

Interiors

North American Pavilion, London: 'A more tender approach to design'

This short show brings together eight of the continent's newer galleries that champion work from 'outside the canon'



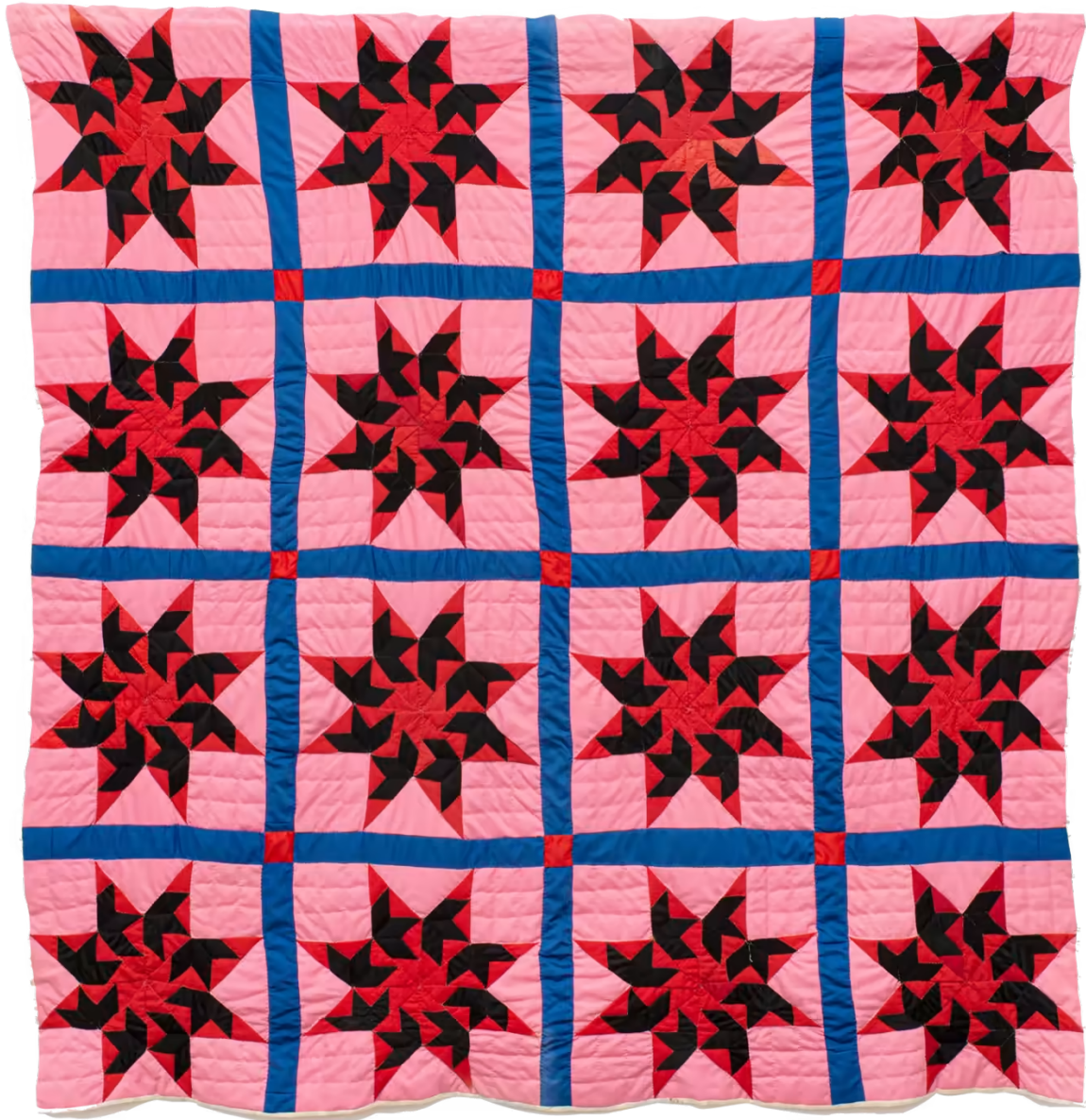
'Chair Dressing 1 and 2' by Kristin Dickson-Okuda, presented by Jacqueline Sullivan Gallery © Oscar Foster-Kane

Victoria Woodcock 4 HOURS AGO

“You’re in Mayfair. The Ladurée shop is a minute away. Then you’ll step into this show and it will be a surprise.” New York-based, Welsh-Italian gallerist Alex Tieghi-Walker is talking about his pop-up London exhibition that is taking place at No. 9 Cork Street until June 24. The smart two-townhouse gallery space, run by the team behind Frieze art fair, will become The North American Pavilion, a group show of eight galleries from the US, Mexico and Canada — all of which are less than five years old. The sense of surprise will come from their multidisciplinary mash-up of bioplastic chandeliers, taffeta-“dressed” chairs and homoerotic needlepoint.

“I pride myself on working with artists who are outside of the canon who are doing things their own way,” says Tieghi-Walker, who set up the online platform [Tiwa Select](#) in 2020. Via a programme of peripatetic exhibitions — from a former theatre in downtown Los Angeles to a barn in upstate New York — he showcases “a more tender approach to design”, inspired by his time living in northern California. “It’s work that is very handcrafted — a lot less design with a capital ‘D’.”

For his London debut, Tieghi-Walker has put together “a history of the US through textile art”. There are quilts by Appalachian craftspeople and the Alabaman Gee’s Bend collective, antique Navajo weavings, and work by contemporary makers — ranging from New York-based [Jordan Nassar](#), who uses traditional Palestinian embroidery to create geometric patterns and landscapes, to Sal Salandra, a 77-year-old former hairdresser in New Jersey, who “creates LGBTQ folk art through needlepoint. I’m actually going to put his work in the bathroom, because it’s quite rude.”



Quinnie Pettway's 'Flying Swallows' quilt for Gee's Bend, presented by Tiwa Select © Quinnie Pettway/Alison Jacques Gallery
As a whole, the exhibition is a showcase for “the best of North American curation”, says Tieghi-Walker. His grouping spans LA-based gallery Noon Projects, “a queer-run space that shows work by predominantly queer artists”; Montreal’s Bruises, which “focuses on antiques and found objects”; and Of the Cloth, run by Tione Trice, who “grew up in Atlanta and is very interested in how west African art forms made it over to the US through the slave trade”.

Collectively, these new-generation galleries are blurring the boundaries between design, art and craft. “In the realm of the white-box gallery, mediums and disciplines have been unnecessarily siloed from one another for too long,” says Benjamin Critton, who founded LA gallery Marta with his partner Heidi Korsavong in 2019. “Putting disparate outputs alongside one another need not lack rigour or consideration.”

Marta's contribution to the North American Pavilion thus features a pigmented, carved foam sofa by Kristen Wentreck and Andrew Zebulon; colourfully layered ceramic vessels by Dino Matt; and abstract landscape paintings by Virva Hinnemo. While all the artists they are showing are based in the US, "half are homegrown — born in Arizona, Texas and California — and half filter their North American sensibilities through upbringings elsewhere", says Korsavong, pointing out that Hinnemo is from Finland and furniture designer Minjae Kim from South Korea.



William Moss's mug 'A Thousand Dawns' (2023)

For Emma Scully, who started her eponymous New York gallery in an Upper East Side townhouse two years ago, this show is an opportunity to advocate for American craftsmanship. "There's often a perception that European craftsmanship is of a higher level," she says. "My passion is in pairing cutting-edge contemporary design with the amazing craftspeople we have in the US."

The OK Foundry, an industrial iron foundry near Richmond, Virginia, was a recent collaborator, while the RCP2 chair by British designer Jane Atfield — the first chair produced from post-consumer recycled plastics in 1992 — has been re-editioned with the original manufacturer in Missouri. It will be on show in Cork Street, alongside pieces by London-based furniture designer EJR Barnes and New York-based Mexican designer Rafael Prieto.

“Rafael is not just a furniture designer; he also runs a branding studio and Casa Bosques [a chocolate company, with a guesthouse and bookshop] in Mexico City,” says Scully. This multi-hyphen approach is also promoted by fellow New York gallerist Jacqueline Sullivan; one of her artists is Kristin Dickson-Okuda, who is showing vintage Morris & Co chairs “dressed” in silk belts, wool leg warmers and taffeta ruffles, but also runs the Los Angeles concept shop Iko Iko as well as a clothing label.



A Dino Matt ceramic piece © Justin-Cole-Smith

At Noon Projects, too, a curation of Californian creatives challenges traditional labels. San José-based potter Will Moss “teaches at a community college and has about 240 Instagram followers, but he makes these incredible mugs which have a narrative to them”, says Ryan Noon, a former fashion designer who worked for Alexander McQueen. “Ben Borden also teaches, and works in a soup kitchen in skid row two days a week, but makes incredible living artworks by chemical reaction.” Using algae embedded in bioplastic to digest and output pigments, his paintings, chandeliers and sconces continuously change and evolve.

“A unifying element [among these eight galleries] is an openness to different backgrounds, rather than the typical design school path, and the result is some really exciting, different work,” says Scully. “I think that people in London will be pleasantly surprised.”

[the-nap.net](#); June 22 to 24

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