

Stephen Friedman Gallery

The Sunday Times
Art review: Liverpool Biennial; John Moores Painting Prize, Liverpool
Waldemar Januszczak
22 July 2018

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Art from cultures under threat is on show across the city at the Liverpool Biennial



Full Scouse: Cenotaph, by Holly Hendry (2018), evokes the city's industrial heritage
PETE CARR

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The Liverpool Biennial is 20 years old. And, the modern world being what it is, that is enough to prompt salvoes of hype and celebration. Normally, I'd be reluctant to join in. In my book, 20 years is a tiny drop in a big ocean. But in Liverpool's case, I am happy to make an exception. So pop the corks! The Liverpool Biennial is 20 years old! Whoopee!

The interpretations of beauty, of course, vary, making for a [Liverpool Biennial](#) that is both optimistic and challenging. Here are six artworks, scintillating with hope, you won't want to miss...

Ryan Gander

Ryan Gander's acclaimed work often sends up art in favour of experimentation and play; and for the biennial the British artist has taken his art to a place where they know how to play best. *Time Moves Quickly* is a collaboration with five schoolchildren at a local Liverpool Primary School. Taking its cue from the self-lead Montessori style of education, Gander and the children have created a series of sculptures that show the city and surroundings through their young eyes. *Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral*, *Mount Pleasant*, *Liverpool L3 5TQ*; *Bluecoat*, *School Lane*, *Liverpool*, *L1 3BX*



Ryan Gander with Jamie Clark, Phoebe Edwards, Tianna Mehta, Maisie Williams and Joshua Yates, *From five minds of great vision (The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King disassembled and reassembled to conjure resting places in the public realm)*, 2018. Installation view at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. Photography: Rob Battersby

Holly Hendry

Inspired by 'our desire to peek under the edges of things', as the artist puts it, you won't be able to miss young London-based artist Holly Hendry's new public commission, in the U-shaped square or Exchange Flags, overlooked by Liverpool's Town Hall. The huge slices of industrial-looking pipe – made of glass-reinforced concrete – get to grips with the guts of Liverpool's grand architecture, taking inspiration from everything from the Williamson tunnels (built for land reclamation) to cast iron manhole covers and precast concrete features, all materials found in the city, if you look close enough. *Exchange Flags*, *Liverpool*, *L2 3SW*

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ART: Six artists not to miss at the Liverpool Biennial



Cenotaph, 2018, by Holly Hendry, installation view at Exchange Flags. Photography: Pete Carr

Abbas Akhavan

You might notice a strange smell at the Bluecoat art centre, where Tehran-born Akhavan's monumental sculpture is on show. Made out of soil and water – using a technique the artist invented and calls 'dirt ramming' – the work refers to the ancient half-man, half-animal figures known as Lamassu that once protected cities in Mesopotamia. Many precious sculptural representations of Lamassu were infamously destroyed by ISIS at the entrances to sites such as the Mosul Museum, Iraq, but in Akhavan's sculpture they are resurrected, more powerful than ever. *Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BX*

Agnès Varda

As one of the only female filmmakers to emerge from the French New Wave movement, Agnès Varda has a unique perspective – and in her first ever UK commission, produced for the Biennial and FACT, a three-channel video piece titled *3 Mouvements*, fragments of her films following individuals in society convey Varda's singular vision. The arresting installation analyses the true meaning of images and their impact on us in the modern world. The video work *3 Mouvements* is presented with a large-scale photographic installation, *5 reveurs*. *FACT, 88 Wood Street, Liverpool L1 4DQ*

3 moving images. 3 rhythms. 3 sounds, 2018, by Agnès Varda, installation view at FACT. Photography: Thierry Bal

George Osodi

Falling somewhere between photojournalism and fiction, George Osodi's striking photographic series *Nigerian Monarchs* at Open Eye Gallery celebrates the artist's native Nigeria – but not without criticism. The award-winning photographer staged a series of portraits that ruminate on Nigeria's complex history, paying homage to kings, queens, and rulers in Africa who were in power during times of slavery, serving a reminder to the viewer that in the annals of Western history, other perspectives are missing. *Open Eye Gallery, 19 Mann Island, Liverpool L3 1BP*

HRH Queen Hajiya Hadizatu Ahmedu magajiya of Knubwada, 2013, by George Osodi. Courtesy of the artist and TAFETA

Iacopo Seri

As anyone who has ever attended an art opening knows, the artist is not always present – but the alcohol is. The Italian artist Iacopo Seri tackles the relationship between creativity and getting drunk – in the bar of the Playhouse Theatre. Starting with a weekend-long communal workshop demystifying the way artists use alcohol and drugs to inspire new ways of seeing, the results will be turned into an illustrative zine by the artist. *The Playhouse Theatre, Williamson Square, Liverpool L1 1EL. ★*