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ART

# This Spring's Must-See Contemporary Art Exhibitions, In London And Beyond

Sure, your local park may *look* tempting now that spring is on the horizon, but when you consider the near certainty of an April shower ruining your fun, a weekend gallery crawl is actually a much safer bet – even before you factor in the world-beating contemporary art that's available to see in the UK in the coming months. Browse just some of the highlights, below.

## Institutions

There really wasn't any other place to start. Easily the most buzzed-about show of the season, [Tracey Emin's monolithic \*A Second Life at the Tate Modern\*](#) (until 31 August) – supported by [Gucci](#) – offers the most expansive, all-encompassing survey to date of Britain's most celebrated living woman artist. A chronicle of her unflinching approach, it's a testament to how, over four decades, Emin has taken the most raw experiences of her body, mind and soul as source material for her art; she has martyred herself, almost, in the name of making the reality of her lived experience as a woman felt – in all of its brutality, beauty and candour. No matter your relationship to, or perspective on, Emin and her work, it's a landmark show that vindicates her reputation as one of Britain's great artists.

Upriver at Tate Britain, another major survey show, this time of British painter [Hurvin Anderson](#) (26 March to 23 August). Across more than 80 vibrant paintings and through a personal prism, the show paints a contemporary history of movement between the UK and the Caribbean, contemplating notions of belonging and diaspora – a particularly salient work being a 24-panel mural-style piece, reworked for its presentation here.

Close by at Hayward Gallery, Chiharu Shiota's *[Threads of Life](#)* (17 February to 30 May) – a mycelial web of scarlet yarn – continues its sell-out streak.

Meanwhile, next door, *[Skate 50](#)* (30 Apr to 21 Jun) commemorates 50 years since London's skateboarders first took up informal residency beneath the Southbank Centre's QEII Hall, featuring photographic and video documentation from across the years, with contributions from the likes of Beatrice Dillon and Palace co-founder Lev Tanju.

Across the river, among the highlights of the ICA's spring programme is *[Genuine Fake Premium Economy](#)* (1 May to 5 July), a mixed-media triple headliner featuring American artists Jenna Bliss, Buck Ellison and Jasmine Gregory, exploring themes of class and inheritance through an expectedly sardonic lens. At the Royal Academy, a similar wry wit echoes across [Rose Wylie's](#) vast canvases (until 19 April); read more about the rebellious painter and the show of her lifetime [here](#).

At Serpentine, more celebrations of great British painting. At [Serpentine North](#), [David Hockney's](#) first exhibition at the Hyde Park space (12 March to 23 August), comprising a series of new paintings alongside the artist's 90 metre-long frieze, "A Year in Normandie" – a monumental work inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry (which, incidentally, will be passing through the British Museum this year). And at [Serpentine South](#), a show spotlighting new and recent paintings by Cecily Brown (27 March to 6 September), marking something of a homecoming for the British-born, New York based artist – it's her first major UK institutional solo show since 2005.

While you're out west, a visit to the Cosmic House – the Post-modern architectural marvel in Holland Park – is a must, as much for the house itself as for the single-screen iteration of Isaac Julien's "[All That Changes You. Metamorphosis](#)" (22 April to 18 December), a poetic exploration of the existential importance of transformation that will shortly be on show in the home's gallery space.

In Chelsea, more work that interacts with fabulous architecture at the [Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation](#), where *[Meow Meow Real Estate](#)* (14 March to 23 May), a show by Berlin-based Nancy Lupo, takes the exhibition space's bourgeois Victorian features as a point of narrative fixation. Later in the spring (13 to 17 May), the 11th edition of [Photo London](#) – the UK's foremost photography fair – will move into fresh digs at the newly renovated Olympia in Kensington.

While we're on photography, the National Portrait Gallery houses the first major UK exhibition to date of the work of one of the medium's modern greats, [Catherine Opie](#) (5 March to 31 May). The show includes her seminal, Holbein-style portraits of queer friends and contemporaries, as well as images installed in conversation with the gallery's permanent collection.

Over at the Barbican, the season's string of landmark solo shows from agenda-setting women artists continues. There, you'll find an exhibition of monumental paintings and installations by the late Colombian artist [Beatriz González](#), whose reflections on the role of circulated imagery and media culture in the propagation of violence take on an eerie resonance against the backdrop of current headlines.

In Bloomsbury, Prem Sahib's installation at [the Perimeter](#)'s new site (until 1 April) – a former pub next to its main space – prompts reflections on the queer subtexts of common material associations. Close by at Ibraaz, you'll find [Joe Namy's \*Cosmic Breath\*](#) (until 30 August), a sound installation composed of recordings of the Islamic *adhan*, or call to prayer, arranged in the exciting new institution's central space.

Heading east, explore punchy shows from progressive institutions, like Whitechapel Gallery, whose programme spans exhibitions of the rich, textural vocabulary of [Veronica Ryan](#) and rare photographic and video documentary of [Senga Nengudi](#)'s radical, sculpture-centred performances from across the '70s (both 1 April to 14 June). [Chisenhale Gallery](#) presents Racheal Crowther's first UK institutional solo show (17 April to 14 June), centred on an installation of repurposed technical apparatus that explores how scent is (or can be) deployed as a tool of influence and social control; and, more broadly, fragrance's capacity as a sculptural material.

Close by at [Cell Project Space](#), artist and musician LA Timpa contemplates the traces that sound leaves on physical matter (until 3 May), while at [Nunnery Gallery](#) in Bow, a poignant installation by the young British-Bengali artist Laisul Hoque, who has conjured a like-for-like recreation of his bedroom from a period spent in Bangladesh tending to his father's poor health. \*Pause for Tracey Emin comparisons.\*