

NEWS RELEASE

24.05.22

## MONUMENTAL PUBLIC ARTWORK TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON MERSEYSIDE

- Alicja Biala's *Merseyside Totemy* visualises statistics and figures related to the impact of climate change on the Liverpool City Region.
- Liverpool City Region one of the areas most at risk from rising sea levels caused by climate change\*.
- Three colourful 4.5m totems to be unveiled next to the Royal Liver Building in July 2022.
- Artwork is latest project commissioned by Liverpool Biennial in partnership with Liverpool BID Company.



Alicja Biala, *Totems in Forest of Dean Sculpture Park*, 2021. Courtesy the artist.

Liverpool Biennial and Liverpool BID Company today announce a monumental new public artwork by artist Alicja Biala, addressing the urgent issue of the impact of climate change on Merseyside. The work will be on display at St Nicholas Place, Princes Dock from July 2022 and will remain in situ for two years.

The work, part of Biala's *Totemy* series and formed of three totems, brings together statistics around climate change aiming to visualise the issues Merseyside faces in terms of rising sea levels and flooding by situating them using local examples.

Each totem will feature markers pointing to three areas of Merseyside threatened by rising sea levels: Liverpool City Centre, Formby and Birkenhead. Visitors will then be able to digitally interact with each totem to access information on the data that determines its proportions, gathered by the artist and researchers Jason Kirby and Timothy Lane from Liverpool John Moores University. The data represented shows what Merseyside will look like in the year 2080 if ice caps continue to melt and sea levels continue to rise at their current speed. Children in the region will be around retirement age in 2080, meaning that they will experience these effects of climate change within their lifetimes.

With data around climate change typically being presented to the public in an intangible and unrelatable way, *Merseyside Totemy* aims to strike a hopeful note with visitors. By acknowledging that the effects of climate change are already being felt, the conversation must shift towards the positive possibilities for mitigation and action, rather than prevention.

The totems will be produced at Castle Fine Arts Foundry Liverpool using materials that reference traditional shipbuilding, including painted and rusted mild steel, whilst the patterns on the work will be inspired by the architecture of the region. The plinths for the totems are based on stone filled gabion baskets that would usually be used to build sea defences and every material used in the creation of the work has been chosen to ensure maximum longevity and reusability. Further information on plans for the sustainable afterlife of the work will be revealed in due course.

As part of the project, global built environment consultancy Arup are supporting a series of workshops with the artist in schools located in areas that are likely to be most impacted by coastal changes. The workshops will look at climate change solutions through an innovative and optimistic lens, enabling students to learn how to represent their own data in exciting and engaging ways.

The artist is also working with local schools and the Liverpool Biennial Learning Team to create a 'Climate Wish' card game that will help young people to navigate difficult and often worrying conversations around climate change. In Summer 2022, the resource will be made available in school libraries across the Liverpool City Region and online to encourage everyone to make their own Climate Wish.

**Sam Lackey, Director, Liverpool Biennial,** said:

“We're thrilled to be working with Liverpool BID Company again, bringing large-scale public artworks to the city and encouraging important discussions about the climate crisis.

With much of Merseyside set to feel the impact of rising sea levels within the next century, Biala's work is strongly situated in the context of the local area, presenting important data in a way that can connect with everybody who passes by.

We hope that this new work will serve as a meeting point to spark ideas around what can be done to mitigate the effects of climate change across our region.”

**Bill Addy, chief executive of the Liverpool BID Company, and chair of LVEN (Liverpool Visitor Economy Network), said:**

"Public art has the power to transform our streets, squares and public places. Our commitment to supporting the presentation of art is a vital part of how we create a catalyst for future activity, how we make places more attractive and inviting to live, work, visit and explore.

I am excited to see this work in situ. It will bring a colourful and thought-provoking addition to our famous city-skyline. With the addition of a new sculpture on The Liverpool Plinth later this summer it will mean we are bringing two artists to this corner of the city. There is such an appetite for new art in the city and we're delighted to be launching the summer with such a vibrant start."

A limited edition etching by Alicja Biala will be unveiled to coincide with the outdoor installation of *Merseyside Totemy* and will be available at [biennial.com](http://biennial.com) from Summer 2022.

**Ends.**

**Notes to Editors:**

Alicja Biala

*Merseyside Totemy*

Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial and Liverpool BID Company, with production supported by Arup and Castle Art Foundry.

Launching July 2022

St Nicholas Place

Princes Dock

Liverpool

L3 1QW

Free Entry

[www.biennial.com](http://www.biennial.com)

\* According to *research by Climate Central*

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#LiverpoolBiennial

#MerseysideTotemy

### **About Alicja Biala**

**Alicja Biala** is a Polish artist working across a range of different media and scales. Biala initially gained attention with her large-scale public paintings, followed by her politically charged Polish Cut-Out series. She has since worked across multiple scales, ranging from architectural sculptures to large interior sculptural lighting, etchings, paintings, and more. Her work incorporates a mixture of pagan themes that bring the political and personal spheres of contemporary life into close proximity. She has received widespread press, multiple awards, and is in numerous private and national collections. Biala is currently studying at Royal College of Art and Royal Drawing School in London.

### **About Liverpool Biennial**

**Liverpool Biennial** is the largest and longest-running festival of contemporary visual art in the UK. Since its inception in 1998, the Biennial has become renowned in the international contemporary art world, bringing together a wide array of international voices and artistic practices. Taking place every two years, Liverpool Biennial activates public institutions, historical sites and extraordinary locations across Liverpool, ensuring major commissions and legacy projects in the public realm including *Liverpool Mountain* by Ugo Rondinone (2018), *Evertro* by Koo Jeong A x Wheelscape (2015) and *Everybody Razzle Dazzle* by Sir Peter Blake (2015). Pioneering an innovative approach underpinned by a year-round programme of research, education, residencies, projects and commissions, each biennial edition introduces renewed thinking and scale of production. Having commissioned over 380 new artworks and presented work by over 530 celebrated artists from around the world, the Biennial is built on a longstanding commitment to connecting international artists with local practitioners, communities and the general public. Liverpool Biennial is funded by Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council and founding supporter James Moores.

### **Liverpool BID Company**

**Liverpool BID Company** is a private, not-for-profit organisation, representing the interests of over 1,000 levy paying businesses in Liverpool city centre, across two BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) - Retail & Leisure BID and Culture & Commerce BID

The aim of Liverpool BID Company is to:

- Bring added value to levy payers and build on the core services already provided by Liverpool City Council and Merseyside Police
- Ensure both BID areas are clean and secure for businesses and visitors, and have the right environment for the private sector to succeed - whether a retailer, restaurant owner, or legal and financial service
- Work with the city and charities to tackle street dwellers
- Drive footfall and develop activity where needed
- Champion the voice of the levy payers it represents, pushing forward their agendas and making things happen

The Liverpool BID areas cover some of the most iconic locations in Liverpool city centre:

- The eclectic and diverse independents of Bold Street
- The thriving restaurant and hotel scene of Castle Street
- Liverpool's ever-evolving high street - from the iconic brands on Church Street and Williamson Square, to the high-end boutiques of Metquarter
- The professional and financial services around Old Hall Street
- Mathew Street and Cavern Quarter - the birthplace of The Beatles, a focal point in the city's music heritage, and a colourful nightlife scene
- The famous Waterfront and Royal Albert Dock, Three Graces and Pier Head
- St George's Quarter and St John's Gardens and William Brown Street

For more information about Liverpool BID Company, please visit:

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

### **About Arup**

**Arup** is the creative force at the heart of many of the world's most prominent projects in the built environment and across industry. Working in more than 140 countries, the firm's designers, engineers, architects, planners, consultants and technical specialists work with our clients on innovative projects of the highest quality and impact.



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