

## Entertainment & Arts

### Serpentine: Yana Peel resigns over 'toxic, personal attacks'

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**Yana Peel, the CEO of the Serpentine Galleries in London, has resigned from her role after three years in the job.**

Peel said her decision came "in light of a concerted lobbying campaign against my husband's recent investment" referencing "toxic, personal attacks".

Peel's husband is an owner of investment company Novalpina Capital Management International, which invests in controversial Israeli tech firm NSO.

Amnesty International **has criticised** NSO's use of surveillance technology.

In a statement, Serpentine Galleries said Peel "will be sorely missed. The arts sector will be poorer without her immeasurable contributions to our cultural lives."

Peel said in her statement: "The work of the Serpentine... cannot be allowed to be undermined by misguided personal attacks on me and my family. These attacks are based upon inaccurate media reports now subject to legal complaints.

"I have decided I am better able to continue my work in supporting the arts, the advancement of human rights and freedom of expression by moving away from my current role."

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She added: "The world of art is about free expression. But it is not about bullying and intimidation. I welcome debate and discussion about the realities of life in the digital age. There is a place for these debates, but they should be constructive, fair and factual - not based upon toxic personal attacks."

Mrs Peel owns one-third of the Novalpina holding company but her representatives stress she has only a single-digit percentage, indirect interest in the relevant fund and no role in operational or investment decisions.

Novalpina began funding NSO Group Technologies earlier this year.

## 'Exemplary job'

NSO has previously been **accused of selling spyware** called Pegasus to agencies which use it to monitor human rights activists.

But the group insists that its products have been used by law enforcement agencies in the battle against terrorism and wider criminal behaviour.

According to its own website, **NSO Group** "provides the tools that support official authorities to lawfully address the most dangerous issues in today's world. Governments use our products to prevent terrorism, break up criminal operations, find missing persons, and assist search and rescue teams."

Following an exchange of letters with human rights organisation Amnesty, **Novalpina issued a statement** last week announcing "a new framework" to "bring NSO Group in full alignment with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights".

It continued: "Novalpina and NSO will do whatever necessary to ensure NSO's technology is used only for its intended lawful purpose - the prevention of harm to our fundamental human rights to life, liberty and security from acts of terrorism and serious crime."

The University of Toronto's Citizen Lab monitors digital attacks against civil society and has been tracking the NSO Group for several years.

**In a letter published on Tuesday**, Citizen Lab said it had "sent multiple letters to Novalpina Capital LLP and NSO Group seeking specific answers regarding a number of concerns, including at least 31 reports of abusive targeting. These questions remain largely unanswered".

The Serpentine said it was "with a mix of gratitude and regret that the board of trustees of the Serpentine Galleries has accepted the resignation of CEO Yana Peel.

"Since taking on the role in 2016, Yana has done an exemplary job furthering the mission, visibility, and financial standing of the Serpentine, increasing support and donations, overseeing ground-breaking exhibitions, and expanding the Serpentine's programme internationally year over year."

Peel oversaw programmes from artists such as Grayson Perry and Rose Wylie and commissioned touring exhibitions to Milan, Miami, Paris, Berlin, Chicago, New York and Hong Kong.

*Correction 1 April 2020: An earlier version of this article said that Yana Peel was listed on company records as an indirect owner of Novalpina. This has been since amended to explain that at the time of publication she owned one-third of a holding company, Novalpina Capital Group. Ms Peel's representatives have explained this means she had no control or involvement in the Novalpina Capital investment fund, which acquired a stake in NSO Group. Our article has also been updated to make that clear.*

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