

The exclusionary scaffold that comprises our current, panicked relation to gender is more directly broached in *Cover Up*, 2026, where Wielebinski has made inaccessible one of the gallery's toilets for the duration of the exhibition, only viewable through two easy-to-overlook holes drilled high into a wall. Whether one encounters the stilled privacy of an empty toilet, as a peeper might, one can still hear the rumbling sounds of a parked engine and smell a musky odour. By barring all from the lavatory, Wielebinski successfully engages with the delimiting aspects of recent UK law on gender definitions: the bathroom emerges as a site where gender conformity is enforced, and trans lives remain subject to surveillance. Yet the work leaves open the possibility that these structures remain unsettled; the engine is still running.

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Glasgow International

various venues, 5–21 June

It seems necessary to start on a downward note here. Glasgow International 2026 opens amid a period of intense economic anxiety, anti-institutional rage and internecine conflict among the denizens of an art scene once famously, or infamously, proclaimed a 'miracle' by celebrity curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. From the permanent closure of the Centre for Contemporary Arts in January this year – its reputation already shot after it called the police on a pro-Palestine sit-in last summer – to the tripling of rents on Trongate 103, a site hosting many of the shows under review here, the primary issues concern financial mismanagement and state-sanctioned impoverishment of arts venues. In amongst it all, institutions have been scrambling to respond to activists justifiably demanding a firmer stance from the art world in calling out what the UN has described as an active genocide in Palestine. At the time of writing, Glasgow International has posted a statement (with the agreement of the city council) on its website outlining its commitment to the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel and the accompanying guide describes 'a time marked by genocide and war', but it remains under pressure to increase the visibility and force of its position.

All of which is to say – notwithstanding some ethical quandaries parked at this point – that the time was right for a festival as intelligent, multifaceted and expressive of a city's creative resilience as Glasgow International 2026. In Helen Nisbet, the biennale has a new director whose approach is nuanced and principled, interweaving feminist and regional socio-political concerns with an internationalism that is, in some crucial sense, configured by an attention to the personal and the local.

Nisbet does not do 'themes' as such. Thus, there are many routes one could plot through the conversations opened by this year's exhibitors: over 60 in total across 32 venues in the city, not including fringe events. One place to start is at Kinning Park Complex, where the exhibition 'The Subtle Body' enacts a dialogue between the wonderful, Black Isle-born, Glasgow-based artist Katy Dove (1970–2015) and icon of Brazilian neo-concrete sculpture and performance, Lygia Clark (1920–88).

Across a series of carrels and vitrines, numerous documents and audiovisual clips convey the essence of several of Dove's projects, which exemplify her collaborative, performance- and sound-based approach to abstract art, most crucially presented in the form of animations. These include *Make a Shape*, 2006–08, an early, residency-based sequence created in Easterhouse, East Glasgow, in which primary school children interacted with projections on a large screen, using their bodies to cast shadows that complemented Dove's dancing shapes and lines. Soundtracks for much of Dove's work were provided by the now-disbanded improvised music collective Muscles of Joy, of which she was a member, evoking a specific era in Glasgow's rich history of experimental music that already feels distant, its evocation here curiously nostalgic.

The showings from Lygia Clark are more cursory, partly consisting of photographic documentation of the Corpo Collective action-based works she began to produce after her 'interactive' sculptures of the late 1960s. Devised during the era of Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–85), these actions, such as the 'Arquiteturas Biológicas' series for which living architectural structures were placed around bodies in group-based happenings, remind us of the potential countercultural power of abstract art when today it is often sneered at as formalistic and insipid. Likewise, Dove's truncated oeuvre – tragically cut short by cancer – is a reminder that community-led, community-empowering art practices do not necessarily have to deal in abrasive polemic.

Regarding community, the north and west of the city host several projects by women artists that exemplify how creative workers can integrate themselves into local communities over decades with genuinely inspiring results. A vital fixture of Glasgow's community arts scene, Mandy McIntosh's Springburn Sculpture Park project involved working with residents of the district where she was born to create a bronze relief. This was placed on an empty plinth which once held public art, making a powerful symbol of both civic abandonment and community solidarity.

Heading westwards, artists Helen McCrorie and Annabel Wright have collaborated with Maryhill Integration Network to prepare a text-installation and film-based document of the organisation's vital work with new Scots seeking asylum. Arranged on hangings of billowing builder's wrap, quotes from MIN's community members are transposed in an unaffected and direct way, not squeezed into an artist's vision: 'Art is important and I enjoy it, but the main thing for me is learning English. I'm a college student, but I'm happier learning here.' This is the artist as recorder in the best sense. At Glasgow Women's Library, Ruth Ewan, Sohaila Baluch and Alixandra Prybala offer a series of site-specific interventions and interactive pieces – including Ewan's 'feminist jukebox' – that speak of a similarly generous entwining with community.

The Dove-Clark double-header also reminds us of how Glasgow's art scene has fed in to global art trends over



Michelle Williams Gamaker, *Strange Evidence*, 2026, video

the past four decades (though the comparison in Dove's case is more historical). So too do several painting exhibitions that reflect Scotland and Glasgow-based artists' contributions to the feted emergence of abstract practices during the early 2020s. There is Dove's erstwhile bandmate Victoria Morton with her powdery, luminous colours in the Modern Institute, and Anna Paterson's extraordinary works in oil on paper, which suggest close-up abstract photography of scuffed porcelain and rusted metal surfaces, presented alongside Amelia Barratt's more organic-seeming compositions at Patricia Fleming Gallery. At Glasgow Print Studio, husband and wife Andrew Cranston and Lorna Robertson offer mesmerising, *intimiste* mark-making, playing on the thresholds of printing, painting and drawing as much as on the mutual influence of their practices over decades.

Dove's work, like McCrorie and Wright's film, are part of a particularly strong showing across the festival of moving-image art. Another Glasgow-based artist who, like Dove, has combined film with a performance-based practice at the cusp of improvised music is Hannan Jones, whose work is included with Mira Adoumier and Carine Doumit of Lebanese collective The Camelia Committee in Market Gallery's group show 'In The Guise of The Common Place'. Jones's striking two-screen audiovisual work *safe keeping* is a woozy evocation of a water-borne arrival in a new city – the piece is set in both Marseille and Glasgow – beautifully encoding something of the emotional qualities of migration and imposed otherness, while enfolding complex histories of economic transaction and exploitation. Rehana Zaman's *Plantation* at Kelvinhall (Interview AM494), approaches comparable themes with a more documentary eye, placing the working conditions of seasonal farmworkers in Pakistan and Scotland into dialogue with one another.

Meanwhile, the Scottish composer Janet Beat – whose work shares a *musique concrète* sensibility with Jones's dial-twiddling soundtrack – is the subject of Luke Fowler's *A Sensation Never Yet Known* at GLOSS, 5 Florence Street (Interview AM469). Based on recorded conversations with the octogenarian pioneer of electronic music, this is another important instalment in Fowler's series of artist's films recovering countercultural and forgotten figures in modern Scottish history. Finally, though the theme is less local, it is important to mention the role of Lydia Honeybone and Leonie Rae Gasson's 'Offline' in nurturing artist's moving image in Glasgow over the past few years. Their GI offering is Michelle Williams Gamaker's delightfully grizzly pastiche of 1980s body-horror and 1930s crime-noir, *Strange Evidence*, based on the Sri-Lankan Indian British film star Merle Oberon, who 'passed' as white to protect her industry status. Similarly, Rae-Yen Song's extraordinary showstopper installation at Tramway – a giant, luminous cephalopod sculpture whose light and sculpture filled innards can be entered and explored – will surely have enough ink spilled over it elsewhere to merit only a brief mention.

At a time of profound, multidimensional crises in local, national and UK-wide culture and politics, Glasgow International feels like an object lesson in how a city can show up for itself, expressing qualities of endurance and creative verve that might just outlast the fascists and the bad vibes.

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9th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art: everything must change. Radical Intelligence. Saloniki 9

various venues, 23 May to 5 July

Nina Simone's 1978 ballad 'Everything Must Change' is sung with characteristic rawness and rage – the lyrics pregnant with the tensions and contradictions of the human condition, including the capacity to heal, alongside the brutality of aging and impending death. This is contrasted with nature's consistency: 'rain comes from clouds', 'sun lights the sky' and 'humming-birds fly'. The song, referenced in this Biennale's montaged, low-fi visual manifesto, acts as an entrance into the poetics and politics that animate the curatorial imagination and ambition that Nadjia Argyropoulou has brought to this edition. The Biennale asks us to recognise our turbulent era of political polarisation and the need for action. It asks what has changed since the 1970s. It also has no time for liberal resignation in the face of genocide, rising fascisms and culture wars. Unlike Venice and Documenta – both plagued by scandals, censorship, complicity and protest – this epic exhibition is principled in negotiating art world hypocrisies, corporate encroachment, self-censorship and art-washing. It situates itself in clear dialogue with Gaza, and the complexities of the left's local, national and global struggles.

The show brings together more than 80 multimedia practitioners including, amongst others, Arthur Jafa, Forensic Architecture, Pierre Huyghe and Oliver Ressler, along with Meriem Bennani, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley and Basma Alsharif. The exhibition has learnt from documenta 14 in Athens – where the divisions between local and global art scenes, politics and economics were criticised – and instead local and national Greek culture and history have been woven into the transnational conversations. The title reclaims 'Saloniki' – an older, Eastern, popular name for the city. Greek avant-garde and anti-fascist struggles past, as well as state-building, commerce, deindustrialised devastation and neoliberal reordering are central to many artworks selected. Performative collective The Callas (Lakis and Aris Ionas), sculptor and multimedia artist Dionisis Kavallieratos, and artist-architect Sofia Dona engage with themes centred on Greece, and the geopolitics beyond it.

Local and national politics are also underscored via the choice of the Biennale's venues. Presented over



Meriem Bennani, *Life on the CAPS*, 2018–22, installation view