

PRESS RELEASE

FACT TO REOPEN WITH THREE NEW EXHIBITIONS AND FILM SCREENINGS IN HIDDEN LOCATIONS ACROSS THE CITY



Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.), *The Only Good System is a Soundsystem* (2021). Installation view at FACT. Photo by Rob Battersby. Courtesy of the artists.

FACT Liverpool will reopen from Wednesday 19 May and is welcoming visitors back into the city with the launch of three new immersive exhibitions, an exciting independent film programme in hidden venues across Liverpool, a special musical event for LightNight and the reopening of Picturehouse cinema at FACT.

For part of its citywide festival, Liverpool Biennial returns to FACT from Wednesday 19 May 2021 for *The Stomach and the Port*, which looks at new ways of connecting with the world through our bodies and the environment. FACT and Liverpool Biennial are proud to present a new series of works by **Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S)** - a collective established in 2018 by Kiera Coward-Deyell, Phoebe Collings-James, Evan Ifekoya, Onyeka Igwe, Shenece Liburd, Marcus Macdonald, Nadine Peters, Shamica Ruddock - and Hong Kong based artist **Zheng Bo**.

Nominated for this year's Turner Prize, B.O.S.S present a newly commissioned audio-visual installation, layering film, light, soundscore and walk-in sculpture to create a sacred space. With PVC curtains and neon-lit pathways, the large-scale installation fills the gallery,

creating the illusion of walking inside the inner workings of a speaker, forming a pulsing and energising part of the exhibition. The work reflects the ways in which marginalised groups have developed methods of transgressing repression and discrimination through collective joy and pleasure. On Friday 21 May in celebration of LightNight, B.O.S.S will be taking the soundscore beyond the gallery walls, with a new audio-visual DJ set broadcast at FACT and online.

Other works presented at FACT include Zheng Bo's brand new commission: the fifth of his *Pteridophilia* film series (2016 onwards), alongside *Pteridophilia* 1-4. Through raw physicality and interspecies kinship, his work connects queer plants and queer people, pushing the boundaries of sexuality and love to incorporate the natural world whilst destabilising the notion of heteronormative ecology. In each of his films, Zheng situates communities of people and plants alike, depicting scenes of physical intimacy between them to accentuate the concept of the human body as a fluid organism that is changed by the environment, and in turn, changes it.

FACT also presents *Soft Boys* by Liverpool-based artist and filmmaker **Kiara Mohamed**, curated in collaboration with **Fauziya Johnson**, co-founder of ROOT-ed Zine. The exhibition will comprise a collection of intimate short films exploring intersections of race, gender, sexuality and self-care through Mohamed's experience as a Black Trans Somali man. The films include new commission *Soft Boys* (2020), an exploration into themes of belonging and ancestry, and *I Wish I Was Here* (2020), an emotive dissection of what it means to be human set in the remote Scottish Highlands. Mohamed's video work combines distanced drone footage with closely observed moments of conversation, considering how we understand our ever-evolving identities against the backdrop of a world which existed long before, and which will outlast, humans.

During 2020, FACT Together created a grant scheme and artist development opportunity for 10 emerging artists based in the North of England to create and present digital art during lockdown. The work was created within FACT's 2020 theme of The Living Planet, a year-long season inspired by wildlife, plantlife and ecological systems affected by human action. The 10 online artworks will be celebrated through a series of large scale images, each including a hidden augmented reality layer which can be activated from your phone.

Bringing a bold, independent film programme to unseen corners of Liverpool, FACT presents Cinema in the City; a menagerie of bespoke film screenings set in distinctive venues across the city, supported by Film Hub North. The summer of screenings, in partnership with Bruntwood, kicks off on the stunning rooftop of the historic Cotton Exchange with open-air showings of directors Bill Ross IV and Turner Ross' *Bloody Nose*, *Empty Pockets* as well as Christos Nikou's *Apples*. Film fans will be able to enjoy critically acclaimed movies against the backdrop of Liverpool's iconic skyline, with Middle Eastern inspired food and drinks provided by locally renowned restaurant, Maray. Tickets will be released on Tuesday 18 May 2021, to find out more go to fact.co.uk/cinema-in-the-city.

Nicola Triscott, CEO and Director at FACT, said: “It has been 14 months since FACT first had to close its doors due to the global pandemic. We took the majority of our exhibitions, artworks and events online, and we have been so grateful for the many visitors who have joined us for our year-long exploration of The Living Planet - both online and in person. Our Living Planet year culminates with 3 spectacular new exhibitions, including Liverpool Biennial 2021: *The Stomach and the Port*, and a unique independent film programme. We’re thrilled to be returning safely to some normality and to our wonderful audiences and community.”

Reopening from Wednesday 19 May, Picturehouse at FACT will be bringing an exciting programme of films to the box office from director Pedro Almodóvar’s *The Human Voice*, featuring Tilda Swinton, to the latest from Studio Ghibli: *Earwig and The Witch*. For more information and to book tickets, head to fact.co.uk/cinema.

NOTES TO EDITORS

OPENING TIMES

The following dates and times are in line with government guidance:

Liverpool Biennial: *The Stomach and the Port*

19 May to 29 August, Wednesday - Sunday, 12:00 - 18:00

Soft Boys and FACT Together

19 May to 29 August, Monday - Sunday, 12:00 - 22:00

Picturehouse at FACT

Open from 19 May, open Monday - Sunday 12:00 - 22:00

For further information, please contact:

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FACT is supported using public funding by Arts Council England and is funded by Liverpool City Council.

ABOUT FACT

FACT is the UK’s leading film and media arts centre, bringing people, art and technology together. Based in Liverpool, FACT’s award-winning building houses two galleries, four cinemas, a café and bar. Now celebrating 18 years in its Liverpool home, FACT has welcomed over 5 million visitors and commissioned and presented over 350 new media and digital artworks from artists including Nam June Paik, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Wu Tsang, Ryoichi Kurokawa, Agnes Varda, Isaac Julien and Marianna Simnett. **fact.co.uk**

ABOUT LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL

Liverpool Biennial is the largest and longest-running 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 artists with local practitioners, communities and the general public. Liverpool Biennial is supported by Arts Council England, Liverpool City Council and founding supporter John Moores. biennial.com

ABOUT BLACK OBSIDIAN SOUND SYSTEM (B.O.S.S)

Black Obsidian Sound System was established in the summer of 2018 with the intention of bringing together a community of queer, trans and non-binary black and people of colour involved in art, sound and radical activism. Following in the legacies of sound system culture they wanted to learn, build and sustain a resource for our collective struggles. The system, based in London, is available to use or rent by community groups and others with the purpose of amplifying and connecting them.

ABOUT ZHENG BO

Zheng Bo (b. 1974, Beijing, China) lives and works in Lantau Island, Hong Kong. Zheng is committed to multispecies vibrancy. He investigates the past and imagines the future from the perspectives of marginalised communities and marginalised plants. Zheng creates weedy gardens, living slogans and eco-queer films. He is learning to cultivate ecological wisdom beyond the Anthro-po-extinction event. Zheng is also a lecturer who taught at China Academy of Art (2010 – 2013) and currently lectures at School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Recent exhibitions and presentations include ICA Shanghai (2019); Kyoto City University of Arts Art Gallery (2019); Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018); and the 11th Taipei Biennial (2018).

ABOUT KIARA MOHAMED

Kiara Mohamed is a Somali, queer, trans, multidisciplinary artist based in Liverpool, working in photography, filmmaking, poetry and artisanal handicraft. His work is primarily concerned with addressing the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and self-care.

ABOUT FAUZIYA JOHNSON

Fauziya Johnson is a Somali and Dominican freelance curator, artist, and writer based in Liverpool. Her work is focused on raising awareness around mental health, queer rights, anti-racism, debt abolishment, representation of People of Colour, and examining institutional inequalities. She also co-founded and edits ROOT-ed Zine.