

HOMEWORK

Tony Chambers on a magnum opus of an art fair, the young Mexican bringing Latin lines to the Serpentine Pavilion and the starchitects who bake buildings



Master blaster

A series of five alabaster portraits by Marina Abramović lines the entrance to Masterpiece London, the extravaganza of collectible design, art and jewellery that returns to the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Viewed at one angle they appear to be abstract landscapes, but at another they show the performance artist's face vividly contorted, her mouth agape, as though screaming in horror. But don't take *Five Stages of Maya Dance* for an expression of art fair fatigue. If anything, the diverse and vibrant showing at Masterpiece makes fair-going more enjoyable than ever.

The fair's modus operandi is its seamless juxtaposition of old and new, and nowhere is this more evident than the collaboration between American galleries Safani and Geoffrey Diner, which sees the former's ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities contrasted with the latter's 20th-century furniture, among them a sculptural wooden table and matching chairs by the George Nakashima. Likewise, Masterpiece veteran David Gill seems determined to show that great design knows no chronological boundaries. He uses 21st-century works — among them a coral-like bronze bust by Michele Oka Doner and a whimsically upholstered armchair by Mattia Bonetti — to create an interior like the home of Edward James (1907-84), famed patron of Dalí and Giacometti. 'James illustrated how interiors can mix a Picasso with a Syrie Maugham, contemporary bookcases with period furniture,' says Gill. 'I thought it was fitting to do this at Masterpiece, working around a pair of Maugham bookcases from his library.'

Hot on the heels of a major expansion in New York, contemporary design gallery R & Company is making its first appearance at the fair, assembling a solo presentation of glass artist Jeff Zimmerman. A range of organically formed vessels will be paired with three illuminated sculptures, each featuring handblown glass orbs clustered around a sensuously curved brass 'vine' to mesmerising effect.

Another newcomer, local gallerist Sarah Myerscough, has opted for a group presentation including a table and chairs (*below*) in scorched wood by John Makepiece and Peter Marigold and Tadanori Tozawa's Cleft cabinets, made from different Japanese woods. While the textures and processes of the pieces are varied, they are united in their use of organic materials and creative manipulation of

form. Ascetics may screech, Abramović-style, at Masterpiece's embarrassment of riches, but there's no denying that life is good in the material world.

28 Jun to 4 Jul (masterpiecefair.com)

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Mexican fave: Frida Escobedo



THE PERSON

The youngest person ever — and the first solo woman — to design the Serpentine Pavilion, Frida Escobedo, 38, made her name with public architectural interventions, including an Aztec-inspired landscape at the V&A courtyard in 2015 and a monolithic timber platform for the Chicago Cultural Center last year. Her Serpentine project, opening on 15 June, will feature a reflecting pool enclosed by dark latticed walls, uniting architectural hallmarks from Britain and her native Mexico. (fridaescobedo.net; serpentinegalleries.org)

THE EXPERIENCE

The annual Great Architectural Bake Off, organised by hospitality design agency WATG, is always a highlight of the London Festival of Architecture. Leading practices including Zaha Hadid Architects, Squire & Partners, Make Architects and Wilkinson Eyre will be creating edible works of architecture this Saturday in Guildhall Yard, with results determined by a judging panel that includes architectural writer Peter Murray and *The Great British Bake Off* star Tom Hetherington. The event is open to the public. (londonfestivalofarchitecture.org)



THE OBJECT

Nest Labs, the Google-owned maker of intelligent thermostats and smoke alarms, releases a new video doorbell in the UK this month. Called Nest Hello, the product allows users to screen visitors to their front door on a phone screen, with an optional facial recognition system that can send customised alerts based on who it is. The doorbell also connects to Google Assistant-enabled speakers, bringing us yet another step closer to a fully intelligent home. £329 (nest.com/uk)



THE BUILDING

'The new cultural home of Japan' will be unveiled on Kensington High Street on 22 June. Overseen by Muji art director Kenya Hara and Wonderwall designer Masamichi Katayama, Japan House will showcase the best of Japanese design, art, technology and food, with the architectural draw being a spiral staircase at its heart. Comprising 51 steel steps and weighing 19.3 tonnes, the staircase was handmade in Japan over eight months and is a fitting opener to a cultural tour de force. (japanhouselondon.uk)

