

## viennacontemporary Appoints Abaseh Mirvali as New Artistic Director



Abaseh Mirvali, Photo: Mary McCartney

Vienna, April 24, 2025 – viennacontemporary is pleased to announce two senior appointments to its leadership team. The internationally respected cultural leader, Curator, and Museum Director **Abaseh Mirvali will join the 2025 edition as Artistic Advisor**, while simultaneously beginning her tenure as **Artistic Director for the 2026 edition**. In addition to Mirvali, the fair welcomes **Christina Wagner as Chief Operating Officer**. With this strengthened Leadership Team, viennacontemporary signals its commitment to expanding the fair's global impact while staying deeply connected to its Central and Eastern European roots.

With her extensive institutional experience and global network, Mirvali brings a long-term vision rooted in collaboration, innovation, curatorial excellence, and international engagement. With the appointment of Abaseh Mirvali as Artistic Advisor for its 2025 edition (September 11–14), viennacontemporary sets the stage for a new phase in its development. Mirvali will concurrently begin preparations for her role as Artistic Director of the 2026 edition, marking a long-term commitment to shaping the fair’s evolving artistic and programmatic vision.

## **Abaseh Mirvali to Lead Artistic Direction**

Mirvali is an internationally respected Executive, Curator, and Cultural Strategist whose two-decade career spans leading institutions and curatorial platforms across Europe, the United States, the Near East, and Latin America. Her work is defined by a collaborative ethos, civic-mindedness, and an ability to engage diverse communities through contemporary art. She previously served as Executive Director, Chief Curator, and CEO at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Executive Director of the Biennial of the Americas, and Executive Director of Fundación/Colección Jumex Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City. She has also held key curatorial and advisory roles at major art fairs, including ArteBA in Buenos Aires, Artissima in Torino, miart in Milan, and Art Basel.

A longtime advocate of Vienna’s cultural landscape, Mirvali first connected with the city through curated by, one of its most acclaimed curatorial initiatives, and has since maintained a dynamic relationship with the local scene. At viennacontemporary, she curated the Solo Expanded section with a vision of bridging cultures—bringing emerging voices into dialogue with established practices. She continues to champion Viennese artists and institutions abroad, integrating them into wider international conversations whenever possible.

**Francesca Gavin**, who served as Artistic Director for the 2024 edition, will step down to focus on other editorial and curatorial projects. The fair’s board, management, and team express their gratitude to Francesca Gavin for her contributions and professionalism, which supported a successful edition and brought a renewed international focus to viennacontemporary’s program.

## Further Key Appointments: Strengthening the Team

As part of its strategic development, viennacontemporary also announces several new appointments ahead of its 11th edition:



Christina Wagner, Photo: Jenn Wortham; Aliaksei Barysionak, Photo: Kristina Kulakova

- **Christina Wagner** joins as Chief Operating Officer (COO). A graduate of ESCP Europe and the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Wagner has a strong background in operational strategy, efficiency management, and international expansion in the German and Austrian startup scenes. With a proven track record of managing operational teams at Infarm in Berlin & haelsi in Vienna, Wagner thrives in fast-paced, evolving markets.

- **Aliaksei Barysionak**, a long-standing VCT team member and Independent curator with a focus on Eastern European contemporary art, has been appointed Curator of ZONE1, viennacontemporary's section for emerging artists. Alongside his work with the fair, Barysionak is an active curator and editor with contributions to e-flux Journal, L'Internationale Online, Springerin, TQW Magazine, and others. He recently co-curated the 2024 Matter of Art Biennale in Prague and was a fellow at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics in New York from 2022 to 2024.
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## QUOTES

**Abaseh Mirvali:** *"It is an honor to take on the role of Artistic Director at viennacontemporary. My approach to leading viennacontemporary is grounded in strategy, collaboration, and a deep respect for the cultural and civic landscape of Vienna and Austria. I see this as an opportunity to strengthen institutional partnerships, deepen regional engagement, and expand our relevance internationally. At a time of accelerated change across the art world, we must be agile and intentional, building a fair that reflects both the complexity of our moment and the strength of our shared commitments. I look forward to working closely with the team and our stakeholders and the cultural community at large to shape a program and platform that is rigorous, dynamic, and forward-looking."*

**Markus Huber**, Managing Director of viennacontemporary, comments:

*"We are pleased to welcome a museum director and curator of international caliber to lead viennacontemporary at a time of great transformation in the art world. With more than 20 years of experience across institutions and cultural contexts, Abaseh brings both curatorial depth and strategic leadership. In a moment that calls for thoughtful adaptation and innovation,*

*we were looking for a strong and collaborative artistic director—someone capable of engaging deeply with galleries, institutions, and collectors, and of shaping the fair's future with both cultural resonance and market insight."*

**Bernhard Hainz**, Spokesman of the Shareholders, adds: *"We are excited to welcome a leader who brings both deep expertise and a forward-thinking vision. We are confident that her fresh perspective and dialogue-driven approach will further strengthen viennacontemporary's profile and ensure its continued success as a key platform in the international art world."*

The team of viennacontemporary is currently preparing for its **11th edition**, set to take place from **September 11-14, 2025**, at **Messe Wien, Halle D**. The fair will feature around **100 galleries**, with a continued focus on art from Austria, its neighboring countries, Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond. **Applications for galleries remain open through the end of April.**

## NOTES TO EDITORS

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### viennacontemporary 2025

[viennacontemporary.at](http://viennacontemporary.at)

**Dates:** September 11-14, 2025

**Location:** Messe Wien Hall D, Trabrennstraße 7, 1020 Vienna

**Press Photos:** [www.viennacontemporary.at/press](http://www.viennacontemporary.at/press)

### About viennacontemporary

Austria's leading fair for contemporary art, viennacontemporary, gathers established galleries and exciting newcomers to present artworks alongside curated special exhibitions. The fair is renowned for its unique focus on the emerging scenes of Central and Eastern Europe and a dense supporting program of performances, guided tours, and high-profile VIP events. Taking place in the spacious Halle D of Messe Wien, the event will host thousands of professionals, artists, collectors, visionaries, and communities, inviting them to experience international encounters and the rich diversity of contemporary art.

viennacontemporary is organized by  
VC Artfairs GmbH  
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1070 Vienna