

Liverpool Biennial

PRESS RELEASE

Liverpool Biennial 2021 to open first chapter of *The Stomach and the Port* on 20 March with major series of outdoor sculpture, sonic and digital commissions, alongside the new Biennial Online Portal.

The 11th edition of Liverpool Biennial will open the first ‘outside’ chapter of *The Stomach and the Port* on 20 March 2021, starting with a major new series of outdoor sculpture, sonic and digital commissions by 9 different artists, alongside the new Biennial Online Portal (liverpoolbiennial2021.com). To align with government guidelines, the second ‘inside’ chapter will launch the full festival of exhibitions and events hosted by key venues throughout Liverpool in late Spring.

The Stomach and the Port (20 March to 6 June) is curated by Manuela Moscoso and will showcase the work of 50 leading, and emerging, artists and collectives from 30 countries around the world, including 47 new commissions for the Liverpool Biennial. Exploring concepts of the body, the Biennial draws on non-Western thinking that challenges our understanding of the individual as a defined, self-sufficient, entity. Instead, the body is seen as fluid, being continuously shaped by, and actively shaping its environment. The central point of these queries is Liverpool: a city which was an active agent in the process of modernisation and change but which also played a role in the foundation of colonialism. Through the visible and invisible dynamics of Liverpool’s historic port, this Biennial envisions different forms of being human and explores what bodies have the potential to be.

The ‘outside’ chapter brings together the exterior elements of the Biennial. New sculptures and installations located at strategic outdoor sites across Liverpool will celebrate the city centre’s iconic architecture and public spaces. The works connect bodies and experiences to key places, past and present, speaking of the movement of humans across the sea and proposing new understandings of the relationships between the body and nature. In addition, 3 dynamic new sonic and digital commissions will be launched on the Biennial Online Portal for the duration of the Biennial.

To ensure the health and safety of the public, local residents will be able to safely experience the inspiring new additions to the city’s cultural landscape, while observing the government’s COVID-19 guidance of social distancing at all times and the appropriate wearing of face coverings. For audiences from further afield, the Biennial Online Portal will provide a dedicated platform, featuring the practices of each of the artists taking part, along with a free and evolving public programme of events and learning resources.

'Outside' Chapter – Outdoor Sculpture, Installations, Sonic and Digital Commissions

Larry Achiampong's *Pan African Flags For the Relic Travellers' Alliance* forms part of *Relic Traveller*, a multi-disciplinary project that builds upon a postcolonial perspective. Displayed across 10 sites within the city centre, the series of flags will comprise the original set of 4, with each design featuring 54 stars to represent the 54 countries of Africa, along with a new set to be shown for the 2021 Biennial. Symbolically, they highlight Pan African and diasporic identity, while the colours green, black and red reflect the land, its people and the struggles the continent has endured, respectively. The field of yellow gold represents a new day and prosperity.

Rashid Johnson's large-scale sculpture *Stacked Heads* (2020) at Canning Dock Quayside is formed with two distinct head parts in the style of a totem. Made from bronze and furnished with yucca and cacti plants, the work takes inspiration from his series of drawings *Anxious Men* (2015-ongoing). Selected for their endurance to harsh winds and saline water, the plants resilience and the work's waterfront location negotiates Liverpool's transatlantic histories while keeping prescient contemporary concerns at its core.

A major new billboard by **Linder**, located within the Liverpool ONE, will form part of her *Bower of Bliss* (2021) constellation that has its origins in a copy of Oz magazine, which she bought at the Bickershaw Festival in 1972. The centuries old phrase "Bower of Bliss" refers to the birthplace, the point of origin and safety. For the poet Edmund Spenser, the "Bower of Bliss" meant "womb". For Linder, the connotations link back to her experience of being carried in her mother's womb in Liverpool in 1954 and her billboard presents the "Bower of Bliss" as a safe, deeply pleasurable space, needed now more than ever.

On the side of Bluecoat, **Jorgge Menna Barreto's** *Mauvais Alphabet* (2021) has been made in collaboration with students from Liverpool John Moores University and local mural artist, Anna Jane Houghton. Documenting weeds and wild edibles found in Liverpool, Barreto presents the types of plant that thrive naturally in local conditions as our associate, rather than product. Through eating and foraging locally, we can learn more about the place we inhabit and the local stories which are read not necessarily by the brain but by the stomach.

Osteoclast (I do not know how I came to be on board this ship, this navel of my ark) (2021) by **Teresa Solar** is composed of five kayaks, each sculpture reflecting the shape of a human bone. Positioned outside Exchange Flags, it is anchored on the maritime history of Liverpool, the installation draws parallels between bones - carriers of tissues, veins and cell communities, message pathways – and vessels, vehicles of migration, transmitters and connectors of bodies and knowledge. In contrast to the ships that are built and docked in Merseyside, Solar's kayaks, turned into a disarticulated skeleton, set the body at sea level, evoking our fragility over the sea while simultaneously celebrating our human capacity for transition and transformation.

At Crown Street Park, *La Pensée Férale* (2021) by **Daniel Steegmann Mangrané** features a replica of a Pau Rei, a native tree of the Brazilian Mata Atlántica, imbedded with the eye of an

Indian pariah dog from Bangladesh, and surrounded by newly planted *Fagus Purpurea Pendula* trees. Mangrané's installations query humanity's position in the world – eroding the Western conceptions of being which separate the world into opposing dualisms, such as nature and culture. *La Pensée Férale* raises questions about subjectivity as a cultural construction as well as our attitude towards the environment, reinforcing that nature is not without perception or feeling.

Sonic and digital commissions hosted on the Biennial Online Portal include:

Ines Doujak, in collaboration with **John Barker**, will explore the social and cultural history of pandemics in *Transmission: A series of five Podcasts on Disease and Pandemics in a Distorted World* (2021). Interwoven with spoken word, music and songs, Doujak and Barker consider how the spread of disease, parasite and infestation throughout history has created a dehumanised language, which has entered political vocabulary, specifically directed at migrants, minorities and the poor. Sound edited, mixed and mastered by Michael Jellasitz, and jingle by Maja Osojnik.

Artists **UBERMORGEN**, digital humanist **Leonardo Impett** and curator **Joasia Krysa** present the first iteration of *The Next Biennial Should be Curated by a Machine*, an experiment in reimagining the future of curating in the light of Artificial Intelligence. Featuring a group of machine-learning algorithms, collectively named *B³(TNSCAM)*, archive materials and datasets from Liverpool Biennial and The Whitney Museum of American Art are processed to generate new combinations of data into public form.

KeKeÇa Body Percussion Ensemble will deliver a series of interactive performances at key moments during the Biennial. Acknowledging the body as a place of lived experience, audiences will be encouraged to participate using their own bodies as percussive instruments. Positioning sound as a form of knowledge, KeKeÇa's practice engages bodies in the state of being present while the resulting sounds and rhythms invoke histories of movement and migration. Through pre-recorded and live streamed workshops, initially running throughout a network of schools in Liverpool as a key part of the Biennial's learning programme, KeKeÇa will open-up the workshops to wider audiences, empowering intergenerational participants to connect and collaborate, culminating in a large-scale virtual performance during the festival.

The Biennial Online Portal

The Biennial Online Portal will underpin the physical festival, introducing each artist taking part in tandem with an exploration of the broader entry points to *The Stomach and the Port*. Gathering the artists practices under three ideas, the entry points – stomach, porosity and kin – present different ways of thinking about and linking the artworks across the Biennial. The stomach is the bodily organ through which we engage with and digest the world; porosity is the ability of the skin to absorb or allow things to pass through; and kin revisits the bonds and relationships which connect us to the world.

A healthy stomach has a rich diversity of bacteria. The public programme *Processes of Fermentation* will combine a diverse selection of voices to investigate the entry points through an inspiring line-up of live performances, artist interviews, curatorial videos, artist-led discussions and workshops, a film programme, and podcasts, all to be hosted alongside rich and engaging multimedia content, enabling audiences to enjoy the Biennial from home.

Learning plays an integral role throughout the Liverpool Biennial with this year's edition producing a vibrant selection of online and physical resources to engage children and young people, comprising intimate digital workshops for GCSE students with artists including Teresa Solar and Erick Beltrán; the illustrated Kinship Activity Pack will be available for families, primary age children and home-schoolers; and online curriculum-based resources for teachers and educators will bring the Biennial into the classroom.

Highlights of the Biennial Online Portal

To celebrate the opening of the first chapter of the Liverpool Biennial 2021, the six-part podcast series ***Art Against the World***, hosted by Vid Simoniti and co-produced with the University of Liverpool, will release its first episode on 17 March. Introducing 10 artists from *The Stomach and the Port* whose work responds to issues, such as the climate crisis and the legacies of colonialism, the series will include Alberta Whittle, Ebony G. Patterson and Ane Graff, amongst others.

On 18 March, ***The Liquid Club*** will continue with a live listening hosted by Larry Achiampong and invited guests. In partnership with Melodic Distraction Radio, The Liquid Club invites collective exploration of the ideas and practices inherent in the 11th edition of the Liverpool Biennial. Devised and hosted by a different artist each month, from Invernemuto & Jim C Nedd, to SERAFINE1369, Ayesha Hameed and more, this series of online events invites audiences to learn about the sound, listening and aural practices that feature across this year's Biennial, with past editions available online.

Across the weekend of 20 to 21 March, visitors will be able to take a virtual trail of the new outdoor sculptures and installations and tune into Ines Doujak's podcast series.

Starting on 24 March, ***The Refracted Body***, a film programme curated by Margarida Mendes, explores the resonant power of communal voices and their ability to evoke resilience against resource and labour extraction. Perceiving the body without limits, this programme of 17 films across 6 screenings will be realised online fortnightly. In addition, Pedro Neves Marques will be the first artist to kickstart 4 Instagram live events, pairing artists with invited guests.

Looking ahead to 6 April, Liverpool Biennial 2021 will broadcast a discussion with curator Manuela Moscoso, artists Neo Muyanga and Xaviera Simmons and leading Liverpool academics, to investigate the creative stimulus of the city on BBC Radio 3's Free Thinking, which will also be available as a BBC Arts & Ideas podcast.

The Online Portal will continue to provide new and free content each week with updates being announced on a regular basis.

Manuela Moscoso, Curator of Liverpool Biennial 2021, said: “We might think of the human stomach and the port as two sites of connection and exchange. Both vast, interconnected networks of cultural, natural and sociopolitical systems. Developed over several years, *The Stomach and the Port* gathers practices that are deeply engaged with different forms of existence that challenge rigid categories. They include kinship, porosity, collectivism and bodily experience, embracing ways of digesting and continuously producing, rather than only consuming. They also address bodies within specific locations and constraints and how history unfolds in the present.

Given the porosity of our bodies and the behavior of the virus restricting our movements until today, the Biennial has to respond to the constant shifts and COVID regulations. *The Stomach and the Port* will therefore unfold in two chapters. The first focusing on Liverpool’s exterior, presenting the outdoor, sonic and digital commissions, together with the film and online programme. And the second chapter will fully open the Biennial festival later in the Spring. Rooted in decolonising our experience of the world, the artists collaboratively present a recalibration of the senses and a catalyst for change and healing.”

Sam Lackey, Interim Director, Liverpool Biennial, said: “We are so proud to be opening *The Stomach and the Port*, on 20 March. The committed spirit from our artists, our partners and the city to present the Biennial amidst the pandemic has been resolute, enabling us to create a model that can safely bring art to the public and adapt to the changing patterns of life that COVID-19 presents us with moving forwards.

“Now is a vital time to breathe new life and energy into Liverpool and the wider community, spearheading the process of cultural recovery. Our hybrid approach to opening the Biennial will ensure we can continue to present an ambitious programme throughout late Spring and Summer, offering an extraordinary, shared experience that will empower and inspire, reasserting Liverpool’s reputation as a nerve centre for art and culture. As soon as the Government’s restrictions are lifted, we cannot wait to open the doors to the physical exhibitions on display at our partner venues across the city.”

Artists Participating in the Liverpool Biennial 2021

Larry Achiampong, Black Obsidian Sound System, Erick Beltrán, Diego Bianchi, Alice Channer, Judy Chicago, Ithell Colquhoun, Christopher Cozier, Yael Davids, Ines Doujak & John Barker, Dr. Lakra, Jadé Fadojutimi, Jes Fan, Lamin Fofana, Ebony G. Patterson, Sonia Gomes, Ane Graff, Ayesha Hameed, Camille Henrot, Nicholas Hlobo, Laura Huertas Millán, Sohrab Hura, Invernomuto & Jim C. Need, Rashid Johnson, KeKeça, Jutta Koether, SERAFINE1369, Ligia Lewis, Linder, Luo Jr – shin, Jorgge Menna Barreto, Haroon Mirza, Neo Muyanga, Pedro Neves Marques, Roland Persson, Anu Pöder, Reto Pulfer, André Romão, Kathleen Ryan, Zineb

Sedira, Xaviera Simmons, Teresa Solar, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Jenna Sutela, Martine Syms, UBERMORGEN, Leonardo Impett and Joasia Krysa, Luisa Ungar, Alberta Whittle, Zheng Bo, David Zink Yi.

Outdoor, Sonic and Digital Commissions supported by:

Larry Achiampong, *Pan African Flags For the Relic Travellers' Alliance forms part of Relic Traveller* is supported by The African Arts Trust.

Rashid Johnson, *Stacked Heads (2020)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial with support from Hauser & Wirth.

Linder, *Bower of Bliss (2021)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial with support from Liverpool ONE and the Estate of Fanchon Fröhlich.

Jorgge Menna Barreto, *Mauvais Alphabet (2021)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial with support from the British Council and Catherine Petitgas.

Teresa Solar, *Osteoclast (I do not know how I came to be on board this ship, this navel of my ark) (2021)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial and Liverpool BID Company with support from Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) and the Henry Moore Foundation.

Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, *La Pensée Férale (2021)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial with Art Fund support, and the assistance of Bury Art Museum. Additional support received from Acción Cultural Española (AC/E).

Ines Doujak, *Transmission: A series of five Podcasts on Disease and Pandemics in a Distorted World (2021)*, is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, produced in collaboration with Phileas, with support from the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport of Austria, Austrian Cultural Forum London and the Estate of Fanchon Fröhlich.

KeKeÇa Body Percussion Ensemble is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial with support from SAHA Association and The Medicash Foundation.

UBERMORGAN, Leonardo Impett and Joasia Krysa, *B³(TNSCAM) (2021)* is commissioned by Liverpool Biennial and The Whitney Museum of American Art for their online platform artport, with support from Liverpool John Moores University, Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport of Austria, and the City of Vienna.

Ends

Liverpool Biennial 2021: *The Stomach and the Port* takes place 20 March – 6 June 2021
www.biennial.com

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About Liverpool Biennial

Liverpool Biennial is the oldest and largest festival of contemporary visual art in the UK. Since its inception in 1998, the Biennial has become renowned in the international contemporary art world, bringing together a wide array of international voices and artistic practices. Taking place every two years, Liverpool Biennial activates public institutions, historical sites and extraordinary locations across Liverpool, ensuring major commissions in the public realm. Pioneering an innovative approach underpinned by a year-round programme of research, education, residencies, projects and commissions, each biennial edition introduces renewed thinking and scale of production. Having commissioned over 340 new artworks and presented work by over 480 celebrated artists from around the world, the Biennial is built on a longstanding commitment to connecting international artist with local practitioners, communities and the general public. Liverpool Biennial is supported by Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council and founding supporter James Moores. A full list of supporters and partners for the 11 edition is located at the end of this press release. For more information visit: www.biennial.com.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. For more information visit: www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government's unprecedented £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Funds. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.

About Liverpool City Council

Liverpool City Council is one of the largest local authorities in the UK serving a population of 491,500. Culture Liverpool is the city council department which aims to maintain the city's reputation as a cultural and sporting destination, positioning Liverpool as the most exciting place in the UK in which to live, visit, work, study and invest. Through the production and delivery of events, and championing creativity via funded projects across Liverpool City Region, Culture Liverpool pushes boundaries and inspires audiences, ensuring everyone has access to arts and culture. For more information, visit www.cultureliverpool.co.uk.

About Dr. Sam Lackey, Interim Director of Liverpool Biennial

Dr. Samantha Lackey has joined Liverpool Biennial as Interim Director and is currently Head of Collection and Exhibitions at the Whitworth at the University of Manchester, where she is the Senior Lead on the Leadership Team. Previous to this she was curator at The Hepworth Wakefield (2010-16), where she delivered 40 exhibitions over 4 years, and was part of the team that opened the gallery in 2011 to critical acclaim. Her background is in academia, receiving a PhD on the subject of surrealism in 2005, which was the context of her work as a lecture, research fellow and her first exhibition at the Whitworth, *Subversive Spaces: Surrealism and Contemporary Art*. She has published on surrealism and contemporary art and worked in multiple group and solo exhibitions with artists including Cecily Brown, Susan Hefuna, Linder and Eva Rothschild.

About Manuela Moscoso, Curator of Liverpool Biennial 2021

Manuela Moscoso (b.1978, Ecuador) joined the Biennial from Tamayo Museo in Mexico City, where she was the Senior Curator. She is part of Zarigüeya, a programme that activates relations between contemporary art and the pre-Columbian collection of the Museo de Arte Precolombino Casa del Alabado, Ecuador. Moscoso was the adjunct curator of the 12th Cuenca Biennial and the co-curator of the Queens International 2011 biennial. In 2012 she was appointed co-director of Capacete, a residency programme based in Brazil where she also co-ran the curatorial programme Typewriter. Moscoso has collaborated with CA2M, Di Tella, MAM Medellin, Museo de Rio, RedCat and Fundació Miró among other institutions.

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