

In 1997, as a student, Paola Pivi placed a truck on its side as part of the exhibition *Fuori Uso* (Pescara, Italy). Two years later, she installed an upside down G-91 fighter jet in the Venice Biennale's Arsenale, helping Italy win the coveted Golden Lion award for best national pavilion. In subsequent years she has invited horses to the Eiffel Tower and a leopard to roam amongst cappuccino cups—documenting the experience through photography. Such ambitious and spectacular acts have come to define her art. Pivi's practice is diverse and enigmatic. Her oeuvre appears to have been formed through multiple creative minds. Each piece poses questions and is defined by its openness to interpretation. She appropriates cultural symbols and transforms them in an art context. These gestures are about freedom. They deliver unexpected visuals which surprisingly also appear to be familiar.

The titular “Ma’am” sets the tone of the exhibition. It establishes a polite, welcoming voice, which rests highly on decorum. This mimics the structure of experiencing art within the context of a white cube gallery space. At the same time “*ma’am*,” evokes humorous moments in life when social protocol is performative rather than driven by sincere emotion. As is the case with many of Pivi's titles, this one lays a foundation for viewers to be engaged in their approach to the exhibition. *Ma’am*, Pivi's first solo exhibition in the US, brings together iconic past works as well as new commissions. It sheds light on the strength and range of Pivi's practice. Included in the exhibition are Pivi's anthropomorphic feather covered polar bears; canvases of cascading pearls; video showing fish in flight on a passenger jet; and her iconic inverted G-91.

Nomadic by nature, Paola Pivi has lived in many unexpected places in the world, including the remote island of Alicudi in southern Italy, and Anchorage, Alaska. She is presently in India. Pivi first exhibited at Viafarini in Milan in 1995, the same year she enrolled in the Brera Academy of Art in Milan. In 2012, the artist was commissioned to create two original public artworks in New York City: “How I roll”, a project by Public Art Fund, a Piper Seneca airplane lifted on its wingtips and constantly rotating forward, installed near Central Park at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, and “Untitled (zebras)”, a striking image of zebras on a snow-covered mountaintop on the 25-by-75-foot High Line Billboard at West 18th Street. Like all of her photographs, this image is a live-action still, presented without digital intervention. Another of her photographs, “Untitled (donkey)”, shows a lonely donkey on a boat floating in the Mediterranean Sea. Pivi is included in the permanent collections of The Guggenheim Museum and the Centre Pompidou.

The exhibition is curated by Justine Ludwig, Director of Exhibitions and Senior Curator of Dallas Contemporary.

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