

PRESS RELEASE

Cynthia Corbett Gallery / Young Masters at Collect 2026

Somerset House, London | West Wing | Stand W19

Public Days: 27 February–1 March 2026

Preview Days: 25–26 February 2026

Cynthia Corbett Gallery / Young Masters returns to Collect 2026 with a curated presentation bringing ceramics and textiles into a richly layered dialogue. The stand explores how contemporary craft can hold memory, repair histories, and reimagine tradition, foregrounding artists whose practices draw on material intelligence to address identity, gender, mental health, cultural heritage, and the politics of “who gets to belong” in art history.

The booth is anchored by **Ebony Russell**, winner of the Brookfield Properties Craft Award 2025 in collaboration with Collect Art Fair, Crafts Council and Cynthia Corbett Gallery. Russell’s signature piped-porcelain constructions push the decorative to architectural extremes, reclaiming aesthetics historically coded as feminine, superficial, or excessive. Ornament becomes structure, and “too much” becomes a site of power, pleasure, labour, and resistance.

Alongside Russell, **Matt Smith** continues his long-standing engagement with museum collections and queer histories. Reworking established ceramic forms, Smith surfaces stories that have been marginalised or erased, from palaces to public institutions. His practice asks: who is remembered, who is forgotten, and how can collections be gently but firmly rewritten?

Textiles are given equal weight through **Margo Selby**, whose woven works bridge “art into industry.” Drawing connections between loom, circuit board, and space travel, Selby explores the relationship between hand and machine, craft and engineering. Her structured, colour-rich compositions echo both the logic of weaving and the circuitry of contemporary technology, proposing textiles as a language for the future as much as the past.

Across the stand, vessels and figurative forms become sites of inscription, repair, and transformation: **Carolyn Tripp** embeds fragments of a private visual diary into blue-and-white porcelain, layering overheard phrases, drawings, and photographs into jewel-like surfaces. Her works become intimate containers where personal experience meets the viewer’s own memory.

SaeRi Seo engages the Korean moon jar tradition, reclaiming a form historically closed to women. By fracturing and reassembling jars, she transforms trauma into sculpture, using detonation and repair as a language of survival and self-determination.

Freya Bramble-Carter brings a sensorial, cosmic approach to clay, creating “alien” vessels that meditate on nature, spirit, and the roles we perform. Her forms read almost as sentient beings.

Narrative and figurative work deepens the conversation through **Jemma Gowland's** *Naughty Children* and *Bad Angels* series. Using the language of porcelain figurines, Gowland questions how girls and women are disciplined into "acceptable" behaviour. Humour, fragility, and disruption sit side by side, turning ornament into sharp social commentary.

Amy Jayne Hughes reinterprets historically significant vase forms with a distinctly contemporary hand, celebrating clay's material identity by leaving traces of process visible, from dribbles of slip to raw edges and exposed joins. Drawing on museum collections and sources spanning Grecian, Islamic and 18th-century French porcelain, she nods to original designs while reinventing them for new audiences, often translating her drawings into lively, painterly surfaces on hand-built forms.

Across generations and geographies, these artists use contemporary craft as a site where tradition is both upheld and questioned, with beauty, rigour, and material intelligence becoming tools for resilience, resistance, and joy.

ARTIST TALKS AND BOOTH MOMENTS (Collect 2026)

- **Ebony Russell – Thursday 26 February, 12:00** (official Collect talk)
- **Jemma Gowland – Friday 27 February, 16:00** (in-booth talk at Stand W19)
- **Margo Selby – Saturday 28 February, 15:30** (official Collect talk)

About Cynthia Corbett Gallery

Cynthia Corbett Gallery, a London-based Contemporary art gallery, was established by American former economist, art historian and curator Cynthia Valianti Corbett in 2004. The Gallery is an international nomadic art gallery representing emerging and established contemporary artists, and has a broad annual exhibition programme including international art fairs and collaborative projects worldwide. The Gallery's represented and guest artists come from British, American and international backgrounds, whose works have been published and acquired by major museums, institutions, and private collections. Since its inception, the gallery has championed the work of women artists, queer artists and artists of colour working across a wide range of media encompassing practices at the intersection of fine art and craft.

The gallery has a remarkable track record of nurturing artists by placing their work in prestigious public collections, notably the V&A, National Museums of Scotland, 21c Museum Hotels, and private collections including Omer Koc and Jorge Perez.

In 2009, Cynthia Corbett launched the Young Masters Art Prize, a unique, not-for-profit curatorial platform supporting emerging international artists. The Prize celebrates artistic skill and innovation, with awareness of the Old Masters and art of the past. An independent judging panel that includes renowned art historians, collectors, curators and art professionals, selects the winners. In 2014 the Young Masters Maylis Grand Ceramic Prize was added to focus more attention on the growing interest in the collection of contemporary craft and 2017 saw the launch of the inaugural Young Masters Emerging Women Award, and the fifth edition and 10th Anniversary Exhibition of the Prize took place in October 2019. In 2021 a curatorial platform, Focus on the Female, was developed as an artistic and philanthropic antidote to the disproportionate impact of the COVID pandemic on women. The 6th edition of the Young Masters Art Prize took place in London to coincide with Frieze London at 67 York Street, *Marylebone*. To mark its 16th anniversary, Young Masters

presented *Sweet 16: Young Masters Retrospective*, a landmark exhibition at 67 York Street Gallery during Frieze Week, a celebration of over a decade and a half of artistic innovation rooted in the traditions of art history, featuring past finalists and new talents. This year, Young Masters presents *Line of Beauty*, a not-for-profit initiative celebrating the 2025 People's Choice Award winners Cristina Schek and Alexandra Baraitser, on view 15 Jan –April 2026 at The Exhibitionist Hotel, South Kensington.

SELECTED QUOTES (for press use)

Why are contemporary craft and design important to you?

“Contemporary craft and design bring thought, touch and time back into the heart of art-making. Working with clay, thread, glaze and fibre, our artists think through materials: histories of labour, gender, migration, architecture, technology and mental health are literally built into their surfaces.

Craft creates continuity between past and present. Many of our artists work in direct dialogue with museum collections and historic forms, but use those references to ask urgent contemporary questions about whose stories are told, and how.

For us, contemporary craft and design are where criticality, beauty and care meet: a space where difficult narratives can be held in forms that are generous, tactile and enduring.”

What are you most looking forward to about exhibiting at the fair, and why is it important?

“Collect is one of the most important international platforms for contemporary craft and design, where serious collectors, curators, museum professionals, designers and artists meet on equal terms around material-led practices.

For Collect 2026, we are especially looking forward to sharing new bodies of work by artists at pivotal moments in their careers, including Brookfield Properties Craft Award winner Ebony Russell, previous Collect Open Award recipient Matt Smith, and Turner Medal recipient Margo Selby. Collect gives contemporary craft true parity of esteem: not a side note to art, but a central stage.”

Which artists are you particularly excited to bring to Collect 2026 and why?

“We are especially excited to foreground Ebony Russell, Margo Selby and Jemma Gowland. Ebony Russell’s piped porcelain works feel like a breakthrough in contemporary ceramics: technically audacious, conceptually rigorous and visually seductive. Margo Selby’s practice bridges loom, circuit board and space travel, bringing together textiles, technology and architecture. Jemma Gowland uses humour and the language of porcelain figurines to explore female socialisation, obedience and resistance, opening rich conversations around gender, care and expectation.”

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