

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE



*Letters of Love, 2022 Installation: rope, paper MOCA Jacksonville, Florida, USA Photo by Doug Eng © DACS, London, 2026 and Chiharu Shiota*

# Chiharu Shiota Threads of Life

PREPARATION STORY  
TUE 17 FEB – SUN 3 MAY 2026

**HAYWARD  
GALLERY**

## Preparing for your visit

This information is for you to use as much or as little as you like, to help you **prepare for your visit to the exhibition**. In this handout, you can find pictures of the route through the exhibition and information about what you will experience along the way.

For our **Relaxed Hours events on Tuesday 10 March (2pm – 5pm) and on Thursday 16 April (11am – 2pm)** we are making small changes to help our visitors who require a more relaxed environment, including turning up the lights where possible and reducing the number of visitors in the galleries for these hours.

There are **spotlight talks** with Hayward Gallery tour guides, a **printed companion resource** to inspire your explorations of the exhibition and a **chill-out space**. We don't expect visitors to be quiet during these hours. **It is a time and space for you to be yourself.**

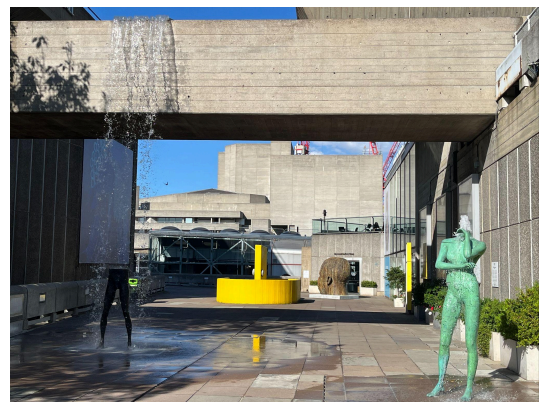
When you arrive at the Southbank Centre site, look for the building with the **pyramid shapes** on the roof, or **ask any staff member inside the Royal Festival Hall for directions**.

Entrance to the exhibition is via the **Hayward Gallery main entrance**. Please arrive as close to your time slot as possible.

## External installations

As you approach the Hayward Gallery, there are **three installations** located around the outside of the building.

*Thinking Fountains* by Klaus Weber is an **outdoor sculpture featuring two water-spouting bronze figures** and a narrow waterfall cascading from an elevated concrete walkway. This installation is located near the entrance to the Hayward Gallery Foyer. The fountains are turned off during the winter and are switched on again in April.



*Their Jumpers* is a **painting** by Nicola Tyson which shows **two figures standing** against a **yellow brick wall**. They appear to be engaging in a **dance** or **striking a pose** – or perhaps something more unsettling is taking place and their arms are raised in surrender. We are **never quite certain** of the narratives unfolding in Tyson's artworks. This artwork is located on the side of the Queen Elizabeth Hall and is opposite the Hayward Gallery Foyer.



*Mother Tongue* is a **bronze sculpture** by Teresa Solar Abboud that is **bubblegum pink** in colour. It depicts **two tongues intertwining into one dancing figure**. The artist explores the process of translation and assimilation that she experiences within her family context. With an Egyptian mother and a Spanish father, she has grown up in the constant intermingling between these two cultures.



## Hayward Gallery facilities

### Cloakroom

The cloakroom is open and there is a **charge of £2** per item to leave anything here. **Please note that we do not accept cash, and all payments are made by card.** You won't be able to bring any bags of 40 x 25 x 25cm and over (for example, a large backpack or luggage) into the exhibition, **so please leave large bags at home.**



You can request to **borrow a gallery stool** to use while you explore the exhibition. These stools are foldable and lightweight to carry. There are also **two wheelchairs available to borrow if needed.** We recommend pre-booking the wheelchairs where possible.

**Sensory backpacks** are available if you think they could support your visit. They contain adult, teen and child-sized **ear defenders** and **fidget equipment.**



## Toilets

There are three **gender-inclusive toilets** (this means everyone can use them) located in the Hayward Gallery Foyer between the Hayward Gallery Shop and the cloakroom. **One of these toilets is an accessible toilet.**

There are **additional toilets within the galleries**, located halfway up the front staircase. These toilets are separated for women and men.

## Foyer lift

The foyer lift goes to the following floors: Level 0 in the car park (**step-free access route from street level**), Level 2 (Hayward Gallery Foyer and Shop, toilets and HENI Project Space) and Level 3 (Hayward Gallery Cafe). This is a **small lift that can comfortably fit one wheelchair user and a companion**. There is a **mirrored wall** facing you as you enter the lift.

## Gallery lift

The gallery lift is located on the right, just inside the entrance to the Lower Galleries. It takes you to the Upper Galleries and back down again. This is a **large lift, with silver-coloured walls and a black carpet**.

## Seating

There are **benches, chairs and stools for visitors to sit on in some of the rooms**. These have been upholstered in faux leather. You can also borrow a foldable gallery stool from the cloakroom if you prefer. A Hayward Gallery Visitor Assistant will always be **happy to bring you a stool if you need one**. Just ask the nearest member of staff with a yellow lanyard.

## Hayward Gallery Cafe and finding a quiet space

The **Hayward Gallery Cafe is located on Level 3** and can be accessed either by the staircase in the Hayward Gallery Foyer or by taking the lift in the foyer to Level 3.



The Hayward Gallery Cafe is open **Tuesday to Friday, and Sunday, from 10am to 6pm, and Saturday, from 10am to 8pm**. The cafe stops serving 30 minutes before closing.

You can buy **food and drink** from the cafe and use the **tables and chairs** in this area, or sit outside on the balcony. The **coffee machine** in the cafe is loud during the brewing process and the release of steam and compressed air.

**If you need a quiet space, please speak with a member of staff who will be happy to help.**



### **Dan Graham Waterloo Sunset Pavilion**

The Dan Graham Waterloo Sunset Pavilion is located **next to the Hayward Gallery Cafe**.

This is an **oval-shaped glass pavilion with views over Waterloo Bridge**.

You are welcome to sit in this room, the cafe or outside on the balcony when the weather allows.



### **HENI Project Space**

The HENI Project Space is an additional exhibition space where you can **experience art by both emerging and established artists**. It is located in the Hayward Gallery **Foyer** and there is only one entrance and exit. **Pull the glass door to enter**.

*Samuel Laurence Cunnane: Blue Road* is the current exhibition in this space and runs from 17 February to 3 May. This is a **free exhibition** and you do not need a ticket to enter.

You will see a large square-shaped room with small framed **photographs** on the wall. The **lighting levels are low** and there are **spotlights on the artwork**.

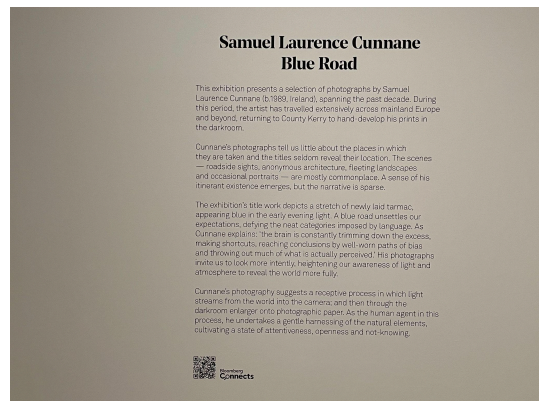


*Blue Road*, the first London exhibition by Irish artist Samuel Laurence Cunnane, brings together works from the **past decade** of his analogue photography practice.




Cunnane takes many of his photographs during extensive **periods of travel** across Europe and beyond, returning afterwards to his native County Kerry in southern Ireland, where he meticulously develops the colour prints in his darkroom.

The photographs record **fleeting scenes** which might go unnoticed. And yet, with Cunnane's sensitivity to subtle qualities of **light** and **atmosphere**, these commonplace subjects yield quiet and glowing intensity. The exhibition's title refers to one such moment captured by the artist: a stretch of newly tarmacked road, appearing blue in the early evening light.

Please do not touch. You are welcome to stay and explore the exhibition for as long as you like.



### Exhibition rules

	<p>Please do not touch</p>
	<p>Photography is allowed with no flash</p>
	<p>No food or drink in the galleries</p>

## Barriers

To keep the artworks safe, many have **floor tape** around them. This means that you shouldn't lean over or step into this area. Although you can look closely, **please do not touch the artworks.**

## Hayward Gallery Visitor Assistants

All our Hayward Gallery Visitor Assistants wear **bright yellow lanyards and black Hayward Gallery T-shirts.**

Our Visitor Assistants' priority is to ensure you have a positive and safe experience at the Hayward Gallery. They are friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about visual art, **and if you need help or have a question about anything in the gallery, they'll be happy to assist.**

## What happens when you arrive at the Hayward Gallery

There may be **short queues to enter the building** and the exhibition. If you are not able to queue or need further assistance, our staff are here to help you.

When you arrive at the Hayward Gallery entrance, the **Visitor Assistant at the entrance will ask to see your e-ticket and check the time you have booked for.** The Visitor Assistant will direct you to the **Ticket Office if you need to buy a ticket.**

You will be directed to the entrance to the exhibition by a Visitor Assistant, who will **scan your e-ticket and tell you about the rules** of the Hayward Gallery.

## Bloomberg Connects app

The Southbank Centre has launched a **new, digital guide on Bloomberg Connects**, the **free app** that makes it easy to access and engage with arts and culture from mobile devices, anytime, anywhere.

It is available for download from Google Play or the App Store. Search for 'Hayward Gallery' and select the *Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life* exhibition from the 'What's On' section.



The content of the app includes short **audio recordings** with a **transcript** of the exhibition's curatorial team discussing the various themes encountered in Chiharu Shiota's work. You can enjoy listening to this from home before or after your visit or use it on the day you come to the Hayward Gallery.



You can still enjoy the exhibition without using the app. There are **wall texts on the gallery walls** describing the artwork, or a **large-print handout** if you prefer.

You can collect a large-print handout from the foyer or take one from wall boxes within the galleries.



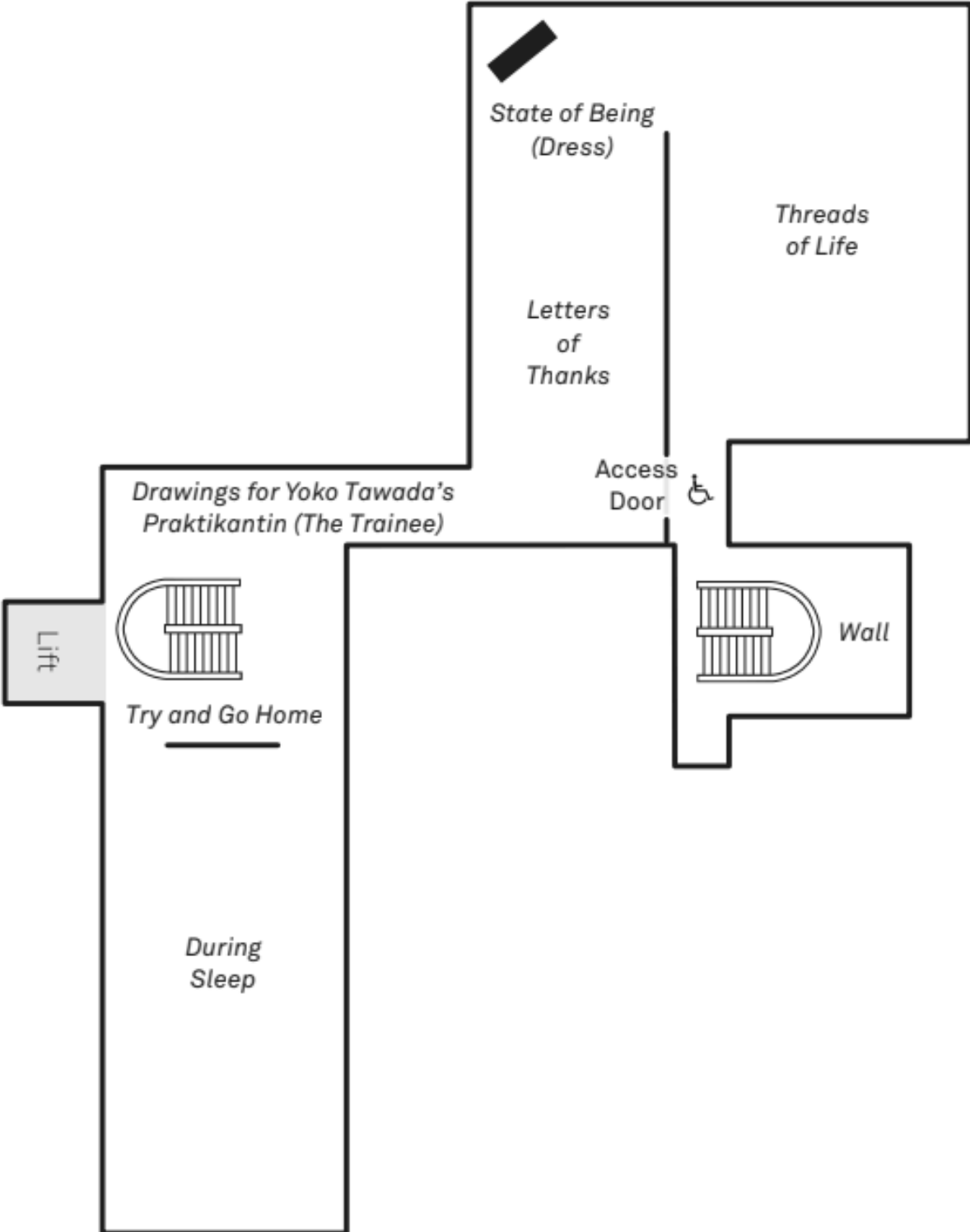
### **Touchable materials**

We ask that visitors **do not touch any of the artworks in the exhibition.**

However, there are some **specific touchable materials** inside the galleries, and **you are welcome to touch these.**



# Upper Galleries



### ***Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life***

Chiharu Shiota is best-known for her **large-scale installations** which engulf **ordinary objects** – such as shoes, keys, beds, chairs and dresses – within huge **web structures** made from **woollen thread**.

The resulting works are immersive and deeply emotive, often drawing from **personal experience**, which Shiota expands into universal human concerns such as life, death and relationships.

Accompanied by new large-scale sculptures, drawings, early performance videos and photographs, the artist's signature works are woven from floor-to-ceiling across the Hayward Gallery's top floor, responding to the gallery's iconic brutalist architecture in a truly atmospheric presentation.

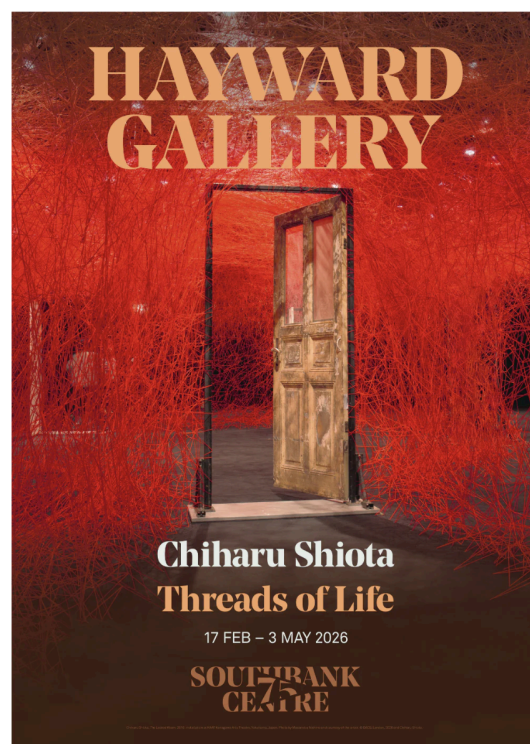
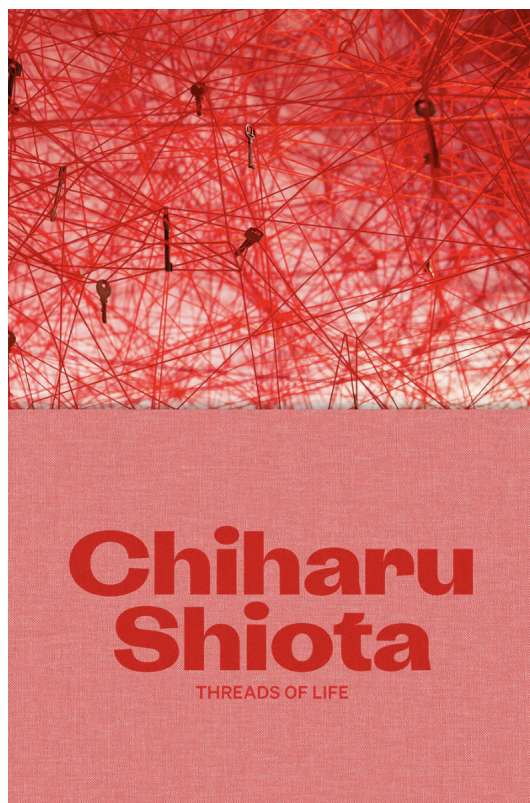
The **exhibition is located in the Upper Galleries**. There are **three galleries** to explore. You can leave the exhibition at any time if you need to. You can go in again, as long as it is on the same day.

You **do not need to look at every artwork** and the **Visitor Assistants are happy to help** you if you wish to avoid certain areas.

From the Lower Galleries, take the **rear stairs** up to the Upper Galleries to visit the *Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life*. There is one artwork displayed on the wall at the top of the staircase.

Please note, there are **40 steps** to climb, so if you would rather **take the lift**, either retrace your steps and take the wooden staircase or platform lift down to Gallery 2, turn right and walk through the open lift doorway to Gallery 1. You will see the lift through the open doorway on the left-hand side.

If you take the **lift** to the Upper Galleries, turn left then head straight down to the end of the connecting corridor and through the marked **access door** to reach the start of the Chiharu Shiota exhibition.



At the top of the **rear staircase** you will see a **performance video** called *Wall* (2010) projected onto the back wall. This video depicts the artist's body covered with a **network of tubes** through which **blood-like liquid** flows, exploring themes of illness, the body and connection.

Shiota conceived the work while meditating on **physical and psychological walls**, such as the Berlin Wall and the Western Wall. She shifted her focus to the 'walls' within the bloodstream, representing family, nationality and religion – boundaries that provide identity but can also 'strangle' the individual.

The film is set to the steady, resonant **heartbeat** of a fetus in the womb, reflecting the artist's personal experiences with pregnancy, childbirth and illness.

Move into the gallery when you are ready to continue. Please note the installation flooring is **grey floor tiles** which can make **creaking sounds** as you walk across them.

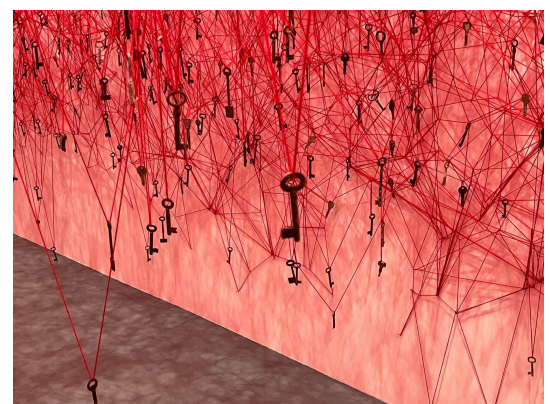
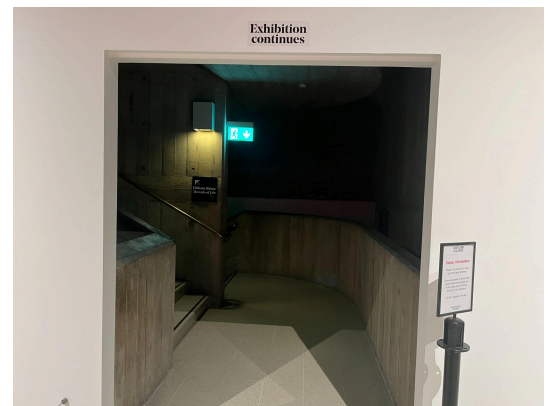
There are **spotlights** shining on the artwork, which cause **shadows** on the floor and **reflections** on the tiled floor of the gallery.

*Threads of Life* (2026) is a monumental installation that serves as the centrepiece of the show and is specific to the Hayward Gallery.

**Twenty thousand old metal keys** are suspended within a dense **floor-to-ceiling web** of red thread. Some of the keys hang low from the ceiling so watch your head and please do not touch.

In the middle of the installation there are two upright **doors** within a wooden doorframe. Both doors are open and you are welcome to walk through the doorway.

The red thread in East Asian folklore represents the **red thread of fate**, the **invisible bonds** that tie people together. Red thread also symbolises the **colour of blood**. The keys are **everyday objects** that are used daily to protect homes and secrets. The artist believes they absorb the **memories** of



their owners.

Move round to the left at the end of the room when you are ready to continue.

*State of Being (Dress)* is a long **white dress** that is **suspended** within a densely-knit **web of black threads** and contained within a display case. By displaying an empty dress the artist is highlighting the **trace of a person** who is no longer there. The clothing represents a choice of identity and a personification of a **memory**.

The threads are woven so densely that the object inside can no longer be reached, thereby **freezing the memory** in time and space. The **black thread** can represent the **night sky**, the **universe** or the **infinite cosmos**.

*Letters of Thanks (2026)* is an installation incorporating **3,000 handwritten notes** of gratitude from the public **suspended in red thread**. Thousands of delicate red threads descend from the ceiling creating a **path** that visitors walk through in a single file. Please note that this is a **one-way** route.

The letters represent a mix of the artist's **personal archive** and new letters collected specifically from the **UK public** for this show. The letters express **gratitude** for whatever has touched the writers' lives.

**Copies** of some of the letters are available for you to read if you would like to do so. Please ask the Visitor Assistant when you exit the installation and they will show you. There is a **bench** for you to sit on if you wish.

When you are ready to move on, **head down the connecting corridor**.

### **Connecting Corridor:**

*Drawings for Yoko Tawada's Praktikantin (The Trainee)* (2023 – 24) is a work that lines the length of one wall in this connecting corridor.

This novel was published as a **daily series** in the Yomiuri Shimbun **newspaper** and featured 460



drawings by Shiota. Look closely at the **watercolour and charcoal drawings** and you will see some of the artist's signature red threads.



There is a **bench** for you to sit on if you wish.

*Try and Go Home* (1997) is a seminal performance and **photographic work** created while the artist was a student of performance artist Marina Abramović. Here we see photographs documenting the performance, which involved Shiota **digging a hollow space in the earth** on a cliffside in France.

Shiota is naked and **smearred with mud** and repeatedly attempts to crawl into the small hole and 'go home', but **tumbles** back down the slope.

Move into the last gallery when you are ready to continue. Please note the installation flooring is **grey floor tiles** which can make **creaking sounds** as you walk across them.



There are **spotlights** shining on the artwork, which cause **shadows** on the floor and **reflections** on the tiled floor of the gallery.

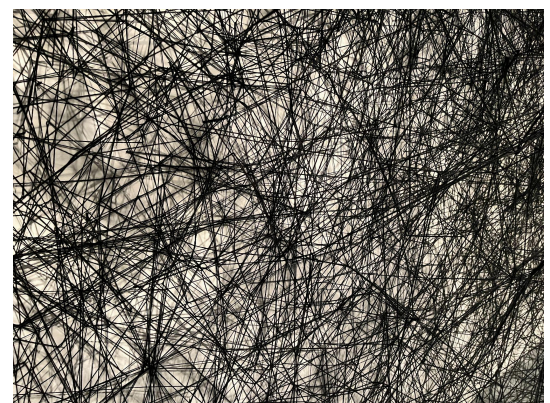
This installation is called *During Sleep* (2026) and fills a square-shaped gallery. This is a new iteration of this installation for the Hayward Gallery. **Ten single beds** are **cocooned** within a dense, floor-to-ceiling **web of black wool**. The black thread reminds us of the **night sky** and the cosmos.



*During Sleep* is an installation and performance work that explores the **boundaries** between **dreams** and **reality**. Shiota's personal experience of moving to Germany and **relocating nine times in three years** often left her waking up disorientated and unable to recognise her surroundings.

For the artist, sleep recalls a kind of death because of the **temporary loss of memory** and recognition, and this theme is explored alongside her **personal health** battles.

The performance element occurs when **performers** sleep in the hospital-style beds while visitors watch. There are three performances during the exhibition



run and these will be on Saturday 7 March, 11 April and 2 May, 10am – 1pm.

When you are **ready to leave** the *Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life* exhibition, either **walk down** the **front staircase** or take the **lift down** to the **Lower Galleries** then go through the exit door in Gallery 1 into the foyer.

Exit through the **Hayward Gallery Shop** when you are ready to leave the Hayward Gallery.

### After your visit

We hope you enjoyed our *Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life* exhibition. **Thank you for visiting the Hayward Gallery.** We look forward to seeing you at our next exhibition.

We are committed to ensuring all visitors feel **welcome** and have an **enriching and positive experience** when they visit the Hayward Gallery. We are keen to hear about your experience and ways you feel we may be able to keep improving. Our staff in the gallery would like to hear what you think – **speak to them directly or give feedback by completing one of our forms** in the Hayward Gallery Foyer.

To receive emails about *Relaxed Hours* at the Hayward Gallery, please email:  
[haywardrelaxedhours@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:haywardrelaxedhours@southbankcentre.co.uk)

More information about our Access Scheme can be found on our [website](#). To stay up to date and receive information about our year-round programme of accessible events, please email:  
[artsandwellbeing@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:artsandwellbeing@southbankcentre.co.uk)

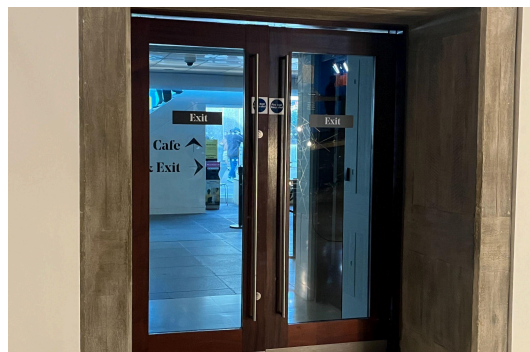
## Upcoming events

***Relaxed Hours: Chiharu Shiota: Threads of Life***

**Tuesday 10 March, 2pm – 5pm**

**Thursday 16 April, 11am – 2pm**

**[About Relaxed Hours at the Hayward Gallery](#)**



We welcome everyone to the gallery throughout our opening hours but we also recognise that some visitors may require a more **relaxed approach to noise and movement** in the space, or **additional support** to experience exhibitions fully.

We make **changes** to ensure the gallery is even more of a **welcoming environment**, where you can enter and exit more freely, and exhibition **capacity is reduced**. We don't expect visitors to be quiet. It is a time and space for you to **be yourself**. We have **tour guides** on hand and encourage you to prioritise your own needs when visiting. **Relaxed, chill-out** spaces away from the exhibition are available.

These events are **open to all** and we particularly welcome those with **sensory processing differences, neurodivergent visitors** or those living with **neurological conditions**, as well as **early-year visitors, parents and carers**. If you have a particular **access requirement** or any questions ahead of your visit, do let us know – we will do all we can to accommodate any requests.

There are *Relaxed Hours* sessions for every exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. Dates are shared on our website in advance. **Advance booking is essential** and you'll be asked to choose a time slot when you book. For this event your ticket allows you to arrive, leave and re-enter at any time during the *Relaxed Hours* event.



**Book online for *Relaxed Hours*:**  
*Chiharu Shiota* [here](#).