

Joseph Kosuth. *EXISTENTIAL TIME #6*. 2019. Installation view at GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino. Warm white neon, clock. 12 x 142 cm. Artissima 2020. Image courtesy of Galleria Lia Rumma Milano/Napoli. Photography by Perottino – Piva / Artissima



WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON? ART IN THE PANDEMIC

With the world reeling under the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the lives of millions of people have been affected. Beyond the immediate tragedy and upset of the many deaths, the economic and social well-being of vast swathes of the global population is potentially at risk for years to come. The arts and culture sector has faced additional particular challenges, struggling at times to articulate its voice and often regarded by governments as less worthy of financial support than other parts of the economy. We take a look at how the art scene is coping.

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Regina Vater. *Give me your time*. 1981. 65 cards. Pen, graphite, newspaper, magazine and other printed matter cutting, adhesive, typing, punching, leterset, postage stamp and rubber stamp on printed paper. 9.2 x 13.8 cm. Image courtesy of Artissima and Galeria Jaqueline Martins São Paulo, Brussels



ART FAIRS AND BIENNALES

As major art events years in preparation become unfeasible, we look at what's been successfully delivered, what's planned for the coming months, and ask leading figures how the art fair of the future might look.

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Forged against an unpromising backdrop in locked-down Turin, the latest edition of **ARTISSIMA** has finally opened. In a sign of the times, the 27th iteration of the fair since its inception in 1994 is both physical and digital, mirroring the art world's wider split personality. *Words by James Parry*



Installation view at GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino. Image courtesy of Artissima. Photography by Perottino-Piva

As if organising a major art fair were not burdensome enough, coping with the uncertainty of recent months – and the constant lurches in and out of what might end up being everyone's 'new normal' – is surely enough to drive any curator over the edge. Tempted to seek refuge in postponement? Not so, it seems. "It's been very difficult at times," admits Ilaria Bonacossa, director of Artissima, "but we felt that the art world, and the Italian one in particular, needed an occasion of networking, of meeting clients and of working together to map the way to a different future."

A clue to how different that future might be lies in the character of this year's fair, which brings together digital projects and

physical exhibitions in a hybrid format called Artissima Unplugged. "We worked tirelessly to make it happen," continues Bonacossa, "inventing new projects with creativity and determination, dismantling and reassembling the fair in response to changing needs."

Originally scheduled to open in early November, before falling foul of a renewed lockdown across Italy, the fair's physical manifestation was finally unveiled on 5 December, under the banner *Frenetic Standstill* – "an ode to resistance and faith, and an attempt to narrate the emergency of this time", according to Bonacossa. It is shared across three of Turin's museums, the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAM), the Palazzo Madama

and the Museo d'Arte Orientale, with each venue home to booths displaying artworks from many of the 122 galleries (from 26 countries) participating in this year's edition, either physically or digitally.

The GAM has more than 100 works on show for the fair, with one gallery space dominated by Anthony Gormley's prostrate but compellingly powerful cast-iron *Flex* (2016), presented by Galleria Continua and eerily symbolic of our troubled age. Elsewhere, the medieval core of the Palazzo Madama has obvious historical attributes, but showcases more contemporary treasures – among them a captivating installation by Andrea Galvani (Fabienne Levy Gallery). *The Totality of Electromagnetic Phenomena*

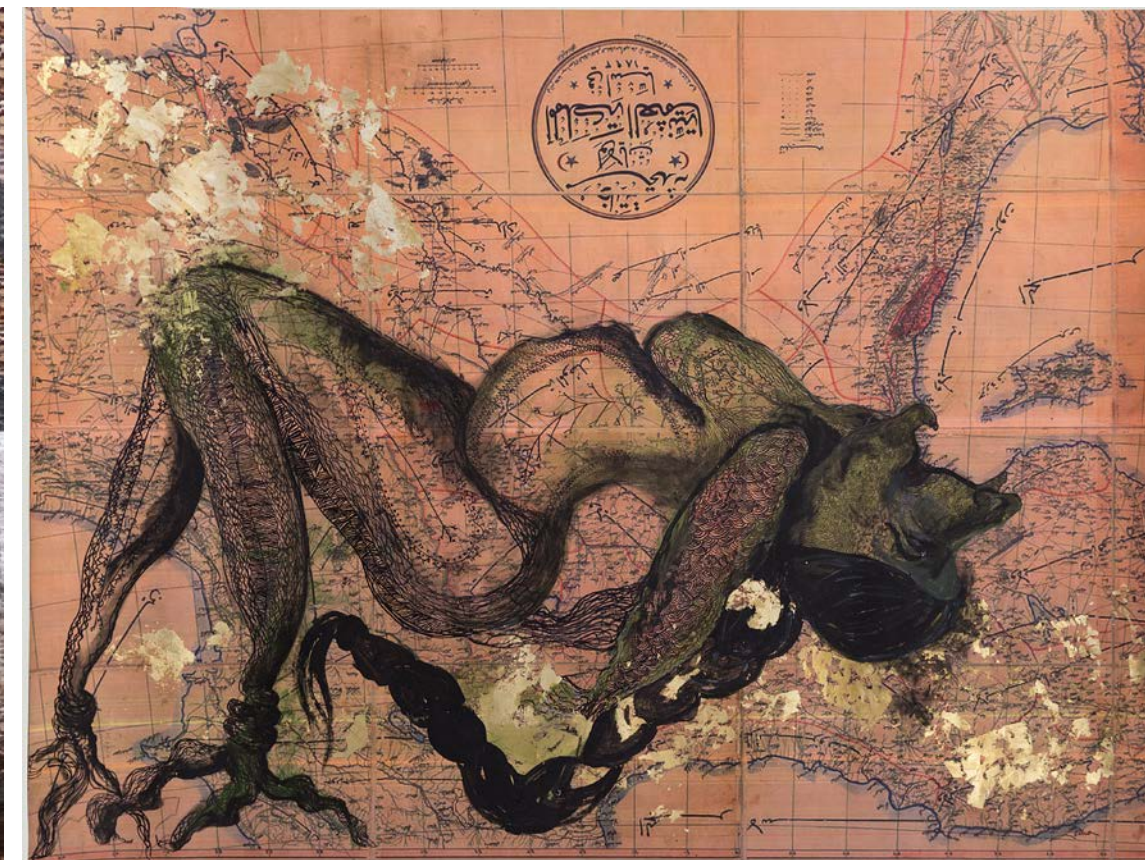
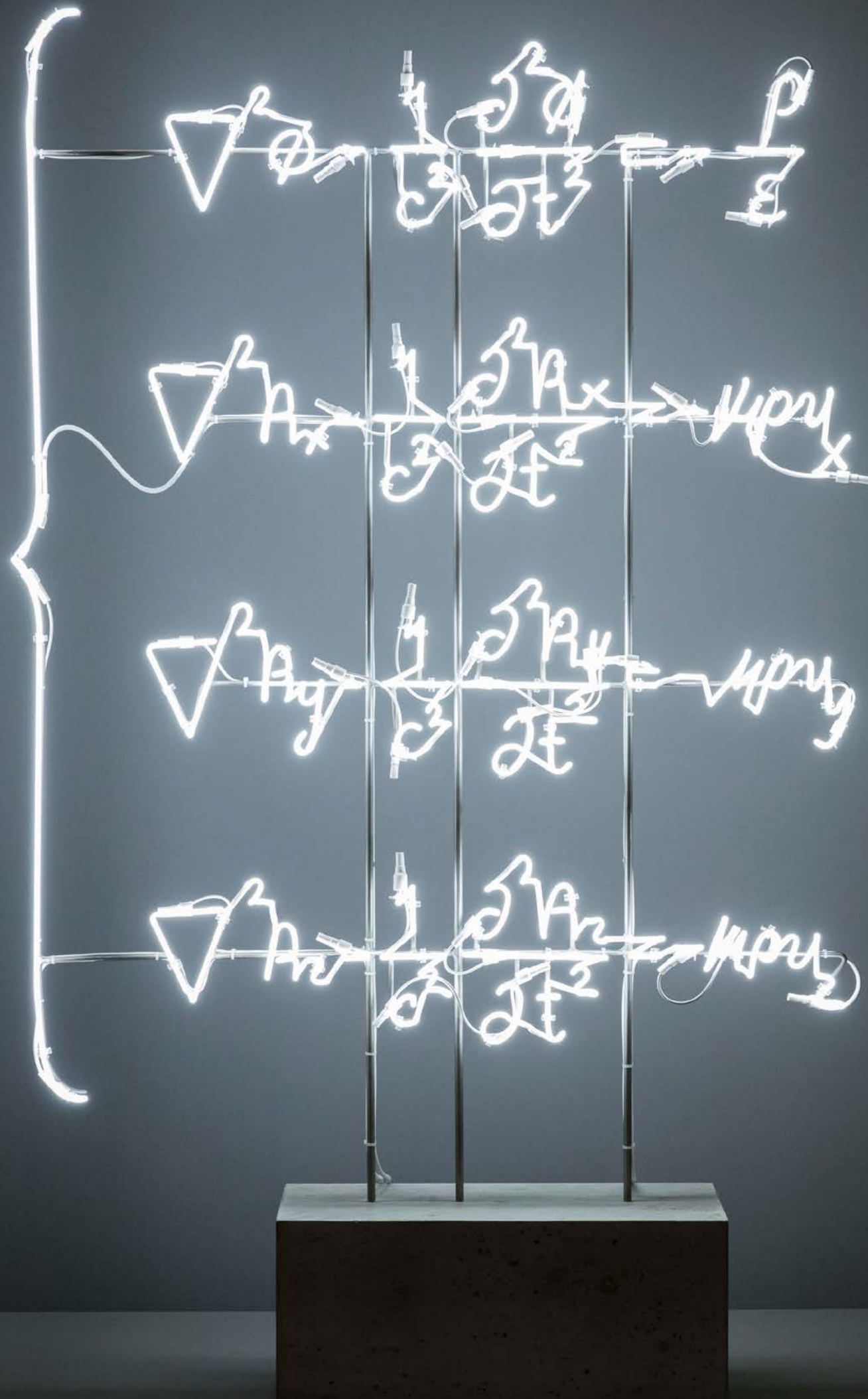
Regina Vater. From the series *Tropicália*.1968. Silkscreen on paper. 37.9 x 28.7 cm. Image courtesy of Galeria Jaqueline Martins São Paulo, Brussels



[Maxwell's Equations] (2019) speaks well to our times, emphasising the primacy of scientific research and application through the layered language of mathematics and physics, yet also capturing beautifully the point at which science becomes magic.

The fair's digital expression includes an online catalogue and Artissima XYZ, a cross-media platform with three curated sections: *Present Future*, *Back to the Future* and *Disegni*. It's an impressive and many-layered achievement, with videos, podcasts and interviews with artists and gallerists, as well as images and archive material. There are also 3D virtual tours of the three physical venues, with tags linking to a range of material about each work on display. "We wanted the digital dimension of the fair to go much further than just an online viewing room," explains Bonacossa. "The multimedia approach and ease of use have opened the way to a wider audience, not just of collectors and art professionals, but also curious, young visitors who are getting acquainted with art."

In our COVID-19 age, we increasingly expect nothing less than this level of digital delivery. It can be a lot to work through, but there are nuggets of gold to be found. In the *Back to the Future* section, works from the 1960s and 70s by the Brazilian-born artist Regina Vater are particular gems, presented by



Left: Zehra Doğan. Photography by OKNOstudio; right: Zehra Doğan. *Kurdistan 2*. 2020. On map, acrylic, felt pen, gold paper. 150 x 114 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani Milan/Lucca

São Paulo-based Galeria Jaqueline Martins. A special standout is her 1968 *Tropicália* series, through which Vater's vibrant and articulate engagement with the political and intellectual issues of that time continues to have clanging resonance today.

A major highlight of this edition of Artissima came on 19 November, with the announcement of Zehra Doğan as the winner of the inaugural Carol Rama Award. Sponsored by the Fondazione Sardi per l'Arte and open to any living female artist presented at the fair, the award is given to an individual deemed to channel the spirit and ethos of the late artist Carol Rama, embodying in their work the same unconventional female creativity and artistic freedom expressed by Rama. Born in Turin in 1918, Rama was a self-taught artist who courted controversy with her creative focus on themes of sexuality, feminism and mental illness. Her innovative and challenging work was subject to censorship and trenchant condemnation from some quarters, which only

served to further cement her commitment to expressing difficult and complex issues through her art. She died in 2015 and her Turin apartment – where she lived and worked for several decades – is now protected as an Italian cultural asset.

In this context there can be few worthy candidates of such recognition than Kurdish artist and journalist Doğan (born 1989, in Diyarbakir). A formidable and outspoken campaigner for women's rights and freedom of speech, in 2016 she was arrested and sentenced to almost three years' imprisonment by the Turkish authorities for inciting terrorism after posting on Twitter a watercolour painting she had made showing the destruction by Turkish armed forces of a Kurdish area of the city of Nusaybin.

Doğan's plight generated outrage worldwide and garnered the vocal support of international artists such as Ai Weiwei and Banksy. The Turkish government remained unmoved, however, and her jail sentence was confirmed. While in prison, Doğan continued to create

artworks using whatever media and materials she could find or make, smuggling these out of her cell as dirty laundry. She was released from prison in 2019, since when she has continued her campaigning and art-making. Presented at Artissima by Milan- and Lucca-based Prometeogallery, her landmark work *Kurdistan 2* (2020) is on view at the Museo d'Arte Orientale. As well as being awarded EUR 2000 (USD 2422), Doğan will collaborate on an exhibition with the Fondazione and the Carol Rama Archive in 2021.

Talking to *Canvas* about the award, Doğan commented how touched and honoured she was to receive it, not only as Carol Rama was "an artist whose name and impropriety both speak to me", but also because she felt respected as "a woman determined to remain free and independent. So often singled out because of my personal story as an artist who was imprisoned, the fact that this is a prize for art fills me with joy. Art has the power to break through every wall but also to go beyond every propriety, norm and limit." ■