

Press release
16 September 2026

The Contemporary Art Society launches new Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund to mark tenth anniversary of partnership with Frieze



- **The Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund will support the purchase of a work by an artist presenting in Frieze London's Focus section for a UK public institution for the next five years, starting with Abbot Hall, Kendal**
- **The CAS Collections Fund at Frieze will celebrate its tenth anniversary by acquiring significant works for the Whitworth, Manchester**

The Contemporary Art Society (CAS) marks its tenth anniversary of partnering with Frieze to support the acquisition of significant contemporary works for UK public institutions with the launch of the Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund at the London fair in 2026. Adding to the existing CAS Collections Fund at Frieze, which over the past decade has paired museum curators with private collectors to research and secure major contemporary acquisitions at the fair, the Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund will facilitate the purchase of work by a young artist with a presentation in the Focus section of Frieze London.

The recipient museums for the two CAS purchase funds facilitated at Frieze London 2026 are: the Whitworth, Manchester, for the £100,000 Collections Fund at Frieze; and Abbot Hall, Kendal, for the newly established £30,000 Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund. Together, the two funds will bring significant new works by both established and emerging artists into UK public collections.

The Contemporary Art Society (CAS) is a London-based charity founded in 1910 to promote the acquisition and study of contemporary art in the UK. Since its foundation, it has facilitated the donation of over 10,500 works of fine art and craft into public collections. CAS currently has a membership of 78 museums across the UK, and past acquisitions made possible by the Collections Fund at Frieze include works by John Akomfrah (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art), Kehinde Wiley (The Box, Plymouth); Ibrahim Mahama (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery) and Michael Landy (The Walker Art Gallery).

Long-standing CAS supporter and arts philanthropist Dasha Shenkman has a distinguished track record of supporting young creatives, and the new Focus Fund is designed to recognise an early career artist at a moment of maximum visibility and at a critical juncture in the development of their practice.

Caroline Douglas, Director of the Contemporary Art Society, said: "For the past decade, the Collections Fund at Frieze has enabled us to acquire major works for our member museums by some of the most exciting artists working today, from Kehinde Wiley and Zadie Xa to Ibrahim Mahama and Haegue Yang. As we celebrate this ten-year milestone, we are grateful to the members of the Collections Fund Committee, past and present, whose expertise and commitment have helped shape its impact. This year, the Committee is co-chaired by Liesl Fichardt and Nicola Blake.

We're doubly thrilled to mark this anniversary by opening an exciting new chapter connecting emerging artists with UK institutions thanks to the generous and visionary support of Dasha Shenkman and her newly launched Focus Fund. At a time when most UK museums have no core budget for acquisitions, committed philanthropy is one of the only routes by which work by contemporary artists work can enter public collections."

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

Press contacts:

Matthew Brown / matthew@sam-talbot.com

Flora Guildford / flora@sam-talbot.com

Image credits (L-R):

The Whitworth, Manchester. © the Whitworth; Abbot Hall (Lakeland Arts), Kendal. © Lakeland Arts.

ABOUT THE COLLECTIONS FUND AT FRIEZE

This year is the 10th anniversary of the Contemporary Art Society's Collections Fund at Frieze, designed to support the acquisition of significant contemporary works for Contemporary Art Society Museum Members across the UK. The central aim of the Collections Fund is to draw together the knowledge, experience and expertise of private collectors and museum curators in a programme of research leading to an acquisition at Frieze London/Frieze Masters.

Past acquisitions made possible by the Collections Fund have included works by John Akomfrah and Kader Attia for Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (2016), Dineo Seshee Bopape for Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (2017); Kehinde Wiley and Zadie Xa for The Box, Plymouth (2018); Zanele Muholi for Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery (2019); Sunil Gupta, Hetain Patel and Billie Zangewa for Harris Museum and Art Gallery (2021); Ibrahim Mahama for Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery (2022); Grada Kilomba, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum and Goshka Macuga for The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (2023); Nour Jaouda and Haegue Yang (2024) for the Hepworth Wakefield; and Michael Landy and Shaquéelle Whyte for The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2025).

The 2026 Collections Fund at Frieze is co-chaired by Nicola Blake and Liesl Fichardt. The committee includes Soo Hitchin, Stephanie Holmquist, Helen Janecek, Sophie Kingsley, Béatrice Lupton, Clare McKeon, Suling Mead, Minka Nyberg, Andrew Pirrie-Franks, Susan Rosenberg, Samantha Rowe-Beddoe, Varvara Roza, and Pamela Stanger.

ABOUT THE DASHA SHENKMAN FOCUS FUND

The Dasha Shenkman Focus Fund is a new acquisition scheme facilitated by the Contemporary Art Society that will support the purchase of work by a young artist with a presentation in the Focus section of Frieze London. The purchase may be the artist's first ever museum acquisition, offering both critical endorsement as well as a public platform in the premier forum for contemporary art in the UK. Dasha Shenkman has a distinguished track record of supporting young creatives and her Focus Fund is designed to recognise a young artist at a moment of maximum visibility and at a critical juncture in the development of their practice.

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY

The Contemporary Art Society (CAS) is a London-based charity founded in 1910 to promote the acquisition and study of contemporary art in the UK. Since its foundation, it has facilitated the donation of over 10,500 works of fine art and craft into public collections. The CAS currently has a membership of 78 museums across the UK: from Plymouth in the South to Orkney in the North, and from Swansea in the West to Norwich in the East. Over the years, the CAS has acquired work by many leading artists, including Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, David Hockney, John Akomfrah, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye and Grayson Perry. We're thrilled to continue this legacy by supporting the acquisition of significant works of contemporary art at Frieze London.

contemporaryartsociety.org

ABOUT THE WHITWORTH

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

ABOUT ABBOT HALL

Abbot Hall is set within a Grade I listed Georgian villa on the banks of the River Kent in Kendal, Cumbria, and is part of Lakeland Arts, a registered charity and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Over more than sixty years it has built one of the North of England's most significant art collections, bringing together historic and contemporary work — from watercolours by J.M.W. Turner and John Ruskin and a comprehensive holding of George Romney portraiture, to modern and contemporary pieces by Barbara Hepworth, Lucian Freud, Bridget Riley, Stanley Spencer and Charmaine Watkiss. Alongside its permanent collection, Abbot Hall is

known for an ambitious and independently minded temporary exhibition programme, with a focus on ecology and the surrounding landscape.

lakelandarts.org.uk/abbot-hall/

ABOUT FRIEZE

Frieze is one of the world's leading platforms for modern and contemporary art, for scholars, connoisseurs, collectors, and the general public alike. Frieze comprises three magazines – frieze, Frieze Masters Magazine and Frieze Week – and six international art fairs – Frieze London, Frieze Masters, Frieze New York, Frieze Los Angeles, Frieze Seoul, and Frieze Abu Dhabi. In October 2021, Frieze launched No.9 Cork Street, a hub for visiting international galleries in the heart of Mayfair, London. Frieze is part of the IMG network.

www.frieze.com