# UK Aids Memorial Quilt to make largest appearance in decades at Tate Modern



Frankie O'Reilly vividly recalls the life-changing moments under the London skies, where he and his childhood friend, Georgie Long, forged a bond that transcended friendship to become a loving partnership. Their journey began in the 1980s, shortly after they left Northern Ireland for London. By the mid-1980s, both were diagnosed with HIV, and the spectre of the disease loomed large, claiming many lives in their community. "I started seeing friends slowly dying," Frankie recalls, likening the experience to waiting for friends at a bus stop, only to watch them depart, leaving him alone. Tragically, Georgie succumbed to an Aids-related illness in 1992. The pain of loss transformed into a commitment to remember not just Georgie but also the countless others who faced similar fates. This commitment culminated in the UK Aids Memorial Quilt, a moving collection with 42 quilts and 23 textile panels commemorating 384 individuals who lost their lives to HIV/Aids in the UK. The quilt will be displayed at the iconic Tate Modern from June 12 to 16, 2025, marking the largest public showing of the quilt since its inception in 1994.

The quilt, a powerful tapestry of grief and remembrance, embodies personal stories interwoven with artistic expression. Each panel is crafted by those who loved the departed, forming a visceral reminder of both the individuals memorialised and the political activism surrounding the epidemic. "When I nursed Georgie at home, the last three years were just awful," Frankie shares, adding that participating in the quilt project played a crucial role in his healing process. The initiative to create the quilt was catalysed by Scottish activist Alistair Hulme, who was inspired by the American version first displayed in San Francisco in 1985. Alongside Frankie, contributors like Cathy John and Grace McElwee stitched panels to honour their friend Michael, whose journey with Aids exemplified the broader narrative of the epidemic—one marked by love, laughter, and ultimately, profound loss.

Notably, this exhibition arrives at a time of renewed relevance as global aid for HIV/Aids confronts significant reductions. With the UK’s aid budget cuts and diminished US funding for prevention programmes, the quilt serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing need for compassion and awareness. Author Charlie Porter, who initiated the exhibition by writing to Tate's director in July 2024, aims to leverage the quilt's visibility to rally ongoing support and challenge the lingering stigma associated with HIV. "The history of the quilt involves it being displayed in iconic locations," he states, hoping that this display not only pays tribute but also facilitates healing among those who have long been disenfranchised.

The UK Aids Memorial Quilt is a testament to collective grief and resilience, created during a time when many faced isolation and shame. It includes notable figures such as novelist Bruce Chatwin and actors Denham Elliott and Ian Charleston, embodying the artistic excellence and political activism that the pandemic inspired. Following previous displays in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it seeks to humanise the narrative of Aids and preserve the memory of those lost. Those behind the quilt believe that despite advancements in medical treatment, the struggle against stigma and neglect must continue. In addition to the physical display, the quilt has been digitised and made available online, allowing global access to its panels and stories, ensuring that those who suffered are never forgotten.

As the public prepares to view this poignant artwork at the Tate Modern, the exhibition promises to be an outpouring of love, friendship, and dedication—a chance not only to remember but also to reflect on the impact of HIV/Aids that still resonates today.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgmjrm0m20mo), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/22c2699d-64c3-451c-b35e-bccac4046fc6), [[5]](https://www.aidsquiltuk.org/2025/04/08/quilt-display-at-tate-modern/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/08/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-display-tate-modern-turbine-hall), [[4]](https://www.tht.org.uk/news/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-now-available-online), [[6]](https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/aids-memorial-quilt-turbine-hall-tate-modern)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/22c2699d-64c3-451c-b35e-bccac4046fc6), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/08/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-display-tate-modern-turbine-hall), [[7]](https://fadmagazine.com/2025/04/17/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-to-be-shown-in-tate-moderns-turbine-hall/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgmjrm0m20mo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <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.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/08/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-display-tate-modern-turbine-hall> - The UK Aids Memorial Quilt, created in the 1980s to raise awareness and humanise those who died from Aids, is set to be publicly displayed at Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall in London from June 12-16, 2025. The quilt comprises panels commemorating individuals who lost their lives to Aids during the 1980s and 1990s. This exhibition marks the first appearance of the quilt at a major UK cultural institution, following previous displays in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The display aims to bring attention to the ongoing impact of HIV/AIDS and challenge the stigma associated with the disease.
4. <https://www.tht.org.uk/news/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-now-available-online> - To mark World AIDS Day 2023, the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt was digitised and made available online for the first time through Google Arts & Culture. The quilt consists of 42 large pieces, each comprising eight panels commemorating individuals in the UK who died of AIDS-related illnesses. The online exhibition allows a global audience to view each panel in ultra-high resolution, read emotional testimonials, and listen to new audio recordings from volunteers and some of the people who created the work. This initiative ensures that those lost to the AIDS epidemic are never forgotten.
5. <https://www.aidsquiltuk.org/2025/04/08/quilt-display-at-tate-modern/> - The UK AIDS Memorial Quilt collection is scheduled to be on display in full at Tate Modern for five days in June 2025. The exhibition will be installed in the iconic Turbine Hall from June 12–16, 2025, from 10 am to 6 pm daily. This display offers a rare opportunity to view the entire quilt, which serves as a poignant reminder of those lost to HIV and AIDS.
6. <https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/aids-memorial-quilt-turbine-hall-tate-modern> - The UK AIDS Memorial Quilt, a vast artwork made of 42 quilts, is set to be displayed in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall for a short time in June 2025. The quilt consists of textile panels created by members of the public to commemorate friends, family, and loved ones lost to AIDS. This exhibition marks the largest showing of the UK Quilt in its history and offers visitors a chance to reflect on the impact of HIV and AIDS.
7. <https://fadmagazine.com/2025/04/17/uk-aids-memorial-quilt-to-be-shown-in-tate-moderns-turbine-hall/> - From June 12 to 16, 2025, Tate Modern's Turbine Hall will host the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt, comprising 42 quilts and 23 individual panels representing 384 individuals affected by HIV and AIDS. The quilt will be laid out in a grid across the floor, echoing its previous outdoor displays aimed at raising awareness of the ongoing AIDS pandemic. This exhibition serves as a powerful act of remembrance and advocacy.