

Liverpool Biennial

PRESS RELEASE

16.04.25

CATHRYN WRIGHT APPOINTED AS CHAIR OF LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL BOARD



Today, Liverpool Biennial announces the appointment of Cathryn Wright as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees. Taking over the role from current Chair Kathleen Soriano in September 2025, Cathryn will work with the trustees and wider team to support the strategic development and ambition of the organisation, ensuring that Liverpool Biennial, the UK's largest free festival of contemporary visual art, continues to deliver innovative and internationally acclaimed programming in the city.

Cathryn brings her extensive leadership experience in finance, as well as the arts and charity sectors, to the role. She is currently Managing Director of Sedulo and has previously held an array of senior management positions in the not-for-profit sector, including Managing Director of the national equality charity, Stonewall.

Cathryn Wright said: "Having been an admirer of Liverpool Biennial for many years, it's a privilege to take on such an esteemed role at this point in the organisation's evolution. I'm excited to build on the transformative work of Kathleen, Sam and the wider Board and team and would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to them for changing the landscape of visual arts in Liverpool, the UK, and beyond. Internally and externally, collaboration will remain at the heart of what we do and as we grow, we will ensure that communication with each other, our supporters and our partners, remains clear, inclusive, and constructive. I have huge ambitions for Liverpool Biennial and believe that we can maintain the spirit of the organisation while supporting increasingly ambitious projects and bringing the visual arts to wider and more diverse communities than ever before."

Kathleen Soriano said: “Chairing the Liverpool Biennial for the last 9 years has been one of the most enjoyable roles that I have ever had, and one that I have been most honoured to undertake. That is largely down to the incredible team that we have, and their dedication to art, to artists, and to our communities here in Liverpool and internationally. That Cathryn Wright has agreed to take on that role makes me very proud and gives me huge pleasure. I know that Cathryn will work closely with the team to make Liverpool Biennial the best it can possibly be, and I will watch with pride, and some envy, as she takes it forward into its next great chapter.”

Dr Samantha Lackey, Director, Liverpool Biennial said: “We are delighted to welcome Cathryn Wright as Liverpool Biennial’s new Chair. Her significant experience in both the charity and commercial sectors, alongside her passion for culture, will be a great asset to the organisation as we look ahead to the future. Meanwhile, I, along with the whole Liverpool Biennial team and Board, would like to thank Kathleen for the invaluable support, leadership and guidance she has shared with us over the past 9 years.”

The 13th edition of Liverpool Biennial, titled ‘BEDROCK’, will take place 7 June – 14 September 2025, curated by Marie-Anne McQuay.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

Press enquiries:

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About Cathryn Wright

Cathryn Wright is Managing Director of the Sedulo Group, one of the UK’s fastest growing financial advisory firms and investment houses, with offices in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, London, and Birmingham. Prior to her time at Sedulo, Cathryn held senior management positions in the voluntary sector, including Managing Director of the national equality charity Stonewall, where she worked for seven years. Cathryn has also appeared multiple times on the Pride Power list, featured in The Guardian, in recognition of her work advocating for inclusive workplaces. Cathryn is a qualified accountant, specialising in Charity SORP and cultural and operational change management in high growth environments. She is a strong and passionate advocate for the visual arts and has held a multitude of advisory and non-executive roles in the creative industries, including Treasurer at Aviva Studios / Manchester International Festival where she has been a Trustee for the past eight years.

About Kathleen Soriano

Kathleen Soriano is an independent curator, strategic consultant and broadcaster, and is currently Director at Hastings Contemporary, Chair of Liverpool Biennial, on the Advisory Council of 2 Temple Place, and a specialist advisor to the National Trust. With over 35 years’ experience in the art world, she has been responsible for contemporary and historical exhibitions, collections and public programmes at the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Royal Academy of Arts, where she was Artistic Director (2009-14), as well as at Compton Verney Art Gallery, where she was previously Director. She has lectured and written extensively on art and her book ‘Madam and Eve’ on women artists, co-authored with Liz Rideal, was published in April 2018. Her broadcast activities include 11 series of Portrait and Landscape Artist of the Year for SkyArts.

About Dr. Samantha Lackey, Director of Liverpool Biennial

Dr. Samantha Lackey has held the position of Director at Liverpool Biennial since late 2020. 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. Sam also sits on the as Co-Vice Chair on the Executive Board of the International Biennial Association and is a Co-Director of Contemporary Visual Arts Network North West.

About Liverpool Biennial

Liverpool Biennial, established in 1998, is the UK's largest free festival of contemporary visual art. Taking place in historic buildings, unexpected spaces and art galleries, the Biennial has been transforming the city through art for over two decades. 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.

Since its inception, the Biennial has commissioned 414 new artworks, presented work by over 590 leading artists, delivered 39 collaborative neighbourhood projects, and received over 50 million visits. Permanent public artworks commissioned by Liverpool Biennial include 'Ngialibalibade – to the Lost Myth' by Eleng Luluan (2023), 'Liverpool Mountain' by Ugo Rondinone (2018), 'Evertro' by Koo Jeong A x Wheelscape (2015) and 'Everybody Razzle Dazzle' by Sir Peter Blake (2015).

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. They have set out their strategic vision in 'Let's Create' that by 2030 they want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.

From 2023 to 2026 Arts Council England will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. This year the National Lottery will celebrate 30 years of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom through raising £49 billion and awarding over 690,000 individual grants since the first draw was held in 1994.

Visit www.artscouncil.org.uk to learn more.

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.



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