

artnet

Cascone, Sarah, “What Caught Collector Komal Shah’s Eye at Fog Design and Art Fair,” *Artnet*, January 24, 2025

Art Fairs

What Caught Collector Komal Shah’s Eye at Fog Design and Art Fair

We toured the 11th edition of the San Francisco fair with the keen-eyed collector.

It was about 5:45 p.m., and Komal Shah had been at the opening for San Francisco’s [Fog Design and Art](#) for about a half an hour—but the collector, known for her near-exclusive focus on women artists, had only made it to three of the fair’s 58 booths.

After a few minutes shadowing her, it was clear why: “San Francisco loves to socialize,” Shah told me.

When I first linked up with Shah, she was asking SFMOMA chief curator Janet Bishop about the fair’s must-see works. Bishop flagged two late Bay Area artists—both women, naturally—with recent or forthcoming shows she had curated at the museum.

Bishop’s other pick was a large-scale 1976 canvas by figurative painter [Joan Brown](#) (1938–1990) titled [Let’s Dance](#). The work, which appeared in [SFMOMA’s fabulous show](#) of the artist in 2022 and ’23, was on offer from Claudia Altman-Siegel at her namesake San Francisco gallery [Altman Siegel](#) for \$350,000 courtesy of a “very prestigious local collection,” according to the dealer.

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

Inspired by a torrid affair Brown had with the owner of an Italian restaurant, it shows a couple at dinner, one red wine glass spilled over the table as the waiter pours another.



Joan Brown, *Let's Dance* (1976). Photo courtesy of Altman-Siegel, San Francisco.

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

Shah wasn't just relying on recommendations from trusted friends and colleagues. At one point, she pulled from her pocket a handwritten list, neatly folded in half, of the different dealers she wanted to visit, and their booth numbers. But what Shah was really looking for was the unexpected.

"What I love about going to a fair is for it to be organic. So much is about falling in love," she said. And when that moment happened, it was immediately apparent.

After showing off the show-stopping Brown, Altman-Siegel took Shah to the booth's side wall, where she had a trio of abstract paintings by Hiba Kalache (b. 1972). The Lebanese artist moved to San Francisco after the explosion in Beirut in 2020, and her works are inspired by Middle Eastern fables.

Shah wasn't just relying on recommendations from trusted friends and colleagues. At one point, she pulled from her pocket a handwritten list, neatly folded in half, of the different dealers she wanted to visit, and their booth numbers. But what Shah was really looking for was the unexpected.

"What I love about going to a fair is for it to be organic. So much is about falling in love," she said. And when that moment happened, it was immediately apparent.

After showing off the show-stopping Brown, Altman-Siegel took Shah to the booth's side wall, where she had a trio of abstract paintings by Hiba Kalache (b. 1972). The Lebanese artist moved to San Francisco after the explosion in Beirut in 2020, and her works are inspired by Middle Eastern fables.

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com



Komal Shah put this Hiba Kalache painting on hold with Altman Siegel at Fog Design + Art. Photo by Sarah Cascone.

Shah leaned in close to examine one of the works, then then turned to face Altman-Siegel, her face breaking out into a massive smile: “There is something about it that draws in me,” she said, promptly putting in a reserve on the \$12,000 painting. “This is the best.”