

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

Contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Images: Artwork images downloadable [HERE](#); Installation images downloadable [HERE](#)

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In the Black Fantastic

29 June - 18 September 2022



Installation views of *In the Black Fantastic* at Hayward Gallery, 2022.
Photo: Zeinab Batchelor, Courtesy of the Hayward Gallery

From 29 June to 18 September 2022, the Hayward Gallery presents *In the Black Fantastic*, the UK's first major exhibition dedicated to the work of Black artists who use fantastical elements to address racial injustice and explore alternative realities. Showcasing new works and special commissions, this exhibition adds a new chapter to the Hayward Gallery's tradition of presenting ground-breaking shows that respond to and illuminate pivotal themes in contemporary art.

Curated by Ekow Eshun, *In the Black Fantastic* brings together a group of artists who inventively recycle and reconfigure elements of folklore, myth, science fiction, spiritual traditions, pageantry and legacies of Afrofuturism. The artists reimagine the ways in which we represent the past and think about the future, whilst also engaging with the challenges and conflicts of the present. The fantastical element has nothing to do with escapism; instead it considers alternative ways of being, and confronts socially constructed ideas about race.

Encompassing painting, photography, video, sculpture and mixed-media installations, the exhibition seeks to create multi-dimensional aesthetic experiences that bring the viewer into a new environment somewhere between the real world and a variety of imagined ones. Opening the show, a major new commission by **Nick Cave** takes the form of a dramatic installation

comprising hundreds of casts of the artist's own arm, joined together like links in a chain. Alongside this, Cave will present a group of Soundsuits: the legendary series of wearable artworks begun 30 years ago in response to the brutal police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles. A new Soundsuit commemorating the killing of George Floyd is shown in the exhibition.

Other artists using their own body to create works of far-reaching imagination include **Hew Locke** and **Lina Iris Viktor**. Locke's immersive installation comprises a series of portrait photographs of the artist masquerading as corrupt kings, tyrants and bandits, while Viktor's mixed-media works draw from sources including astronomy, Aboriginal dream paintings, African textiles, and West and Central African mythology. Similarly, **Wangechi Mutu** reimagines the human body and reflects on its imperilled environment, presenting collage and film works alongside two new female figure sculptures made from natural Kenyan materials including red soil, horn and shells.

Intersectionality underpins the work of a number of artists including **Rashaad Newsome** whose multi-disciplinary practice explores themes of gender, sexuality and race, and **Tabita Rezaire** whose immersive film installation critiques Western conventions of narrow binaries by invoking a spiritual connection to pre-colonial Africa. Interwoven mythologies and history are explored by **Ellen Gallagher** who addresses the horror of the Atlantic slave trade through paintings inspired by mythical sub-aquatic realms inhabited by the ancestors of Africans drowned during the Middle Passage, and **Chris Ofili** whose paintings transport Homer's encounter between Odysseus and Calypso to the islands of the Caribbean.

Past, present and future, utopian and apocalyptic, are all explored. Works by **Sedrick Chisom** and **Kara Walker** probe the parasitic ideology of whiteness and America's history of racial violence. A stop-motion animation by Walker weaves a nightmarish tale of racial violence and domestic terrorism based on events of recent history, including the storming of the US Capitol in 2021. In contrast, **Cauleen Smith** addresses themes of community and Afrofuturist utopias with an immersive installation.

Accompanying *In the Black Fantastic*, a rich summer season of events takes place across the Southbank Centre, spanning artist talks, literature, performance and music, as well as a series of outdoor installations. A parallel programme of film screenings curated by Ekow Eshun will also be hosted at BFI Southbank throughout July.

Ekow Eshun, Curator of *In the Black Fantastic*, says: *"As a concept, the Black fantastic does not describe a movement or a rigid category so much as a way of seeing shared by artists who grapple with the inequities of racialized contemporary society by conjuring new visions of Black possibility. More than ever Black visual artists, as well as writers, film-makers and musicians, are thinking in boldly imaginative terms in order to explore race and cultural identity in the contemporary era."*

Ralph Rugoff, Director at the Hayward Gallery, says: *"Thanks to the insights of curator Ekow Eshun, In the Black Fantastic will be the first exhibition to highlight this very significant – and still under-acknowledged – artistic territory that extends across the field of visual art to recent trends in literature, film, television, and music. At once vivid and thought-provoking, lyrical and relevant, the works in the show embody the power of the fantastic to help us chart new ways of confronting legacies of racism and celebrating cultures of resistance and affirmation."*

Participating artists include Nick Cave, Sedrick Chisom, Ellen Gallagher, Hew Locke, Wangechi Mutu, Rashaad Newsome, Chris Ofili, Tabita Rezaire, Cauleen Smith, Lina Iris Viktor and Kara Walker.

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated publication exploring the expansive territory of the Black fantastic across film, music, design and literature. Published by Thames and Hudson, the book includes an introductory text by Ekow Eshun and extended essays by Eshun, Kameelah L. Martin, and Michelle D. Commander.

In the Black Fantastic is curated by Ekow Eshun with Assistant Curator Thomas Sutton and Curatorial Assistant Debbie Meniru.

The exhibition will tour to Kunsthall Rotterdam, Netherlands from November 2022 to March 2023.

In the Black Fantastic is generously supported by the US Embassy London, Gagosian, Cockayne – Grants for the Arts and The London Community Foundation, Victoria Miro, David Zwirner, Pilar Corrias and Sprüth Magers.

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For further press information and high res images please contact:

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Exhibition Listing information:

In the Black Fantastic

29 June - 18 September 2022

The Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Full price standard: £13.50

Concessions available (Under-30s. Under-30s tickets for Wed – Fri are £5) & Southbank Centre Members go free.

Link to *In the Black Fantastic* web page [HERE](#)

Art installations around the site:

Art Installation

Dubmorphology: *Emergence*

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am- 11.30pm - Every half hour on the hour and at half past the hour. Run time 3.09 minutes

Queen's Walk

Free & unticketed

Ancient drums, future sonics and the voice of pioneering historian CLR James form a futuristic sound installation. Dubmorphology's newly commissioned sound installation, *Emergence*, responds to the themes of the Hayward Gallery exhibition *In the Black Fantastic*. *Emergence*, 2022 features CLR James speaking about Négritude, a movement from the 1930s intended to dispel stereotypes, cultivate a new Black consciousness and celebrate African beliefs and values. Interdisciplinary research group Dubmorphology is formed of artists Trevor Mathison and Gary Stewart. They make experimental sound and visual installations that examine the relationship between culture, history and creativity, reworking historical, political and scientific archives.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/dubmorphology-emergence>

Art Installation

I. Nakhla: *On the Lips of Time*

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Queen's Walk

Free & unticketed

Inspired by Egyptian iconography within Afrofuturism, artist I. Nakhla explores their Egyptian heritage in a sonic blend of audio from home videos, music and memories of dreams. It also contains words from the song 'Al-Atlal' (The Ruins), made famous by singer Om Kalthoum, and adapted from poetry by Ibrahim Nagi. *On the Lips of Time* brings together an array of sonic material as a form of fictioning, in an attempt to get close to traces of histories connected to themes of place, time, power and family.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/i-nakhla-lips-time>

Art Installation

Peter Adjaye: *Music for Architecture*

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Queen's Walk

Free & unticketed

Peter Adjaye installs his *Music for Architecture* project on the Queen's Walk, using sound to change how we experience space and architecture. Peter Adjaye is a contemporary conceptual sound artist, specialising in multidisciplinary collaborations. An accomplished composer, producer, musicologist, creative consultant and educator, Adjaye is passionate about exploring the crossover between the arts, science, architecture, fashion and film. Utilising his experience and skills, Adjaye has continually developed the borderless, collaborative work *Music for Architecture*.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/peter-adjaye-music-architecture>

Art Installation

Lina Iris Viktor: *Syzygy*, 2015

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Royal Festival Hall Wall, Mandela Walk

Free & unticketed

Displayed outside the Royal Festival Hall, Lina Iris Viktor's work of opulent gold and blue draws on artistic traditions and visuals from African symbolism and cosmology. *Syzygy* (2015) is one of several artworks reproduced at scale and displayed externally around the Southbank Centre's site as part of its summer festivities and in response to the Hayward Gallery exhibition *In the Black Fantastic*, which Lina Iris Viktor also appears in.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/lina-iris-viktor-syzygy>

Art Installation

Alisha Wormsley: *There Are Black People in the Future*

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Royal Festival Hall Wall, Blue Side

Free & unticketed

Inspired by Afrofuturist calls for Black people to claim their place, Alisha Wormsley's message has been splashed across billboards in the US. Through the inscription and utterance of the words 'There Are Black People in the Future', the project addresses systemic oppression of Black communities through space and time, offering reassurance by asserting the presence of Black bodies. In 2017, Wormsley placed these words on a billboard in East Liberty, a neighbourhood in Pittsburgh's east end that has suffered gentrification.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/alisha-wormsley-there-are-black-people-future>

Art Installation

Hew Locke: *Bounty Killer*, 2007

Until Monday 31 October 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall slip road, display space

Free & unticketed

Bounty Killer is part of Hew Locke's photographic series *How Do You Want Me?*, a collection of sinister character portraits confronting the stereotypes of Black artists. For the series, Locke created a clutch of dark characters and acted them out by wearing costumes and posing as they would want to project themselves. They are a portrait gallery of sinister figures, corrupt kings, tyrants and bandits. They embody both fear of, yet desire for, the exotic. Locke says that 'How Do You Want Me?' is the question many people ask when having their portrait taken by a high-street photographer. How should they pose in order to be acceptable? I am saying – OK – if this is how you want your black artists to be – dangerous, colourful, mysterious, edgy – then I can project that cliché for you.'

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/hew-locke-bounty-killer>

Art Installation

Wangechi Mutu: *Even my old soul has an old soul*, 2019

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Royal Festival Hall Wall, Blue Side

Free & unticketed

Wangechi Mutu's work of ink and watercolour populates a strange world with female figures and birds, subverting preconceptions of the female body and the feminine. Working with a range of mediums, Wangechi Mutu reflects on sexuality, femininity, ecology, politics, the rhythms of the world and our often damaging or futile efforts to control it. Mutu was first recognised for paintings and collages concerned with the myriad forms of violence and misrepresentation women experience, especially black women, in the contemporary world.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/wangechi-mutu-even-my-old-soul-has-old-soul>

Art Installation

Namsa Leuba - *La Déesse Hiti III* from the *Illusions* series, 2019

Until Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Hayward Gallery Banner

Free & unticketed

In the fictional narratives of her staged photographs of Polynesian women, photographer and art director Namsa Leuba challenges Paul Gauguin's exoticised imagery. *La Déesse Hiti III* is part of Leuba's most recent project, *Illusions*, created in Tahiti and inspired by the paintings of Paul Gauguin and 'tropical' images in modern art. This type of imagery casts the Polynesian woman as beautiful, desirable, subservient, and connected to the natural environment.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/namsa-leuba-la-deesse-hiti-iii>

Art Installation

Emily Mulenga - *Stills from Orange Bikini*, 2015; *4 Survival 4 Pleasure*, 2017; and *Electric Lady Land*, 2018

Friday 15 July - Sunday 4 September 2022, 10am - 11.30pm

Royal Festival Hall Wall, Mandela Walk

Free & unticketed

Emily Mulenga is a multimedia artist. Using visuals and sound that draw upon video games, cartoons and the internet, her practice explores themes of capitalism, feminism, technology and existential anxieties. Mulenga's output reflects a ravenous consumption of media, where gloss and escapism meet humour and unease, spanning past, present and future. These stills are taken from three videos where the viewer is taken on a dreamlike journey through a succession of scenarios, in which the avatar takes part in a series of fantastical or luxurious activities.

Accompanying talks and events programme:

Artist Talk

In the Black Fantastic: Artists' Talk

Thursday 30 June, 7pm

St Paul's Roof Pavilion, Level 6, Blue Side, Royal Festival Hall

Ticketed, £8.

Delve into the ideas behind the Hayward Gallery exhibition *In the Black Fantastic*, with curator Ekow Eshun and artists Sedrick Chisom, Cauleen Smith and Lina Iris Viktor.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/talks-debates/black-fantastic-artists-talk>

Artist Talk

In the Black Fantastic: Artists Talk

Thursday 30 June 2022, 7.00 - 8.30pm

St Paul's Roof Pavilion, Level 6, Blue Side, Royal Festival Hall

Ticketed, £8 full price, £5 concession

Exhibition curator Ekow Eshun will be delving into the ideas behind the Hayward Gallery exhibition with three of its featured artists Sedrick Chisom, Cauleen Smith and Lina Iris Viktor.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/talks-debates/black-fantastic-artists-talk>

Creative Learning

Secondary Schools Morning: *In the Black Fantastic*

Thursday 7 July 2022, 11am

Hayward Gallery

Free & ticketed

In a morning reserved exclusively for secondary schools, sixth forms and colleges, explore our latest Hayward Gallery exhibition, *In the Black Fantastic*. Groups are able to discover the exhibition at their own pace, while using our new secondary schools resource, the Artists' and Thinkers' Guide to the Hayward Gallery, to dive deeper into the artwork. Schools also have the opportunity to meet a curator and find out more about the exhibition, as well as take some time to sit and sketch in the space.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/art-exhibitions/secondary-schools-morning-black-fantastic?eventId=913728>

Creative Learning

Teachers' Twilight: *In the Black Fantastic*

Tuesday 12 July 2022, 5pm

Hayward Gallery

Free & ticketed

Primary, secondary and SEND teachers are invited to explore *In the Black Fantastic* and find out how to make the most of it with their classes. After a welcome drinks reception, you're introduced to the exhibition by lead curator Ekow Eshun. Then it's time to discuss the different ways you can explore the ideas and themes of the exhibition with your students. Following these discussions, you can explore the gallery at your leisure and prepare for your next visit with your school.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/teachers-twilight-black-fantastic?eventId=913773>

Artist Talk

Hew Locke

Friday 15 July 2022, 7-8.30pm

Southbank Centre's Purcell Room

Ticketed, £8 full price, £5 concession

Hew Locke discusses his artistic practice in relation to the Hayward Gallery's latest exhibition, *In the Black Fantastic*. Locke explores the languages of colonial and post-colonial power, how different cultures fashion their identities through visual symbols of authority, and how these representations are altered by the passage of time. These explorations have led Locke to a wide range of subject matters, imagery and media, assembling sources across time and space in his deeply layered artworks. This event is part of the Southbank Centre's In the Black Fantastic Weekender.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/talks-debates/hew-locke>

Purcell Sessions

In the Black Fantastic: Live

Saturday 30 - Sunday 31 July 2022, 7.45-9.15pm

Southbank Centre's Purcell Room

Ticketed, £15. For ages 16+.

Embark on a journey *In the Black Fantastic* combining music, live performances and striking visuals, inspired by the Hayward Gallery exhibition of the same name. This specially commissioned multidisciplinary performance draws on key works from the epic poem Sunjata to Amos Tutuola, incorporating narratives as they mirror a journey from the African continent to the forced migrations of the diaspora, and the dreaming of possible futures as embodied by writers including Toni Morrison and Octavia E. Butler. Based on a text edited by Ellah P. Wakatama, this performance fuses extracts from a wide range of writers in this fantastical tradition. With live performances from actors (cast to be announced) in a staging by Jack McNamara and Tian Brown-Sampson, and specially commissioned music from Space Afrika and visuals from Alistair Mackinnon, this unique event invites audiences on a journey *In the Black Fantastic*.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/literature-poetry/black-fantastic-live>

Literature

Writing *In the Black Fantastic*

Thursday 15 September 2022, 7.45pm

Level 5 Function Room, Royal Festival Hall

Ticketed, £10. For ages 16+

Writers Courtia Newland and Michael Salu join a panel, chaired by Ellah P. Wakatama, exploring the influence of the fantastical in their work, inspired by the Hayward Gallery's latest exhibition, *In the Black Fantastic*. Curated by Ekow Eshun, *In the Black Fantastic* presents artworks which draw on elements of myth, speculative fiction, spiritual tradition, carnival and folklore, to build what Ekow Eshun has described as 'new narratives of Black possibility'. Find out how Newland and Salu have drawn on these same fantastical traditions in their own books, artworks, films and television productions, building alternate worlds which recast historic and current injustices and traumas into their own compulsive new narratives of Black possibility.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/literature-poetry/writing-black-fantastic>

Creative Learning

Photo-Fantastic: Creative Photography Course

Monday 8 - Sunday 14 August 2022, daily, 10.30am – 5pm, Free

A free week-long photography course, led by Eddie Otchere and Holly-Marie Cato, supporting local creative talent, using the Hayward Gallery's *In the Black Fantastic* exhibition as inspiration.

Southbank Centre is inviting emerging photographers aged 18 – 24 who identify as Black, mixed race or from the Black African or African Caribbean diaspora, and who are resident in London to apply for this course.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/creative-learning/emerging-artists-creatives/photo-fantastic-creative-photography-course?tab=overview>

Multi-Artform

In the Black Fantastic Weekender

Friday 15 - Sunday 17 July 2022

Explore three days of music, poetry, comedy, film and talks celebrating the breadth of contemporary Black art and culture.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/black-fantastic-weekender>

The Hayward Gallery opening times:

11am – 9pm, Wednesday

11am – 7pm, Thursday - Saturday

10am – 6pm, Sunday

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Twitter: [@haywardgallery](https://twitter.com/haywardgallery)

Instagram: [@Hayward.Gallery](https://www.instagram.com/Hayward.Gallery)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/haywardgallery/

NOTES TO EDITORS

[HERE](#) is the exhibition guide

Press release about the *In the Black Fantastic* BFI programme [HERE](#).

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. They include those by Bridget Riley, Bruce Nauman, Anish Kapoor, Lee Bul, Andreas Gursky, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Kader Attia and Matthew Barney, as well as influential group exhibitions such as *Africa Remix*, *Light Show*, *Psycho Buildings* and *Space Shifters*. Opened by Her Majesty, The Queen in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).

Keeping audiences safe on site

Our number one priority is the safety, health and wellbeing of visitors and staff. We strongly encourage visitors to our buildings to wear a face covering at all times (except when eating and drinking), including during performances, and to social distance from our staff where possible. We continue to review and manage any risks and respond to any changes in government guidance. Full details of Covid-secure measures can be found on the Southbank Centre website [here](#).

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

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