

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Wallpaper*

London Gallery Weekend: art exhibitions to see in the city

Harriet Lloyd-Smith

2 June 2021

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Ahead of London Gallery Weekend (4 - 6 June 2021) we round-up the in-person London art exhibitions to squeeze into your post-lockdown diary, and those around the UK

Summer is beckoning, and with it, the sun is rising on London's long-fallow art scene. Though many countries are still in the throes of lockdown restrictions, England's art galleries and museums can now open their doors to physical visitors, just in time for London Gallery Weekend 2021. For many, these will be the first in-person art experiences in more than a year. For others, it will be months of show postponements and uncertainty coming to an end. Ultimately, this will provide an alternative to viewing art via pixels, which – recent NFT dramas aside – just hasn't quite offered the same thrills. As our diaries begin to rapidly fill ahead of London Gallery Weekend, these are the shows, in the city and around the UK, worth pencilling in.

Exhibition: Yayoi Kusama: 'Infinity Mirror Rooms'

Location: Tate Modern

Dates: 14 June 2021 - 12 June 2022 (Tate Members from 18 May)



Image: Yayoi Kusama Infinity Mirrored Room - Filled with the Brilliance of Life 2011/2017 Tate Presented by the artist, Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro 2015, accessioned 2019 © YAYOI KUSAMA Photo © Tate (Joe Humphrys)

On the post-lockdown London art scene, there seems to be a recurring theme: immersion. These include Ryoji Ikeda's sensory ambush at 180 The Strand, and Es Devlin's forthcoming Forest for Change at Somerset House for London Design Biennale. But Tate Modern is hosting the piece of work that arguably redefined the role of immersion in contemporary art: Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Rooms. The year-long show will comprise two of the artist's acclaimed mirror room installations – a dizzying marriage of mirrors, light and water, which offers the illusion of limitless space. Also on view is The Universe as Seen from the Stairway to Heaven 2021, Kusama's brand new 'peep in' sculpture, which has been created specifically for the show. At 92, Kusama remains a prolific force: the artist currently has a simultaneous shows at Victoria Miro, London, the New York Botanical Garden and a major retrospective at Gropius Bau in Berlin. She has also recently collaborated with brands such as Veuve Clicquot, which involved a striking sculptural intervention on the French Champagne house's premium cuvée, La Grande Dame.

Exhibition: Tom Sachs: 'Ritual'

Location: Thaddaeus Ropac

Dates: 3 June - 31 July

Harbouring potent commentaries on consumerism, branding, and the fetishisation of products, Tom Sachs' work is never quite what it seems. At Thaddaeus Ropac, Sachs draws on the subcultures of the urban metropolis, specifically the phenomenon of corner shops and their role in the diverse civic demands of modern urban life. Displayed on bespoke pedestals channelling modernist forms, these pieces replicate a clean-lined consumer culture in humble materials like plywood, cardboard, tape and paint. They also bear traces of the hands that made them, a nod to the value of human labour. Sachs illustrates how, when quotidian objects such as laundry baskets, milk crates, surveillance cameras or leaf blowers, are placed on Brancusian pedestals, they can be reframed as high art. This layered show merges sociopolitics, the genius of Constantin Brancusi and the rhythmic rituals of everyday life. As Sachs says of the show: 'Everything has form, but the objects are selected and

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presented so that their shapes along with their pedestals engage the viewer in the tradition of modernist sculpture, at eye level on a plateau.'

Exhibition: Leilah Babirye: 'Ebika Bya ba Kuchu mu Buganda (Kuchu Clans of Buganda) II'

Location: Stephen Friedman Gallery

Dates: 4 June – 31 July 2021



Image: Leilah Babirye, Namasole Wannyan, Mother of King Kimera from the Kuchu Royal Family of Buganda

Leilah Babirye's work examines the legacies of British colonialism in Uganda – where the artist was born – and the traditional clan systems of the kingdom of Buganda. Through an innovative approach to found objects, the artist delves into progressive ideas regarding alternative forms of kinship, community and LGBTQI activism. Babirye's biography is deeply entwined with her work: the artist fled Uganda in 2015 after being publicly outed in a local newspaper. In 2018, she was granted asylum in the United States with support from the African Services Committee and the New York City Anti-Violence Project. Since then, Babirye's work has rapidly gained acclaim, most notably following her 2020 show at Gordon Robichaux, New York. Babirye's Stephen Friedman show centres on a new series of figurative ceramic works. Describing her practice, Babirye explains: 'Through the act of burning, nailing and assembling, I aim to address the realities of being gay in the context of Uganda and Africa in general.'

Exhibition: Bronwyn Katz: 'I turn myself into a star and visit my loved ones in the sky'

Location: White Cube, Bermondsey

Dates: Until 27 June 2021

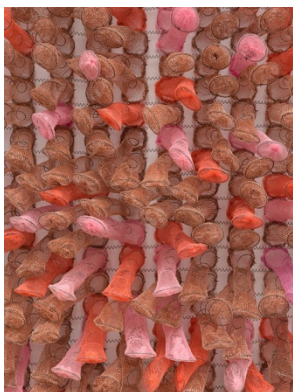


Image: Bronwyn Katz, !Noas (Porcupine star), 2020, Salvaged bedspring, pot scourers and wire. © the artist. Photography: © White Cube (Ollie Hammick)

For her first show in London, South African artist Bronwyn Katz has staged a deep-dive into materiality and social history, and how the two are woven together. 'I turn myself into a star and visit my loved ones in the sky' at White Cube Bermondsey includes ten new wall-based sculptural works made from deconstructed metal bed frames, bedsprings and other salvaged household materials in vibrant hues. For Katz, the bed is a metaphor for issues around land, ownership, homelessness, belonging, identity, and a sense of place. 'There are places that have previously felt important to me because they are the places where most of my known ancestors lived and were buried', she says. 'But now understanding that I have ancestors as old as time, no specific place holds more importance than another.'

Exhibition: Igshaan Adams: 'Kicking Dust'

Location: Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre

Dates: Until 25 July

Dominating the Hayward gallery's cavernous spaces, Igshaan Adams' meticulous textile works comprise a fusion of natural and synthetic materials: rope, twine, copper wire, silk, wood, bone, glass and plastic beading. The artist's first solo exhibition in the UK sees weaving, sculpture and installation used as vehicles to explore race, religion and sexuality. Adams draws on the teachings of Sufism, specifically the notion of looking inwards to

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define oneself. Adams' imposing hybrid forms navigate the complex relationship between his faith and sexuality, the iconographies of Islam, and the socio-political histories of creole communities in his native Cape Town. As Ralph Rugoff, director of the Hayward Gallery notes, 'Adams' intricately woven sculptures and tapestries, fashioned from an expansive and exhilarating range of materials, reflect on the complex interconnections that contribute to contemporary identities. His Hayward Gallery installation invites us to reimagine how we navigate complex social landscapes defined by an ever-evolving weave of differences and desires.'

Exhibition: Kapwani Kiwanga: 'Cache'

Location: Goodman Gallery

Dates: Until 12 June

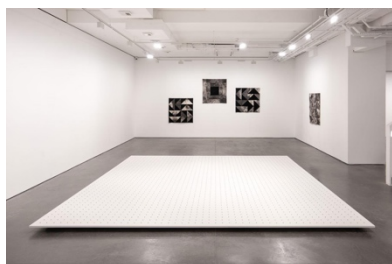


Image: Installation view of 'Cache' by Kapwani Kiwanga Goodman Gallery, London

Canadian Kapwani Kiwanga is not an artist short of accolades. Beyond two BAFTA nominations for her film and video works, she was also named the inaugural winner of the Frieze Artist Award, and the 2020 recipient of the Prix Marcel Duchamp. Kiwanga's wide-ranging and compelling work often interrogates themes of history, power and resistance. At Goodman, she presents a new body of work for 'Cache', which exemplifies her research-based practice. Here, materials are deployed to entrench social, political and economic power structures and illustrate artefacts used by those who have circumnavigated these obstacles through history. These narratives are transported through Kiwanga's mixed-media works and wall-based reliefs, rendered in ceramic, metal, gold leaf, embroidery, textile and mirror.

Exhibition: Sheila Hicks: 'Music to My Eyes'

Location: Alison Jacques Gallery

Dates: 4 June - 31 July

For American textile art trailblazer Sheila Hicks, art and music have long been entwined. The artist described that, in childhood, the routine of sewing clothes was 'as playing a musical instrument was for others'. Hicks' third solo exhibition at Alison Jacques anticipates her major survey at The Hepworth Wakefield scheduled for April 2022, which will mark the artist's first in a UK museum and will be curated by Andrew Bonacina. In London, Hicks' show invites a certain 'visual listening'. 'Usually, sound enters through your ears,' Hicks says of her new works, 'but I invite participation and perception through your eyes. One can detect subtle harmonies, discover intricate structures, complex sequences, and enjoy an infinite range of colours, as when you listen to music.'

Exhibition: John Akomfrah: 'The Unintended Beauty of Disaster'

Gallery: Lisson (67 Lisson Street)

Dates: 13 April - 5 June 2021



Image: John Akomfrah , Triptych, 2020 (film still). © Smoking Dogs Films, courtesy Lisson Gallery

John Akomfrah's latest body of work is a direct response to the events of 2020. In 'The Unintended Beauty of Disaster,' the celebrated artist, filmmaker, lecturer and writer reflects on the Black Lives Matter protests, demonstrations against imperialist monuments and the rethinking of historical narratives. New works include a three-screen video installation, Triptych (2020), an homage to a track on the radical album, 'We Insist!' (1960) by jazz musician Max Roach. Elsewhere, Akomfrah will present a series of new photo-texts

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exploring colour, race and following on from *Our Skin Is a Monument I* (2020), an edition created in support of the Frieze Emerging Curators Fellowship for UK-based Black and POC emerging curators.

Exhibition: Rachel Whiteread: 'Internal Objects'

Gallery: Gagosian (20 Grosvenor Hill)

Dates: 12 April - 6 June 2021



Image: Rachel Whiteread: 'Internal Objects', installation view, 2021. © Rachel Whiteread. Photography: Prudence Cuming Associates. Courtesy Gagosian

A hotchpotch of whitewashed wood, the formality of minimalism fused with human irregularity: Rachel Whiteread's 'Internal Objects' is a lesson in hidden narratives. Her work is known to harness existing artefacts and spaces – including chairs, interiors of rooms, and most famously, an entire terraced house – to explore corporeal presence and negative space to ghostly effect. In her London show, this eeriness arrives in a different form: instead of casting existing objects, she's built new ones. Instead of closed, opaque forms, for which she is well known, Poltergeist and Döppelgänger have been blasted wide open, suggesting catastrophe and mayhem.

Exhibition: Antony Cairns: 'CTY_TYO3 TYO4'

Gallery: Webber

Dates: 22 April - 6 June 2021



Image: E.I. TYO4_011, 2019. Courtesy Antony Cairns and Webber

As parts of the world tentatively contemplate a return to city life, British artist Antony Cairns' exploration of the global metropolis in 'CTY_TYO3 TYO4' is a must-see. Working with outmoded forms of technology such as electronic ink, COBOL coding forms and IBM decision tables, Cairns engages with the history of photography and highlights how the medium is inextricable from the evolution of digital processes. Perfection isn't what Cairns is after, but rather an evidential work that embraces errors and imperfections. For those unable to attend the physical show, the exhibition is accompanied by Cairns' latest book *Selected Computer Punch card artworks: Computer listing paper edition*, published by Morel.

Exhibition: Orlanda Broom, 'Rewild'

Location: Grove Square Galleries

Dates: Until 11 June



Image: Installation view of Orlanda Broom's show 'Rewild' at Grove Square Galleries. Courtesy of the artist and Grove Square Galleries. Copyright Paul Aitchison

Colour-drenched, otherworldly, and dominated by natural forms, Orlanda Broom's latest series offers a portal to an optimistic post-pandemic future. The buoyant portrayals of saturated flora in 'Rewild', at Grove Square Galleries are odes to new beginnings, with a healthy dose of the mystical. One piece, *Susquehanna Dreamer* (2020), alludes to Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his hopes to establish a utopian commune on the banks of the river Susquehanna. But here, sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between paradise and purgatory: works such as *Creep* (2020) play

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on plant-like characteristics and at the same time present a mirror of human behaviour, the prickly tendrils both seductive and sinister. As Broom says, 'Currently, when we think about the environment it's generally about loss, damage or negative change. I'd like my enthusiasm and love of nature to come through and engage people to also think about what the future holds. Can our planet rewild?'