

Liverpool Biennial

PRESS RELEASE

22.03.23

LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL ANNOUNCES PROGRAMME FOR ITS 12TH EDITION OPENING JUNE 2023.

- **New venues announced include Tobacco Warehouse - the largest brick-built warehouse in the world - and the city's historic Cotton Exchange building.**
- **Edgar Calel, Guadalupe Maravilla and Lubaina Himid join artists including Brook Andrew, Charmaine Watkiss, Gala Porras-Kim, Julien Creuzet, Raisa Kabir, Nicholas Galanin, Torkwase Dyson and Unmute Dance Theatre.**
- **A series of ambitious outdoor works will be installed at locations across the city including Liverpool ONE, Stanley Dock, Princes Dock, St John's Gardens and Liverpool Parish Church (St Nicholas').**
- **A public programme of free events and performances will take place throughout the 14-week festival.**

Today Liverpool Biennial launches the full programme for its 12th edition, taking place from 10 June – 17 September 2023. Titled 'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things', the Biennial festival is curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa with Director Dr Samantha Lackey and the Liverpool Biennial Team.

Taking over historic buildings, unexpected spaces and art galleries, Liverpool Biennial - the UK's largest free festival of contemporary visual art - has been transforming the city through art for over two decades. New venues and sites announced today for the 12th edition include historic buildings **Tobacco Warehouse** and **Cotton Exchange**, and retail and leisure destination **Liverpool ONE**, which join leading arts venues such as **Tate Liverpool, Bluecoat, FACT Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery, Victoria Gallery and Museum** and **World Museum**. A dynamic programme of free exhibitions, performances, screenings, community and learning activities and fringe events unfolds over 14 weeks, shining a light on the city's vibrant cultural scene.

'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things' addresses the history and temperament of the city of Liverpool and is a call for ancestral and indigenous forms of knowledge, wisdom and healing. In the isiZulu language, 'uMoya' means spirit, breath, air, climate and wind.

Edgar Calel, Guadalupe Maravilla, and Lubaina Himid join the list of participating artists that includes **Brook Andrew, Charmaine Watkiss, Gala Porras-Kim, Julien Creuzet, Raisa Kabir, Nicholas Galanin, Torkwase Dyson** and **Unmute Dance Theatre** amongst others. A series of outdoor works will be installed across the city including a large-scale neon by **Brook Andrew** at Stanley Dock, an installation by **Rudy Loewe** at Liverpool ONE, and a major new sculptural work by **Ranti Bam** presented in St Nicholas Church Gardens.

Khanyisile Mbongwa, Curator, Liverpool Biennial 2023, said:

“We invite visitors to surrender to the currents of uMoya, to lend themselves to its flow, allowing the artists’ work to be a compass, guiding them through the Biennial. To enter the city of Liverpool as a site where something productive can happen, as the port city opens itself up to be excavated – laying bare its history of colonialism, role in the trade of enslaved people and the making of the British Empire.

The artists unpack catastrophe by engaging with histories of extraction (people, resources, objects); they re-read cartography by engaging with histories of mapping (trade, architecture, town planning, street naming, public sculptures and monuments); and propose healing by engaging with movements of undoing violence, ‘unholding’ the suffering and centering repair work. Finally, they turn to aliveness by engaging with the human right to be alive and live.”

Dr Samantha Lackey, Director, Liverpool Biennial, said:

“I believe that ‘uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things’ will be a beautiful and deeply felt festival across the city - that will both connect to Liverpool’s colonial past but also uncover possibilities for repair, healing and joy in its future.

Khanyisile Mbongwa has brought together perspectives, thinking - and importantly - feeling, from across the globe which will help us see the world we are living in today from different viewpoints.

We look forward to welcoming regional, national and international visitors to the festival and are excited to expand our reach across the city centre this year, bringing Liverpool Biennial to the North Docks. We are grateful to our curator Khanyisile Mbongwa and our 2023 artists for their passion and imagination and are especially thankful to our partner venues and funders for their support in bringing the festival to life.”

OUTDOOR WORKS

Celebrating Liverpool’s iconic architecture and public spaces, a series of outdoor sculptures and installations will be installed at sites across the city centre.

Brook Andrew presents a new large-scale neon work, located at **Stanley Dock** (home to Tobacco Warehouse). Combining languages including Irish Gaelic, isiZulu, Wiradjuri, Urdu, Mandarin and Welsh, the commission symbolises the cultural and historical linguistic diversity of Merseyside across the Liverpool skyline. A video work by the artist will also be shown at **World Museum**.

A monumental sculpture by **Eleng Luluan** will be unveiled at Princes Dock, Liverpool Waters. Taking the form of a giant metal vessel, the work is inspired by the legend that the founder of Rukai was born from a pottery jar protected by two snakes and draws on the artist's experience of growing up in the Kucapungane community in Taiwan.

A newly commissioned piece by **Nicholas Galanin** will be installed at **St John's Gardens**, next to St George's Hall. The work, a display of bronze casts of handwoven baskets, references museum displays of Indigenous North American and African basketry and cinematic portrayals of thieves via ski-mask cut-outs. The bronze sculptures reflect the commodification, reproduction, theft, and imitation of indigenous cultural traditions. A video work by the artist will also be shown at **Bluecoat**.

Ranti Bam presents a major new sculptural commission in **St Nicholas Church Gardens**, where the first recorded Black resident in Liverpool, Abell, an enslaved African, is buried. Visitors will be invited to gently interact with the works, modelled to the size and shape of the artist's embrace.

At **Liverpool ONE**, **Rudy Loewe** will present a new large-scale installation inspired by the Liverpool Sailors' Home gates and based on the artist's painting 'February 1970, Trinidad #1', which depicts Moko jumbie (a stilts walker or dancer) and other Carnival participants coming to the aid of the people at a moment of Black Power revolution in Trinidad and Tobago.

LIVE AND DIGITAL WORKS

Albert Ibokwe Khoza, Lorin Sookool, Raisa Kabir, Shannon Alonzo and Unmute Dance Theatre will present live works for the festival, ranging from physical theatre, participatory events and multi-day performances to live drawing at venues including the **Cotton Exchange** and **Tobacco Warehouse**. **Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu** will create a new digital commission for the festival - an atmospheric audio work hosted on biennial.com.

VENUES

Tobacco Warehouse

For the first time, Liverpool Biennial's reach will expand to Tobacco Warehouse at Stanley Dock – the largest brick warehouse in the world, covering 1,600,000 sq. ft. The festival hub for Liverpool Biennial 2023 will be located at Tobacco Warehouse in the ground floor waterside space and will host six artists who all explore ideas of repair and healing in their practice. **Albert Ibokwe Khoza's** 'The Black Circus of the Republic of Bantu', an immersive offering and installation, and **Melanie Manchot's** long-form film project 'STEPHEN', produced in collaboration with local participants from the recovery community, will be presented, alongside work by **Binta Diaw, Isa do Rosário, Julien Creuzet** and **Rahmi Hamzi**.

Tate Liverpool

The artists at Tate Liverpool explore the space between life and death and how to work through ancestral pain towards healing. **Isa do Rosário**'s largescale textile pieces will be exhibited for the first time outside of Brazil, whilst **Edgar Calel**'s 'Ru k' ox k'ob'el jun ojer etemab'el (The Echo of an Ancient Form of Knowledge)', will be premiered following Tate becoming custodians of the work in 2021. **Torkwase Dyson**'s monumental work 'Liquid A Place' will occupy the Wolfson Gallery, directly conversing with the brutal histories of the water and docks which surround the gallery. Further highlights include work by **Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales, Francis Offman, Gala Porras-Kim, Guadalupe Maravilla, Lubaina Himid, Nolan Oswald Dennis, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, and Shannon Alonzo.**

Bluecoat

At Bluecoat, the first ever retrospective of work by **Raisa Kabir** will be presented alongside a new immersive work by **Kent Chan**, building on his 'Hot House' project. Other highlights include installations by **Benoît Piéron** and a video work by **Nicholas Galanin**. The artists at Bluecoat explore play and childhood alongside histories of objects and labour.

Cotton Exchange

Returning as a venue for Liverpool Biennial 2023, the old restaurant in the Cotton Exchange building, once the home to Liverpool's Cotton industry, will form the backdrop for newly commissioned works by **Lungiswa Gqunta** and **Shannon Alonzo** alongside video work by **Sepideh Rahaa**. The artists at Cotton Exchange explore resistance, indigenous knowledge and ancestral healing.

FACT Liverpool

At FACT Liverpool, **Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński** presents a new multi-screen video work and soundscape building on her 2022 work 'Respire'. The artist has invited members of local Black communities to participate in the film and soundscape, recorded in Liverpool and created in collaboration with sound-artist Bassano Bonelli Bassano. The piece is dedicated to imagining spaces for Black breath and breathing to expand and thrive.

Open Eye Gallery

The artists at Open Eye Gallery highlight Western exploitative practices related to the extraction and destruction of natural resources in African countries. Work by **David Aguacheiro** and **Rahima Gambo** is presented alongside a new iteration of **Sandra Suubi**'s performance installation 'Samba Gown'.

Victoria Gallery & Museum

At Victoria Gallery & Museum, new works by **Charmaine Watkiss** and **Gala Porras-Kim** are presented alongside **Antonio Obá**'s interactive installation 'Jardím'. The

works at Victoria Gallery & Museum are centred around themes of spirituality, what survives the crossing and ancestral memory.

World Museum

Brook Andrews' 2018 video work 'SMASH IT' is presented at World Museum. The work brings together imagery of the destruction and defacement of monuments, old films, and news stories.

ONLINE TALKS PROGRAMME: RADIKAL SELF LOVE

An online series of conversations titled 'Radikal Self Love' will take place in the lead up to the festival, providing an insight into the ways artists practice self-care during the creative process.

Featuring Gala Porrás-Kim, Sandra Suubi and Antonio Obá, each event will take the form of a conversation led by Khanyisile Mbongwa.

Event dates:

30 March 2023, 7pm GMT: Gala Porrás-Kim

20 April 2023, 7pm GMT: Sandra Suubi

18 May 2023, 7pm GMT: Antonio Obá

Sign up for the first event with Gala Porrás-Kim [here](#).

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

A public programme of free events will take place across the 14-week festival in three stages, creating a triangle intended to mirror the journeys undertaken during the transatlantic trade in enslaved people. The three stages are: The Opening Door (focused on live performances and public installations), The Middle Passage (dedicated to movement, film and moving image) and The Reflective Return (centred around artist talks and music).

Advance booking is required for some events. Further details, including event timings, locations and accessibility information will be announced in the coming weeks.

The Opening Door **10-11 June**

The Opening Door allows the invited artists to respond to the theme of 'uMoya' by using their bodies as vessels and vehicles for change, bodies that have historically and often continue to be viewed as objects of desire or servitude.

Events will take place throughout the opening weekend including live activations by Albert Ibokwe Khoza, Raisa Kabir and Lorin Sookool, alongside talks including an in-conversation between Khanyisile Mbongwa and Christina Sharpe (Writer and

Professor, Canada Research Chair in Black Studies in the Humanities, Vanier College).

The Middle Passage

2-6 August

The second stage of the public programme, titled **The Middle Passage**, will centre around the moving image, short films, and live activations from Unmute Dance Theatre working with local dancers (supported by Art Fund, British Council and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and developed in collaboration with DaDa), and Shannon Alonzo.

As part of a multi-year development programme for international Curators, in partnership with British Council, Liverpool Biennial will host a Curator's Week of events, discourse and networking from 2-6 August. Funded spaces for early-mid career Curators from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are available to apply for now via the open call, closing 9 April 2023.

On 4 August, a day of screenings by artists including Campbell X, Versia Harris, Michelle Eistrup and Santiago Mostyn will run alongside events including a talk chaired by Osei Bonsu (Curator, International Art at Tate Modern).

The Reflective Return

7 – 10 September

The '**Reflective Return**' will take place towards the end of the Biennial, providing a moment for visitors and Liverpool Biennial 2023 artists to reflect on the themes of the festival through artist talks, music and listening sessions.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

For families, schools and the wider community, the Liverpool Biennial Learning Programme will include a selection of online and physical resources, including a sensory pack, wellbeing routes to navigate the Biennial and artist-led workshops.

The participating artists for Liverpool Biennial 2023 are:

Albert Ibokwe Khoza (South Africa); **Antonio Obá** (Brazil); **Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński** (Austria); **Benoît Piéron** (France); **Binta Diaw** (Senegal/Italy); **Brook Andrew** (Wiradjuri/Australia); **Charmaine Watkiss** (UK); **David Aguacheiro** (Mozambique); **Edgar Calel** (Guatemala); **Elang Luluan** (Rukai Nation/Taiwan); **Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales** (Peru); **Francis Offman** (Italy/Rwanda); **Gala Porrás-Kim** (Colombia/USA); **Guadalupe Maravilla** (El Salvador/USA); **Isa do Rosário** (Brazil); **Julien Creuzet** (Martinique/France); **Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu** (Brazil/France); **Kent Chan** (Singapore/The Netherlands); **Lorin Sookool** (South Africa); **Lubaina Himid** (UK); **Lungiswa Gqunta** (South Africa); **Melanie Manchot** (Germany/UK); **Nicholas Galanin** (USA); **Nolan Oswald Dennis** (South Africa/Zambia); **Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum** (Botswana/Canada/The Netherlands); **Rahima Gambo** (Nigeria); **Rahmi Hamzi** (Palestine); **Raisa Kabir** (UK/Bangladesh); **Ranti Bam** (Nigeria/UK); **Rudy Loewe** (UK); **Sandra Suubi** (Uganda); **Sepideh**

Rahaa (Iran/Finland); **Shannon Alonzo** (Trinidad & Tobago); **Torkwase Dyson** (USA); **Unmute Dance Theatre** (South Africa).

Accreditation for Liverpool Biennial 2023 for arts professionals is open until 26 May – [click here](#) to register.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

Liverpool Biennial 2023
uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things
10 June – 17 September 2023
Venues and sites across Liverpool, free entry
www.biennial.com

Social Media

Join the discussion online at:
Facebook /liverpoolbiennial
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#LB2023

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About Khanyisile Mbongwa, Curator of Liverpool Biennial 2023

Khanyisile Mbongwa is a Cape Town-based independent curator, award-winning artist and sociologist who engages with her curatorial practice as Curing & Care, using the creative to instigate spaces for emancipatory practices, joy and play.

Mbongwa is the curator of 'Puncture Points', founding member and curator of 'Twenty Journey' and former Executive Director of Handspring Trust Puppets. She is one of the founding members of arts collective Gugulective, Vasiki Creative Citizens and WOC poetry collective Rioters In Session. Mbongwa was a Mellon Foundation Fellow at the Institute of Creative Arts at the University of Cape Town, where she completed her masters in Interdisciplinary Arts, Public Art and the Public Sphere, and has worked locally and internationally. She is also currently a PhD candidate at UCT where her work focuses on spatiality, radical black self-love and imagination, and black futurity; and a Blak C.O.R.E (Care of Radical Energy) Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Formerly Chief Curator of the 2020 Stellenbosch Triennale, her other recent projects include: 'Process as Resistance, Resilience & Regeneration' – a group exhibition co-curated with Julia Haarmann honoring a decade of CAT Cologne (2020), Athi-Patra Ruga's solo at Norval Foundation titled 'iiNyanka Zonyaka (The Lunar Songbook)' (2020) and a group exhibition titled 'History's Footnote: On Love & Freedom' at Marres, House for Contemporary Culture in Maastricht, Netherlands (2021). In 2023, Khanyisile was part of the selection committee for

the British Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2024, commissioned by the British Council.

About Dr. Samantha Lackey, Director of Liverpool Biennial

Dr. Samantha Lackey initially joined Liverpool Biennial as Interim Director in late 2020 and was appointed Director in April 2021. She joined the Biennial from her role as Head of Collection and Exhibitions at the Whitworth at the University of Manchester and Senior Lead on the Leadership Team. Before this she was curator at The Hepworth Wakefield (2010-16), where she was part of the team that opened the gallery in 2011 to critical acclaim. Her background is in academia, receiving a PhD in 2005 in the subject of surrealism, which was the context of her work as a lecturer, research fellow and her first exhibition at the Whitworth, 'Subversive Spaces: Surrealism and Contemporary Art.' She has published on surrealism and contemporary art and worked on multiple group and solo exhibitions with artists including Cecily Brown, Susan Hefuna, Linder and Eva Rothschild.

About Liverpool Biennial

Liverpool Biennial, established in 1998, is the UK's largest free contemporary visual arts festival and the country's first Biennial. Every two years the festival brings together international artists, arts professionals, communities and audiences to experience exhibitions across the city, alongside a hybrid programme of talks, performances and events, providing an opportunity for Liverpool and the UK to connect with the world, reflecting new ways of thinking. Liverpool Biennial aims to create long-lasting impact through the economic investment it brings to the city, through support for artistic, peer and young people's professional development, through community and school programmes and through its contribution to placemaking in the city and wider region.

Permanent public artworks commissioned by Liverpool Biennial include 'Liverpool Mountain' by Ugo Rondinone (2018), 'Evertro' by Koo Jeong A x Wheelscape (2015) and 'Everybody Razzle Dazzle' by Sir Peter Blake (2015).

Liverpool Biennial is supported by Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council and founding supporter James Moores.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.

About Liverpool City Council

Liverpool City Council is one of the largest local authorities in the UK serving a population of 491,500. Culture Liverpool is the city council department which aims to maintain the city's reputation as a cultural and sporting destination, positioning Liverpool as the most exciting place in the UK in which to live, visit, work, study and invest. Through the production and delivery of events, and championing creativity via funded projects across Liverpool City

Region, Culture Liverpool pushes boundaries and inspires audiences, ensuring everyone has access to arts and culture. For more information, visit www.cultureliverpool.co.uk.

About the British Council

The **British Council** is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Last year we reached over 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive a 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. www.britishcouncil.org

About Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) was established by Paul Hamlyn in 1987. He died in 2001 and left most of his estate to the Foundation, creating one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK. PHF use their resources to support social change, working towards a just and equitable society in which everyone, especially young people, can realise their full potential and enjoy fulfilling and creative lives. phf.org.uk



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