

# On View: Six Art Shows to See in London This Summer

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Summer used to be a slower, regenerative time for the art scene. But not so much anymore and definitely not in London this year, where a number of exciting solo and group shows are programmed. Among them, [Anselm Kiefer](#) presents new sculptures and paintings inspired by James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (June 7 through August 20). One of my favorite Ukrainian contemporary artists [Iryna Maksymova](#) regales with ebullient women-centered and freedom-infused works on recycled textiles (through June 24), and Sulger-Buel Gallery looks back at the last decade of Cameroon-born [Adjani Okpu-Egbe](#)'s paintings and installations on Afro-Surrealism and social justice (through June 30).



Iryna Maksymova, Self Portrait, 2023. 100% Renewable Textile. 134 x 124 cm. 52 3/4 x 48 7/8 in.  
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That's already a feast, and there's plenty more. Below are six shows that have you covered through early September.

**Isaac Julien, *What Freedom is to Me***

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**Tate Britain, through August 20**

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Installation view, 'Looking for Langston', Tate Britain, 2023 Photo: Jack Hems © Isaac Julien  
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

For British Black artist Julien, archives serve to resurrect forgotten, non-dominant narratives. They are a creative labyrinth enabling self-expression and self-reflection on the space Black bodies occupy across our collective imagination, unearthing vibrant ways of remembering. This is best incarnated in *Looking For Langston* (1989), Julien's breakthrough film work, which repositions "beauty for the Black gaze" and reclaims emancipatory aesthetics as they relate to prominent voices and figures of the Harlem Renaissance movement. The monochromatic film shows sensual queer desire, a private garden of seductive shadow and light.

In addition to poet and writer Langston Hughes, Julien engages with other cultural figures, such as poet Essex Hemphill, Bruce Nugent, Alain Locke and Palmer Heyden, notably in *Once Again...* (2022), conceived as a prequel to *Looking For Langston*, which explores the aura of African art, their place in the canon of Western museums and the burning issue of restitutions. These two lyrical films and others (a total of seven) are included in his major solo show at Tate Britain. They channel a timeless elegance, a poetic poise that marks Julien's distinctive filmmaking, and at last, a commensurate recognition of his barrier-shattering cinematic journeys.

## **Hallyu! The Korean Wave**

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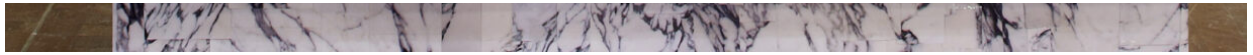
**V&A South Kensington, through June 25**

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Gwon Osang, 'Untitled G-Dragon, A Space of No Name'. Painted sculpture. Courtesy Gwon Osang

When I used to watch ajummas and oppas in Korean dramas during the 00s, it wasn't as cool and mainstream as it is now. My bands weren't BTS or Blackpink but Big Bang and girl band 2NE1. HyunA preceded Lisa and Jennie. The singer-actor Rain was all the rage and I eagerly waited for the next YG-produced hit song and stunning videos. Actors Kim Bum and Lee Min-ho made me swoon. Kimbap rolls became a staple, and I even took Korean language classes. And before *Parasites* and *Squid Game*, there were *Coffee Prince*, *Winter Sonata* and *Boys Before Flowers*. Hallyu, the Korean word for "wave," has become a global pop culture phenomenon, a recent and not-so-recent history that the V&A retraces through film, photography, sculpture, design and fashion. In that show, Gwon Osang's sculpture *Untitled G-Dragon, A Space of No Name* pastiches the iconography of Saint George killing a dragon with former Big Bang lead G-Dragon as both slayer and slayed. There are also incredible monochromatic archives from photographer Jun Min Cho showing Gangnam before Gangnam and unseen sides of Seoul's rapid urbanization.

## Vibeke Slyngstad, *Entangled Life*

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Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London Bridge, July 1 through July 22

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Vibeke Slyngstad, 'Brusand III', 2023. Oil on canvas. 80 x 110 cm. 31 1/2 x 43 1/4 in. Courtesy Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery



Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery presents ten new works of Norwegian mid-career artist Vibeke Slyngstad for her London return after two years. Exuding impressionistic emotions through soft realism, her oil and watercolor paintings celebrate the vitality of nature and human love. Slyngstad alternates between a flowery field and a couple romantically strolling the patch of overgrown grass. *Kjeholmen* (2023), named after a Norwegian island, shows windswept daisies, a motif also found in the series *Shuafat* (2023). The close-up, macro-lensed daisies represent an age of innocence—of discoveries. The distant view of the couple emulates a similar feeling of freedom and wanderlust.

The two silhouettes come closer to one another in the series *Brusand* (2023) until they eventually embrace. The artist likes repetition and connections. While *Brusand* (2022) placed an anonymous couple in seaside hills, *Brusand* (2023) moved their fleeting escapade to a more open lush field. Her 2023 daisies contain more vibrancy; they burst with light, inviting the viewer to get lost outside in an epicurean communion with nature. The windswept, summery, grass-grazing peak suggests an ode to Monet's *Woman with a Parasol* (1875), immortalizing in paint a moment of pure bliss. Like overexposed film, Slyngstad's artworks seem ever-so-brittle.

## **Tomás Saraceno, Web(s) of Life**

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### **Serpentine South, June 1 through September 10**

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Argentinian artist and environmentalist Saraceno is obsessed with spiders. Less haunting than Louise Bourgeois's, Saraceno's spiders primarily embody the notion of connective tissue and landscape. If you didn't make it to his last show a year ago at The Shed, you can still explore his arachnophilic production in his new show with collaborators, focusing on spiders as incarnations of fragile ecosystems. To him, they represent a source of fascination. He admires their architectural prowess. Spiders also lend themselves to an allegory of overcoming one's fears. "Web(s) of Life" is conceived as a hybrid, renewable energy-powered show, with cloud-like sculptures installed in the Royal Parks that interrogate dwindling urban habitats and fauna. Inside the gallery, new installations and film—such as one highlighting spider diviners in Cameroon—underpin Saraceno's work to examine the animal's physical, mystical, and spiritual qualities. His commitment to revealing invisible networks serves to cement the fundamental relationship between living species altered by our climate crisis.

## **Shubbak Festival**

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### **Various London locations, June 23 through July 9**

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London's celebration of North African and West Asian culture returns for the summer across 80 events featuring literature, performances, visual art, calligraphy classes, and film. The festival makes a point to elevate women artists (as well as honor Palestinian voices and narratives). For instance, it will premiere Woman at Point Zero, a feminist opera starring an all-women troupe, named after the 1975 novel of Egyptian feminist Nawal el Saadawi. In the novel, a sexually-abused incarcerated protagonist awaits her



fate on death row after having been found guilty of killing a man. Saadawi, who based the novel on a real-life interview, explores in the book the psychological condition and violence of being born a woman in Egypt. Shubbak engages with timeless concerns as well as with timely issues. Of such urgent conversations, the intersectional play *[Dreamer](#)* discusses the experience of three Black women in Arab societies and the themes of community amid pervasive anti-Blackness. Subbak's full program [here](#) to catch up on all the festival's planned events.

## **The Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art**

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### **Various locations in Liverpool, June 10 through September 17**

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Not technically London but it's just a train away. The 12th edition of the Liverpool Biennial, *uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things*, borrows the isiZulu word for spirit and air to engage with power, transience, and postcolonial healing. Curated by Cape Town-based [Khaniyisile Mbongwa](#) who previously curated the [2020 Stellenbosch Triennale](#), the biennial presents 35 artists and collectives, across 15 venues, in locations such as Liverpool's Tobacco Warehouse and Cotton Exchange building. The very-international biennial includes artists of Caribbean descent such as [Rudy Loewe](#) anchoring Trinidadian folklore in the UK's colonial legacy and [Julien Creuzet](#), who engages with the notion of creolization and will represent the French pavilion at the next Venice Biennale. The line-up is incredibly exciting with Colombian artist [Gala Porras-Kim](#) discussing Mesoamerican representations and art as living organisms, [Sandra Suubi](#) capturing issues of commodification and hyperconsumerism in her native Uganda, and so many great talents I regrettably can't fit into this article. Go see it for yourself [here](#).