

The best free exhibitions in London right now – get your culture fix and keep your money for coffee

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20 September 2022



By
[Elizabeth Gregory](#).

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t's one of the best times of the year. Granted, Summer is coming to end, but that means its time for evenings spent hunkered down in pubs, tonnes of stews, and weekends doing indoor-y cultural stuff. And London is, as ever, absolutely packed with things to do — whether that's exhibitions, people, events and music.

But of course, it can all get a bit pricey. So if you want to have a great weekend seeing some of London's best culture, but also want to save a few quid, look no further than this guide to the best art shows to see in the city, which are all absolutely free.

Art Now: Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings at Tate Britain



Courtesy the Artists and Arcadia Missa, London . Photo by Josef Konczak

Art Now is Tate Britain's long-running exhibition series spotlighting rising stars in the art scene. Past shows include choreographer SERAFINE1369, Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe aka Cooking Sections, Scottish artist France-Lise McGurn and Polish-born Joanna Piotrowska. Now it's Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings's turn to shine.

Quinlan and Hastings's work uses the traditional fresco painting technique to depict scenes of people, and explores themes of power dynamics and authority in relation to public spaces, architecture and different forms of identity.

Tate Britain, Millbank, September 24 until May 7, 2023, [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk)

Picasso Ingres: Face to Face at The National Gallery



Woman with a Book Pablo Picasso 1932, The Norton Simon Foundation
/ © Succession Picasso/DACS 2021 / photo The Norton Simon Foundation, Courtesy of The
National Gallery

Woman with a Book is one of Picasso's most famous paintings, but did you know that it was based on a painting called Madame Moitessier by the 19th-century classical artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres? Or that Picasso frequently referenced Ingres' portrait for over a decade after first encountering the work?

Now an exhibition will explore the relationship between Picasso, the man whose work he repeatedly referred back to, and the elusive Madame Moitessier. It will be the first time that the two paintings have been brought together.

National Gallery, until October 9, nationalgallery.org.uk

Soheila Sokhanvari: Rebel Rebel at Barbican Art Gallery



Soheila Sokhanvari, Rebel (Portrait of Zinat Moadab), 2021, Elizabeth and Jeff Louis Private Collection

/ © Soheila Sokhanvari, courtesy Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

This exciting upcoming exhibition will be the first major UK commission for Iranian artist Soheila Sokhanvari. Here she paints miniature portraits of both feminist icons and important cultural figures, ranging from 1925 to the 1979 revolution.

Her celebratory portraits will be housed in Barbican's Curve building, which is being turned into an immersive space with geometric shapes hand-painted from the floor to the ceiling. There will be a soundtrack composed by Marios Aristopoulos, and mirrored sculptures with projections from the 2019 film *Filmfarsi*.

Barbican, October 7 until February 26, 2023, barbican.org.uk

Kamala Ibrahim Ishag at Serpentine South



Blues for the Martyrs, 2022. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Mohamed Nouredin Abdallah Ahmed. © Kamala Ibrahim Ishag.

There are just a few days left to go and see *Back to Earth*, an exhibition that looks at artistic responses to the climate emergency. See moving images from grassroots media group *Karrabing Film Collective*, an installation from South African multimedia artist *Dineo Seshee Bopape* and their sonic collaboration with *Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu* - plus the contributions of a dozen other artists including *Agnes Denes*, *Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg*, *Brian Eno* and *Carolina Caycedo*.

Then from October 7 see the work of Sudanese modernist artist *Kamala Ibrahim Ishag*. *Ishag* was part of the influential *Khartoum School* and was co-founder of the *Seventies modernist conceptual group the Crystalists*, which was committed to novelty and invention. Her famous paintings, where human and plant forms are intertwined, will be on show as part of this comprehensive survey of her work.

Serpentine South Gallery, Back to Earth until September 18, Kamala Ibrahim Ishag, October 7 until January 29, 2023, serpentinegalleries.org.

Out of the Margins at Whitechapel Gallery



Courtesy Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photograph by Manuel Vason

Out of the Margins: Performance in London's institutions 1990s – 2010s investigates the way that institutions have engaged with live art over the years. The show focuses on key moments over a twenty-year period in London and introduces audiences to the city's electric modern art scene as you've never seen it before: think underground parties at the ICA, the start of the Live Art Development Agency, initiative from The Roberts Institute of Art, and Whitechapel Gallery's major 2002 exhibition A Short History of Performance (I, II, III, IV).

While you're at the gallery also check out Donna Huanca's selection of works from the Norwegian Christen Sveaas Art Foundation. She's made a multi-sensory environment and investigates themes of colonialism, displacement and artistic creation.

Whitechapel Gallery, Out of the Margins is on until January 15, 2023. Christen Sveaas Art Foundation: Portal De Plata is on until January 1, 2023, whitechapelgallery.org.

LuYang NetiNeti: at Zabłudowicz Collection



Courtesy of the artist and Soci t , Berlin

For those who enjoy multimedia exhibitions, this major commission from the Zabłudowicz Collection could be one for you.

Chinese artist LuYang's first solo exhibition in the UK will focus on LuYang's digital avatar DOKU as they explore opposites - life and death, human and machine, past and present - through moving images, installations, interactive games and videos. The artist's work is described as "darkly humourous" and as "all-consuming in their visual and sonic intensity".

Spread across the gallery, there'll be half a dozen mind-boggling videos: a choreographed dance video, a video that was shown at this year's Venice Biennale, a video about gods, moving image works and animations. Expect a tonne of exciting visuals.

This major show comes as the Zabłudowicz Collection celebrates 15 years at its spot on Prince of Wales Road.

Zabłudowicz Collection, September 22 until February 12, 2023,
zabludowiczcollection.com

Amy Sherald: The World We Make at Hauser & Wirth



Amy Sherald, *For love, and for country*, 2022

/ © Amy Sherald, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth, Photo: Joseph Hyde

Opening in a month, but nevertheless worth making a note of now, US artist Amy Sherald will be sharing an entirely new body of work at this upcoming show. The portraitist has become one of America's most famous: she's best known for painting Black Americans at leisure and will continue to investigate the Black experience in this London exhibition.

“Sherald foregrounds the idea that Black life and identity are not solely tethered to grappling publicly with social issues and that resistance also lies in an expressive vision of self-sovereignty in the world,” says Hauser & Wirth. In *The World We Make* she asks audiences to look beyond social constructs, instead reflecting on humans and their interior lives.

Hauser & Wirth, October 12 until December 23, 2022, hauserwirth.com

Space Popular: The Portal Galleries at Sir John Soane’s Museum



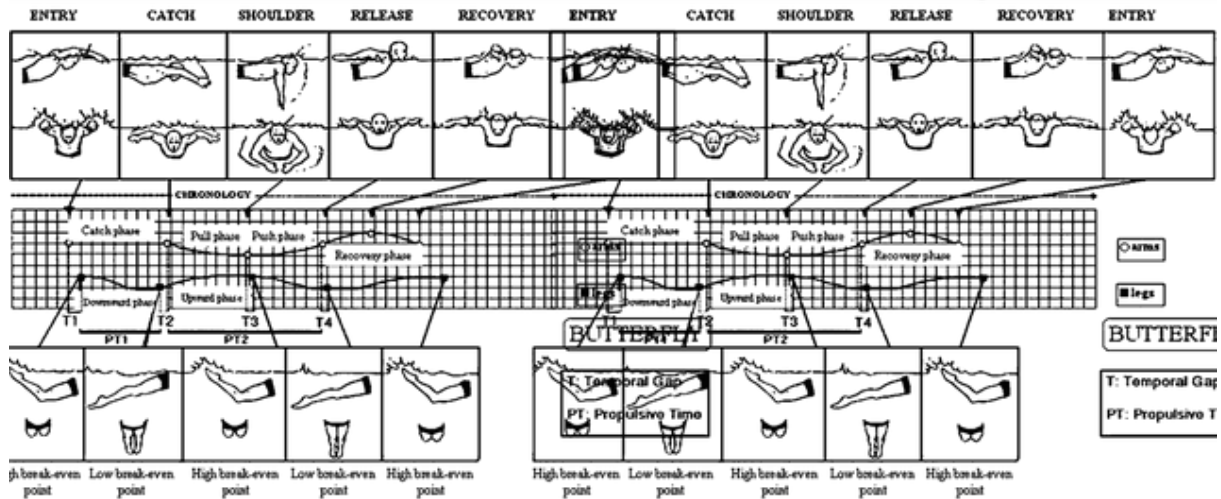
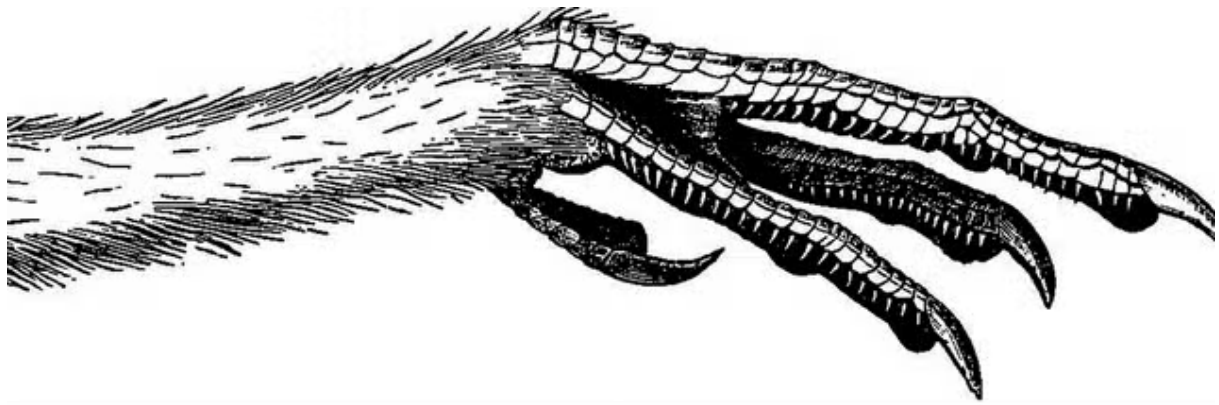
Photographer: Anna Huix. 2021.

Multidisciplinary artists Space Popular (Lara Lesmes and Fredrik Hellberg) invite audiences to go on a journey with them into the world of virtual time travel. Yes, it’s certainly something different from Sir John Soane’s Museum, which is best known for its thousands of antiquities, sculptures and paintings jammed into every crevice of the late architect’s home turned museum.

The design duo has been more specifically researching time travel gateways, and has now built up a database of more than 1,000 fictional portals. Audiences can see their research presented as two VR films in the museum.

Sir John Soane’s Museum, until 25 Sep 2022, soane.org.

Gallery 31: Swimmers Limb at Somerset House Studios



Gallery 31: Swimmers Limb / Handout, courtesy of Somerset House Studios

What role does pleasure take in creative work? A good question, and one which is the starting point of this exhibition, which, in Somerset House Studios' own words, "is 'about' no theme in particular". Instead of working towards a concept, the exhibition, which has been curated by Taylor LeMelle, is interested in the ideas that are conjured up by attendees when they see the show's works.

Featuring the work of Turner Prize-winning artist Tai Shani, artist Mani Kambo and the design studio Comuzi Lab, LeMelle prompts the artists to respond to "a theoretical intervention on Somerset House's surroundings". Yes, it sounds pretty obscure to us too, but Shani shares watercolours from her latest body of work, Kambo responds by making an immersive wallpaper and Comuzi Lab investigate love and wellbeing - it all promises to be a visual treat.

Somerset House, until November 20, somersethouse.org.uk

Yinka Ilori: Parables For Happiness at The Design Museum



Creative Courts, Yinka Ilori, photographed by Matt Alexander

Yinka Ilori draws on his British-Nigerian heritage to create his accessibility-focused art and design work. He reimagines spaces in cities – often using bright colour patterns and employing geometric shapes – by creating murals, building outdoor gallery trails, installing structures in pavillions and transforming pedestrian crossings.

Now, at the Design Museum, the artist will be showcasing a range of Ilori’s work and inspirations including billboard graphics, Nigerian textiles, photographs, furniture and books.

Visitors can look forward to as many as 100 objects all summarizing Ilori’s design inspiration.

Design Museum, September 15 until June 25, 2023, [designmuseum.org](https://www.designmuseum.org).

Hadi Fallahpisheh: As Free As Birds at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art



Installation view: Hadi Fallahpisheh: *As Free As Birds* at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art. Courtesy Goldsmiths CCA. Photo: Rob Harris.

This first institutional solo exhibition in Europe for Hadi Fallahpisheh is now enjoying an extension. Meaning, that if you'd meant to get down to Goldsmiths CCA to see the Iranian artist's work, there is still time.

Fallahpisheh is a multimedia artist and plays with fables and allegories in his work. He is interested in freedom and uses various characters and structures to investigate this theme including photographic paintings, a cast of a human, a mouse, a cat and a dog, life-sized cages, a darkroom to symbolise a prison and vintage objects reflecting childhood memories.

"Fallahpisheh suggests that freedom is always a contradictory position that relies on the captive or unprotected status of others," explains the CCA.

Goldsmiths CCA, extended until October 16, goldsmithscca.art

Simeon Barclay: In The Name Of The Father at South London Gallery

Although currently closed as they prep their next show, the South London Gallery's doors will open on September 23, when visitors will be able to see a new body of work from Simeon Barclay. The Yorkshire-born artist will investigate father and son relationships, legacy, identity and masculinity in his forthcoming show *In The Name Of The Father*. The exhibition will also draw on Barclay's heritage: Huddersfield's cloth industry, his father's tailoring trade and his own experience working as an industrial machinist.

The multimedia artist also often draws on influences from architecture, fashion, club culture and art history in his work. Expect works in various media as Barclay continues to explore these themes.

South London Gallery, September 23 to November 27, southlondongallery.org.

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