

# CHECKMATE Revives the Art Salon Through an Immersive Cultural Installation in Sofia

*Created by cultural curator Michaela Leitz, CHECKMATE merges conversation, food, ritual, and performance into a contemporary living installation.*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Cultural curator Michaela Leitz revealed the inaugural edition of CHECKMATE; an immersive contemporary salon merging art, conversation, culinary installation, live performance, and social ritual inside House Farrago, the Sofia-based art space founded by gallery owner Olga Penkovska of ArtAffect Sofia.



Guests gather inside CHECKMATE, an immersive contemporary salon created by cultural curator Michaela Leitz at House Farrago in Sofia.

Developed as a contemporary reinterpretation of the European salon culture of the 1920s and 1930s, CHECKMATE invited a curated circle of artists, designers, gallery figures, professors, musicians, and cultural thinkers into an intimate environment designed to encourage meaningful exchange beyond digital culture.

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With CHECKMATE I wanted to create a temporary cultural space where conversation itself becomes the artwork; where strangers enter as guests and leave as witnesses to each other.”

*Michaela Leitz*

Guests were invited to dress exclusively in black and white, embodying symbolic chess pieces within the conceptual framework of the evening. Inspired by chess as a social condition, CHECKMATE explored the tension between agency and performance in modern life; questioning when we are the player, when we are being played, and how social spaces quietly choreograph human behavior.

Rather than functioning as a conventional dinner event, the evening unfolded as a living installation. Culinary artist Elena Pekin developed sculptural food compositions as part of the immersive environment, while live violin performance, architectural staging, and conversational

prompts transformed the gallery into a participatory cultural experience.

The evening explored questions surrounding cultural intimacy, hospitality in the digital age, and the ways physical space shapes human interaction.

For Leitz, choosing Sofia as the location for the inaugural edition was deeply intentional.

“At a time when many cultural concepts immediately gravitate toward cities like London or Paris, I was interested in creating something within a city that still feels emergent, emotionally textured, and culturally alive,” says Leitz. “Sofia carries an extraordinary balance between underground energy, artistic experimentation, and deep cultural heritage. There is an openness and creative sincerity within the city that feels deeply aligned with the spirit of CHECKMATE.”

The project was developed in collaboration with Olga Penkovska and ArtAffect Sofia, whose engagement with Sofia’s contemporary art scene helped shape the intimacy and cultural atmosphere of the evening.

A live violin performance was presented by Bulgarian musician Teodor Stoyanov, whose contemporary classical intervention formed part of the evening’s immersive atmosphere.

With CHECKMATE, Leitz positions the contemporary salon as a new cultural format for intimacy, discourse, and artistic participation.

Credits:

[Concept & Cultural Curation: Michaela Leitz](#)

In collaboration with: [Olga Penkovska / ArtAffect Sofia / House Farrago](#)

[Culinary Installation: Elena Pekin](#)

Live Violin Performance: Teodor Stoyanov

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