

# Welcome

---

Welcome to the 12th edition of Liverpool Biennial, 'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things'. 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 firstly like to thank Khanyisile who has brought 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.

Since being formed in 1998 we have commissioned 380 artworks, presented work by over 560 leading artists from around the world and delivered 34 collaborative neighbourhood projects, many with long-lasting social impact. We aim to connect the best of international art and artists to Liverpool for the benefit of everybody who lives, studies, works within and visits our brilliant city. Free, accessible in public spaces and across our partner and found venues we have so far hosted 49 million visits to the festival. As we commemorate our 25-year history through this truly remarkable edition, I ask that you consider supporting our future work. Now more than

ever, the work of cultural organisations, which afford access to knowledge, different lived experiences, and creativity, is vital, however, the current economic climate places it at risk. The team and I remain resolutely committed to working with artists to create transformational experiences for our local, national and international visitors, and you can read more about supporting this work later on in this guide.

We continue to be grateful to our cultural partners and venues who work with us across the city, generously collaborating on our programme. We would also like to thank Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council and Culture Liverpool, founding supporter James Moores, Trusts & Foundations, International Agencies and corporate supporters, as well as individuals from our Collector, Director and Commissioning Circles for their ongoing support. And of course, a huge thank you to our wonderful team for bringing this festival to life. I hope you will enjoy visiting this year's festival and experiencing all that the programme - and Liverpool as whole - has to offer.

**Dr Samantha Lackey**  
**Director**

# Useful Information

---

## Opening Hours

All exhibitions are open Wednesday to Saturday, with public artworks open and accessible throughout the festival. Please check individual exhibition pages in this guide or [biennial.com](http://biennial.com) for specific opening times as some venues are open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays.

## Booking Information

Entrance to exhibitions and events is free unless stated otherwise. Where booking is required, please visit [biennial.com/ events](http://biennial.com/events) for further information.

## Accessibility

All venues have flat access. For a full access guide, detailing provision at all our venues, head to [biennial.com](http://biennial.com).

## Contact Us

+44 (0)151 709 7444

[info@biennial.com](mailto:info@biennial.com)

## Connect

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

Instagram: [@liverpoolbiennial](https://www.instagram.com/liverpoolbiennial)

Twitter: [@biennial](https://twitter.com/biennial)

TikTok: [@liverpoolbiennial](https://www.tiktok.com/@liverpoolbiennial)

Facebook: [/liverpoolbiennial](https://www.facebook.com/liverpoolbiennial)

# Introduction

---

What a time to curate a Biennial, amidst the remnants of a pandemic, global wars and instability, an energy crisis, environmental violence, economic systems crashing, racial and gender injustices. To be invited to travel up from the southeast tip of Africa, Cape Town – moving north to Liverpool – and be tasked to create and hold space for us to move through the woundedness, to create openings that allow us to imagine our way through the wound, to clear pathways so we can hold each other with something other than pain.

Curating for me is a form of remembering. This Biennial represents a state of remembering that which was lost, stolen, taken, and is now tracing its way back home, alongside the realisation that for some places, a return is not possible.

I curate because I do not know, and because of my unknowing, I am asked to forensically and ancestrally listen – lending my whole being to the practice of listening. The artists in this Biennial have honoured my call to them, their practices repair, recur, return. They are cartographers redrawing the lines, examining colonial histories and legacies; engaging with mapping and migration routes; digging through personal, collective, and political archives; imagining joyful futures despite Catastrophe.

In the isiZulu language, 'uMoya' means spirit, breath, air, climate, and wind. Wind often represents the fleeting and transient, the elusive and intangible. I remember my first moment standing at the docks in Liverpool and feeling the wind in my bones. The same wind that made Liverpool a key location in the trade of enslaved people and a city that built itself through each 'merchant' ship.

'uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things' addresses the history and temperament of the city of Liverpool; it is a call for ancestral and indigenous forms of knowledge, wisdom, and healing. It 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 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.

**Khanyisile Mbongwa**  
**Curator, Liverpool Biennial 2023**

# Artists

---

Albert Ibokwe Khoza

Antonio Obá

Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński

Benoît Piéron

Binta Diaw

Brook Andrew

Charmaine Watkiss

David Aguacheiro

Edgar Calel

Eleng Luluan

Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales

Francis Offman

Gala Porrás-Kim

Guadalupe Maravilla

Isa do Rosário

Julien Creuzet

Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu

Kent Chan

Lorin Sookool

Lubaina Himid

Lungiswa Gqunta

Melanie Manchot

Nicholas Galanin

Nolan Oswald Dennis

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

Rahima Gambo

Rahmi Hamzi

Raisa Kabir

Ranti Bam

Rudy Loewe

Sandra Suubi

Sepideh Rahaa

Shannon Alonzo

Torkwase Dyson

Unmute Dance Theatre

# Tobacco Warehouse

---

Artists: Albert Ibokwe Khoza, Binta Diaw, Isa do Rosário, Julien Creuzet, Melanie Manchot, Rahmi Hamzi.

Tobacco Warehouse is a Grade II listed building and the world's largest brick built warehouse, comprising 1.5 million square feet. Situated in Stanley Dock and constructed between 1898-1901, the Tobacco Warehouse stored rum and tobacco imported at the zenith of Liverpool's powers as a trading port, and was integral to the success of the colonial economy. Juxtaposed against this violent history, the artists at Tobacco Warehouse explore themes of repair and healing in their work, tending to colonial wounds and offering opportunities for reclaiming identity, dignity and engaging with aliveness.

In Unit 1, visual artist and poet **Julien Creuzet** presents a series of suspended abstract forms and intricate sculptures, grouped together to create a complex installation which threads together a range of source imagery including historical African sculptures, abstracted landscapes and compositions inspired by engravings and paintings. The works address Creuzet's relationship to his ancestral home of Martinique, the diasporic experience, and the history of French colonialism. Creuzet's work is inspired by the poetic and philosophical reflections of French Martinican intellectuals Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant on

creolisation (the process by which elements of different cultures are blended to create a new culture) and migration, focusing on the troubled intersection of the history of Martinique and the events of European modernity. The sculptural forms and layered images function as an intimate and powerful discovery of many worlds brought together.

**Melanie Manchot's** new film project, 'STEPHEN' (2023), blurs the lines between fact and fiction to examine addiction and recovery. Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, the film was created with a mixed cast of professional actors and local people from the recovery community. 'STEPHEN' is based on the real-life story of Thomas Goudie, a clerk at the Bank of Liverpool, caught embezzling money to support his obsessive gambling. Goudie's arrest became the world's first crime-reconstruction and first film made in Liverpool in 1901 by filmmakers Mitchell and Kenyon. For this project, Manchot has collaborated with Stephen Giddings who plays the lead role, drawing on his own experiences of addiction recovery.

**Rahmi Hamzi's** painting, 'Parasite' (2021), emerges from her examination, deconstruction, and reconstruction of botanical shapes, creating associations with the human body, femininity, and sexuality. The artist utilises botanical imagery in order to address contentious topics and subtly convey her stance and critique, employing flowers to raise questions about women's traditional roles and the expression of their sexuality. Although Hamzi's work draws on the long-established tradition of flowers as a symbol of gender,



eroticism, and reproduction, it is imbued with ideas derived from her upbringing. Growing up in a community where women interact with nature on a daily basis, waking up at dawn to tend to plants used for nutrition and medicine, Hamzi draws on flowers as an alternative means of expression and extended metaphor for her attitude towards Islamic notions, her concept of femininity, and her approach to social pressures and the delimitation of gendered roles.

In Unit 2, **Albert Ibokwe Khoza's** live offering 'The Black Circus of the Republic of Bantu' (2022), presented here for the first time as an installation, exposes the violent and shameful legacy of ethnological expositions (such as human zoos and exhibitions), that were popular in Western society between the 1870s and 1960s. The work investigates the impact of the imperial and colonial gaze on Black bodies, how it sits within Black bodies today, and how it might be remedied. Through an examination of the ongoing pain of historical and continuing racism, the artist creates a space for collective healing and an opportunity for dignity to be reclaimed.

Drawing on the artist's interest in hidden histories and archival material, **Binta Diaw's** reimagining of her installation 'Chorus of Soil' (2023) uses soil and seeds to map an 18th century plan of the Brooks slave ship. Between 1782 and 1804, the Brooks departed from Liverpool to the West Coast of Africa, carrying over 5000 enslaved people to plantations in the Caribbean. Reimagined here on an almost 1:1 scale, the soil and seed plan is accompanied by a new sound work

incorporating the voices of local people reciting the poem 'Zong!' (2008) by M. NourbeSe Philip. Together, the two elements of this ambitious installation speak to collective acts of mourning, hope, resistance, reparation, care and celebration of ancestral wisdom. The material used for the installation – soil - speaks to the potential for new life, where new buds can grow, and healing can occur. Diaw references the plantation and the worked ground but transforms the narrative, reclaiming the labour of tending to the ground and reinterpreting it as a productive, fertile space and emancipatory act.

In the creation of her textile works, **Isa do Rosário** is led by spiritual conversation with Orixás (pronounced 'oh-ri-shas'). According to Candomblé, an African religion that developed in Brazil during 19th century, Orixás are believed to be ancestors who have been deified and who represent the forces of nature. This piece, entitled 'Dance with Death on the Atlantic Sea' (2013-2023), represents the life and death at the bottom of the sea. On one half, we see small black dolls named Abayomi. Meaning 'precious meeting' in Yoruba language, here, the artist uses them to represent Black people and bodies, a memorial to all those who lost their lives during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The work creates a meditation space that, via the Orixás, hopes to offer safe passage for the souls that linger in the depths of the ocean.

# Tate Liverpool

---

Artists: Edgar Calel, Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales, Francis Offman, Gala Porras-Kim, Guadalupe Maravilla, Isa do Rosário, Lubaina Himid, Nolan Oswald Dennis, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Shannon Alonzo, Torkwase Dyson.

At Tate Liverpool, artists act as cartographers, redrawing the lines of past catastrophes to create new possibilities. The exhibition traces a thread that connects catastrophe to ongoing healing; from wound to repair, from tragedy to joy. The artists explore ways to connect ancestral knowledge, with the present. They consider how we might acknowledge and heal traumas of the past and the echoes that persist, carried by the wind.

In the Wolfson Gallery, **Torkwase Dyson's** abstract work 'Liquid a Place' (2021) is composed of three striking structural objects, which appear as both static and fluid simultaneously. The curved constructions are excavated by triangular voids within their centres, signifying a gateway, a shelter, or the sailing route upon which 2.4 million enslaved Africans lost their lives. The piece is in direct conversation with the dark histories of the water and docks which surround Tate Liverpool - Britain's first commercial wet dock was constructed nearby in 1715 to service and expedite the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In this work, Dyson presents water as a simultaneous space of resistance, terror, conflict, pollution, oppression, refuge, extraction and liberation, particularly for Black and Brown bodies.

Upstairs, **Edgar Calel**'s work 'Ru k'ox k'ob'el jun ojer etemab'el (The Echo of an Ancient Form of Knowledge)' (2021) presents stones as sacred sites of ritual adorned with fruit and vegetables placed during a private ritual during the exhibition installation. Exhibited here for the first time since Tate began its 13-year custodianship of the work, the piece exists as an offering to the land and Calel's ancestors. In the artist's home, stories from dreams are shared amongst families over breakfast and are understood to foretell the energy for the day or task ahead. For Calel, dreams, art and spirituality are always interconnected and here, they have determined the specific produce which is on offer as thanks. Calel draws on ancestral knowledge from his Mayan Kaqchikel heritage, his work both a celebration of the traditions and spirituality of his community in Guatemala and an act of resistance in its presentation of ancestral practices. The work creates a space to acknowledge, honour, preserve and be in the presence of ancestral indigenous forms of knowledge. Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales presents several works from her 'Holograms' series (2020- 2022), alongside a newly commissioned textile work, 'Contradanza' (2023). Both explore how fashion photography often copies and extracts from aesthetics and traditional dress of indigenous people and cultures for commercial purposes. In these types of photographs, people are portrayed as subjects with no identity, reduced to their costumes that become detached from their original purpose or meaning through repetitive postures and gestures. Through the photographer's lens, Andean and other indigenous bodies become exotic commodities for an international

market, enabling hierarchies that reproduce the colonial idea of a “civilised us” constructed in opposition to the “indigenous others”. Using the same patterns and symbols, often lost in the background of these staged photographs, she creates new abstract compositions which reclaim the existence, meaning and essence of traditional Andean celebrations. In this way, Rodrigo Gonzales’ work makes sacred what has been commodified.

**Francis Offman** proposes a meditation on the Rwandan genocide, an intimate reflection on how to convey history’s violent narrative through objects of personal connection. ‘Untitled’ is centred around a Bible belonging to Offman’s mother which accompanied her as she fled the country with her family following the onset of the Rwandan Civil War. The floor is filled with books, each delicately held up by callipers – instruments used by Belgian colonisers to measure the facial features of Rwandan people and classify them into racial groups. This immense violence is juxtaposed against the daily pleasure of drinking coffee – a major export of Rwanda – with repurposed grounds spread on the fabric and covering the books. The dialogue between these objects demonstrates how personal experience is central to collective histories and healing.

**Gala Porras-Kim**’s work questions the museum storage system, investigating institutional frameworks and the ethics of keeping and caring for objects. In ‘Out of an instance of expiration comes a perennial showing’ (2022 - ongoing), Porras-Kim propagates mould spores from the British Museum’s collection storage, liberating and

regrowing microscopic parts of the exhibits and artefacts. The work is a living organism. The mould spores will grow and spread over the course of the exhibition, inverting traditional concerns within conservation which aim to prevent and contain growth.

**Guadalupe Maravilla's** 'Disease Thrower' series (2019) are autobiographical constructions which are at once sculptures, shrines, wearable headdresses, and healing instruments, reflecting on the artist's own experiences as an undocumented migrant and cancer survivor. Elements of the work are crafted from objects collected during Maravilla's retracing of his childhood migration route made alone to the USA at the age of 8 to escape the civil war in El Salvador, interwoven with items from the spiritual and shamanic practices the artist experienced after his diagnosis with colon cancer in his mid-30s. The works consider ancient and contemporary methods of healing the body and spirit from the traumas of displacement. The artist works with healers of all types to activate the works during sound ceremonies which include gongs, singing, flutes, harmonicas and many other types of sound instruments.

In the creation of her work, **Isa do Rosário** is led by spiritual conversations with Orixás (pronounced 'oh-ri-shas') and those who lost their lives during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In the creation of her work, Isa do Rosário is led by spiritual conversations with Orixás (pronounced 'oh-ri-shas') and those who lost their lives during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. According to Candomblé, an African religion that developed in Brazil during the 19th century, Orixás are

believed to be deified ancestors who represent forces of nature. These deities can be communicated with directly and offer guidance, protection, prosperity and health. The large and intricate textile work exhibited here emerges directly from this connection and communication, creating a meditation space for remembering, mourning and ascension.

**Lubaina Himid's** work, 'Between the Two my Heart is Balanced' (1991), is a re-imagining of French artist James Tissot's painting 'Portsmouth Dockyard' (c.1877). Himid's work subverts the artistic canon, centralising two Black female figures and using painting as a place to imagine something other than pain. In Tissot's work, a white British soldier is seated in a boat between two white women. Meanwhile, Himid's piece replaces the soldier with a stack of coloured maps which the women are tearing apart. This action indicates a rejection of traditional forms of knowledge, navigation and rules created and controlled by white men. Himid's contribution to the British Black arts movement has been pivotal since the 1980s, carving out space for the expression and recognition of Black experience and women's creativity. In her work 'Act One, No Maps' (1992), Himid further explores the overlooked and invisible aspects of history and contemporary life through positioning Black women as protagonists. The painting depicts two Black women seated at the opera, gazing out at a seascape from their balcony seats. Inspired by the Impressionist works of Auguste Renoir and Mary Cassatt, Himid was drawn to create these pieces as a reclaiming of space after the realisation that

she could not recall ever seeing a painting with two Black female protagonists.

**Nolan Oswald Dennis'** work 'No conciliation is possible (working diagram)' (2018 - ongoing) is next in their series of installations consisting of map-like wall diagrams and a shifting selection of drawings and objects which amplify the diagrams' contents. Dennis explores the hidden structures that determine the limits of our social and political imagination. Within the diagram, the meanings of terms such as 'welcomed and unwelcomed', 'apology', 'land', 'country', 'home', 'dream', 'ancestor', 'inheritance' and 'healing' are complicated by their shared and unshared meanings. Meanwhile, the use of terms like 'reconciliation', 'reparations', 'repatriation', 'regeneration', 'compensation' and 'justice' can be seen as a condition and limitation of imagining a world beyond our reality. The artist is concerned with a 'Black consciousness of space', questioning the politics of space and time. In particular, the work examines how decolonisation, colonial compensation and conciliation exist throughout history, in the present and into the future.

In 'Mumbo Jumbo and the Committee' (2022), **Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum** explores the conflicting demands faced by the artist in pursuit of home and wholeness – the intrinsic expectations of family and community, with the demands and limitations imposed by whiteness. Through drawing, animation and bespoke furnishing inspired by Victorian design aesthetics, Sunstrum looks at how our cultural identities are often tied to our



environments, to the expectations of others and imposing systems of class and race inequality.

In her artistic practice, **Shannon Alonzo** aims to create a connection, or draw a thread, between past and present. She etches, stitches, draws and moulds as a way of making the rich archive of the Caribbean community more tangible. She attempts to counteract years of historical erasure and remnants of colonial legacy which often obscures progress towards collective belonging and a deeper understanding of the self for Caribbean people. Created in response to an article on the 'postcolonial diet' in the Caribbean, 'Lowest Hanging Fruit' (2018) questions how our everyday choices are often informed by our history. The layers of the garment represent periods of time, with the subject seen lifting the upper layer – which represents the present – in order to reveal the past. 'Washerwoman' (2018) is inspired by an unnamed woman featured in a photograph taken by J.W. Cleary in Jamaica around 1890. It is the product of Alonzo's attempt to get to know her ancestors through the work of her own hands, which silently move alongside theirs across time.

## Bluecoat

---

Artists: Benoît Piéron, Kent Chan, Nicholas Galanin,  
Raisa Kabir

The artists at Bluecoat explore the possibilities for joy amidst catastrophe, using creativity to bring about emancipation from suffering and engaging with aliveness. This playful exhibition invites us to consider how creative experimentation may provide us with different foundations from which to imagine a better future.

**Nicholas Galanin's** work 'k'idéin yéi jeené ('you're doing such a good job')' (2021) is presented in Gallery 1. Sampling words from the Lingít language, which is spoken by the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America, the work centres the love, safety and connection experienced and shared within these communities. The work criticises and rejects the false historical narratives and generational trauma inflicted by settler-colonialism – the ongoing system of oppression based on genocide that continues to displace and eliminate indigenous people and cultures, confining them to marginal existence. Instead, it centres and celebrates indigenous families and communities, reflecting the light of their children against the shadows of punishment for practising their cultures, ceremonies, and languages.

In Gallery 2, a survey of **Raisa Kabir's** work, titled 'Utterances: Our vessels for the stories unspoken. Subaqueous violence. Sea. Ocean...' (2016-present) encompasses woven text, textiles, sound, video, and performance to convey and visualise concepts concerning the cultural politics of cloth, its associated labour and networks of extraction. The works explore the material histories of cotton, silk, indigo, cochineal,

jute and flax. Kabir investigates the production and global trade of these materials, referencing the maritime boats, ships and sails that arrived cargo-laden to Liverpool's docks.

The exhibition is inspired by Kabir's research into the journey made by Bengal Lascars - Indian sailors employed and exploited by the British East India shipping company - many of whom docked and settled in Liverpool.

In Gallery 3, **Kent Chan's** 'Hot House' (2020 – ongoing) is an installation and project space which questions the relationship between climates and cultures, and the influence of heat and humidity on our bodies and minds. For Liverpool Biennial 2023, Chan engages with artworks and artefacts of tropical provenance from the Global Cultures collections of World Museum, National Museums Liverpool to produce a new series of videos and installation. Forming part of Chan's ongoing enquiry into heat and humidity, climate, history, art and the tropics as a meteorological region, the work opens a discussion around why these objects have historically arrived in institutions far from their home countries, where climatic conditions are vastly different, and how they are subsequently perceived. 'Hot House' posits the cool and dry, climate-controlled museum conditions as a manifestation of the assumed superiority of one climate and culture over another.

Upstairs, **Benoît Piéron's** work deals with the uncertainty of life, death and immunity. His practice reappropriates and transfigures the medical

environments and materials that surround him – hospital sheets and gowns, IV drips and waiting room furniture – to create something new, joyful, and full of life. Piéron’s stuffed animals, entitled ‘Peluche Psychopompe’ (2022), and his reimagining of a children’s bed, ‘Le Lit’ (2011), are made using discarded hospital bed sheets. Despite this visceral display of illness, the work is a testament to play through creative practices and seeks to produce alternative expressions of disease as a site of potential. At Bluecoat, Piéron creates a space amongst a selection of his existing artworks which invites visitors to explore, rest and play.

## Cotton Exchange

---

Artists: Lungiswa Gqunta, Shannon Alonzo, Sepideh Rahaa

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Liverpool emerged as the world’s largest cotton market, holding the largest single stock of cotton in the world. It was a period in the city’s history when economic prosperity depended upon enforced movement of people, enslavement, trade and labour. This former Cotton Exchange, opened in 1907, is explicitly and integrally tied to this moment in the city’s economic and societal history.

The artists at Cotton Exchange explore resistance, indigenous knowledge and ancestral healing.

Lungiswa Gqunta is interested in histories of displacement and how colonialism, slavery and Apartheid shape and inform displacement. Her work is fractured with the cracks that rupture the underlying structure of South African society. Rather than build upon this unsteady terrain, Gqunta pieces together the fragments of her lived experiences – those of her community’s collective memories - and distils them into their most essential materials, reconstructing the socio-political landscape. Here, the parameters of secure spaces are reconsidered in the form of her sculpture ‘Sleeping Pools – Brewing’ (2023), an illuminated bedframe filled with a petrollike substance. Gqunta questions what it means to rest in the tenuous divide that separates public and private domains in South Africa, subsequently creating a ‘third space’ where the luxury of a suburb and the perceived threat of a township coincide. The significance of Gqunta’s use of petrol lies in the sense of discomfort it creates, pervasive and unsettling. By accompanying this symbolic representation of a suburban swimming pool with the presence of political unrest, Gqunta highlights structural inequity and poses an imminent threat to privileged entitlement.

**Shannon Alonzo**’s site-specific mural of charcoal and paint, entitled ‘Mangroves’ (2023), explores the Caribbean Carnival’s relationship to space: claimed and embodied, geographic and ideological. Mangroves are an enmeshed root system living on the fringes of land and sea in coastal, tropical climates. Referencing the entangled forms of mangroves, the motif refers to the Carnival’s historic provision of a place of refuge and

stability for marginalised people. Carnival celebrations exist globally to resist racial injustice and institutionalised oppression, offering a space for people of the Caribbean diaspora to assert their right to joy, self-articulation, agency, and ancestral legacy. Alonzo's ritual of erasing and redrawing the mural part way through the exhibition is an offering to catalyse healing and a restoration of balance.

In 'Songs to Earth, Songs to Seeds' (2022) **Sepideh Rahaa** portrays the often invisible and inaccessible process of rice cultivation in the paddy lands of Mazandaran, Northern Iran. The almost year-long process is an intergenerational tradition, with knowledge passed down for nearly a century through the artist's family. Rahaa centres the role of women's labour, presenting the traditional songs sung by Iranian women during the cultivation and harvest seasons. These songs are passed down between generations of women and contain stories of their daily struggles in Mazani (an indigenous language from Northern Iran). The work invites us to consider the complexity and invisibility of rice cultivation in a contemporary, global context. The crop is both a container for indigenous forms of knowledge and, as a global food staple, is enmeshed within cycles of consumption, neo-colonial food politics and environmental injustice.

# FACT

---

Artists: Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński

At FACT Liverpool, **Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński's** 'Respire (Liverpool)' (2023) references the precarity of Black breathing and proposes breath as a means of individual and collective liberation. Accompanied by 'Keep On Keepin' On (for Nile)' (2023), a soundscape created in collaboration with sound-artist Bassano Bonelli Bassano, this video work is committed to giving space to Black breathing to expand and exist freely. Dedicating the exhibition space to this expansion, Kazeem- Kamiński's presents a multimedia-based and hauntingly visceral experience in which the sound moves in waves from the individual to the communal and back again.

By positioning breath as a somatic response to violence but also to pleasure and connection, the works investigate breath as a compass to guide along the precarious line between catastrophe and aliveness. Filmed here in Liverpool with local participants, 'Respire (Liverpool)' explores the possibilities to breathe freely despite the burden of an ongoing past. Together, the performers share, hold and imagine breathing space for each other, themselves and others, blurring lines between past, present and future.

# Open Eye Gallery

---

Artists: David Aguacheiro, Rahima Gambo, Sandra Suubi

At Open Eye Gallery, the artists imagine ways to depict the continuing colonial catastrophe, highlighting the reverberations of violence and extraction which infiltrate the land, seas, mountains, forests, air and our bodies. The works on display highlight Western exploitative practices related to the extraction and destruction of natural resources in African countries.

**David Aguacheiro's** photographic installation considers the ongoing extractivism (the removal of large quantities of raw or natural materials, particularly for export) of oil, timber, sea life and other essential natural resources from the artist's home country of Mozambique, and its devastating impacts. By centring people through his poignant portraits, Aguacheiro suggests that the repercussions of this violence are complex, deep-rooted, and layered. The artist presents people stripped not only of their resources, but also their clothes, dignity and identities. The extraction is extended beyond that of the land to include culture, place, tradition, language, religion, worth, and self. The work questions the value and ethics of consumer goods and trade, asking us to consider the devastating and long-term impact on the people and land which remain.



**Rahima Gambo** employs walking as an artistic practice, using movement as a meditative and creative process from which to weave a visual story. 'Nest-works and Wander-lines' (2021) and 'Instruments of Air' (2021) explore the origins of language, embodied and multisensory communication, and speculative storytelling. The artist places video clips on a timeline, similar to found objects in an assemblage or words in a cut up poem, to create an out of time and out of place territory. Underpinned by an improvised and open-ended approach, the video installation becomes a capsule for the artist's fleeting experience of traversing a particular rural environment in Laongo, Burkina Faso, where Gambo spent three months in 2020. With a background in photojournalism, here Gambo proposes an alternative to the documentary storytelling form, focusing on sensing rather than seeing and experimenting with new forms of non-verbal language. The works reject standardised and normative forms of communication, using movement, symbols, signs, gesturing, tracing and silence as preferred modes of understanding the world.

Suspended in the centre of the gallery, **Sandra Suubi's** 'Samba Gown' is a statement of resistance. The work, originally devised as a performance piece, imagines and re-enacts the Ugandan independence ceremony of 1962 as a wedding ceremony. A procession in the Samba Gown is used as a metaphor for what happened that day when Uganda (bride) entered a binding contract with its former colonisers (groom). The work draws attention to the transactional relationship that exists between former colonies and their colonisers. The photographs displayed around the gallery document the

wearing of the gown in various rubbish dumps in Kampala, Uganda. Comprised from plastic waste, the gown comments on plastic pollution as one of the major aftermaths of colonialism – Uganda receives thousands of tonnes of plastic waste from wealthy nations each year. Suubi evokes historical narratives, contemporary narratives on dumping grounds and the West's exporting of waste, alongside contemporary forms of Western extraction such as knowledge and anthropological studies.

## Victoria Gallery & Museum

---

Artists: Antonio Obá, Charmaine Watkiss, Gala Porrás-Kim

The artists at Victoria Gallery & Museum each explore ancestral memory and contemporary experience. Their works, like altars, offer spaces to rest, reflect and listen. Through these almost spiritual works, the artists invite us to engage with archives and collective memories. They ask us to contemplate the various ways in which our histories, and the wisdom of our ancestors, live on to impact our position within, and understanding of, the world.

**Antonio Obá's** 'Jardim' (2022), meaning Garden in Portuguese, is a large-scale installation consisting of hundreds of brass bells. The interactive installation invites visitors to follow a path through the work,

encouraging active participation through the ringing of the bells. The immersive environment simulates a hideout – the bells act as bait, calling us to touch them. By completing this irresistible action, we sound the alarm and reveal our presence and location. In this scenario, we become both the hunter and the hunted. Obá draws on his research of hunting environments to present this ambiguous situation that is simultaneously an invitation and a trap.

**Charmaine Watkiss'** work forms what she calls 'memory stories', visual representations of her research into the African Caribbean diaspora mapped onto life sized figures. The artist's work traces African ancestral traditions which survived the Transatlantic crossing; the stories, rituals, and customs which have become a part of Caribbean culture. 'Witness' (2023) depicts two deities who share tales of courage in the face of adversity. The illustrated figures are symbols of collection and reflection, representing the unheard voices and stories which survived the Middle Passage. The work invites us to contemplate, reflect and gather our energy for the journey towards healing.

**Gala Porras-Kim's** intricate drawings, 'Future Spaces Replicate Earlier Spaces' (2023), imagine objects created from ancient vessels, combined to create new forms and functions. A drawing of shells, once used as ritual wind instruments, questions the sounds they would have made individually - a sound that recalls an earlier space, but now becomes a collective sound. A second drawing depicts empty moulds from an ancient factory. We see negative spaces in place of objects which are

no longer present, with functions that are no longer available, but which hold the potential to be reimagined and remade. Porras-Kim explores the difficulty of remembering, imagining and recreating specific sounds and acoustics from history, over time and across space. She examines the possibility of recovering or reproducing objects to help us understand how people in the past created and experienced physical and sonic spaces; exploring how we might remember and archive sonically, as well as visually.

## World Museum

---

Artists: Brook Andrew, Gala Porras-Kim

At the World Museum, Brook Andrew and Gala Porras-Kim examine how museum spaces can be used to both understand the past and speculate on the future.

**Brook Andrew's** 'SMASH IT' (2018) is a digital amalgamation of images, videos, sound and text. Archival film from the Smithsonian Institute collides with found footage and media samples from the artist's collection. Andrew co-opts and reframes ethnographic photographs, newspaper extracts, film footage and other cultural objects to dismantle racist stereotypes of First Nations people.

The work complicates colonial archives and their embedded ideologies by repurposing archival materials

to subvert dominant narratives. Throughout, interviews with prominent Australian Indigenous intellectuals, including Marcia Langton, Wesley Enoch and Maxine Briggs, are juxtaposed against imagery of demolished and defaced Western statuary and monuments to colonial power. In its cacophony of voices and materials, 'SMASH IT' brings colonial archives into conversation with the present moment, inviting us to consider their contemporary legacies and international relevance.

**Gala Porras-Kim's** 'Roll Call' (2023) is an audio piece, resurrecting the names of those who have passed and been reincarnated into objects now stored in museum collections. According to their beliefs, the deceased left conservation instructions for their names to be spoken aloud as their bodies were preserved for reincarnation. Porras-Kim honours their wishes and presents a whispered reading of their names, bestowing agency on the dead and questioning museum conservation models. This work builds on Porras-Kim's interest in the institutional and linguistic frameworks that define, legitimise and preserve cultural heritage. It invites us to question the ethical principles of museological conservation and to imagine new meanings for artefacts displayed inside museums or assembled in its storages.

# Outdoor Works

---

## Stanley Dock: Brook Andrew

**Brook Andrew** presents a new largescale neon work at Stanley Dock, entitled 'NGAAY' (2023) (a Wiradjuri word meaning 'to see'). Combining languages including Irish, Scottish Gaelic, isiXhosa, Wiradjuri, Urdu, Mandarin and Welsh, the commission symbolises the cultural and historical linguistic diversity of Merseyside. It is at once a celebration and a critical examination of this diversity, highlighting its origins in the city's history of trade in goods and enslaved peoples. The river Mersey acts as a witness to these histories of violence and extraction which remain mapped across the world today: Sydney, Australia is home to a place called Birkenhead Point and a suburb named Liverpool. These duplicate monikers serve as reminders of the British colonial exploits that spanned the globe. Through centring indigenous language and perspectives, Andrew's work questions the limitations imposed by colonial power structures, historical amnesia, and stereotyping. Drawing on his Wiradjuri heritage (Indigenous Australian), Andrew disrupts Western conventions of space and time, to present alternative histories and ways of being.

## Princes Dock, Liverpool Waters: Eleng Lulan

**Eleng Lulan** presents a monumental sculpture at Princes Dock, Liverpool Waters, inspired by the artist's memories of growing up in the indigenous Kucapungane community, a Rukai aboriginal village in the mountains of southern Taiwan. 'Ali se be sa be' (2023) depicts the legend of the founder of Rukai, believed to have been born from a pottery jar protected by two snakes. In the Rukai language, the title 'Ali sa be sa be' translates as 'a large rock wall' or 'rock bed with sparse vegetation', referencing the landslides and typhoons common in the artist's home region. Climate change means that these natural disasters are increasing in frequency, forcibly displacing communities and fracturing their traditions and culture. Through positioning the work between two bodies of water – the River Mersey and Princes Dock – and by using found and recycled fishing nets as a key material, Lulan asks us to consider our relationship to and reliance on water, and to reflect on the devastating impact of climate change here and around the world.

## St John's Gardens: Nicholas Galanin

At St John's Gardens, adjacent to St George's Hall, **Nicholas Galanin** presents 'Threat Return' (2023): a gathering of overturned, cast-bronze handwoven baskets, modified to resemble burglary masks. The seven bronze sculptures sit upon concrete plinths, referencing busts and monuments which surround the piece in St John's Gardens and within the nearby galleries and museums, many of which celebrate men and families who made their wealth in shipping and merchant trade. Galanin references museum displays of Indigenous North American and African basketry and cinematic portrayals of thieves via skimask cut-outs incised into each basket, contemplating the commodification, reproduction, theft, and imitation of indigenous cultural traditions. The work is a reflection on what is considered to be theft, a meditation on the reflexivity of threat, and the return of energy as well as cultural property. Galanin insists on the persistence of Indigenous connection to land and culture which is embedded in bodies, memories, traditions, objects and languages.



## St Nicholas Church Gardens: Ranti Bam

Created especially for Our Lady and St Nicholas Church Gardens – the burial location of Liverpool’s first recorded Black resident and former slave, Abell (d.1717) - **Ranti Bam** offers a new meeting point for visitors to gather in mediation, contemplation, and discourse. Inspired by the profound curative and narrative powers of clay, Bam presents seven new sculptures from her ‘Ifa’ series (2021-23). Through an intimate and time-sensitive creation process, Bam explores themes around fragility and vulnerability, intimacy and care, feminine labour and strength. The artist proposes clay as a medium for understanding human’s inseparability from our environment.

The title ‘Ifa’ references the Yoruba word ‘I-fàá’, meaning ‘to pull close’, as well as ‘Ifá’, the Yoruba system of divination - Yoruba are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, concentrated in the southwestern part of the country. The sculpted stools, known as ‘Akpoti’ are integral to indigenous life and are used for rest, care, communication, and communal gatherings. Together, they seek to encourage rest, soothing and love. They act as an alter at which to honour memory and to thank our ancestors – a ritual commonly practiced in many African and global religions.

## Liverpool ONE: Rudy Loewe

At Liverpool ONE, **Rudy Loewe** presents a new large-scale installation based on the artist's painting 'February 1970, Trinidad #1', which depicts Moko jumbie (a stilt walker) and other Carnival mas players (participants who wear masquerade costumes and march in the parade) coming to the aid of the people at a moment of Black Power revolution in Trinidad and Tobago. For Liverpool Biennial, 'The Reckoning' (2023) transports these spirits to the site of The Old Dock where they confront Britain's colonial legacy and its contemporary reverberations. The work also engages with the Sailors' Home Gateway, located on Paradise Street, a freestanding monument to the since demolished Liverpool Sailors' Home. The Home operated as a sanctuary for sailors passing through the city and provided affordable accommodation as well as educational and recreational opportunities. Loewe aims to visualise Black histories and social politics through their work, particularly focusing on a critique of Britain's role in suppressing Black Power organising in the English-speaking Caribbean during the 1960s and 70s. 'The Reckoning' acts as a portal to imagine and learn about these histories; it is a manifestation of power, but not the kind that oppresses.

# Online: Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu

---

**Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu** presents a new atmospheric audio work on [biennial.com](https://biennial.com). Tayassu is an Animist, believing that all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and in some cases words— have spirits, are animated and alive. She is inspired by sounds that go beyond normal human sense perception and the interconnectedness between objects bodies, frequencies, vibrations, movements and energies.

Designed as an intimate experience, to be listened to lying down and through headphones, 'GREEN STAR' (2023) is both a soundscape and awakening which celebrates the earthly and spiritual forces which the artist perceives. It is a translation of the call and response between natural elements and atmospheric responses, reflecting the artist's sensory experience of the world. Tayassu's practice engages with the metaphysical and the extra-sensory; listening, perceiving, feeling, seeing and touching sounds and lights. The artist invites us to feel the sensory effects of imperceptible natural sounds; the whistle between grains of sand, the dance of the wind, the waves caused by a storm, the ominous noises of the night. The work is a manifestation of the invisible and a tribute to 'uMoya's' links between visible and invisible forces. It is a digital landscape, a sound painting and a spiritual perception, dedicated to the freedom of a new consciousness and symbiosis.

# Live Works

---

## St Luke's Bombed Out Church: Lorin Sookool

**Lorin Sookool's** 'Woza Wenties!' (2023) uses dance movement to trace and unpack the violent erasure of her Black identity during her schooling in South Africa. Through a creative process that engages with the political through a very personal, embodied experience, Sookool embarks on a journey of remembering, restoration and repositioning of her Brown body. The artist uses dance to examine the complex and nuanced conditions of her 'Colouredness', a specific experience of Blackness within the South African socio-historical, political and cultural context.

Interpreting the dancing body as a previously colonised state, Sookool intends to understand her own erasure by deconstructing the colonial projects undertaken in many South African schools ) uses dance movement to trace and unpack the violent erasure of her Black identity during her schooling in South Africa. Through a creative process that engages with the political through a very personal, embodied experience, Sookool embarks on a journey of remembering, restoration and repositioning of her Brown body. The artist uses dance to examine the complex and nuanced conditions of her 'Colouredness', a specific experience of Blackness within the South African socio-historical, political and cultural context. Interpreting the dancing body as a previously colonised

state, Sookool intends to understand her own erasure by deconstructing the colonial projects undertaken in many South African schools post-1994. Despite desegregation, these previously “white-only” institutions enacted violent policies including the regulation of hairstyles and exclusion of African languages.

Through the title of the work, Sookool calls for the resurrection of lost aspects of her being and expression; ‘Woza’ is an isiZulu word meaning “come”. ‘Wenties’ is the affection term for the Wentworth township, located in Durban South. The area, previously reserved for people of colour, was Sookool’s home before the artist moved to a suburban area to attend school. Using dance movement as a tool to symbolise a body under duress, Sookool references colonial and modernist systems of dance techniques and uses improvisation as a means to decolonise the body.

## Various Locations:

### Unmute Dance Theatre

**Unmute Dance Theatre** is an integrated company of artists with mixed abilities and disabilities who use physical theatre and contemporary and integrated dance to promote awareness around accessibility, integration and inclusion of Disabled people in mainstream society. Through this practice, the artists explore what they would like to ‘unmute’; feelings, perceptions, social norms and expectations, while simultaneously deconstructing what society perceives as dance.

Bringing their bespoke choreography style derived from South African Sign Language, Unmute explore the body as a vessel for alternative, more accessible forms of communication that transcend spoken or written language. Engaging with 'uMoya' and the transition from catastrophe to joy, Unmute Dance Theatre use creativity to bring about emancipation, liberating themselves from conventional language. Unmute traces the way in which uMoya resides in the body as breath and breathing, interpreting movement as an extension and result of that breath. Like the wind in 'uMoya' which is a form of language, holding histories and ancestral tales, the body is itself an unmuted language, speaking in abstract symbols of its lived experiences.

For Liverpool Biennial, Unmute Dance Theatre will work with a diverse group of local dancers with lived experience of being d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent. Through an online and in-person residency programme, this new cohort of dancers will skill share and collaborate across borders to create, develop and perform a brand-new showcase for Liverpool Biennial 2023.

## Various Locations:

### Tobacco Warehouse

**Albert Ibokwe Khoza's** live offering 'The Black Circus of the Republic of Bantu' exposes the violent and shameful legacy of ethnological expositions (such as human zoos and exhibitions), that were popular in Western society between the 1870s and 1960s. The

work investigates the effect of the imperial and colonial gaze on Black bodies, how it sits within Black bodies today, and how it might be remedied. Through an examination of the ongoing pain of historical and continuing racism, Khoza creates a space for collective healing and an opportunity for dignity to be reclaimed.

## **Stanley Dock**

**Raisa Kabir** is an interdisciplinary artist and weaver who utilises woven textiles, sound, video, and performance to materialise concepts concerning the interwoven cultural politics of cloth, archives of the body, and colonial geographies. Building on a survey of the artist's work exhibited at Bluecoat, Kabir presents a performance sculpture at the iconic Stanley Dock. The performance will pull the artist's past works into focus, connecting them directly with the rising tides and seas and their associated colonial and industrial histories. The performance centres around a collection of coracles (small one-person boats made from woven bamboo and a waterproof coating) positioned in Stanley Docks. Each coracle, filled with various materials, will be pulled along the banks of the Docks where Kabir will undertake basket weaving using reeds and rope. Kabir's (un)weaving performances and tapestries comment on histories of trans-national power, global production, and matrixes of labour.

## Cotton Exchange

**Shannon Alonzo's** engagement with cycles of erasure and re-inscription as performance, are intended to emphasize the cyclical nature of Trinidad Carnival practice and its position as an ever-evolving archive of Caribbean narratives. As one drawing is erased and the succeeding one is inscribed over the remnants of the last, a form of palimpsest – writing material used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased – is created. Alonzo's actions of drawing, erasing and redrawing mirror the embodied, nonlinear nature of time which exists in each instance of a ritual performed or a character assumed during the festivities. The collective consciousness derived from this is then able to transcend the everyday, as we come to a greater understanding of self, in relation to one another and the environment.