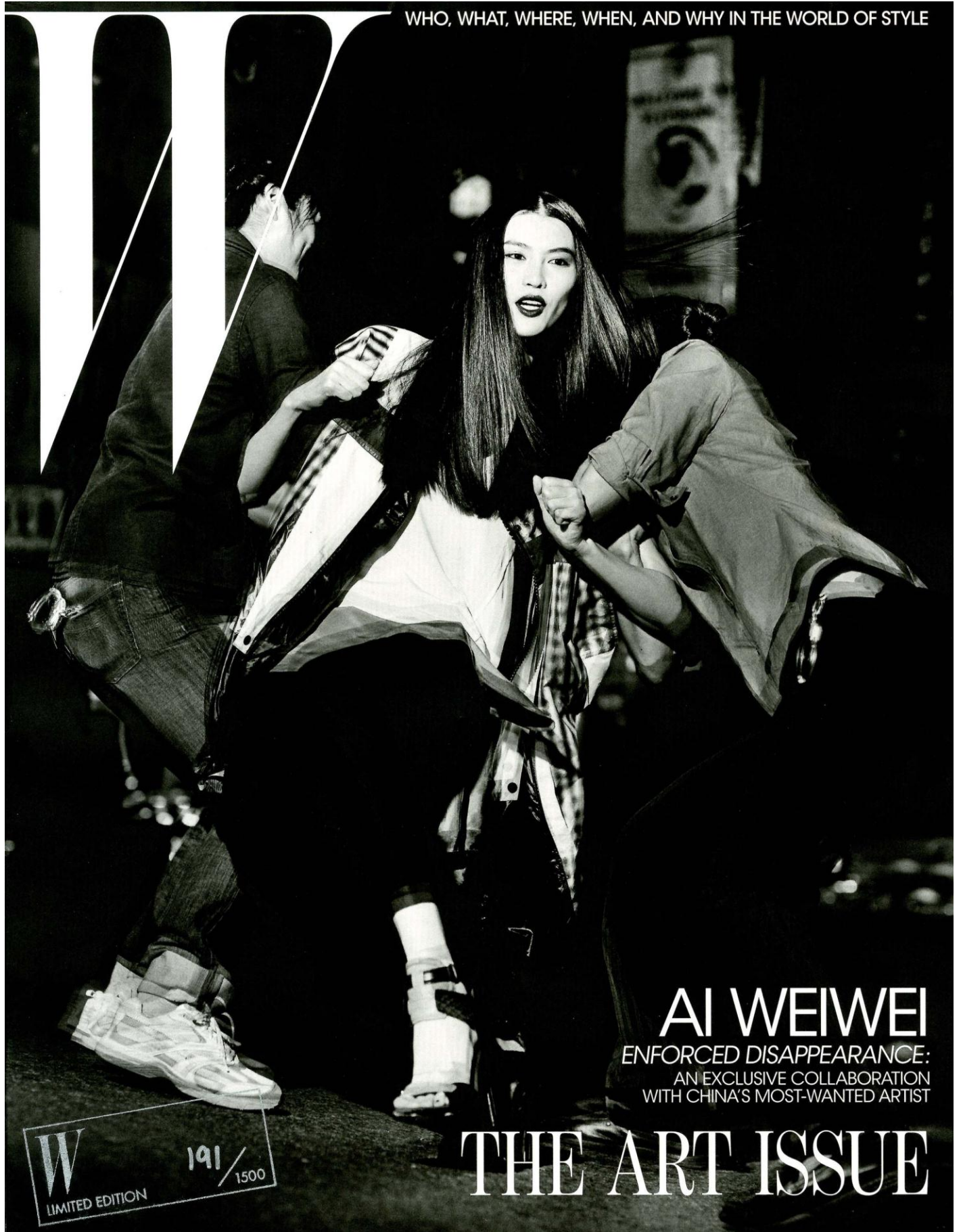


WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND WHY IN THE WORLD OF STYLE



**AI WEIWEI**  
ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE:  
AN EXCLUSIVE COLLABORATION  
WITH CHINA'S MOST-WANTED ARTIST

**THE ART ISSUE**

**W**  
LIMITED EDITION  
191 / 1500

WHO



Dibelius in her Munich home flanked by Philipp Lachenmann's *Nichts Gleicht Meinem Glücke* (left) and a painting from Dieter Mammel's "Family Works" series.

## THE STEALTH PATRON

As Andrea Dibelius's Emdash Foundation prepares to launch a provocative new artist at London's Frieze Art Fair, ERIC BANKS heads to Dibelius's legendary house in Munich to meet the woman who is quietly transforming the cultural landscape.

IF YOU WANT TO IMMERSE YOURSELF in the art world, there's no splashier way to do so than as an eager collector, and if you're looking for a particular venue to jump into, none is more turbulent than the art fair. Those in Basel, Miami, New York, and London offer an opportunity to schmooze and be schmoozed at dealers' stands, chic dinners, and late-night parties—bonanzas of social opportunity where you can check out the price tags and see and be seen by other collectors and art advisers. Long gone, if it ever really existed, is the quiet profile of the discreet and disinterested connoisseur-buyer who carried out his or her business in an atmosphere of clerical silence: Church mice are out; peacocks in.

All of which makes Andrea Dibelius—a former marketing executive who left a position at Daimler Chrysler Bank six years ago to pursue a career as an entrepreneur, investor, and consultant to a handful of lifestyle companies—something of an anomaly. For one, she seems to have little interest in promoting herself or in using her philanthropic organization, the Emdash Foundation, as a vanity vehicle. And though the Salzburg, Austria-born Dibelius is far from a novice when it comes to collecting, her

plunge into the contemporary art world has come not via the usual route of buying and selling and amassing a collection of work by young artists, but rather by directly supporting those artists through her foundation.

The only constant in her story may be the importance of the art fair, or of one in particular: London's Frieze, which each year has staged the sharpest and smartest of the annual international contemporary art extravaganzas—less stodgy than the white-shoe Basel, less arriviste than big and brassy Miami, and less tedious than New York's business-as-usual Armory Show. It was there, last October, that the thirtysomething Dibelius had a serendipitous meeting with Frieze directors Amanda Sharp and Matthew Slotover, which led to a partnership and a jump start for Emdash.

One year later, the foundation, still in its infancy, is sponsoring, in conjunction with Frieze, its first award to provide support to a single emerging international artist. The Emdash Award includes a residency at London's Gasworks studio and a copious stipend to realize a work for presentation as part of Frieze Projects, the not-for-profit section of the fair that has become a sensitive barometer of significant young artistic

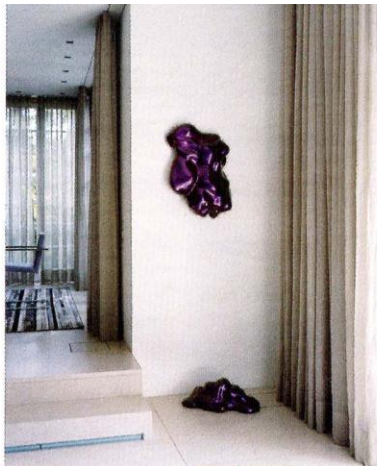
# WHO

talent. (Nearly half of last year's selected artists in Frieze Projects—including Shannon Ebner, Nick Relph, and Karl Holmqvist—went on to show in this summer's Venice Biennale.) "Frieze offers an excellent platform, and as a new foundation, we are benefiting enormously from its expertise," says Dibelius when I meet her on a sleepy Friday morning in the leafy outskirts of Munich, where she lives part of the year (she also has residences in Saint-Tropez and London) in a stolid, sun-drenched villa—a faithful reconstruction of the home of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Thomas Mann that once stood on the spot. Her work in preparation for Frieze had trimmed short a holiday in Southern France, and she entered the room in a dappled red dress that managed to be attention-getting yet modest, even casual.

A razor-slim, dark-haired woman who speaks with an uncommon mix of focused precision and friendly zeal about her vision for Emdash, Dibelius is using her foundation and its award to support art that couples aesthetic wonder and a political edge—work that imagines bringing about a difference in society, particularly beyond the borders of Western Europe and the United States. The first winner's project, to be unveiled at Frieze, comes from the half-Iranian, half-German Stuttgart-based artist Anahita Razmi, who has revisited choreographer Trisha Brown's *Roof Piece*, a 1971 performance sited stories above the streets of Manhattan and scattered atop several buildings. Now Razmi, with the support of Dibelius and Emdash, has restaged Brown's concept a world away in both time and place—in contemporary Tehran—and documented the production on video.

Dibelius plans for her foundation to eventually reach across disciplines to support creative projects in the sciences as well as the visual arts—a goal suggested by its very moniker. (Perhaps a murky term for those who aren't copy editors, the em-dash—I'm using two of them to cordon off this thought from the rest of the passage—introduces an interruption in a sentence to offer a new statement or idea.) At present, though, the focus is on artists who provide an unexpected angle on the news of the world. "Anahita, Ai Weiwei, Rashid Rana—these are artists I collect and like," Dibelius says. "Their contribution is a different one: It's in the art world, but they criticize their countries through their art. Like other creative people in science and the social sciences, they have really helped people to have a fresh perspective on things; they have helped to make the world a better one."

INSIDE THE IMPOSING WHITE HOUSE not far from the Isar River, the artwork on view bears scant resemblance to the transnational, engagé vision of Emdash. Dibelius has dabbled in collecting a variety of contemporary artworks for most of her adult life, modestly purchasing pieces here and there since her days in Berlin, when a painter friend's enthusiasm began to rub off on her. She is as reserved in talking up her collection as she is reticent about the details of her personal life. Though



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Clockwise from top: Sylvie Fleury's *Wow*, 2006, and Marc Quinn's *Maquette for Siren*, 2007–2008, both in Dibelius's home; the house's exterior; a portrait of Mann in Vienna.

a quick walk-through shows that in addition to a handful of pieces by contemporary artists like Sylvie Fleury (a violet wall sculpture that appears to puddle on the floor below) and Gedi Sibony (a skeleton of a picture frame made out of repurposed packing material), a good deal of the art on view relates to Mann's life and work, much of it installed as part of a 2006 exhibition celebrating the reconstruction of the villa (which Mann was forced to surrender to the Nazis in 1933).

Dibelius and her husband, Alexander—a former surgeon who is now managing director of Goldman Sachs overseeing operations in several European countries and a rainmaker who helped broker some of the company's biggest corporate deals of the last decade—bought the property in 2002. (Dibelius's interest in contemporary art, she admits, is for the most part a solo affair—"my husband's kind of busy these days," she says, laughing.)

The couple opted to reconstruct the house's exterior with fidelity to the 1913 original but went their own way indoors. Along one long wall of the now-minimalist interior looms a large grisaille canvas from 1973 by the noted Hungarian artist László Lakner that contains a facsimile of a page from the handwritten manuscript of Mann's masterpiece *The Magic Mountain*. On a wall

above the staircase, the artist Heike Weber has spelled out the words *AUF EIGENE ART* using a network of red-tipped pins. The phrase comes from a speech by Mann that Dibelius elegantly renders for me in English: "Tradition," she says, "is to follow an example in your own way." She has drawn on the expression not just in how the villa was conceived but also in her support of the Thomas Mann Association, for which she makes the villa and its garden available for events. "There is a kind of

obligation. You have to honor the fact that Mann lived here," she says matter-of-factly, though she'll readily admit that when she discovered the then-derelect site, she didn't realize it had once belonged to the writer. "I wasn't among the craziest of Mann fans," she says.

After buying the property, though, Dibelius began to study the writer's life and read more of his work. The house's environs feature prominently in several novellas, particularly *A Man and His Dog*, which recounts Mann's daily constitutionals around the local landscape with his pointer mix Bashan when the area was still a semiforested stretch of wilderness. And though the splendid sense of isolation that Mann evoked is long gone, the regal, leafy beauty remains: The passage up what is now Thomas-Mann-Allee and on to the trail named for his brother Heinrich still makes for one of the most gorgeous and tranquil strolls in all of Munich.

It's not hard to understand how Mannian ideas have helped Dibelius focus her own philanthropic pursuits. "I've learned a lot in particular about Katharina, the really strong woman behind Mann," she says. "She allowed him to be just a creative artist, and she took care of everything else: the kids, the family life." It's a supporting role Dibelius hopes her new foundation, nearly a century later, can continue anew. ♦