

The best free exhibitions in London right now: culture at no cost

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Installation view of Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon

Courtesy Barbican Centre, KNMA, Ranjani Shettar © Max Colson, Barbican Art Gallery

New year, new you, and, as usual, London is absolutely packed with things to do – whether that's exhibitions, events, theatre or 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.

Chris Ofili: Requiem

In this moving commission, Turner Prize-winning British artist Chris Ofili has created a giant art work across Tate Britain's Northern Staircase to pay tribute to the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. The dream-like, brightly-coloured mural gives a special nod to fellow artist Khadija Saye who was killed in the 2017 tragedy.

Tate Britain, ongoing; tate.org.uk

Materials and Objects

Eleven rooms of the Tate are dedicated to this visual exploration of the varied materials that artists have used over the decades. Expect to see works such as Doris Salcedo's famous metal structures, Marcel Duchamp's toilet seat and Sarah Sze's installations.

Tate Modern, ongoing; tate.org.uk

Oren Pinhassi: After Pleasure



Courtesy of Edel Assanti. Photo by Tom Carter

This series of new and recently produced sculptures from Tel Aviv-born, New York-based artist Oren Pinhassi asks questions about living ecologies, organic environments and the relationship between the body and ideas.

Edel Assanti, to March 2; edelassanti.com

The Way of All Flesh

The eclectic group exhibition, which features 36 artists, contemplates existence and morality, with works that range from a love-heart cushion stabbed through with iron spikes and a giant lycra snake-shaped installation.

Saatchi Gallery, to March 3; saatchigallery.com

Maha Ahmed: Where Worlds Meet



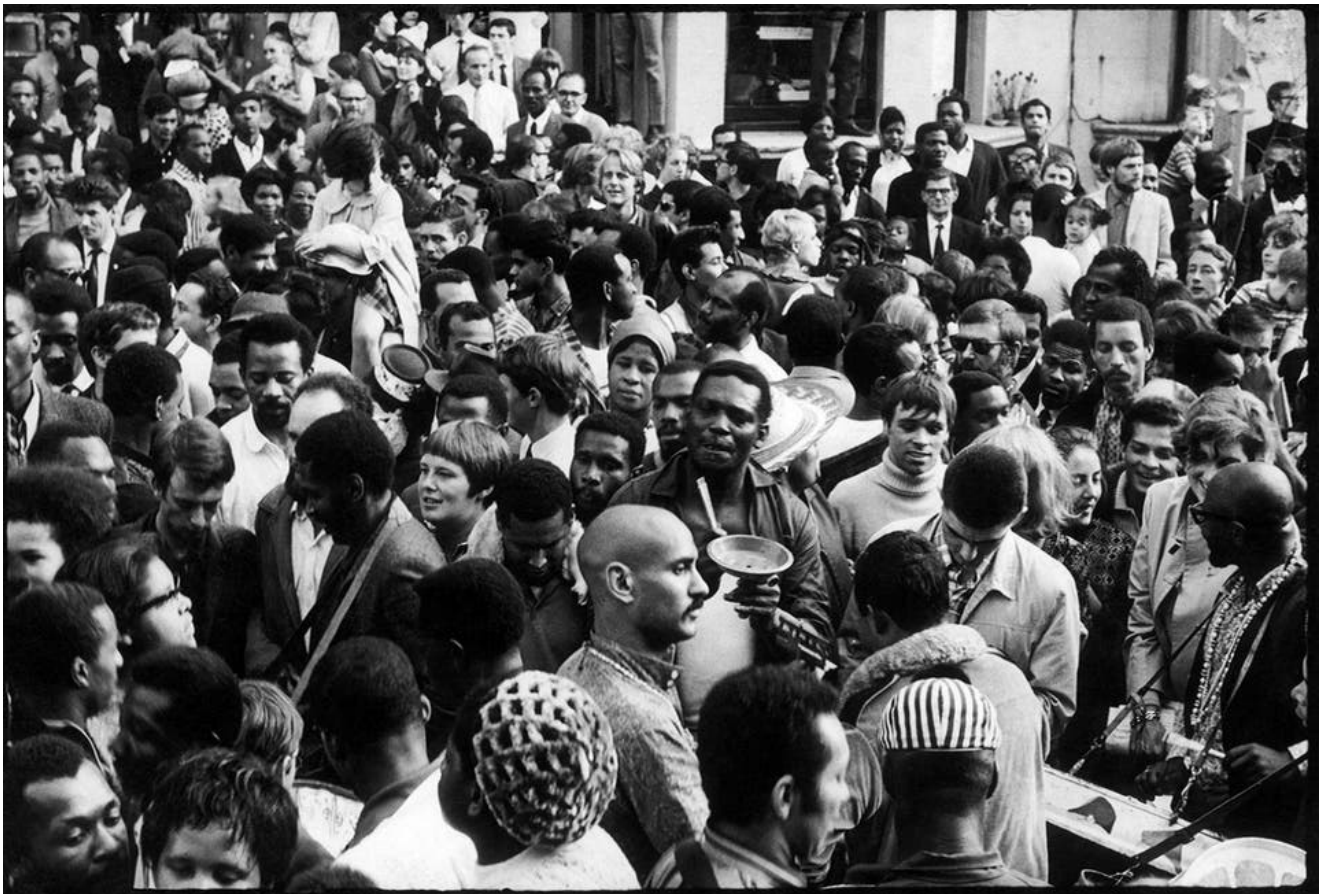
Maha Ahmed, Where two worlds come to meet, 2022 ©Maha Ahmed

Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Taking inspiration from both classical Japanese paintings and Persian and Mughal manuscripts, Pakistan-born, Dubai-based artist Maha Ahmed reflects on isolation and wonder in her elegant and serene paintings. *Where Worlds Meet* will be the first contemporary exhibition in Leighton House's newly designed drawings gallery.

Leighton House, to March 3; rbkc.gov.uk

Uncharted Streets



Charlie Phillips Notting Hill Carnival , 1968

Courtesy of the artist and Centre for British Photography

Curated by the Ben Uri Gallery and Museum alongside the Centre for British Photography, this exhibition showcases the work of Kurt Hutton, Bill Brandt, Edith Tudor-Hart, Charlie Phillips and Markéta Luskáčová - five international artists who each made a huge impact on the development of British photography.

Centre for British Photography, to March 8; britishphotography.org

Yoko Matsumoto



Yoko Matsumoto, *Shapes in Nature V*, 1985

© the artist. Photo © White Cube (Ollie Hammick)

Both abstract paintings and works on paper from Japanese artist Yoko Matsumoto, who famously spent 25 years studying the colour pink, will be displayed here in her first UK solo exhibition.

White Cube Mason's Yard, to March 9; whitecube.com

Five by Five



Tamara Al-Mashouk, I'd search forever, I want to remember; Water Containers, 2023

Courtesy of the artist and Incubator Gallery

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Five by Five involves partnering five celebrated artists - Maggi Hambling, Mona Hatoum, Georgie Hopton, Abigail Lane and Ingrid Pollard - with emerging artists of their choosing. They have chosen (respectively) Jelly Green, Tamara Al-Mashouk, Alice McCabe, Rebecca Hancock and Matthew Arthur Williams. The resulting collaborations comprise paintings, sculptures, photographs, video and installations.

Incubator, to March 10; incubatorart.com

Pesellino: A Renaissance Master Revealed



FRANCESCO PESELLINO, FRA FILIPPO LIPPO AND WORKSHOP ANGEL (LEFT HAND), 1455-60

© THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

It's fantastic to see a space dedicated to the work of Italian Renaissance painter Francesco Pesellino (circa 1422–1457) who was struck down cruelly young by the plague aged 35. Colourful, dynamic and well-crafted, Pesellino's reimaginings of biblical scenes and religious excursions deserve to be more widely celebrated.

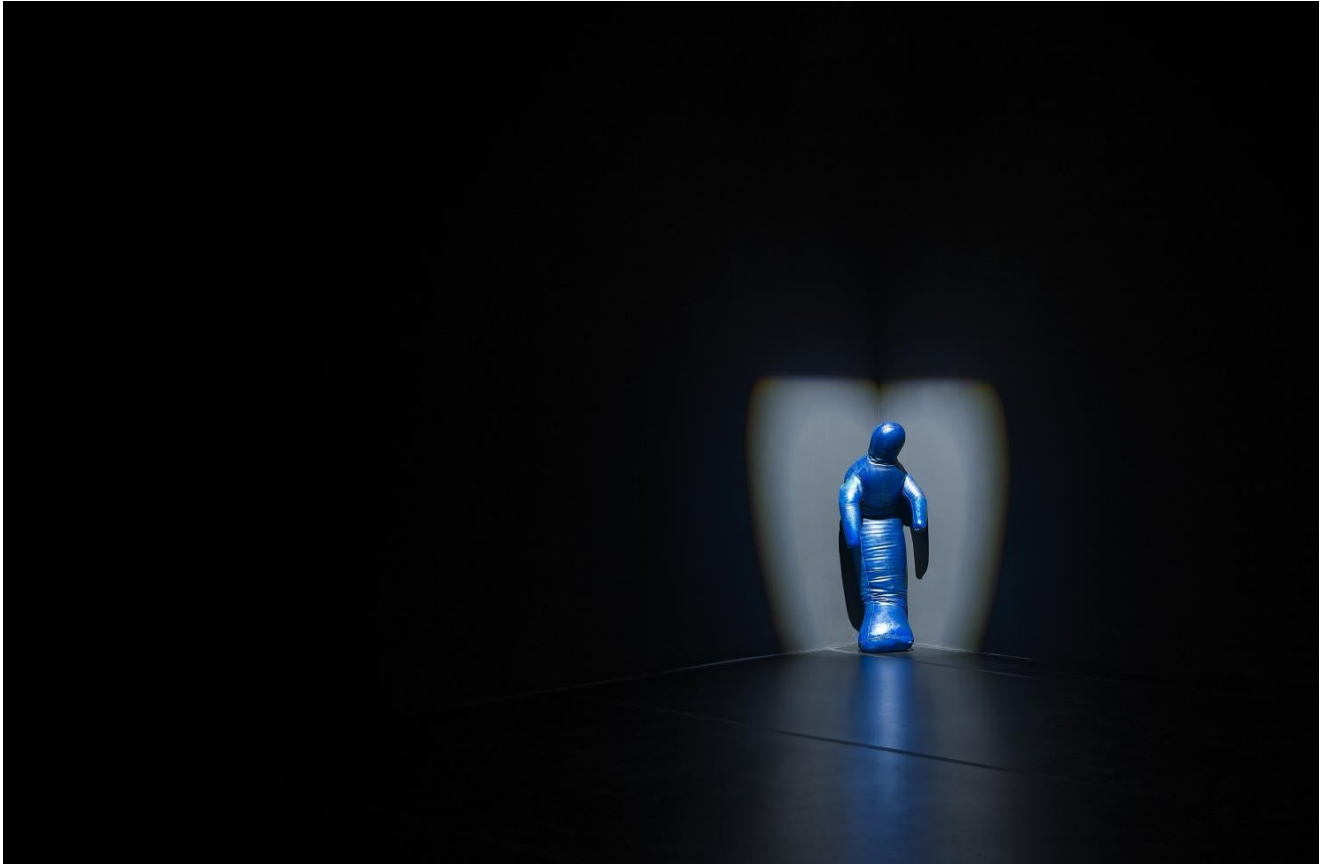
The National Gallery, to March 10; nationalgallery.org.uk

Emalin: 118½

Leopold Thun and Angelina Volk's Emalin, one of east London's leading young galleries, is now opening its second branch in the tiny 18th century Shoreditch Clerk's House. Its inaugural exhibition, which will feature 15 artists including Tolia Astakhishvili, Ceidra Moon Murphy, Sung Tieu, and Marina Xenofontos, is set to explore the slightly dry, though intriguing, themes of domesticity and the historical authenticity of materials.

Emalin The Clerk's House, to March 16; emalin.co.uk

Tiona Nekkia McClodden: A MERCY | DUMMY



Tiona Nekkia McClodden DUMMY [MELANCHOLIC RESTRAINT], 2024

© the artist. Photo © White Cube (Ollie Hammick)

In A MERCY | DUMMY, Philadelphia-based conceptual artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden's inaugural solo show with the gallery, sculptures, installations and paintings explore violence and human endurance.

White Cube Bermondsey, to March 24; whitecube.com

Doron Langberg: Night



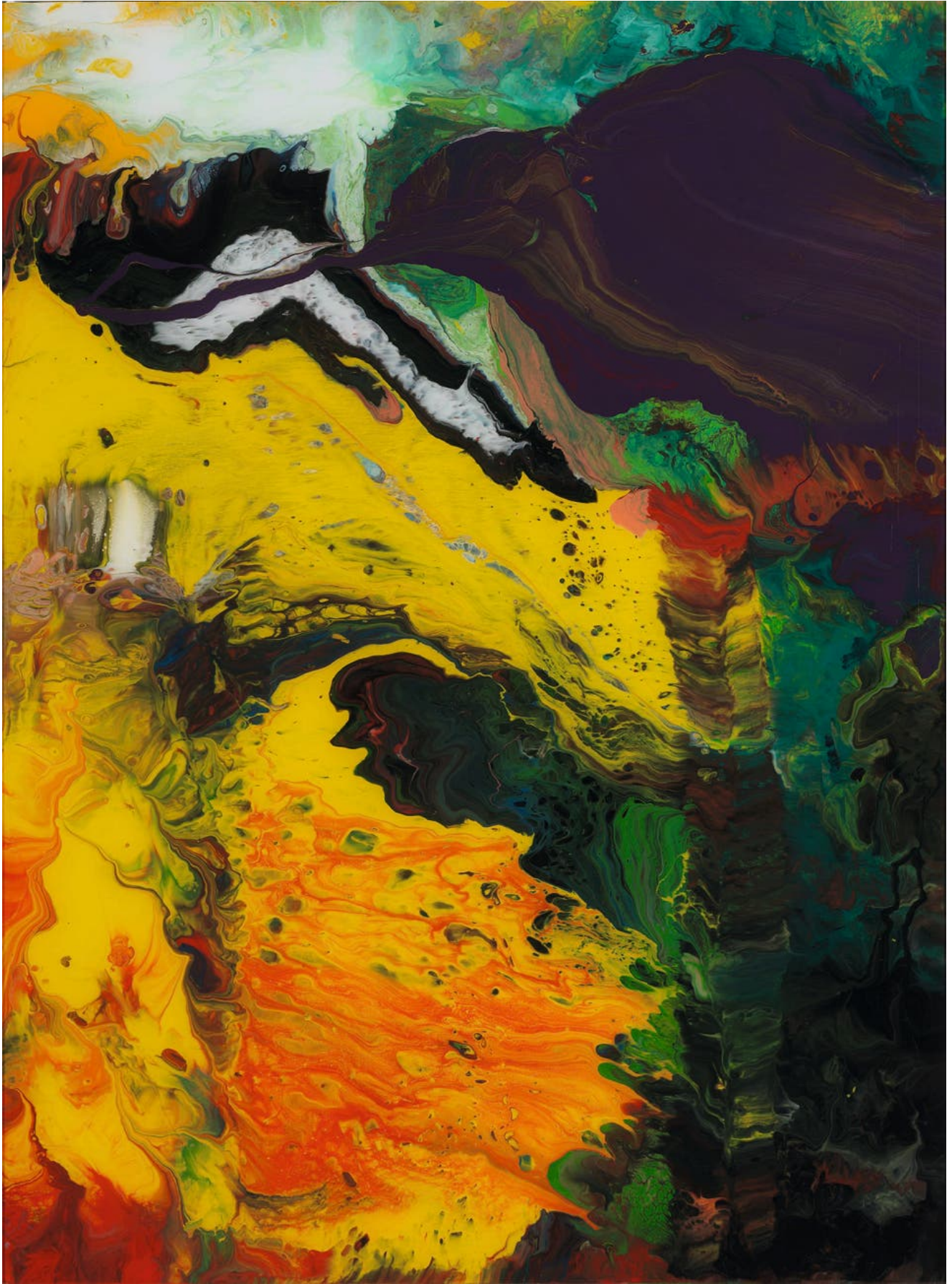
Doron Langberg: Basement

© Doron Langberg Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

Through a series of large-scale tableaux, Israeli-American painter Doron Langberg explores the feelings and spaces that stir after hours: he depicts nightclubs and midnight beach scenes, and in doing so asks questions about the physical and psychological freedom provided by these liminal late night spaces.

Victoria Miro, to March 28; victoria-miro.com

Gerhard Richter



Gerhard Richter, Aladin (Aladdin), 2010

© Gerhard Richter 2024

Gerhard Richter's works are always a treat: here, new and recent paintings as well as drawings from the German visual artist are on display, which continue his career-long exploration of perception and abstraction.

David Zwirner, to March 28; davidzwirner.com

Omar El Lahib



Omar El Lahib, Adventure Garden, 2020-2023

Courtesy of the artist and Saatchi Yates

This lovely exhibition opening this week showcases the work of Lebanese artist Omar El Lahib, whose 18 large-scale figurative and abstract works depict strange, otherworldly and sometimes romantic night scenes.

Saatchi Yates, March 6 to April 10; saatchiyates.com

The Hudsons, Family Ties



Richard Hudson, Knot Marble

Courtesy of the artist and Claridge's ArtSpace

Mollie Dent-Brocklehurst curates this multidisciplinary exhibition of work by three artists from the same family: sculptor Richard Hudson, and his sons Henry and Richard WM. The Hudsons use a range of materials – including clay, plasticine, scagliola, and wood – to explore nature and natural forms.

Claridge's ArtSpace, to April 14; claridges.co.uk

Bloomberg New Contemporaries

Every year, Camden Art Centre celebrates exciting up-and-coming talent in its New Contemporaries show. This year's show features 55 emerging artists whose wide-ranging works tackle issues including climate change, identity politics and kinship.

Camden Art Centre, to April 14; camdenartcentre.org

Turner and Bonington: Watercolours from the Wallace Collection



J.M.W. Turner, Hackfall, near Ripon, c. 1816

The Trustees of the Wallace Collection

Travel around Europe in this one-room “[small gem of an exhibition](#)”: a display of watercolours by Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-1828) and JMW Turner (1775-1851) which are on show for the first time in 17 years.

The Wallace Collection, to April 21; wallacecollection.org

Ainu Stories: Contemporary Lives by the Saru River



Ainu Stories Contemporary Lives by the Saru River

The Cipsanke boat festival in Nibutani. Image: Ogawa Masaki

The Ainu people are an ethnic group native to the north of Japan and its surrounding islands. In this special collaborative exhibition with the people of Biratori, Japan House presents a glimpse into their contemporary lives through a series of intimate video interviews.

Japan House, to April 21; japanhouselondon.uk

Michèle Lamy & Loree Rodkin x Rick Owens



Portrait of Michele Lamy

Photography by Tim Verhallen, courtesy of the artist

French designer Michèle Lamy is a fixture of Paris's fashion and art crowd. Not only is she the life partner of fashion designer Rick Owens, but over her six-decade career she has worked as a cabaret dancer, lawyer, producer, entrepreneur, artist and model. She also makes jewellery with celebrated designer Loree Rodkin, whose earrings, ring and bracelets were worn by Michelle Obama to Barack's inaugural ball. At Carpenter's Workshop their rings are on show alongside some of Owen's own design pieces.

Carpenter's Workshop, to April 26; carpentersworkshopgallery.com

Wendell Castle: Suspended Disbelief



Suspended Disbelief, exhibition view, photography by Benjamin Baccarani

Courtesy of Carpenters Workshop Gallery

The works of sculptor Wendell Castle (1932-2018), one of the founding fathers of the American Art Furniture Movement, could be best described as ink splashes rendered in 3D. Here a range of the astonishing sculptural design pieces, created over his celebrated career, are on display.

Carpenter's Workshop, to April 27; carpentersworkshopgallery.com

Zheng Bo: Bamboo as Method

Hong Kong based artist Zheng Bo uses film, dance and installation in their work to explore the connections between nature, biology and queer sexuality. In this large-scale commission, they have transformed Somerset House's courtyard into a bamboo garden, creating an elegant sanctuary for contemplation and restoration.

Somerset House, to April 28; somersethouse.org.uk

Atta Kwami, Dzidzɔ kple amenuveve (Joy and Grace) 2021-22: Maria Lassnig Prize Mural

The Serpentine's public art mural is a bright delight. One of Ghanaian painter, printmaker, historian and curator Atta Kwami's (1956 – 2021) last ever works, the prize-winning painted construction, which is titled Joy and Grace in the West African language Ewe, is just that.

Serpentine North Garden, to April 30; serpentinegalleries.org

Accordion Fields



Tim Stoner, Marbella Club, 2021/2023

© The artists, courtesy of Lisson Gallery

This group exhibition, presented across both of Lisson Gallery's London spaces, showcases the work of eight artists who have all cultivated their practices in London over the past three decades, as the city has gone through a number of radical socio-political shifts.

Lisson Gallery, February 23 to May 4; lissongallery.com

Aria Dean: Abattoir



Aria Dean: Abattoir

Courtesy of the artist and ICA

In her first UK exhibition, American artist and writer Aria Dean explores modernity and death through the instantly recognisable and provocative architecture of an abattoir. The large animated film installation is accompanied by an immersive score (so described because it incorporates algorithmically generated sounds, field recordings and instrumentals) by Evan Zierk.

ICA, to May 5; ica.art

Art Now: Zeinab Saleh



Zeinab Saleh, Early morning, 2024

Courtesy of the artist and Tate Britain

Art Now is Tate Britain's long-running exhibition series spotlighting rising stars in the art scene; this time, it's Kenyan-born and London-based artist Zeinab Saleh's turn to shine. Drawing on everyday experiences and memories, Saleh uses patterns and silhouettes in soft colours to create a feeling of otherworldliness and intimacy.

Tate Britain, to June 23; [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk)

Leo Robinson: DREAM-BRIDGE-OMNIGLYPH



Leo Robinson: DREAM-BRIDGE-OMNIGLYPH, installation view, 2023

Photo: Marcus Leith

Bloomberg's City of London basement is full of surprises. It not only consists of an art gallery, but it is home to parts of an ancient Roman temple and showcases a number of Roman artefacts too. Its next art commission is DREAM-BRIDGE-OMNIGLYPH, a collection of multimedia works from British artist Leo Robinson that explores ancient myths, personal identity, history, tradition and colonialism.

London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE, to June 29; londonmithraeum.com

The Conservatory x Ranjani Shettar



Installation view of Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon

Courtesy Barbican Centre, KNMA, Ranjani Shettar © Max Colson, Barbican Art Gallery

Not that anyone really needs an excuse to visit the Barbican's gorgeous conservatory, but the space now features five large-scale works from Indian sculptor Ranjani Shettar. The delightful sculptures, which have been inspired by nature, have been crafted by hand using materials - including wood, stainless steel, muslin - and techniques that are used in traditional Indian craftwork.

Barbican, to July 1; barbican.org.uk

Flaming June



Frederic, Lord Leighton PRA, Flaming June, c. 1895.

Museo de Arte de Ponce. Luis A. Ferré Foundation, Inc.

Frederic Leighton's most famous painting, the exquisite Flaming June, was originally part of the British artist's submission to the RA's Summer Exhibition in 1895. Now, 128 years later, it's on show at the institution again (on loan from the Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico), being shown alongside work from both Leighton and his contemporaries. For mega fans, there's a [curator's talk](#) about the iconic painting on March 15.

Royal Academy of Arts, February 17 to January 12, 2025; royalacademy.org.uk