

ARTS

Flying the flag for art in London

With 128 events and collaborations between rivals, London Gallery Weekend is bringing the city together. By Melanie Gerlis

Mayfair's Cork Street is bedecked with banners covered in daisies and question marks, all the work of Britain's Venice Biennale artist John Akomfrah. His floating project heralds the fourth edition of London Gallery Weekend (May 31-June 2) for which 134 commercial and contemporary art galleries across the city extend their opening hours and lay on special events.

Conceived during the Covid lockdowns, which put art fairs and their concentrated crowds on hold, London Gallery Weekend is on its way to becoming a fixture in the art calendar. While London already boasts a slew of fairs and exhibitions, by making an event of galleries' day-to-day business, the weekend sparks the imagination of the city's most creative traders – and brings in the crowds.

"London Gallery Weekend is distinctly different from our peer events (such as the Frieze fairs) in that it's about driving people into the gallery's own spaces," says co-director Sarah Rustin, also a senior director at Thaddaeus Ropac gallery.

This year's participating galleries stretch from Harlesden High Street in north-west London to Xcira Hill and Studio Chapple in south-east Deyford. Emerging spaces such as Palmer Gallery and Hot Wheels, among the participants that opened in the past year, mix with the likes of London long-timers Sadie Coles and Maureen Paley as well as global outlets Gagosian and David Zwirner. The map can look daunting – London Gallery Weekend is by far the biggest such event worldwide – so organisers have also pulled together route suggestions from art world

experts, including the artists Lubaina Himid and Flora Yukhnovich.

"You can see how the gallery geography has changed since we started," says the event's founder Jeremy Epstein, also co-founder of Edel Assanti, which shows a striking installation by Jodie Carey of 150 jesmonite sculptures, moulded around flowers and soil. Epstein notes a marked consolidation into central London, extending beyond the thriving Cork Street – which has 10 participating spaces – to Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia (where Epstein's gallery is located). In the post-pandemic, work-from-home environment, "there have

There's a prevalence of photography, including a showing of early black-and-white works by Nan Goldin

definitely been deals on commercial property and business rate relief," he says. This has resulted in some invitingly new non-traditional gallery buildings. Union Pacific's latest space is in a former production agency office in Bloomsbury where it will show paintings by the Seoul-based Jin Han Lee.

London Gallery Weekend's website lists 128 events at time of writing, some starting earlier in the week. These range from the usual 6pm-8pm openings to full-blown parties, Borough gallery Copperfield marks its 10th anniversary with a "10pm till late" party on June 1 while Harlesden High Street offers a day-long "Caribbean food & music event" on June 2. Possibly less fun, but still engaging, is Hauser & Wirth's 90-minute "informal



Clockwise, from above: Robert Rauschenberg's 'Caryatid Cavalcade' (1985) at Thaddaeus Ropac; John Akomfrah's Cork Street banners project, 'The Secret Life of Memorable Things' (2024); Jin Han Lee's 'Coming to You' (2024), at Union Pacific. Right: Rauschenberg's 'Magnetic Script' (ROCKY TIBET) (1985) – Lubaina Himid

gathering" on June 1, for which visitors are encouraged to "express your own opinions" on its concurrent shows of Harmony Korine and Isa Genzken.

This year fields more performances, two organised by London Gallery Weekend and UP Projects, by the Italian artist Adelaide Cioni (two performances on May 31) and Turkey's Nil Yalter (June 2). Each also has a coinciding show at their respective galleries. The Approach and Ab-Anbar. Other performances come through the participants themselves, including one by Berlin artist Anna-Lena Krause, whose work questions "the bonds connecting people in the modern world" (Guts Gallery, June 2).

Other galleries are using the opportunity to get collaborative. In south London, Matt's Gallery and The Sunday Painter have joined forces for the first time for a two-venue showing of new work by London artist Harminder Judge, based on a Native American cere-

mony. The 10-minute walk between the galleries "is part of the experience of seeing the show," says Tim Dixon, deputy director at Matt's. A purpose-built tunnel that leads into his gallery's exhibition is echoed through a railway tunnel on the walk between the spaces, he notes.

Sadie Coles takes collaboration to a new level on Kings Street with an ambitious Matthew Barney show, *Secondary*, a project that runs across galleries in Los Angeles, as well as at the Fondation Cartier in Paris. Coles also hosts Margate's 243.uz in her residency space.

Historic highlights include a standout show of the collection of the critic and curator Guy Brett, who died in 2021, mostly cutting-edge, 20th-century Latin American works, at Alison Jacques. At Thaddaeus Ropac is Robert Rauschenberg's ROCKY project, an exploration of international artistic exchange that gets its first gallery showing since a



major 1991 exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

It certainly isn't all oil paintings, a reflection of taste moving beyond this most traditional of media. There's a prevalence of photography, including Gagosian Gallery's showing of Nan Goldin's early black-and-white works in its Burlington Arcade space, an extension of its takeover of the former Welsh Chapel on Charing Cross Road. Elsewhere, Maureen Paley shows Hannah Starkey, TJ Boulting has Adam Routhana and Soft Opening shows Dean Sameshima. Ceramics feature at Kate MacGarry (Renée So) and tapestries at Lison Gallery (Otobong Nkanga).

Galleries are pushing the boat out, Sadie Coles says, because the event now brings in collectors and curators. "It started out as a nice collegial idea through a WhatsApp group during Covid and has become very professional and very ambitious. People come out and see the shows that weekend," she says. Visitors include those from outside London, she notes, with travel and accommodation support for curators from museums across the UK, in partnership with the Art Fund, as well as bursaries for approximately five curators from Europe.

Organisers emphasise that the event is not just for art world cognoscenti. "There's potentially a much larger public for art," Epstein says. And while the shows are commercial endeavours, visiting is free, unlike at art fairs and most institutional exhibitions. There's even a charitable aspect this year: as well as his own exhibition of work by Michael Roemans, David Zwirner hosts a show of editions sold to raise funds for London's Gagosian, which provides studio spaces for London-based artists.

The range is a reminder of the city's creative clout, despite Brexit's negative impact on the arts and a downturn economic environment. "We talk so much about the market but look at the offering that London has in terms of being a hub for the next generation of artists," Rustin says. Coles summarises: "There is a feeling of collaboration, which builds on itself and shows that when we work together we will thrive." London Gallery Weekend has proved its worth.

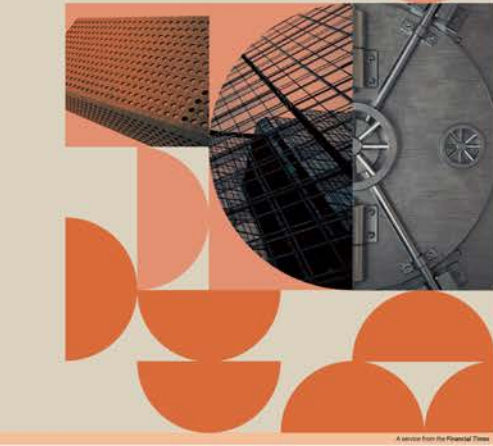
londongalleryweekend.art

THE BANKER

Start the next generation of global banking, today.

The Banker is the authoritative source of in-depth analysis, expert insights and concise summaries, enabling informed and swift strategic and operational decisions.

Find out more



A section from the *Placidus* Tables

Anniversary makeover is a game-changer

GAMING

Braid: Anniversary Edition
Windows, PS4 and 5, Nintendo Switch, Xbox Series X/S, PS5 and Android via Netflix

★★★★

Tim Fisher

When it was first released in 2008, *Braid* promised that the gaming medium could do things differently. The puzzle platformer was hailed as a masterpiece, lauded for its aesthetic sophistication and intellectual ambition at a time when the wider culture still associated gaming with either childish distraction or mindless violence. As one contemporary review put it: "Still wondering if games can be art? Here's your answer."

Braid was equally significant in ushering in a new paradigm of development: instead of large teams producing expensive games and selling them as physical discs in stores, it showed that tiny outfits – even solo auteurs such as the game's iconoclastic creator Jonathan Blow – could make a game, distribute it online and rake in the profits. By proving that indie titles could be both formally daring and commercially successful, it garnered comparisons to breakthrough non-studio films such as *Easy Rider* and *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*. If any one game was the harbinger of the golden era of indie games that we're now in, it was *Braid*.

Now it has been given a lavish anniversary *Anniversary Edition* makeover for new hardware, which goes well beyond the usual graphical glow-up, including hours of developer commentary which is cleverly stitched into the very fabric of the game. It brings well-deserved attention back to one of modern gaming's era-defining classics.

The bulk of this package is the original game with a new lick of paint. If you're playing for the first time, you'll notice the game's similarity to *Mario*: there is jumping to do, platforms to navigate and a princess to rescue. But you will also soon realise that *Braid* is less about precision jumping and more about

lateral thinking. The game's hook is a series of powers that allow you to manipulate the flow of time in ingenious ways. Its smart puzzles are still tough by today's standards, but they provide deeply satisfyingureka moments when you finally find the solution.

Braid was admired for how it wove its central gameplay conceit into a thematically coherent narrative. Rewinding time is how you solve puzzles, but also a lens through which to examine a relationship. Your character, Tim, is on a quest to rescue a princess, and you pass books which narrate his elliptical tale of determination and regret. Blow cites influences such as author Italo Calvino and filmmaker David Lynch, but the game's writing today feels a little overwrought compared with the best of 2004.

Still, its famous narrative climax still hits home. You finally locate the princess and rush to rescue her, but then time begins to rewind and you realise that she is running from you, not to you. Perhaps you have been the monster all along. This smart, provocative twist inspired interpretations ranging from a commentary on toxic masculinity to a grand metaphor about the creation of the atomic bomb. In many ways, it remains *Braid*'s greatest puzzle.

The *Anniversary Edition* reworks the original game's visuals and soundtrack, both of which still impress. *Braid* took

the painterly approach to gaming to new heights, and artist David Hellmuth's "living watercolor" style looks more rich and fluid than ever. The most substantial addition, though, is 15 hours of developer commentary and interviews. Rather than being buried in a special features menu, this commentary is inserted in playable fashion into the game itself. Some of it even needs to be unlocked by further puzzles.

It takes a full multimedia approach at various points, the creator draws on the background to highlight details or you see various iterations of the visuals or even test alternate versions of a level, or Blow explains how he might have made a puzzle differently today before a portal opens so you can jump in and try it.

The commentary offers a fascinating insight into game development, showing how Blow's philosophical approach to design cascades down from the core mechanics all the way to the sound effects that chime when you collect a reward. As a reissue package, it sets a new standard in terms of thoughtfulness and generosity to fans, perhaps only paralleled by Digital Eclipse's interactive documentary format.

Just as *Braid* originally stretched ideas of what indie games could be, so this special edition reimagines how we might preserve and present seminal games for future generations.



"Braid: Anniversary Edition" brings attention back to an era-defining classic game