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6 of the best young gallery presentations at Frieze London

From paintings of decontextualised video game characters to connecting with one's inner octopus, these are the art fair's must-see booths.

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Each October, art lovers, critics and collectors flock to London's Regent's Park in their droves, filling the two cavernous marquees stationed at either end of the green expanse for a five-day frenzy of art perusal and — most importantly — purchasing. The cause for this is, of course, [Frieze London](#), the original edition of the now-globetrotting [art fair](#) — inaugurated 20 years ago — which remains a pinnacle of the global art calendar. Imagine what [PFW](#) is to fashion, basically.

For many, the main draws to both Frieze and Frieze Masters are the booths manned by the big blue-chip galleries — your Gagosians, David Zwirners, Hauser & Wirths — replete with works by artists who are essentially household names. For us, though, the fair's Focus section is our main cause for braving the autumn drear in the name of the arts. Supported by [Stone Island](#), Focus is the fair's critically acclaimed showcase of presentations by galleries in operation for 12 years or less — by its very nature, it's where you'll find some of the most salient, engaging and provocative work on show.

This year's edition is testament to that, featuring 34 exhibitors from across 18 countries, with a focus on emerging talent seen throughout. Among them are a number of debuts, including buzzy London newcomer [Ginny on Frederick](#), who'll be presenting a solo booth by [Jack O'Brien](#), and [São Paulo's HOA](#), the first Black-owned gallery in Brazilian art history, showing a dual presentation of paintings by [Laís Amaral](#) and [Mariana Rocha](#). Below, six of the artists behind some of Focus' most noteworthy presentations discuss their practices and the themes underpinning their work treats — from the inbuilt sociopolitical biases of video games to connecting with one's inner octopus.



Laís Amaral, HOA, São Paulo, Booth H3

Could you briefly introduce your practice?

I've mostly been dedicated to non-figurative painting in recent years, discussing and breaking some of the patterns and vices of a Eurocentric perspective on painting through my work. I aim to bridge the gap between my research on contemporary environmental collapse and the whitewashing of existence and nature, swimming against the tide of the fragmentation of being, and enabling the freedom of our dissident existences. I believe that what I do is first and foremost a path of materialising my spiritual connections through the creation and organisation of codes that dwell between the earthly, the essential and the mysterious.

Tell us about the work you're presenting at Frieze.

This set of paintings is part of my solo show, *No meio do peito um buraco fundo, o mais fundo da cachoeira, onde a luz não vem de fora* (In the middle of the chest, a deep hole, at the deepest depths of the waterfall, where the light from outside does not reach) at HOA in São Paulo. I dedicated myself mainly to feeling and observing how everything that forms our innermost, deepest layers of being is “translated” into a plastic surface that reveals and creates a codified, non-figurative language. The image that often came to mind when making these works is one that has long recurred; I've always tried to imagine what a waterfall is like, in the pitch-black depths of its lowest waters. What it's like to be deeper and deeper within that space, observing the layers that form our natural essence. In my paintings, I try to bring a little part of this place I visit out. The title refers to the first experience of grief I experienced with the passing of my grandfather, Paulo Amaral. That changed everything I am, exposing deep holes; since then, it's taught me to find ways toward light, presence, love and longing.

What do you hope people will be drawn to in the work?

I think that one of the most interesting parts of my work is the fact that I have never studied painting. I started my practice not so long ago, through trial, error, lack of material and money. I'm happy with the opportunity to show this more mature body of work, which I actually consider a perpetual study. Nowadays, after experiencing many crises and feeling “inadequate” in art spaces, I can live in my own pursuit of freedom – and that's something I treasure, having the chance to study within the process itself.

Are there any other booths you are looking forward to seeing at the fair?

I'm very excited about meeting new artists and becoming more familiar with an international scene of racialised and Black art. But my greatest joy, really, is seeing my work alongside the artist Mariana Rocha – we come from neighboring cities, and know what a victory it is to be artists. She's a great abstract painter and I am very curious to see our works assembled together.

