

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

Date: Tuesday 22 February 2022

Contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Images: downloadable [HERE](#)

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In the Black Fantastic

29 June - 18 September 2022



IMAGE CREDITS IN 'NOTES TO EDITORS'

From 29 June to 18 September 2022, the Hayward Gallery will present *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.

Angeles. A new Soundsuit commemorating the killing of George Floyd will be shown.

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 will take place across the Southbank Centre, spanning 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.

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 will be 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 Kunsthal Rotterdam, Netherlands from November 2022 to March 2023.

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For further press information and high res images please contact:

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Listings 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 & Southbank Centre Members go free.

Tickets for *In the Black Fantastic* go on sale to Southbank Centre Members at 10am on Wednesday 23 February and on general sale at 10am on Thursday 24 February.

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

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

Image Credits

L-R: Hew Locke, *Ambassador 1*, 2021. Mixed media - wood, resin, fabric, metal, plastic. 155 x 50 x 137 cm © Hew Locke 2022. Photo: Anna Arca; Sedrick Chisom, *Medusa Wandered the Wetlands of the Capital Citadel Undisturbed by Two Confederate Drifters Preoccupied by Poisonous Vapors that Stirred in the Night Air*, 202. Oil, acrylic, spray paint, and watercolour pencil on tiled sheets of paper glued to canvas. 151.6 x 208.3 x 0.3 cm © Sedrick Chisom. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London. Photo: Mark Blower; Lina Iris Viktor, *Eleventh*, 2018. Pure 24 karat gold, acrylic, ink, copolymer resin, print on matte canvas. 165 x 127 cm © 2018. Courtesy the Artist.

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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