

# The best art and architecture of 2022

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📷 Clockwise from top left: New Street Signal Box, Birmingham; Vincent van Gogh's Self-Portrait with Straw Hat; Vivien Maier's September 18, 1962; Simone Leigh's Brick House; Hew Locke's The Procession. Composite: Brutiful Birmingham/ Detroit Institute of Arts/Estate of Vivian Maier/David Levene/Alamy

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From brutiful Birmingham to Tracey Emin's Margate rebirth, from a mind-boggling array of Cézannes to an immaculate seaside skatepark, our critics rank the year's highlights

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## Adrian Searle's best art shows of 2022

### 5. Hew Locke: The Procession

*Tate Britain, London, until 22 January*

Locke's 2022 Tate Britain commission was by far the most accomplished, ambitious and fascinating work I have seen by the 62-year-old artist. About 150 figures progressed the length of the Duveen Galleries, many on foot, some on horseback, some carried, one in a wheelchair. There were guys in sharp suits and characters who might have stepped out of a Velázquez painting of the Spanish court. Others wore ferocious animal heads or faces like the creature from the Black Lagoon. Locke turned the Duveen into a dreamlike, carnivalesque space for encounters across time and borders.



📷 Enigmatic ... Vivian Maier, Self-portrait, New York, 1953.  
Photograph: Estate of Vivian Maier; courtesy of Maloof Collection and  
Howard Greenberg Gallery, NY

## 4. Vivian Maier: Anthology

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*MK Gallery, Milton Keynes*

All but unknown during her lifetime, Vivian Maier was an enigma. She wandered the streets on what she called “shooting safaris”, in New York and Chicago and beyond, capturing the life about her, leading her peculiar double life as a children’s nanny and street photographer. Taking us from the early 1950s to 1986, Maier left more than 15,000 photographs, many undeveloped in her lifetime. She called herself a spy, and like any good spy she frequently changed the spelling of her name and gave herself different backstories. With more than 140 black and white and colour images, as well as a number of films and audio recordings, the first large-scale show of her work in the UK, at the Milton Keynes Gallery, was a delight.

## 3. Venice Biennale: The Milk of Dreams

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This was the first Venice Biennale whose main exhibition was predominantly devoted to women, transgender and non-binary artists. Yet gender alone did not drive The Milk of Dreams, whose title is borrowed from British surrealist Leonora Carrington, who imagined a world where people transform themselves into someone or something else, whether human, animal or machine, and identity becomes mutable. Carrington’s paintings

occupied one of various thematic displays or time capsules within curator Cecilia Alemani's generous-spirited exhibition. Both cabinet of curiosities and a response to crisis, there was hope and dark humour, and lots of surprises, here too.

## 2. Van Gogh: Self-Portraits

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*Courtauld Institute, London*

During the three and a half years before his death in 1890, Van Gogh painted about 35 self-portraits. The artist appears bearded or clean-shaven, his hair clipped short or unkempt, looking ill or on the mend, confident, withdrawn, on or off the drink – or recovering from poisoning himself by eating paint; or he can be sunken-cheeked (he had 10 teeth removed in Antwerp, making him look older than a man in his 30s), or wearing his vulcanised rubber dentures. It's an at-times harrowing and unflinching parade of images that provides an index of his artistic development and of his physical wellbeing and psychological state.



📷 Unsettling ... Surrealist Wardrobe by Marcel Jean, 1941.  
Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

## 1. Surrealism Beyond Borders

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*Tate Modern, London*

Surrealism Beyond Borders was filled with unlikely conjunctions and unsettling objects, Freudian dream-worlds, nightmares and fantasies. Where this exhibition – and its enormous catalogue – differed from previous surveys, was in showing how expansive, sprawling and diverse a movement surrealism was, and that it included jazz musicians and poets, Leon Trotsky and a Vodou priest, surrealism's fellow travellers and oddball loners, feminists, revolutionaries and visionaries. The exhibition's unlikely meetings and juxtapositions were almost surreal in themselves. Surrealism Beyond Borders was a tremendous work of scholarship, and filled with discoveries.

## Katy Hessel's best art shows of 2022

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## 5. Antonia Showering: Mixed Emotion

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*Timothy Taylor, London*

Antonia Showering's first solo exhibition at Timothy Taylor Gallery was a knockout. In her signature umber palette – with hints of green and that classic Alice Neel blue – she puts into visual form the feeling of attempting to hold on to a memory for ever. Wrapped in a hazy glow, her paintings can appear at once haunting and ethereal, ghoulish yet protective. Infused with an acidic and muted colour palette, with thick impasto and washy strokes, Antonia's paintings deal with universal subjects on a personal level.

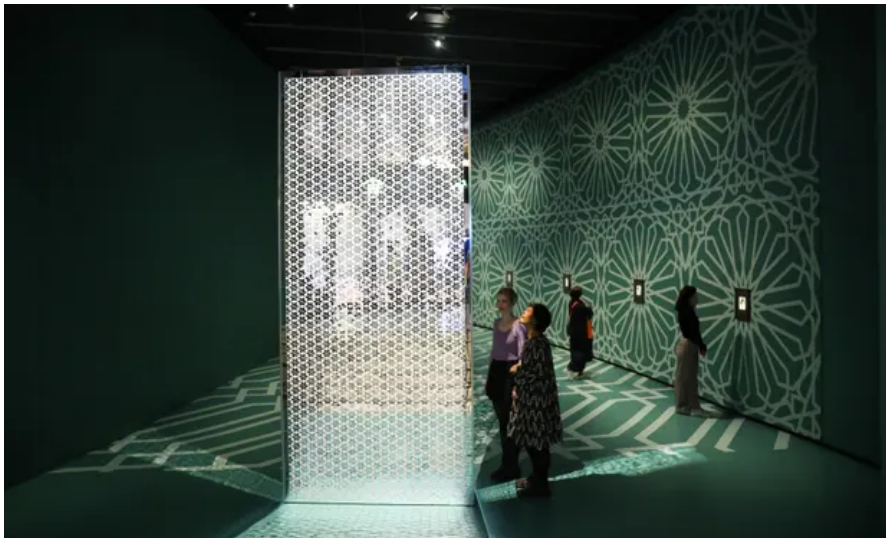
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## 4. Louise Giovanelli: As If, Almost

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*White Cube, London*

Louise Giovanelli's paintings bridge art history and modern pop cultural narratives. The young, Manchester-based artist explores the tensions between representation and abstraction, fiction and reality, historic and contemporary, painting and the digital sphere. Retaining the meticulousness of Renaissance paintings and fusing it with 80s and 90s music videos, Giovanelli's delicate and electrically luminous panoramas offer a language rooted in history. Her paintings require a different type of looking. They reveal themselves slowly, mark by mark, lifting us out of the gallery and into another world.



📷 Mesmeric ... Soheila Sokhanvari: Rebel Rebel at the Curve, Barbican, London. Photograph: Lia Toby/Getty Images for Barbican Centre

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## 3. Soheila Sokhanvari: Rebel Rebel

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*Barbican Curve, London, until 26 February*

Dazzling in low light, Soheila Sokhanvari's exhibition is filled with mesmeric gems of Iranian women set back against kaleidoscopic interiors. Her miniatures spotlight the lives of real women who were artistic heroes in pre-revolution Iran, working across music, poetry, film and theatre. Complete with a backing track sung by performers Googoosh and Ramesh, we are reminded of these women's defiance as in present-day Iran – since

the 1979 revolution – it remains illegal to sing in public. Sokhanvari's women appear undefeatable, expressing their defiant strength and personalities through their relic-like frames.

## 2. Marlene Dumas: Open-End

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*Palazzo Grassi, Venice, until 8 January*

Pulsating with colour and exuding sensuality, Dumas' works explore life, death, desire, pain. She captures life in the moment, as though we are caught mid-motion, mid-sinking, mid-eruption. Exploring deeply raw and vulnerable subjects such as sex and addiction, Dumas is a master at capturing internal emotion. Sinking into the canvas (she paints directly on to the floor, so you can see the paint spill over), her colours collapse into each other, marbling in their wonder. It's as though she paints memories or dreams: worlds that one can only create through line and colour. Whether working on a small or gigantic scale, her images hold a certain kind of power that I have never seen any other painter achieve. An electrifying exhibition that must be viewed in person.



📷 Soulful ... I Was So Hurt It Felt Like I Had Fallen a Million Miles (2022) by Tracey Emin. Photograph: Tracey Emin/Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate

## 1. Tracey Emin: A Journey to Death

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*Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate*

Harrowing, soulful, haunting, protective, the works in Emin's exhibition depicted monochromatic bodies that sink into their bruised lines. Some effused a sense of otherworldliness – some crowned with haloes, others evoking a constellation of stars – while others were rooted in the real world, depicting the stark reality of life, Emin's bodies convey the harrowing events that the artist has witnessed in the past two years. Aptly titled, for me the show was about the cycles of life, the human body, our mental states, relationships with ourselves and other people. It's about decay and decline but also rebirth and renewal.

## Jonathan Jones's best art shows of 2022

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### 5. Walter Sickert

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*Tate Britain, London*

If you like art that soothes the soul, painting that is beautiful and delicate – this wasn't for you. Sickert is a troubling artist of true unease. Not many painters have been fingered as Jack the Ripper, after all. Nonsense as that no doubt is, this richly crammed survey showed how this pioneer modernist brought his hero Degas' style to a London of sleazy music halls and sleazier flats, turning his unforgiving eyes on monstrous men gawping at female singers who stand alone in the spotlight. For there was compassion here after all. This show was like being inside Eliot's Waste Land.

### 4. Howardena Pindell: A New Language

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*Kettle's Yard, Cambridge from Fruitmarket, Edinburgh*

The greatness of American art and the tragedy of American history leapt out from Pindell's brilliant, shocking retrospective. She veers in startling and dazzling ways between deep sensitivity and visceral rage, from subtle meditations on modernism to an anger that shakes your soul. Her wonderful abstractions from the 1970s play on Monet's Nymphs and have affinities with John Cage and Jasper Johns. But racism and injustice wouldn't let her live in an aesthetic ivory tower. She turned to polemical videos and stark history paintings that tell a terrible story of the Americas from Columbus to lynch mobs. Uplifting and brutal.



📷 Shocking ... Howardena Pindell's *Rope/Fire/Water*, 2020.  
Photograph: Charles Moore/Courtesy the artist, Garth Greenan Gallery  
and Victoria Miro

### 3. Raphael

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*National Gallery, London*

No one is ever going to make a Netflix series about Raphael or celebrate him in a graphic novel – which is why the National Gallery exists, to put on a great show like this of an unfashionable yet eternal genius. Born with a gift for symmetry and a longing for harmony, this orphaned youth perfected his style in Madonnas that would make Richard Dawkins cry. This show let you bask in his fresco *The School of Athens* and the heady atmosphere of Renaissance Rome, where he competed with Michelangelo and created a sensual heated bathroom for a cardinal. Yet what I can't forget are his touching, intimate portraits.

## 2. Punchdrunk's *The Burnt City*

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*One Cartridge Place, London until 16 April*

I felt I had spent hours inside an Anselm Kiefer painting after experiencing this epic event. It starts with an exhibition of fake antiquities, with labels that concoct a fictional tale of archaeology and madness, before you wander through a vast installation recreating the cafes, flower shops and nightclubs of a fantastical Troy where enigmatic moments of performance art materialise. The final act is a shattering, murderous ritual in which you are complicit. This is at least as much “art” as it's “theatre” – and for me it points the way to deeper, more sustained and poetic dimensions in contemporary visual culture.



📷 Fantastical ... Punchdrunk's *The Burnt City*. Photograph: Julian Abrams

## 1. Cézanne

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*Tate Modern, London until 12 March*

It starts with a moving self-portrait and a formidable still life: how did this insecure man paint such irrefutable works? By the end, the mystery has only deepened as you stagger under the intellectual and emotional force of Cézanne's late paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire. For this is simply a mind-boggling array of drop-dead masterpieces by the most profound of modern artists. Cézanne starts as a sexually troubled bohemian reprobate.

Then he discovers something in nature that fascinates and reassures him. As he pursues that sense of meaning and order, he invents abstraction. One of the most important shows in Tate Modern's history.

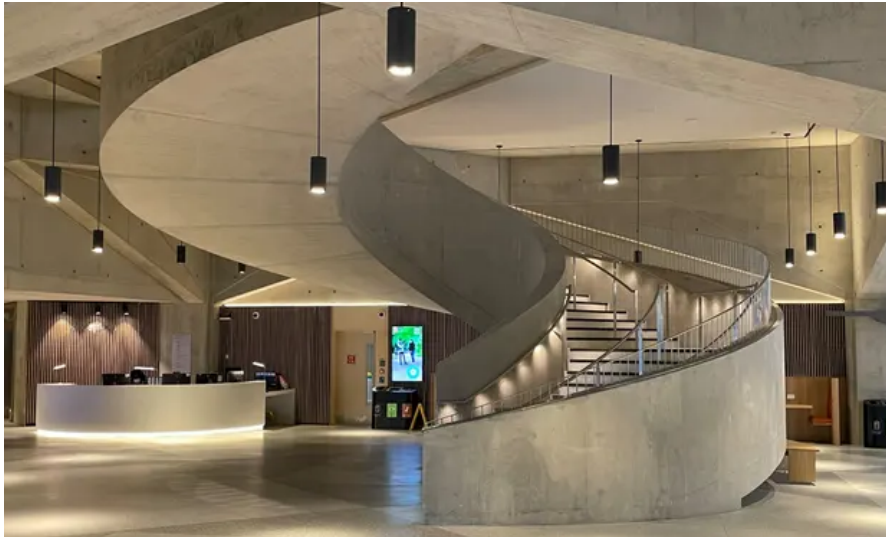
## Oliver Wainwright's best architecture of 2022

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### 5. Birmingham: The Brutiful Years

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At a time when Birmingham's postwar architecture is most under threat, this passionate love letter to the "brutiful" city is a powerful wakeup call to developers and city councillors alike. Written by amateur brutalism fans rather than architectural historians, the book is the product of years of tireless campaigning to raise awareness of the qualities that make the UK's second city so distinctive. Written with infectious enthusiasm, it takes the reader through Brum's postwar shopping precincts, speculative office towers, university campuses, public artworks, suburban churches and tangled motorway intersections, making a powerful argument for retention and reuse over carbon-hungry demolition.



📷Brawny ... Grafton's new Marshall Building for the LSE. Photograph: Oliver Wainwright

### 4. LSE Marshall building, London

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Continuing the brutalist theme, Irish architects Grafton unveiled their latest brawny structure among the stately surrounds of Lincoln's Inn Fields this year, in the form of a heroic new addition to the campus of the London School of Economics. Behind the elegant palazzo-like facade, a grove of muscular concrete trees branch upwards to support a series of intimate timber-lined lecture theatres and research spaces. The stack of open floors has been designed as a great "convening casserole of delight", in the words of the architects, with social staircases spiralling downwards to a huge sports hall and music rooms below ground.

### 3. F51 Skatepark, Folkestone

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A great aluminium ark landed in Folkestone this year, like some futuristic container ship run aground. Wrapped with an intriguing skin of crushed metal mesh, this flaring vessel housed a world first: a multistorey skatepark, climbing centre and boxing gym. Designed by Hythe-based architects Holloway Studio, the building takes immense pleasure in stacking the undulating forms of the various skateparks, drawing you into a place where big concrete bowls bulge from the ceiling, and immaculately crafted timber floors ripple and swoop in sinuous curves. Not a bad outcome for a building that was originally going to be a multistorey car park.



📷 Immaculately crafted ... the F51 Skatepark. Photograph: Guy Hollaway

## 2. The Elizabeth line, London

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Thirty-three years and £18.9bn in the making, the Elizabeth line finally opened this year, ushering hordes of eager passengers into a streamlined white world of tunnels and tubes, worthy of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. For anyone used to London's claustrophobic, creaky tube network, the sheer sense of scale and space is astonishing. The work of Grimshaw and Atkins has created a serene, clutter-free dream. Above ground, the architecture is more of a mixed bag – and the Crossrail-real-estate complex has spawned some truly horrific things – but the overall experience makes commuting across town a new pleasure.

## 1. Bloqs

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A big shed in Edmonton in London might make an unlikely contender for one of the best buildings of 2022. But the arrival of Bloqs to this unloved corner of the Lower Lea valley is quietly revolutionary. Standing next to a cash and carry warehouse and a ready-mix concrete supplier, this new temple to fabrication provides affordable shared machinery and studios in an “open-access factory”, as the capital rapidly loses industrial workspace elsewhere. As a nimble retrofit and extension of a dilapidated warehouse, by 5th Studio, it is a model for a new kind of productive local economy that could be readily replicated across the country.

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