

Take a Seat | 3 October - 16 November 2024

• Saelia Aparicio • Jess Allen • Alma Berrow • Marco Bizzarri • Jenny Holzer • James Lomax • Christabel MacGreevy • Elias Peña Salvador • Emma Sheehy • Orfeo Tagiuri • Ai Weiwei • Franz West •

LAMB Gallery is pleased to present *Take a Seat*, an exhibition that brings together an international group of contemporary artists, both emerging and established, to explore the tensions between the functionality and artistry of a commonplace object: the chair. A simple yet essential part of daily life, the chair serves as the central motif, presented through both painted and sculptural works that experiment with a variety of materials, weights, and textures. In this exhibition, chairs transcend their utilitarian role, becoming symbols of personal and collective memory, cultural significance, and artistic expression.

Through each artist's unique interpretation, chairs are reimagined and repurposed, then placed into the narrative of the gallery space which provides an unconventional setting for the object. This gallery setting challenges the boundaries of viewing and interaction, as these objects, while still identifiable as chairs, cannot be used in their functional sense and an invisible wall is created. Therefore, as the playful title suggests, visitors instead are invited to "take a seat" in a metaphorical sense.

At the heart of the group exhibition is Franz West's *Untitled (Sit Down)* (1996–2000), a work that encapsulates the central tensions explored throughout the show. This piece builds on West's enduring interest in interactive art, and in *Untitled (Sit Down)* West introduces text, adding a conceptual dimension that deepens the tension between interaction and inaccessibility. The phrase "sit down" extends a playful and seemingly direct invitation to the viewer, yet the work's elevation as an art object ultimately withdraws the possibility of physical interaction, subverting the initial call to engage.

The use of text as a vehicle for meaning emerges across other works in the exhibition, particularly Jenny Holzer's *Survival: Bodies lie in the bright grass...* (1989). Holzer transforms functional furniture into a platform for activism, with the granite bench serving both as a symbol of permanence, evoking monuments or graves, and as a channel for social critique through the incorporation of text.

Similarly, Ai Weiwei's *Marble Chair* (2008) echoes these themes by referencing the traditional Chinese yoke-back chair, while reimagining it in solid marble. The chair speaks to the erasure of Chinese cultural heritage during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), with Ai drawing on personal history—his family was allowed to keep only a few possessions, including a similar chair, when they were sent into exile. The permanence and weight of marble become metaphors for both the resilience of cultural identity and the loss it has endured. Like

Art's chairs, tradition runs as a common thread between many of the works in the exhibition, as seen in Elías Peña Salvador's Catalan chairs in *Farewell at Dawn* (2024), and James Lomax's Mexican cantina chairs in *Chair Study (for a sinking city)* (2024), which is a direct reference to the environmental crisis in Mexico City. Additionally, Alma Berrow's *Take a Pew* (2024) draws on Christian tradition with her characteristic humorous take.

The invitation to "Take a Seat" inevitably calls attention to the role of viewer participation and the spaces where the body can physically sit. Yet, in the gallery setting, this interaction remains absent, creating a tension between both an expectation and lack of physical engagement. This theme extends to other works in the exhibition, such as Jess Allen's *Nobody's Watching, study 5* (2022), in which empty, shadowed chairs evoke feelings of loneliness and solitude. Marco Bizzarri's hazy, atmospheric scene in *Apertura III* (2024) similarly explores the enigmatic nature of memory, where fleeting light and shadow suggest presence or absence, hinting at figures that once were but are no longer visible.

Through this interplay between invitation and restraint, *Take a Seat* encourages viewers to contemplate the boundaries between art and functionality. By presenting the chair as an object both to be viewed and to be reflected upon, the exhibition transforms this common piece of furniture into a symbol of personal, cultural, and historical narratives, prompting a deeper exploration of the spaces we occupy—both physically and conceptually.

Artist Biographies

Saelia Aparicio

Saelia Aparicio (b.1982, Spain) is a London-based Spanish artist who completed her MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in 2015. Her multidisciplinary work dwells on ideas of the organic, establishing analogies between corporeal and social mechanisms. The body is a malleable source of wonder and horror for Aparicio in her practice that spans large-scale mural drawings and sculptures that often feature modified found objects and mouth blown glass. Humour, and an aesthetic style inspired by comic books and cartoons, belies a concern for the bodily impact of daily life, the environment, disease and age. In 2019, Aparicio won Generaciones 2019, one of the most prestigious awards for emerging artists in Europe, and was commissioned by the Serpentine Gallery to make the film 'Green Shoots' for their General Ecology symposium and research project, 'The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish with Plants' in London.

Jess Allen

Jess Allen (b. 1966, Dorset, United Kingdom) is a contemporary British artist based in Cornwall. She studied at Camberwell College of Arts and Falmouth School of Art. Her practice is centered around domestic objects and locating the sublime in the seemingly mundane. She explores the gulf between our exterior façades and inner worlds, allowing us to glimpse the varying degrees of chaos and order that may lie behind doors. Within the world of painting, Jess Allen's works explore themes of absence, presence, emptiness, memory,

and time. Objects stand in as symbols of individuals kept out of view: a discarded book becomes a direct reference to its absent reader. Scenes of domestic space, populated by quotidian objects yet uninhabited by visible figures, become psychologically charged windows that leave the viewer searching for human presence.

Alma Berrow

Often inspired by intimate day-to-day experiences from her formative years, Alma Berrow's (b. 1992, United Kingdom) nostalgic and sometimes uncanny artistic vocabulary is inextricably linked to personal memory. Her practice re-investigates the genre of still life through portrayal of contemporary taboos and zeit-geist revealed by the ubiquitous pocket litter left behind. Berrow succeeds in her ability to transform ordinary objects into art pieces that are both humorous and other-worldly beautiful. Berrow lives and works in London, previously attending Falmouth University for Art and Textiles. It was over her first lockdown, due to Covid-19, that she began to explore ceramics as her primary medium. In 2021, Berrow was part of Sotheby's (Women) Artists auction, with her work presented alongside works by Lavinia Fontana, Dorothea Tanning, Cindy Sherman and Helen Frankenthaler.

Marco Bizzarri

Marco Bizzarri (b. 1988, Santiago) is a Chilean artist based in West Sussex, England. He graduated from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile with a BA in Fine Arts (2014) and co-founded

Centro ARC, a new space for art residencies at the Humboldt Archipelago in the Atacama Desert of Chile in 2017. In 2020 he won the Solo Residency at Unit 1 Gallery, London, and studied Painting at Turps Art School in the following year. In 2021 he was invited to High House Residency in Norfolk and the same year he won The de Laszlo Foundation Award and The Gilbert Bayes Award from the Royal Society of Sculptors. He was also one of the five finalists of the First Plinth Public Art Award given by the same institution. Marco Bizzarri's paintings respond to the exercise of collecting and translating images by delving into the material possibilities of pictorial language. The result combines abstraction and figuration: the images reveal the multiple resources with which they have been constructed. The pictorial image, taken from personal photographs, is constructed from the dynamic between revealing and concealing. The action of covering the surface, through the gesture of sandblasting, is articulated as a way of silencing elements and at the same time charging the composition with a singular graphic and chromatic expression.

James Lomax

James Lomax (b. 1991, UK) graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2022. He has undertaken residencies at Ikon Gallery, The New Art Gallery Walsall, The Henry Moore Institute and Studio Block M74 Mexico City. Lomax is drawn to objects that serve as barriers or containers, using them to explore the physical and material qualities of a place. By highlighting both permanent and fleeting elements within a landscape, he works with found objects, reframing and transforming them by altering their context, material, and form. His practice, often

characterized by repetitive series, integrates with his interest in exhibition-making. Selected exhibitions include: Chester Contemporary, curated by Ryan Gander (2023); *Unbound Material*, Sid Motion Gallery, London, UK (2023), *Unprecedented Times*, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2022), *Absurd*, OHSB Projects, London, UK (2022), *Modern Relics*, Fold Gallery, London, UK (2022), and *Flatten & Collapse*, Recent Activity, London, UK (2022).

Christabel Macgreevy

Christabel MacGreevy (b. 1991, London, England) is a British artist living and working in London. MacGreevy studied Fine Art at Central Saint Martins, London (2010) and the Ecole de Beaux Arts, Paris (2013), before completing her postgraduate diploma from The Royal Drawing School, London (2016). Her interdisciplinary practice is concerned with myth, love, and memory explored through folklore, art history and personal mythology, explored through the interplay of the personal and the universal. MacGreevy uses storytelling and an idiosyncratic iconography to express what we may struggle to say in words; identity, masculinity, femininity, and what it is to experience the human condition, with its complexities, joys, miseries, furies and madness. MacGreevy's works explore ideas of memory, identity and the human inclination to transform the significance of the inanimate, or overlooked object into a personal shrine. Her bold drawing practice has an emphasis on pattern, color and graphic lines lending itself to an expanded practice which includes collage, printmaking, textiles and more recently, ceramic sculpture.

Elias Peña Salvador

The paintings of Salvador (b.1992, Spain) pay homage to the transcendent nature of everyday life. Salvador luxuriates in and is inspired by often overlooked simplicities of life. From the intimacy of public spaces to the pervading sense of community and camaraderie in a crowd, Salvador captures the delicate subtleties of life to delve deeper into the inner workings of society. In each of Salvador's works, his brushstrokes narrate untold stories in a frozen *mise en scène*. From elderly men playing games on the street, children rushing out of school, and people waiting amidst traffic, Salvador takes on the mundane everyday happenings and turns them into whimsical abstractions. Salvador's paintings are works of figuration and abstraction, chaos and harmony; They serve to examine and immortalize the ephemeral instant that separates accident from chance. He transcends literal representation, each scene intimately pulling the viewer closer to the subjectivity of human consciousness: a distillation of personal experience and fleeting scenes. Salvador's paintings are not about creating something new. Instead, they serve as a gateway to reenter the monotonous everyday world, a fervid reminder of the beauty and vitality of the world surrounding us, leaving viewers enlightened with transformed eyes to appreciate the world around us.

Emma Sheehy

Emma Sheehy (b. 1992, London, England) creates imaginative spaces that are escapist, funny and folkloric. They are filled with a somewhat weaponised naïveté. Often drawing upon medieval-inspired imagery, she builds up a collection of creatures to play with again and again in paintings and sculptures. Emma's work is influenced by pre-modern polytheistic mythologies, medieval manuscripts and awkward public interactions. Emma uses her research as a means of

understanding the present. Her impish creatures complicitly smile at our contemporary moment and the repeating patterns we find ourselves in. They seek to communicate that to love is a freedom from pain. For Emma, making work is sometimes a personal healing process which looks to accept the monstrous, shadow sides of the self. It is also a means of learning to cherish and love her body which is outside of the purported conventional, 'able' working body, as a result of chronic disease. Although there are constant battles, the times where love wins are moments of glorious flowing.

Orfeo Tagiuri

Orfeo Tagiuri (b. 1991, Brookline, MA, USA) lives and works in London. Orfeo's practice spans from painting and drawing to performance, film, woodcarving, animation, and music. Orfeo has both exhibited and performed internationally, including at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018), at Fiorucci Art Trust's Volcano Extravaganza (2016) and the ICA, London (2015). Orfeo is a graduate (MFA Painting, 2019) of the Slade School of Fine Art, and previously attended Stanford University. In 2020, Orfeo was nominated as one of the recipients of the Bloomberg New Contemporaries, with an exhibition opening in May 2021 at the South London Gallery.

Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei (b. 1957, Beijing, China) is a Chinese contemporary artist, documentarian, and activist. Ai grew up in the far northwest of China, where he lived under harsh conditions due to his father's exile, until 1976. Ai attended the Beijing Film Academy from 1978 through 1981, after which he

relocated to the United States, settling in New York and briefly attending Parsons School of Design. In 1993 he returned to China, where he helped establish Beijing East Village, a community of experimental artists. Ai's practice, which encompasses architecture, Conceptual art, curating, installation, and photography, is driven by the artist's social activism and is often critical of the Chinese government. Ai uses art as a means of confronting the sociopolitical system in China. His recurrent manipulations of Chinese cultural artifacts juxtapose the materiality and tradition of the country's imperial history with symbols of the current phase of its modernization.

Franz West

Austrian-born artist Franz West (1947-2012) emerged in the early 1970s, developing a distinctive aesthetic that blended high and low cultural references while emphasizing social interaction as an essential element of his work. Known primarily as a sculptor, West's diverse body of work also included drawing, collage, video, and installation, incorporating materials such as papier-mâché,

furniture, cardboard, plaster, and found imagery. His playful manipulation of everyday materials redefined art as a social experience, drawing attention to how art is presented and how viewers engage with both the artwork and each other. West studied at the Academy of Applied Arts from 1977 to 1982. He belonged to a generation of artists influenced by Actionist and Performance Art from the 1960s and 70s, but he instinctively rejected the passive relationship between artwork and viewer. In 1973, he began creating his "Passstücke" (Adaptives), compact, portable mixed-media sculptures that became art only when physically or cognitively engaged by the viewer—through touch, holding, wearing, or carrying. These early works laid the foundation for his later explorations, in which he increasingly framed sculpture as part of an ongoing dialogue between viewer and object, while also probing the aesthetic interplay between painting and sculpture.