

Liverpool Biennial

PRESS RELEASE

08.06.23

LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL OPENS 12TH EDITION 'UMOYA: THE SACRED RETURN OF LOST THINGS'.

- Exhibitions launched at historic locations and leading art venues across the city including Tobacco Warehouse, Cotton Exchange, Tate Liverpool, Bluecoat, FACT Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery, Victoria Gallery and Museum and World Museum.
- Large-scale outdoor artworks unveiled in public spaces including Liverpool ONE, Stanley Dock, Princes Dock, St John's Gardens and Liverpool Parish Church (St Nicholas').
- First part of free public programme, titled 'The Opening Door', takes place across the opening weekend, featuring artists Albert Ibokwe Khoza, Lorin Sookool, Raisa Kabir, and Torkwase Dyson.
- 'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things' runs until 17 September 2023.

On Saturday 10 June, Liverpool Biennial opens its 12th edition, titled 'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things', unveiling a series of exhibitions and outdoor artworks across the city. 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' is curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa and presents the work of 35 leading and emerging artists and collectives from 6 continents, including 15 new commissions. Liverpool Biennial 2023 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.

Taking place in historic locations and leading art venues, this year the Biennial presents exhibitions at Tobacco Warehouse, Cotton Exchange, Tate Liverpool, Bluecoat, FACT Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery, Victoria Gallery and Museum and World Museum.

Khanyisile Mbongwa, Curator, Liverpool Biennial 2023, said:

"'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things' explores the ways in which people and objects have the potential to manifest power as they move across the world, while acknowledging the continued losses of the past. It draws a line from the ongoing

Catastrophes caused by colonialism and slavery towards an insistence on being truly Alive, pulling threads from East and Southern Africa, East and South Asia, North and South America, the Middle East, Oceania, and Europe. This Biennial locates itself in Liverpool not only as a provocation to the city but also as an intimate excavation of its history and temperament.”

Dr Samantha Lackey, Director, Liverpool Biennial, said:

“We are delighted to bring the spirit of ‘uMoya’ to the city of Liverpool in this, our 25th anniversary year. At this moment of global instability, the vision and experience of our curator Khanyisile Mbongwa brings a perspective of historic acknowledgement that both connects to Liverpool’s colonial past but also uncovers possibilities for joy, healing, and aliveness in its future.

I would like to thank Khanyisile Mbongwa who has brought not only her thinking but also her feeling and care to the city and to us as an organisation over the past months. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the artists who have brought so much passion and imagination to this extraordinary Biennial. As we commemorate our 25-year history through this truly remarkable edition, we continue to be grateful to our cultural partners and venues who work with us across the city generously collaborating on our programme. Finally, I would like to thank our funders, in particular Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council, without whom the festival would not be possible.”

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 Cael** (Guatemala); **Eleng Luluan** (Rukai Nation/Taiwan); **Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales** (Peru); **Francis Offman** (Italy/Rwanda); **Gala Porras-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).

OUTDOOR WORKS

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

Brook Andrew presents a new large-scale neon work, located at **Stanley Dock** (home to **Tobacco Warehouse**). Incorporating Irish, Scottish Gaelic, isiXhosa,

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 is on view at **World Museum**.

A monumental sculpture by **Eleng Luluan** is displayed 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** is 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, as well as 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 is on view 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. Inspired by the profound curative and narrative powers of clay, Bam presents seven new sculptures from her 'Ifa' series (2021-23), offering a new meeting point for visitors to gather in mediation, contemplation, and discourse.

At **Liverpool ONE**, **Rudy Loewe** presents 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 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** has created 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 expands 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 is located at Tobacco Warehouse in the ground floor waterside space and hosts 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, is presented alongside a monumental installation by **Binta**

Diaw, textile work by **Isa do Rosário**, sculptural and video works by **Julien Creuzet** and painting by **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 large-scale 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)', premieres following Tate becoming custodians of the work in 2021. **Torkwase Dyson**'s monumental work 'Liquid A Place' occupies 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** is 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 home to Liverpool's cotton trade, forms 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'. A new component of the gown, a veil, has been added through the artist's engagement with women living in North Liverpool.

Victoria Gallery & Museum

At Victoria Gallery & Museum, new works by **Charmaine Watkiss** and **Gala Porras-Kim** are presented alongside **Antonio Obá**'s interactive installation 'Jardín'. 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. **Gala Porras-Kim** presents a new sound work, resurrecting the names of those who have been reincarnated into objects now stored in museum collections.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

A public programme of free events takes 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 can be found at biennial.com/events.

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 taking place throughout the opening weekend include:

Saturday 10 June

'Our vessels for the stories, unspoken. Subaqueous violence. Sea. Ocean...', a Durational Performance by Raisa Kabir

Stanley Dock

2pm-5pm

[Drop-in](#)

'Woza Wenties!', a Dance Piece by Lorin Sookool

St Luke's Bombed Out Church

12-1pm

[Book here](#)

Opening the Door of No Return: In Conversation with author Christina Sharpe, artist Torkwase Dyson & Liverpool Biennial 2023 Curator Khanyisile Mbongwa
Victoria Gallery & Museum
1:30 - 3pm
[Book here](#)

'Black Circus of the Republic of Bantu', an immersive offering by Albert Ibokwe Khoza
Tobacco Warehouse
6:30 - 7:30pm
[Book here](#)

Sunday 11 June

'Black Circus of the Republic of Bantu', an immersive offering by Albert Ibokwe Khoza
Tobacco Warehouse
6:30 - 7:30pm
[Book here](#)

The Middle Passage **4–6 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 1-6 August.

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. The event will also include contributions from Irvin Pascal, Saul Williams, Anisia Uzeyman as well as a roster of local talent presented in collaboration with Homotopia.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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

To coincide with the launch of Liverpool Biennial 2023, the Biennial is releasing a special edition print by artist Rudy Loewe available to purchase at biennial.com/shop. The Liverpool Biennial 2023 publication 'UBUHLANTI: LETTERS TO ALIVENESS' is also out now, featuring contributions from participating artists and Kevin Quashie, Patrick Flores, Li'Tsoanelo Zwane, Christina Sharpe, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Koleka Putuma and Mai Thao (translated by Kevin Bowen and Chung Nguyen). The sale of each edition and publication directly supports Liverpool Biennial's new commissions, exhibitions, talks and education programmes.

SEVENSTORE X LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL ARTIST BURSARIES

As part of a shared commitment to supporting local artists in Liverpool and Merseyside, Liverpool Biennial 2023 and SEVENSTORE have joined forces to offer three bursaries for local artists and creative practitioners between June-September 2023, as part of the 12th edition of Liverpool Biennial. The selected artists are Alexis Maxwell, Sufea Mohamad Noor, and Willzy.

Expanding upon the theme of 'uMoya', the selected artists all examine or work with practices of care and will receive support from Liverpool Biennial to develop their practices through self-determined activities inspired by their own unique needs. The creatives are invited to showcase their work during the final weeks of the festival, between 4-10 September 2023, and will benefit from dedicated time with Curator, Khanyisile Mbongwa, and the wider Biennial team to support their research and development.

THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE X LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL OPEN CALL FOR WRITERS

For Liverpool Biennial 2023, Liverpool Biennial has collaborated with arts criticism and cultural commentary publication [The Double Negative](#) to offer an opportunity for one Merseyside-based writer to develop a piece of critical writing in response to this year's programme.

Under-represented early-career writers based in the Merseyside region are encouraged to apply. Successful applicants will receive £500 to cover their writing time and visit to the Biennial and will also receive mentorship from The Double Negative's editors throughout the process, including support and feedback on the text, as well as the option of an additional advisory session. Further information can be found at biennial.com.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

To navigate the Biennial, a free Guide is [available online](#) and to pick up around the city.

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
Instagram @liverpoolbiennial
Twitter @biennial
#LB2023

Press enquiries:

For further information, including full artist biographies and images, please contact:

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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 Gugulethu, 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 has held the position of Director at Liverpool Biennial since late 2021. She joined the Biennial from her role as Head of Collection and Exhibitions at the Whitworth at the University of Manchester. 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 co-curated 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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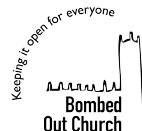
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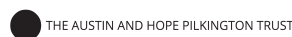


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