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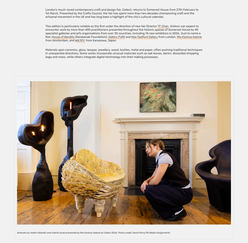
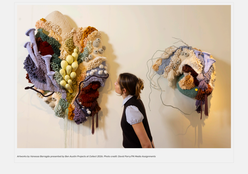
# RETHINKING CRAFT: IN CONVERSATION WITH COLLECT DIRECTOR TF CHAN

By Phillip Bryan Williams | 27 February 2026

Somerset House, Photo: Dim Mura.



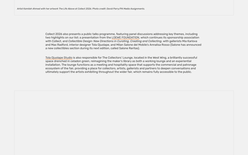
Artwork by Isabel Albuquerque presented by Ms Collective Gallery at Collect 2026. Photo credit: David Parry/PR Media Assignments



Artwork by Vanessa Berrington presented by Mr Ruskin Projects at Collect 2026. Photo credit: David Parry/PR Media Assignments

Collect continues to reflect the growing overlap between contemporary craft and collectible design, with a strong presence of design and furniture alongside a diverse range of craft practices. Emerging artists are presented alongside established makers, with many exhibitors using the fair to introduce new work or develop collaborations. The majority of works on display have been produced within the past five years.

Collect Open, supported by Opensocks Financial, also returns, bringing together 17 artists who have created new commissions for the section. These projects explore material, social, political and personal priorities, further underscoring the fair's focus on contemporary craft practice. Among the commissions, Ghanian-British artist Ibrahim Mahama enclosed Kelly Knaggs's The Life Above, a large-scale suspended entombment textile installation in a pungency deep blue, which was first presented at Venice Biennale in 2024 and has been shown at Tate Modern and Tate Britain. Knaggs's cap, shaped by referencing the ever-so-elegant, ECONIC's new 4,000-year-old and preserved with a long, spiney crassulacean that celebrates the material.



Artwork by Kelly Knaggs presented at Mr Ruskin Projects at Collect 2026. Photo credit: David Parry/PR Media Assignments

Collect 2026 also presents a packed talks programme, featuring panel discussions addressing key themes, including the future of craft education and the relevance of craft today. The programme includes contributions from speakers with Collect, and Collective Design, Hans Sherrebeck of Scandinavian Collecting and Collecting, with galleries Ms Kunsten and Ruby Hatfield, interior designer Tara Gonzales, and Peter Salmon-Ben Mazlish, Annalisa Rosso Gaskell has composed the programme alongside Collect Director TF Chan and Collect Curator Ruth Ezra.

Tate Modern Studio's new exhibition for the Collection Lounge located in the West Wing, a brilliantly successful space stretched in sweeping green, reimagining the reader's library as both a working lounge and an experiential exhibition. Curated by Tate Modern's Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Ann Gallagher, the exhibition centers the acquisition of the fair, providing a space for collectors, artists, galleries and practitioners to deepen conversations and ultimately support the artists exhibiting throughout the week for which remains fully accessible to the public.

Artist-hosted dinner with Ann Lemont, The Life Above at Collect 2026. Photo credit: David Parry/PR Media Assignments.

Tate Studios Studio Collective Lounge at Collect, Photographs credit Denise Harris for Tristan Manning

Ahead of the fair's opening, FAD correspondent Marty Bogne Drew spoke with Director TF Chan about his vision for this year's edition and what visitors can expect.

Portrait TF Chan (Dennis Cullen)

**Collect has built a strong identity over the past two decades as a destination fair for "museum-quality contemporary craft and design." As Director, what has Collect done to ensure that this vision remains relevant? How do these ideas shape your long-term vision for the fair?**

This is my first year as the director for Collect, and I'm excited to be introducing three key changes which point to my ambitions for the future of the fair. Collect has been a pioneering platform for contemporary craft since its first edition in Hoxton Square in London. Based in Paris and The Netherlands, and our 60th edition happened last QE2 Commonwealth Centre, Collect has always been a place where collectors can discover new work and meet the underrepresented historical disciplines, and new cultural perspectives to complement what we already have at the fair.

I'm particularly excited about the presentations by the Polish Creative Industries Institute, showcasing the country's dynamic craft and design scene, and Perrows gallery Dagaari Bowser, which is bringing an impressive roster of Ghanaian artists. Alongside this, we are also introducing a new commissioned section, Collect Open, with 17 international representations. While Collect Projects is showing a collaboration between three British artists and the Ruskin Projects section is showing work by Isabel Albuquerque, Vanessa Berrington and Kelly Knaggs, I hope that audiences a new side of Brazilian design beyond the housemark name of the mid-20th century.

Secondly, we're putting a spotlight on collectible design. Along with Ms Studio, Tetro now exhibits Ms Kunsten Gallery and the Radfrib Gallery are leading the charge, showing unique and limited-edition furniture pieces shaped by the artistic vision of their creators, underscoring the boundaries between craft and design. This section also ties into the focus on the making of these pieces, they are curating the backstories of craftsmen to create pieces with meaning, so collectors can understand the story behind the work they are acquiring.

Finally, we're invested significantly in the visitor experience. This starts with the introduction of the Collect Bar, a new space for drinks and conversation within the South Wing. We have also introduced a Friday late opening, and have partnered with Somerset House's heat and sauna-type establishments on several offers for Collect visitors.

**Many artists begin in institutions and artist-run spaces before moving into the gallery system. Why is this transition important for the ecosystem, and what kind of support do emerging artists need most as they navigate this space?**

Leading Collect has required adding quite a few new skills to my arsenal, beyond what I learned while running Wallpaper* magazine. Where I began my career and stuck up working for a decade, but there are common threads. Whether it's a magazine, a fair or a gallery, the ultimate goal is to tell the story of the creatives and their work and ensuring you're what's collectable to curators or board and a sense of choreography, or individual strands come together to create a cohesive whole.

In my conversations with galleries, artists, and other industry leaders when starting towards the fair's 60th iteration, the overwhelming narrative that has emerged is the enabling relevance of craft, and thus, the value of having unique pieces and objects in our lives. As an agent-tester of our lives in the digital realm, we need craft to remind us of the tactile, the human touch, the sense of place and belonging that we crave. Craft makes us feel more connected to the world around us, and the artists and makers are particularly well-placed to tell this story. Collect is a place where the world's curators, collectors and enthusiasts can meet the artists and makers who are bringing craft into our lives, and Collect's doors have closed for the year.

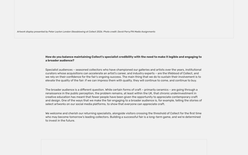
**The boundary between contemporary craft, collectible design and fine art has become increasingly fluid. Where do you see this boundary now, and what does it mean for a city like London where Frieze, FAD and other design fairs and events compete for similar audiences?**

A place for the collector is a repository of curated curation as a model for the art as well as a cultural hub, so I have great admiration for fairs such as Frieze and FAD, and we each have our own role to play.

I believe that Collect can be distinguished from the other London fairs in three ways. Firstly, we are committed to the promotion and elevation of contemporary craft and design. By this, I mean the material disciplines for which we are particularly well-suited to tell the story of the creatives who are bringing craft into our lives. Secondly, we are committed to artists who are deeply engaged in the process of making, exploring material possibilities, and sharing their ideas with the world.

Secondly, we provide a welcoming environment for fair-time guests. We're lucky that Somerset House's venues offer more than just the headline act, we have places that suit all £1000, but we nonetheless maintain quality – a great opportunity to get a taste of the thrills of building your own collection.

Finally, the list of our exhibitors as a whole galleries with deeply involved and impressively knowledgeable owners, who are passionate about the work they bring to the fair and the artists and makers they represent. This provides ample opportunities for conversation for all visitors and makes a visit to Collect all the more rewarding.



Artwork display presented by Peter Lundin Lundeborg at Collect 2026. Photo credit: David Parry/PR Media Assignments

**How do you balance maintaining Collect's specialist credibility with the need to make it legible and engaging to a broader audience?**

Specialist audiences – seasoned collectors who have championed our galleries and artists over the years, institutional curators whose acquisitions can accelerate an artist's career, and industry experts – are the lifeblood of Collect, and we want to continue to serve them well. We want to be the place where they can find the best work, and we want to elevate the quality of the fair. If we can impress them with quality, they will continue to come, and continue to buy.

The broader audience is a different question. While certain forms of craft – primarily ceramics – are going through a renaissance in the public perception, the problem remains, at least within the UK, that chronic underinvestment in craft education has left a generation of people who don't understand the value of craftsmanship in contemporary craft and design. One of the ways that we make this fair engaging to a broader audience is, for example, telling the stories of the craftsmen who are bringing craft into our lives, and the ideas behind their work.

We welcome and cherish our returning speciality, alongside visitors crossing the threshold of Collect for the first time who may become tomorrow's leading collectors. Building a successful fair is a long-term game, and we're determined to invest in the future.



Grand Salon at Lily Oates Lorient presented by Dagaari Bowser Gallery at Collect 2026. Photo credit: Dim Mura.

Artwork by Alaina Sabaeh presented by Gallery TIN8 at Collect 2026. Photo credit: Dim Mura.

**Collect 2026** runs from 27th February to 1st March, at Somerset House. collect.artfair.com

at Somerset House. collectartfair.com

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Marta Bogna-Drew is a communications consultant in architecture, design, hospitality, placemaking and visual arts. Marta's broad experience working across different creative industries equips her with a unique viewpoint, and she is endlessly fascinated by artistic outcomes born out of intersections.

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