

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

The Guardian

The grand reopening: our critics pick the best art shows for 2021

Rachel Cooke, Laura Cumming, Alice Fisher, Kadish Morris

4 April 2021



## The grand reopening: our critics pick the best art shows for 2021

If all goes to plan, UK galleries will open from the end of April for a busier-than-ever season. Here's our guide to the brightest post-lockdown festivals and exhibitions

Art has been unseen for so long. Like the proverbial flower in the desert, it is hard to believe it is all still there waiting for us in warehouses, crates and long-dark museums. But very soon the sight of it will be instantaneously restored. From 9am on 17 May, all things going to plan, England's galleries are allowed to open their doors once again in a dam-bursting flood of exhibitions. On 26 April, Scotland's venues will start reopening, with Wales and Northern Ireland still under review.

The blight has been epochal. Small galleries died, biennales withered, museums cancelled or postponed momentous blockbusters, from Raphael to David Hockney, and nixed many more throughout the pandemic. Shows opened and shut in one day like a Feydeau farce. Hundreds of staff were furloughed, then axed altogether at the Tate, the National Gallery and the V&A, where "departmental restructuring" will mean the loss of deep curatorial knowledge.

But now the surviving staff are scrambling to secure their last Rodin or Rubens from abroad, anticipating a continental third wave. Shows are being hastily recast, catalogues rewritten, events like Glasgow International coming offline into living reality. Eighty-seven galleries are mounting the first ever London Gallery Weekend in June. To set eyes on art once more will be a revelation, literally; and the auguries for the future are strong. Galleries turned themselves into safe spaces from the start, and visitors are increasingly armed with vaccines. Pray the doors never have to close again.

### Jean Dubuffet: Brutal Beauty

Barbican, 17 May-22 August



Image: Landscape with Argus, 1955, Jean Dubuffet. Photograph: Copyright Fondation Dubuffet / DACS 2019

It seems almost impossible that this is the first major British show of this wild and zany Frenchman in half a century – but so it is. Dubuffet is unique. His interest in the raw art of the mentally ill and the untrained, from caveman to graffiti artist, fed directly into his brilliantly coloured and expressive painting, in which he goes at it with everything from asphalt and tar to spray gun and plaster. Expect to be startled by his spontaneity and surprised by his influence on so much of what followed.

### Michael Armitage: Paradise Edict

Royal Academy of Arts, London, 22 May-19 September



Image: The Paradise Edict, 2019, by Michael Armitage. Photograph: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection © Michael Armitage. Photo: © White Cube (Theo Christelis).

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The fantastical dreams of the Kenyan-born painter Michael Armitage (b 1984) are mesmerising, vast and densely worked. Armitage works on lubugu bark cloth, a material made by the Baganda people of Uganda, and all of his paintings speak to cultural assumptions about Africa, its politics and history, but spliced with motifs from western art. Fifteen of his mural-sized works will be displayed alongside paintings by contemporary East African painters who have influenced his career as a figurative artist.

## Barbara Hepworth: Art & Life

Hepworth Wakefield, 21 May-27 February 2022



Image: Two Forms with White (Greek), 1963, by Barbara Hepworth. Photograph: Jonty Wilde/Photo by Jonty Wilde

The biggest show of the egg-woman (as she was once known) since her death in 1975, this survey marks the 10th anniversary of the museum that takes her name. Every part of Hepworth's career will be on show, from the famous strung sculptures of the 40s and 50s to the carved marble works and the large bronzes of her later years. And as if that were not enough, Tacita Dean and Veronica Ryan have been commissioned to create related works.

## England's Creative Coast

Various venues, 18 May onwards



Image: I Keep Telling Them These Stories, 2018, by Jasleen Kaur, who will present a new artwork, The First Thing I Did Was to Kiss the Ground in Gravesend as part of England's Creative Coast. Photograph: © Jasleen Kaur.

This is art as itinerary: a beachside drive (or walk, if you're very hardy) all along the south coast from Essex and Kent to west Sussex. This year, the loose amalgam of exhibitions includes John Nash at the Towner gallery in Eastbourne, sculptures by Holly Hendry at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill, and a Michael Rakowitz installation at Turner Contemporary. Seven new outdoor artworks will appear like beacons along the breathtaking English coastline.

## Ryoji Ikeda

180 The Strand, London, 20 May-1 August



Image: Test Pattern 16 by Ryoji Ikeda. Photograph: jackhemsphoto.co.uk / 180 Strand Gallery/jackhemsphoto.co.uk / 180 Strand Gallery

Vinyl Factory and Fact Magazine presents a massive solo show for the cult Japanese musician-turned-artist Ryoji Ikeda, master of hypnotic hyper-stimulation. A dozen of his colossal sound-light installations will fill the old brutalist office block on the Strand. Nerds love his deep-dive data researchs, from DNA to sonic booms and outer space, but his work is a kind of 21st-century romanticism, with its waterfalls of flashing light. Synapse-splitting installations are promised, along with a reprise of his dazzling strobe-light corridor. Booking definitely essential.

## Dürer's Journeys: Travels of a Renaissance Artist

National Gallery, London, 20 November-27 February 2022

Albrecht Dürer was European art's first great tourist, drawing bristling walruses shipped from Scandinavia, and travelling miles in winter to see a whale washed up on a beach in Zeeland. He criss-crossed the Alps more than

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once and saw what he thought were the bones of a giant. With loans from museums across the world, and from private collections, this epochal show will present the strange genius of his mind and art. And look out for paintings never shown before in Britain.

Image: Lot and His Daughters, c1496–9, Albrecht Dürer. Photograph: National Gallery of Art/image courtesy National Gallery of Art

## The Making of Rodin

Tate Modern, London, 17 May-31 October



Image: The Tragic Muse, 1890, Auguste Rodin. Photograph: Christian Baraja/Studio SLB/Collections du Musée Rodin, Paris

Rodin the revolutionary sculptor of The Burghers of Calais, The Thinker and The Kiss: everybody thinks they know the great French titan. But this show homes in on the origins of his art. How his hands worked the clay models, how he shaved and twisted plaster, what use he made of photographs, and even films, and his relationship with his female collaborators, including the sculptor Camille Claudel and the Japanese actress Ohta Hisa. This show should reshape our understanding of Rodin.

## Veronica Ryan: Along a Spectrum

Spike Island, Bristol, 19 May-5 September



Image: Punnet I, 2020, by Veronica Ryan. Photograph: courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photograph by Max McClure.

Best known for her pillow, pod and cocoon-like pieces, British sculptor Veronica Ryan's work celebrates the natural world and the Caribbean with beautiful pastel-hued works that evoke dreaming, childhood memories and home. A key theme for Ryan, who was born in Montserrat, is the island's pre-colonial history and culture. This show brings together new works made from clay, bronze, fabrics, neon crocheted fishing-line pouches, seeds, fruit stones, guanábana skins and cocoa pods – even volcanic ash from the island.

## Eileen Agar: Angel of Anarchy

Whitechapel Gallery, London, 19 May-29 August

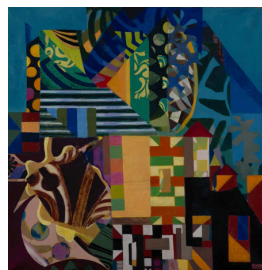


Image: Collective Unconscious, 1977, by Eileen Agar. Photograph: © The estate of Eileen Agar

British artist Eileen Agar (1899-1991) may be the most under-represented of all the surrealists. She made diamanté sculptures and ceremonial hats, painted scenes of indelible strangeness, and fashioned collages and fetishes out of feathers, photographs and jewels. Her art seems infused with a constant sense of the sea and the shore, but also with a characteristically independent joie de vivre. This survey of over a hundred works is long overdue, but better late than never.

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## Nero

British Museum, London, 27 May-24 October



Nero the ruthless tyrant – or Nero the conquering hero, last male descendent of Rome's first Emperor Augustus? If you have him pegged as a matricidal maniac, this blockbuster may just alter your perception. Two hundred spectacular objects, including images, sculptures and illustrated manuscripts, will trace the young emperor's rise to power, his crimes, misdemeanours and wild indulgences, as well as his diplomatic and military triumphs. Expect a stunning and controversial spectacle.

Image: Marble bust of Nero, Italy, around AD 55. Photograph: Francesco Piras

## Miss Clara and the Celebrity Beast in Art, 1500-1860

Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, 12 November-27 February 2022



Image: A Rhinoceros, Called Miss Clara (1738-58) attributed to Peter Anton Verschaaffelt. Photograph: © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

The starting point for this quirky-sounding show is one of the most beloved objects in the Institute's collection: *A Rhinoceros, Called Miss Clara* (1750-60), a small bronze representation of a beast that famously toured Europe, having been brought to Rotterdam in 1741 from the Dutch East Indies. The exhibition will place Miss Clara ("tame as a lamb") in the context of other celebrity pachyderms, and will feature work by, among others, Dürer and Rembrandt.

## David Hockney, The Arrival of Spring, Normandy, 2020

Royal Academy, London, 23 May-26 September



Image: No 370, 2020, David Hockney. Photograph: © David Hockney

Hockney's prodigious energy continues to astonish. This exhibition promises more than 100 works, all of which were originally "painted" on an iPad at the artist's French home during lockdown. The images celebrate the coming of spring in the four-acre field that surrounds Hockney's house, but are also inspired by the narrative form of the Bayeux tapestry, which he visits often. An immersive experience across three galleries.

## Paula Rego

Tate Britain, London, 7 July-24 October



Image: The Dance, 1988, by Paula Rego.

The largest and most comprehensive exhibition of work by Rego (b 1935) to date, this is bound to be seriously thrilling. On offer will be early paintings, including *Interrogation*, made when Rego was only 15; collages and drawings from the 1960s and 70s, created in fierce, inspired opposition to the Portuguese dictatorship under which the artist was then living; her famous Nursery Rhymes series of 1981; and work from the 1990s that addresses abortion, depression and human trafficking. A must-see.

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## Lucy McKenzie

Tate Liverpool, 3 June–31 October



The practice of the Scottish artist Lucy McKenzie is singular and beautiful, and speaks to many of the things we have loved and, perhaps, lost (post-war murals, fin-de-siècle architecture, glorious old-fashioned shops). This exhibition will include 80 works made from 1997 onwards, and if her name is unfamiliar, all I can say is that it will be on at the same time as Tate Liverpool's Lucian Freud in Focus, the largest show of Freud's work to be staged in the north-west for 30 years. See both! Double bubble, as we art critics like to say.

Image: Side Entrance, 2011, by Lucy McKenzie. Photograph: © Lucy McKenzie

## Hogarth and Europe

Tate Britain, London, 3 November–20 March 2022



Image: A Scene from The Beggar's Opera VI, 1731, William Hogarth. Photograph: Tate

A bracing dash of William Hogarth never goes amiss, but this exhibition sounds to be both expansive and highly original, showing him alongside some of his European contemporaries – Francesco Guardi in Venice, Chardin in Paris and Cornelis Troost in Amsterdam – for the first time. What sympathies did these men share? And how did they capture the affluence and cosmopolitanism of 18th-century life? By answering such questions, we may in future see Hogarth with eyes more widely open.

## Epic Iran

V&A, London, 29 May–12 September



Image: Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan, 1411. Photograph: Courtesy Wellcome Collection

The first major exhibition to look at Iran for 90 years, this show will tell the story of the country from 3000BC to the present day, and will bring together more than 300 objects, including several significant loans from private collections. Among the highlights are the exquisite *Qaran Unhorses Barman*, a folio from the *Shahnameh* [or *Book of Kings*, the epic poem by Ferdowsi] of Shah Tahmasp, Tabriz, from 1523–35; and *Miss Hybrid #3*, Shirin Aliabadi's 2008 portrait of a young Iranian woman blowing a bubble with her gum. Not be missed in any circumstances.

## Degas to Picasso: International Modern Masters

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, 18 May–13 June

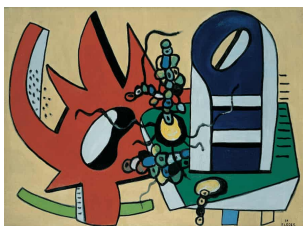


Image: The Red Gear (Still Life in Red and Blue), 1939, by Fernand Léger. Photograph: © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020

Its original opening having been delayed by lockdown, this exhibition will deploy works of art by more than 50 artists to examine the many artistic movements of the late 19th and early 20th century, among them post-impressionism, cubism, surrealism and abstract



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expressionism. Prints by the likes of Braque, Cézanne and Matisse, portraits by Manet, Georges Rouault and Marie Laurencin – and the first chance to see Édouard Vuillard's *Modèle assise dans un fauteuil, se coiffant* (c1903) after its recent conservation.

## Kehinde Wiley

National Gallery, London, 10 December-18 April 2022

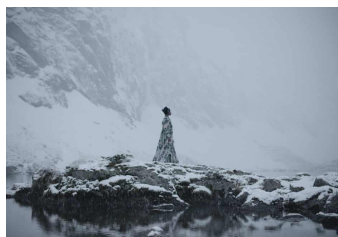


Image: A still from *In Search of the Miraculous* by Kehinde Wiley. Photograph: © Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery and Galerie Templon.

Wiley made his name in his homeland with paintings of modern-day black Americans reimagined as old masters, raising questions about power and identity with his regal, defiant figures. He found international fame in 2018 as the first black artist to paint an official portrait of a president, a work deemed “pretty sharp” by its subject, Barack Obama. Recent work incorporates photography, and his show at the National will also use film to reimagine European romantic landscapes by Turner, Friedrich and Vernet to include people of colour.

## Matthew Barney: Redoubt

Hayward Gallery, Southbank, London, 19 May-25 July

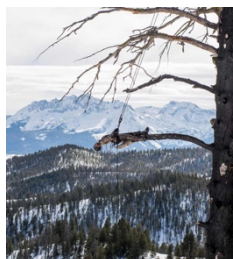


Image: A still from *Redoubt* by Matthew Barney. Photograph: ©Matthew Barney, courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, and Sadie Coles HQ, London. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

This is the first solo UK show for the American performance artist and filmmaker in more than a decade. Still best known for the unsettling *Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002), Barney's *Redoubt*, including engravings, sculptures, and a feature film set in Barney's childhood home of Sawtooth Mountains, Idaho, is a more grounded affair. This exploration of guns, nature, the myth of Diana the hunter and some remarkable hoop dancing has given Barney his best American reviews in years and will be a treat for British fans.

## Sophie Taeuber-Arp

Tate Modern, London, 15 July until 17 October



Image: *Beach*, 1927, by Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Photograph: Photo: Alex Delfanne/Courtesy Stiftung Arp eV, Berlin/Rolandswerth and Hauser & Wirth

The 20th-century avant-garde artist, textile designer, dancer, editor and sculptor overflowed with ideas and creativity, never settled, moving from one discipline to the next with restless curiosity. From Dadaist sculptures and puppet shows for the Cabaret Voltaire to her extraordinary geometric abstracts and constructivist textiles, Taeuber-Arp brought exuberance to every project. This major UK retrospective will feature her most important works. Recognition here of her contribution to modern art is long overdue: in her native Switzerland, she's so respected she appears on a bank note.