

Distant Voices

46 & 57 rue du Temple, 75004, Paris

14 January – 25 February 2023

Opening: Saturday, 14 January, 6 – 9 pm

Galerie Max Hetzler, Paris, is pleased to present *Distant Voices*, a group exhibition exploring notions of exile, the fight against oppression and resilience through the work of four artists, **Ai Weiwei**, **Leilah Babirye**, **Simone Fattal** and **Adam Pendleton**.

*'You always have to be aware that art is not only a self-expression but a demonstration of human rights and dignity.'*¹ — Ai Weiwei, 2008

Ai Weiwei, Babirye, Fattal and Pendleton have all raised their voices for human rights regarding political situations of war, intolerance and censorship. Exiled from their countries, Ai Weiwei, Babirye and Fattal dug into their own traditions, iconography, symbology and skills to crystallise a collective response to political and social repression. Both Babirye and Pendleton's advocacy for persecuted LGBTQ+ and Black communities is inscribed in their work, which queers established notions of representation and abstraction.

This exhibition reveals the ways in which political events shape individual lives, and it embarks us on a journey towards denouncing and breaking free from various forms of authoritarianism.

Ai Weiwei displays *Porcelain Pillar with Refugee Motif*, 2017, representing various traumas of the refugee crisis through six established motifs: War, Ruins, Journey, Crossing the Sea, Refugee Camps and Demonstrations. These themes are depicted and placed within a historical context through the traditional Chinese language of blue-and-white porcelain, known as *qinghua*.

Fattal engenders ragged surface impurities on her abstract and sometimes figurative ceramic sculptures, invested in the ancestral and collective memory of her Middle Eastern background. Her own diasporic experience has led her to figure the fragility of our world.

For Pendleton, artistic positions are also philosophical positions, because every artwork is a field of possibilities, not only for the artist but also for the viewer. Although his painting has referenced the aesthetics of protest in popular movements such as Black Lives Matter, it also consistently underscores his point that *'abstraction is as political as anything else.'*

Babirye, who fled Uganda's anti-LGBT legislation and hostile political climate, 'addresses the reality of being gay in the context of Uganda



Ai Weiwei, *Porcelain Pillar with Refugee Motif*, 2017
Photo: Nicolas Brasseur | Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio



Simone Fattal, *Broken House*, 2018
Photo: Nicolas Brasseur



Leilah Babirye, *Omulangila NaKattakesu from the Kuchu Royal Family of Buganda*, 2022
Photo: Nicolas Brasseur

¹ Ai Weiwei, 2000-09, *Ai Weiwei: A Rebel of Poet Roots*, 2008.

and Africa in general², by using discarded material common in the streets of her hometown, Kampala, as well as African iconography of masks and totems. Her magnetic and hybrid sculptures explore identity and how the queer community continues to exist despite rejection.

Ai Weiwei (*1957, Beijing, China) lives and works between the UK, Portugal and Germany. Major solo exhibitions of the artist's work have been recently held at The Baths of Diocletian, Rome; Albertina Modern, Vienna; Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge (all 2022); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Serralves Museum, Porto; Cordoaria Nacional, Lisbon (all 2021); Imperial War Museum, London (2020); K20 Grabbeplatz, Dusseldorf; The Gardiner Museum, Toronto (both 2019); OCA, São Paulo; Fundación CorpArtes, Santiago; Mucem, Marseille (all 2018); and Royal Academy of Art, London (2015). Ai has been the recipient of numerous awards and honours over his career, most recently the Praemium Imperiale award by the Japan Art Association (2022); the Marina Kellen French Outstanding Contributions to the Arts Award granted by the Americans for the Arts (2018); Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International (2015); the Appraisers Association Award for Excellence in the Arts (2013) and Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation (2012). He was made Honorary Academician at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2011. Ai's work is in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Cleveland Museum of Art; Dahlem Museum, Berlin; De Pont Museum, Tilburg; Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg; Faurschou Foundation, Copenhagen; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum DKM, Duisburg; Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt am Main; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Gallery, London; The Walther Collection, Neu Ulm; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, among others.

Leilah Babirye (*1985, Kampala, Uganda) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She was granted asylum in the United States in 2018. The artist's work has been presented in group exhibitions including the MUMOK, Vienna; The Hayward Gallery, London; The Africa Centre, London; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York (all 2022); Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry (2020); and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2019), among others. She was commissioned to make a site-specific work for *Black Atlantic* at Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York (2022); and created *Najunga From the Kuchu Ngaali (Crested Crane) Clan*, for Celine's Art Project, London (2021). Her works are in the collections of The Africa Centre, London; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson, New York; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; Sammlung Goetz, Munich; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Adam Pendleton, *Untitled (Days)*, 2022
Photo: Andy Romer

² Leilah Babirye, quoted in *Leilah Babirye: Erika Bay ba Kuchu mu Buganda (Kuchu Clans of Buganda)*. Cat. (11 octobre-29 novembre 2020, Gordon Robichaux, New York), p. 48.

Simone Fattal (*1942, Damascus, Syria) lives and works in Paris. The artist participated in the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. In recent years, her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions in public institutions, including the Whitechapel Gallery, London; ICA, Milan (both 2021–2022); MoMA PS1, New York; Bergen Kunsthall (both 2019); Musée de Rochechouart (2017); and Sharjah Art Foundation (2016). Group exhibitions of her work have taken place at the Qatar Museums, Doha; Gropius Bau, Berlin (both 2022); Punta della Dogana - Pinault Collection, Venice (2019); and Musée Yves Saint Laurent, Marrakech (2018), among others. Her work will also be the subject of upcoming exhibitions at the TB21 Ocean Space, Venice; and Portikus, Frankfurt in 2023. Fattal's work is in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; National Museum of Qatar, Doha; Sharja Art Foundation; Surssock Museum, Beirut; and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent, Marrakech.

Adam Pendleton (*1984, Richmond, VA) lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions of the artist's work have been held in international institutions, including Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (2022); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2021); Le Consortium, Dijon; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (both 2020); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2018); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Baltic Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead; Baltimore Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (all 2017); Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver (both 2016), among others. Upcoming solo shows include the Mumok, Vienna (2023). The artist's work is in the collections of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and Tate, London, among others.

Further exhibitions and events

Berlin:

13 January – 25 February 2023

Karel Appel

Encounter in Spring and what follows

curated by Franz W. Kaiser

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

13 January – 25 February 2023

Martin Kippenberger

heute denken - morgen fertig

Works from private collections from the 80s and 90s.

Photographs by Wilhelm Schürmann and Andrea Stappert.

curated by Josephine von Humboldt
Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

25 January – 25 February 2023

Carroll Dunham

Selected Drawings

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623 Berlin

3 February – 11 March 2023

Barry Flanagan

Imaginary Solutions

Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785 Berlin

London:

19 January – 25 February 2023

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