place Vendôme, 2017. Life prototype, 447 x 866 x 210 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Tiravanija, engraved with the words *Demain est la question* (Tomorrow is the question) and where visitors could actually play ping-pong as a way of actively wondering about what is to come.

Tomas Sáraceno filled Esther Schipper’s booth with one of his geometric thread-and-mirror architectures in spiderweb-like forms, while 303 Gallery limited its exhibition to a ceiling of coloured balloons by Jeppe Hein: artists there did play the game of a *mise en scène* engaging the viewer, either with the sense of fullness or emptiness. The artist and architect Felipe Arturo (born in 1979 in Bogotá) even transposed a full bar upstairs, in the section dedicated to the most contemporary galleries. The Huerequeque Bar, named after a Werner Herzog film character, was a place of social interaction where people gathered, drank and talked. It was not only a piece on interactivity and relational aesthetics, but also about fiction (Arturo included footage of an interview with Huerequeque in the installation), orality, and the colonial culture of rubber in Peru.

How art meets architecture is a question that arose several times in this edition. Jérôme Poggi (Paris) crosschecked models of architect Yona Friedman’s *Musée sans bâtiment* (Museum Without Building) project, displayed in real scale in front of the Grand Palais, with Canadian artist Larissa Fassler’s floorplan drawings questioning the materiality of the building and how it makes sense in today’s society. Green Art Gallery (Dubai) connected canvases by Kamrooz Aram, who graphically studies how Eastern ornament swayed modernist architecture, with Seher Shah’s cast iron heavy models. Both speak of building, and how construction eternally structures human lives and cultures. Other artists being shown from the region included Basim Magdy’s video works by first-time participant Gypsum Gallery from Cairo, and Kader Attia at Lehmann Maupin’s booth, last year’s winner of the Marcel Duchamp Prize.

But back to the crux of the matter: is a fair forward-thinking simply because it exhibits outdoors or interrogates architecture? Some works this

year did challenge the art fair’s usual setting, but it’s not exactly a revolution in terms of showing art. Rather, it indicates that the current trend is taking another direction, in favour of domesticity and a more intimate scale after years of superlative events. A five-minute drive from the Grand Palais ASIA NOW was taking place, a manageable art fair with only 30 exhibitors set in an elegant city mansion. It was nice to sit in the courtyard there with a mulled wine (though it was 20°C outside) and talk to Alexandra Fain, who launched the fair three years ago. “The event was conceived as a boutique art fair,” she explained, “like the boutique hotels around the world where you feel at home. We give the floor to the artists and, with a rich programme of conversations and performances, we try to shine a light on art scenes from Asia that are extremely diverse, young and dynamic.” Such a chic and cosy format is always bound to get people meeting artists and chatting with the dealers.

Back at FIAC, it was probably with its programme of performances that the fair was really forward-thinking. In *Parades*, artists and choreographers like Boris Charmatz & Dimitri Chamblas, Kenneth Goldsmith and Falke Pisano paid homage to the figure of Trisha Brown. For Agnès Violeau, a curator of performance based in Paris, “the dancer performing Locus solo by Trisha Brown in the permanent collection of the Petit Palais opened a dialogue with pieces by Cézanne and Courbet. Her dance deeply recalled the role of the body in modernity. I was recently wondering about the next challenges for the museum, and how institutions will adapt to the next generation. This performance is the most convincing answer I observed in Paris this week.” So, perhaps the art of tomorrow might not be so much about objects to possess, but those to experience. Gestures, traces, legacies. Coincidentally (or maybe not), that’s also what Ismaïl Bahri’s short film *Revers* (2017) at Selma Feriani was suggesting. The future might just be more about subtlety than bold statement. 🇸🇪