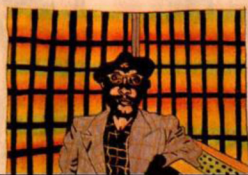




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Good foundations

The creative arm of Frieze Art Fair has a new sponsor: Caroline Roux meets Andrea Dibelius of the Emdash Foundation

The year 2002 was a busy one for Andrea Dibelius. She moved house, got married and started a new job at the DaimlerChrysler Bank in Munich. She even found some time to begin investing in small companies. But 2011 might prove to be equally memorable. This year she has launched the Emdash Foundation, which will leave a mark on the art world from its first initiative as the supporter of Frieze Projects.

The Emdash Foundation will, its founder explains, take on one project each year; this could be from the arts or sciences. Frieze Projects certainly fulfils the first part of that remit – it is a series of new artist commissions delivered each year by the Frieze Art Fair since its inception, and it brings some non-commercial creative grit to the usual art fair pursuits of wheeling and dealing. It's a smart move on the part of its new supporter.

Bearing in mind that Frieze Projects' previous sponsor was Cartier (who underwrote both the commissions and an award, from 2006-2010), Dibelius has subtly teamed the name of Emdash with that of an art fair leader, Frieze, and a luxury giant in one fell swoop. It is no surprise that she has a background in marketing.

I meet Andrea Dibelius in her home in Munich, on the site of a house that the writer Thomas Mann built in 1913. It was pulled down in the 1950s, but when the Dibeliuses arrived in 2008 they found themselves obliged to rebuild the house as it had been when Mann lived there. A few times a year a Mann fan will ring the doorbell. But its interior now boasts acres of oak, wide staircases, open spaces and plenty of art – a commanding Ai Weiwei blue and white porcelain piece that was destined for the garden but, upon delivery, proved too large; a field of fluid colours by Katharina Grosse painted directly on to the wall that greets every visitor coming through the front door.

Dibelius is tall and reed thin in a silk blouse and dark jeans. Her BlackBerry is constantly in and out of her pocket ("I admit, I do use it at dinner parties under the table; some friends mind, some don't. And I take two batteries with me everywhere I go") and she darts about gathering up art books as various artists' names arise. She rattles through the businesses she supports with capital and advice, which range from entertainment to logistics. Among them is catering company Kofler & Kompanie, which runs pop-up dining events called Pret a Diner. During Frieze, Pret a Diner will present a food/art fiesta in collaboration with Banksy galler-



Habitat Andrea Dibelius at her home in Munich

Thomas Dasher/Agentur Focus

ist Steve Lazarides in the Old Vic Tunnels in London. Another company delivers a sort of pocket Botox in a tube. "It's good for hangovers," says Dibelius.

Dibelius is Austrian, from the small town of Saalfelden, not far from Salzburg. Her family has a series of hotels and restaurants, but she didn't want to go into the business. She studied law in Salzburg and marketing in Berlin. She worked for a number of small web start-ups after college, then moved to the more corporate world of the DaimlerChrysler bank in 2002, partly to please her parents. "They are very traditional. They pleaded with me to work for a solid company," she says. By the time she left the bank in 2005, she was head of marketing.

The idea of the Foundation gathered momentum as her connections with the art world increased. She was introduced to it first by the Berlin painter Dieter Mammel 15 years ago. "He invited me to his studio and I bought a little painting – of feet – which I still have," she says. Next came an

early abstract wall sculpture by Sylvie Fleury in iridescent shades of green and purple and later a Jake and Dinos Chapman from the 1990s of conjoined zygotic children with penis faces, which sits in her study. (Her husband Alexander Dibelius, who works for Goldman Sachs, didn't want to deal with it on a daily basis.) Finally, with the help of her friend, the London-based art consultant Amelie von Wedel, the Foundation started to take shape.

For the next few weeks, Dibelius will be decamping to the couple's London flat to take care of Frieze and the Foundation. "I founded Emdash – it's named after the dash you use in punctuation that means something new is coming up in the next phrase – to support individuals and initiatives in art and science internationally, so Frieze Projects couldn't be a better set-up for me in the way it seeks out international artists and enables them to produce work that can be experimental and provocative, and not necessarily commercial.

This year, it means that visitors to the fair will be able to enjoy Christian Jankowski's critique of sales and the market, as he presents a luxury Ferretti yacht as both a boat and an artwork, with different sales pitches depending on the buyer's perception of the object. Dibelius visited Lucky PDF, a London-based artists' group, as they prepared their Frieze Projects piece – a daily television show to be broadcast from the fair, presented by and featuring a list of artists.

And then there's the Emdash Award. Frieze Projects are commissioned by full-time curator Sarah McCrory. The Award, however, is given by a panel of six, after sifting through entries from artists under the age of 35. This year, according to Dibelius, more than 700 applied from all over the world. The winner is Iranian-German artist Anahita Razmi, who has reconfigured a famous 1971 work by choreographer Trisha Brown, "Roof Piece", which took place on 12 different rooftops in downtown New York.

In her reprise, Razmi has gone to Tehran to show how its own skyline was recently used by protesters after the 2009 Iranian

'I founded Emdash to support initiatives in art and science, so Frieze Projects couldn't be a better set-up for me'

elections. "It uses an existing idea to bring attention to the situation of women there," says Dibelius. "Each member of the committee had to select four favourites from the long list, but we agreed really quickly that this was the one."

Razmi's award is to receive £10,000 towards completing the piece, an artist's fee of £1,000, and a three-month residency at the Gasworks studios in London. Financially, that must be the tip of the iceberg for Dibelius, who with Frieze Projects is funding a further eight new works: it's an undisclosed – but presumably hefty – sum. The woman who rebuilt Thomas Mann's house is now building herself a worthy place in the art world.

www.emdash.com
Frieze Art Fair runs from October 13-16
www.frieze.com

See the article on Emdash award winner Anahita Razmi in next Saturday's FT. Watch our video of Frieze Projects at www.ft.com/arts-extra