

Exhibitions 2023–24

Making New Worlds: Li Yuan-chia & Friends 11 November 2023 – 18 February 2024

'Making New Worlds: Li Yuan-chia & Friends' will be the first exhibition to celebrate the artist, poet and visionary Li Yuan-chia (1929–1994), and the impact that his LYC Museum and Art Gallery has had upon the history of British art. From 1972–1983, in the village of Banks in Cumbria, the LYC offered an experimental space for showing and making art. Li exhibited and worked alongside more than 300 artists, including Lygia Clark, Delia Derbyshire, Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash, Winifred Nicholson and Shelagh Wakely.

'Making New Worlds' will bring Li's own practice into dialogue with those in the LYC creative network, drawing parallels between the museum and Kettle's Yard, both places motivated by a shared belief in the inseparability of art, life and friendship. Three new commissions from contemporary artists Aaron Tan (b. 1989, Singapore), Grace Ndiritu (b. 1982, UK) and Charwei Tsai (b. 1980, Taiwan) will reflect the enduring influence of Li's social and artistic legacy, and the importance of telling a vital story that has been obscured.

Developed in partnership with the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the exhibition is curated by Hammad Nasar, Sarah Victoria Turner and Amy Tobin. A fully illustrated publication will include new research into the artistic practice of Li Yuan-chia and the LYC Museum & Art Gallery.



Li Yuan-chia in his studio at the LYC Museum and Art Gallery, Brampton, Cumbria, 1969. Image courtesy of Demarco Digital Archive University of Dundee & Richard Demarco Archive.

Li Yuan-chia, *Untitled*, 1994, Unique hand-coloured photographic print. Image courtesy of the Li Yuan-chia Foundation.

**For further information
and images**

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Issam Kourbaj: Urgent Archive

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2 March – 26 May 2024

For nearly 13 years, Issam Kourbaj (b. 1963, Syria) has been making artworks in response to the ongoing conflict in Syria. This new exhibition at Kettle's Yard – the artist's largest to date – will feature key works from this period and present a new body of work which explores themes of time, loss, memory and renewal.

Born in Suweida, Kourbaj has lived in Cambridge since 1990. His multifaceted practice has developed from a compassionate effort to record events from a distance. From names punched into pianola scrolls to poems written on stamps, and works highlighting the destruction of the seed bank in Aleppo, Kourbaj's work revolves around transforming the everyday and the found into an active, urgent archive. Inspired by a seed's ability to sprout roots in new environments, Kourbaj will also grow Syrian wheat at Kettle's Yard and Downing College, creating new work in collaboration with The Heong Gallery, Cambridge University Botanic Garden and the Sainsbury Laboratory, Cambridge University, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Throughout the exhibition, the artist will continually activate the galleries by adding to his work, attesting to the power of art to remember, resist and hope for change.

'Issam Kourbaj: Urgent Archive' is curated by Amy Tobin and Guy Haywood. A concurrent solo exhibition of work by Issam Kourbaj, 'You are not you and home is not home', will take place at The Heong Gallery, Downing College, Cambridge. A new publication will explore the themes and artworks in both exhibitions.

Issam Kourbaj, *Urgent archives, written in blood*, 2019. Photo: This Is Photography. Courtesy the artist.

Megan Rooney

22 June – 6 October 2024

Megan Rooney's (b. 1985, South Africa) first major solo exhibition in the UK will comprise all new paintings. In one of the gallery spaces at Kettle's Yard Rooney will paint a temporary mural directly onto the walls, and in the other, she will present new works on canvas.

Rooney's paintings have an irresistible life and energy, renewing the potential of abstraction to embody the richness of the visual world. Created in 'family groups', the size of the canvases she uses are determined by the reach of her outstretched arms. Vibrant colour and line appear boundless and as if encountered for the first time, capturing the ebb and flow of their making, from the use of abrasives to remove pigment to repeated overpainting. Inviting visitors into their restless and pleasurable worlds, each work tells a compelling story, poetically recalling the real, the remembered and the imagined.

The exhibition is curated by Andrew Nairne and Amy Tobin. It will be accompanied by a new performance work and an illustrated publication.

Megan Rooney, *Your Wind for my Mirror*, 2022–23, acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. Courtesy the artist.

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Portia Zvavahera 22 October 2024 – 16 February 2025

Comprising new and recent paintings, this exhibition will be Portia Zvavahera's (b. 1985, Zimbabwe) first solo exhibition at a public gallery in Europe.

Drawing from the cosmologies of Shona culture, Christian iconography, European oil painting and African printmaking practices, the exhibition will introduce a cast of apparitions and hybrid human-animal characters informed by the artist's own dreams, as well as the spiritual and metaphysical traditions with which she was surrounded as a child. These semi-autobiographical works will incorporate layers of colour and texture, making use of batik stencilling techniques, block-printing, and modernist modes of drawing and painting with ink.

The exhibition is organised by Kettle's Yard in collaboration with the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, where it will travel from 1 March – 1 June 2025. It is curated by Tamar Garb, Durning Lawrence Professor in History of Art at University College London. A new publication will accompany the exhibition.

Notes to Editors

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About Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard, part of the University of Cambridge, is a leading gallery and unique house with a remarkable collection of 20th-century art. Its founders Jim and Helen Ede believed in art's ability to transform lives, a vision upheld today through critically acclaimed exhibitions, pioneering community and learning programmes, and research of the highest quality. Our aim is to offer an inspiring and enriching experience for everyone who visits. Find out more and get involved at: www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk

Portia Zvavahera in her studio, 2023. Photography by Gianluigi Guercia
© Portia Zvavahera. Courtesy Stevenson and David Zwirner.

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