# London summer art scene spotlights UK AIDS Memorial Quilt alongside Royal Academy and Tate Britain retrospectives



The summer art scene in London unfolds vibrantly, featuring a range of exhibitions that echo both contemporary discourse and historical narratives. Among the most prominent is the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, which runs from 17 June to 17 August. Here, visitors can immerse themselves in a showcase that spans various artistic styles and mediums, with notable works by celebrated artists such as Tracey Emin, Cornelia Parker, Frank Bowling, and George Shaw, whose contributions promise to deliver a rich, often provocative experience.

In parallel, the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt currently resides in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern until 16 June, serving as a stark reminder of the ongoing impacts of the AIDS crisis. The quilt, which comprises 42 large panels each measuring 12 feet square, is not merely a memorial but a poignant blend of art and activism, reflecting the personal stories of grief and loss associated with the epidemic. Initiated by author Charlie Porter and curated by Elliot Gibbons, the display highlights the plight of those affected by HIV/AIDS, underlining the continued relevance of such remembrance in light of recent reductions in global aid and funding for HIV prevention, particularly from the UK and US. According to sources, the quilt is not only an artistic achievement—it's also a heartfelt plea for compassion and awareness during times of societal indifference.

The summer exhibitions offer a kaleidoscope of artistic expression. For instance, the retrospective of Josef Albers at Cristea Roberts Gallery, ending on 29 August, highlights his minimalist prints that convey a sense of calm and clarity, contrasting the emotive urgency of the AIDS quilt. In rounding off the artistic journey, Durham Cathedral Museum features the 'Sanctuary!' exhibition until 29 June, centring on an intriguing medieval artwork—part Medusa, part Green Man—that has welcomed seekers of sanctuary for centuries.

Additionally, the artistry of Edward Burra and Ithell Colquhoun at Tate Britain, running until 19 October, further enriches the cultural tapestry of this season. While their works don't have a direct thematic link, the exhibitions encourage audiences to delve into lesser-known narratives of British art, with Colquhoun's contributions particularly beckoning exploration for the curious viewer.

One noteworthy mention is the recent auction of Tamara de Lempicka’s revered painting, *La Belle Rafaëla*, expected to fetch between £6m and £9m. This piece not only reinvigorates the conversation around women in art but also highlights de Lempicka’s audacious defiance against the traditionally male-dominated depiction of the female nude. As such artworks are celebrated and discussed, they sit amongst broader themes of artistic evolution, gender, and identity frameworked within societal contexts.

As the summer unfolds, London’s art scene continues to reflect on both joyous and poignant themes through a variety of mediums and exhibitions, reaffirming the vital role of contemporary art in narrating the complexities of human experience.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/13/summer-monsters-minimalism-aids-memorial-quilt-tate-the-week-in-art), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/13/summer-monsters-minimalism-aids-memorial-quilt-tate-the-week-in-art)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/22c2699d-64c3-451c-b35e-bccac4046fc6), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/08/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-display-tate-modern-turbine-hall)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/13/summer-monsters-minimalism-aids-memorial-quilt-tate-the-week-in-art), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/66655a6b-178d-4f63-ada1-d14e3b4afecf), [[6]](https://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2024/06/12/summer-exhibition-at-the-royal-academy-of-arts-exhibition-review-2/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/66655a6b-178d-4f63-ada1-d14e3b4afecf), [[7]](https://www.tht.org.uk/news/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-now-available-online)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/13/summer-monsters-minimalism-aids-memorial-quilt-tate-the-week-in-art> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/jun/13/summer-monsters-minimalism-aids-memorial-quilt-tate-the-week-in-art> - This article highlights notable art exhibitions in London, including the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, featuring works by Tracey Emin, Cornelia Parker, Frank Bowling, and George Shaw. It also discusses exhibitions at Tate Britain and Durham Cathedral Museum, as well as a retrospective of Josef Albers at Cristea Roberts Gallery. The UK Aids Memorial Quilt is displayed at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall until 16 June 2025, serving as a poignant combination of protest art and mourning.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/22c2699d-64c3-451c-b35e-bccac4046fc6> - The UK Aids Memorial Quilt, a poignant tribute to those lost to Aids since the late 1980s, will be nearly fully displayed at London's Tate Modern from June 12-16, 2025. Featuring handcrafted panels commemorating individuals like Andrew (1971–93) and Baby Jamie, the quilt highlights personal stories of grief, loss, and remembrance. Comprising 42 large quilts, each 12 feet square, the display emphasizes both artistic excellence and political activism. In light of current global aid reductions—including the UK’s aid budget cuts and reduced US HIV prevention funding—organizers stress the quilt's renewed relevancy. Initiated by author Charlie Porter and curated by Elliot Gibbons, the project seeks to underscore the ongoing impact of HIV/AIDS and advocate compassion amid societal apathy. Inspired by the US Names Project Quilt launched in 1987, the UK initiative aims to raise £1.5 million for conservation, storage, and broader visibility. While medical advances like PrEP have transformed HIV into a manageable condition, campaigners warn that progress remains vulnerable. The quilt serves both as a powerful memorial and a call to continued action against stigma and neglect.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/66655a6b-178d-4f63-ada1-d14e3b4afecf> - The Royal Academy's exhibition 'Brasil! Brasil! The Birth of Modernism' celebrates Brazilian modern art, focusing on ten artists born between the 1880s and 1920s. It features Tarsila do Amaral's iconic works, including the seminal 'Lake' from 1928, signifying Brazilian modernism's maturity. Artists such as Candido Portinari and Lasar Segall contribute vibrant, summery works that range from cubism to abstraction, shedding Hungarian light on Brazil's postcolonial artistic identity. The exhibition underscores Oswald de Andrade's 1928 'Cannibal Manifesto,' encouraging a fusion of European avant-garde influences with native Brazilian traditions. Key figures like Tarsila and Anita Malfatti pioneered this movement, challenging colonialist aesthetics through their transformative experiences in Europe. The exhibition employs a vibrant, dynamic design to present Brazil's cultural and artistic growth, highlighting themes of hybridity and metamorphosis. Through modernist expressions, the show emphasizes cultural renewal and an optimistic vision of Brazil's future, continuing recent global interest in Brazilian modernism.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/08/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-display-tate-modern-turbine-hall> - The UK Aids Memorial Quilt, a poignant tribute to those lost to Aids since the late 1980s, will be nearly fully displayed at London's Tate Modern from June 12-16, 2025. Featuring handcrafted panels commemorating individuals like Andrew (1971–93) and Baby Jamie, the quilt highlights personal stories of grief, loss, and remembrance. Comprising 42 large quilts, each 12 feet square, the display emphasizes both artistic excellence and political activism. In light of current global aid reductions—including the UK’s aid budget cuts and reduced US HIV prevention funding—organizers stress the quilt's renewed relevancy. Initiated by author Charlie Porter and curated by Elliot Gibbons, the project seeks to underscore the ongoing impact of HIV/AIDS and advocate compassion amid societal apathy. Inspired by the US Names Project Quilt launched in 1987, the UK initiative aims to raise £1.5 million for conservation, storage, and broader visibility. While medical advances like PrEP have transformed HIV into a manageable condition, campaigners warn that progress remains vulnerable. The quilt serves both as a powerful memorial and a call to continued action against stigma and neglect.
6. <https://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2024/06/12/summer-exhibition-at-the-royal-academy-of-arts-exhibition-review-2/> - The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2024 showcased a diverse collection of artworks, including pieces by Anselm Kiefer, Rose Wylie, and Frank Bowling. The exhibition featured a mix of large-scale works and smaller pieces, with notable highlights such as El Anatsui's intricate wall hanging and Norman Ackroyd RA's atmospheric seascapes. A distinctive feature of the exhibition was the abundance of animal-themed artworks, ranging from witty and humorous to sentimental, with Elizabeth Cope's grand oil painting standing out for its energy and artistic freedom.
7. <https://www.tht.org.uk/news/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-now-available-online> - The UK AIDS Memorial Quilt is now available online through Google Arts & Culture, allowing visitors to explore each panel in ultra-high resolution, read emotional testimonials, and listen to new audio recordings from volunteers and creators. This digital initiative aims to make the quilt accessible to a global audience, ensuring its stories and memories are preserved and shared widely.