

CREATE

Press release

Create London commissions Louise Giovanelli to create a major temporary public artwork on Strand Aldwych for Westminster City Council



Create London and Westminster City Council will present a new public art and architecture commission by artist Louise Giovanelli at St Mary le Strand Church on the recently pedestrianised Strand Aldwych, opening on 19 November 2025 and on view to the public until 18 January 2026.

Responding to James Gibb's iconic St Mary le Strand Church, the large-scale, site-specific work titled *Decades* will cover the south-facing façade in a composite image of a draped curtain, producing a sculptural trompe-l'œil form. The temporary intervention is intended to draw attention to this overlooked architectural jewel, the first English Baroque church in the UK. Lit up by night, the work will create an atmospheric and illuminating experience during the darker winter months by altering the visual perception of the historic church, which recently marked its 300th anniversary at the heart of one of London's most vibrant and busy locations.

Louise Giovanelli (b. 1993, London) is one of the most exciting emerging painters of her generation. Since graduating from the Manchester School of Art in 2015 and Staedelschule in 2020, Giovanelli has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally with recent solo shows including The Hepworth Wakefield and Museum Villa Stuck, Germany. Reworking and often closely cropping details from paintings, photographs, classical sculpture, architecture and theatre, Giovanelli's work employs repetition to achieve an augmented sense of reality. Deeply engaged

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with the history of architecture, the artist explores overlooked details in historical buildings through a process she terms 'slow looking'. By concealing and revealing details, Giovanelli makes the viewer look again and reconsider the world around us.

Once the tallest and most prominent architectural marker in the area and set on the processional route between St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, St Mary le Strand is now dwarfed by larger, surrounding buildings and situated amongst the many theatres and performing arts venues in Strand Aldwych. Playing on the duality of religious and performance-based congregation, Giovanelli is using a composite image of a shimmering curtain, typically found across the remaining working men's clubs in England. She employs the image to envelope the building, creating a striking contrast of materialities between soft drapery and hard stonework. As a magnified and digitally augmented image, the curtain mimics qualities of a pointillist painting, bearing references to painting practice of Giovannelli and the tradition of painted drapery in Italian Renaissance churches, which Gibbs would have seen on his study trip to Italy before returning to the UK to design St Mary le Strand.

The artwork also draws attention to the church's exposure to air pollution, emphasising the two-coloured columns resulting from its decades-long exposure to heavy traffic as a busy gyratory before the pedestrianisation of Strand Aldwych in 2022. By revealing details of the alternating colour patterns of the columns, while also covering up areas with fabric, Giovanelli uses different types of translucency to both eclipse and reframe architectural elements while embedding the church at the core of the artwork. The repetitive qualities of scaffolding, used for this installation as the structural component, become another method for the artist to explore the qualities of St Mary le Strand through her unique artistic lens.

Commissioning information

Decades is commissioned by Create London for Westminster City Council. The commission is made possible thanks to Westminster City Council's lead support, and with additional sponsorship support from London Heritage Quarter, Liberty and White Cube. St Mary le Strand church and the Diocese of London have been vital in-kind contributors to the project.

The commission is designed with the utmost respect for the architectural qualities of the building and the environment. Developed with support by David Chipperfield Architects, an award-winning architectural practice with experience in conservation and restoration of Unesco heritage sites, the existing proportions and geometries of the building inform the skeleton structure that carries the 'draped curtain', ensuring there is harmony between the temporary structure and the building.

Cllr Ryan Jude, Westminster City Council Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology, Culture and Air Quality, said: "This incredible art commission in the heart of

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Westminster is another way we are breaking down barriers for people to access culture in the city. The work has been made possible through close collaboration with our local partner organisations and is another small chapter in the ongoing transformation of this area. Louise Giovanelli's work invites our residents, workers and visitors to pause, celebrate the lights and appreciate our local heritage in a completely new way. Projects like this allow us to make our city's public spaces vibrant, inclusive, and accessible for everyone to enjoy, which is a key part of our Cultural Strategy."

Marie Bak Mortensen, Director of Create London, said: "We are delighted to be working with Louise Giovanelli and Westminster Council on this commission, which aims to make the familiar unfamiliar, providing a new way of connecting audiences across culture and congregation. A key objective of the commission is to create an exciting and visually stimulating experience for visitors while increasing public knowledge of our built heritage. A heritage that is – like today – richly informed and influenced by cultures beyond our own borders. It also cleverly highlights how climate change and a lack of care pose risks to our built environment and all the rich layers of history it contains."

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For further information, images and interview requests please contact:
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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Strand Aldwych

Strand Aldwych aims to bring the inside out – celebrating the wealth of cultural and educational offer in the area, whilst providing a new green oasis in central London to relax, play and come together. After an extensive co-design process with over 70 stakeholders, Westminster City Council revealed a new destination for London at the end of 2022. The scheme converted busy roadways into a major new public space at the Strand and an enhanced pedestrian experience across the Aldwych, including new crossings, wider footways and new green space. Strand Aldwych is multi-award winning public space and received a Green Flag Award in 2025. A local partnership, led by Westminster City Council with London Heritage Quarter and Kings' College London and together with other local organisations, has driven a scheme that is transforming the area around Strand Aldwych. The project sees the ancient route adapted to become a modern public space for London, and is regularly host to cultural events, installations and artist commissions.

About Create London

Create London commissions socially engaged art, generous architecture and bold infrastructure that is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Our work is driven by a

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belief that transformative and radical ideas can derive from working long-term within local communities. We bring world-class cultural experiences to areas where it is least expected, providing inclusive moments for individuals to expand their imaginations, foster collective action and support thriving communities. Recent projects include co-commissioning the Hackney Windrush Art Commissions with Thomas J Price and Veronica Ryan OBE, for which the latter artist won the 2022 Turner Prize; the RIBA award-winning A House for Artists by Apparata Studio and Grayson Perry's first public sculpture Inspiration Lives Here in Barking Town Centre. Create London is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

createlondon.org

About St Mary le Strand

St Mary le Strand is a Grade 1-listed church, built in 1714-21 to the designs of the renowned Scottish Architect, James Gibbs – his first building on his return from studying in Rome. It is often said to be one of the UK's loveliest Baroque churches, with its fabulous plastered, curved and coffered ceiling, unparalleled in Britain. 'The Jewel in the Strand' restoration and development project will transform St Mary le Strand for generations to come and make the church fit for purpose as the centrepiece of the new setting of the pedestrianised Strand Aldwych district.

stmarylestrand.com

About Westminster City Council

Westminster City Council is the local authority for the City of Westminster, located in the heart of London. Home to over 250,000 residents and welcoming millions of visitors each year, the city sees around one million people pass through its streets every day. The Council is committed to delivering high-quality, responsive services that support the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors alike. From housing, education, and public health to social care, environmental sustainability, and keeping the streets clean and safe, Westminster City Council works hard to ensure the city remains a welcoming and accessible place where people can thrive and enjoy a high quality of life.

www.westminster.gov.uk

About London Heritage Quarter

London Heritage Quarter is the collective of four Business Improvement Districts which cover South Westminster - Victoria, Victoria Westminster, Whitehall and Northbank. Stretching from Belgravia through to Parliament Square, Strand and on to the Royal Courts of Justice, the BIDs cover some of central London's most iconic locations and visitor destinations. The BIDs represent thousands of businesses, from major employers and FTSE 100 companies to smaller creative businesses and start-ups, across a diverse range of sectors. Delivering value through partnership is at the heart of our offer, with the BIDs working hand in hand with Westminster Council and other partners to support business growth, enhance the environment and lobby on behalf of our diverse business communities. Recent successes include

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the refurbishment of Christchurch Gardens in Victoria and the transformation of Strand Aldwych. Both projects, pioneered by the BIDs, demonstrate the importance of high-quality public spaces and the powerful force for good that public / private collaboration can be.

<https://london-hq.co.uk>

White Cube

White Cube's exhibition programme extends across locations in London, Hong Kong, Paris, New York, Seoul and online. Since its inception in 1993, the gallery has exhibited the work of many of the world's most highly acclaimed contemporary artists.

whitecube.com

About Liberty

Liberty is a movement dedicated to discovery, animated by arts, culture, design and the pursuit of beauty. Liberty is famed for its original curation, directional design and celebration of craftsmanship. In the spirit of our founder, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, Liberty remains unapologetically eccentric and committed to bringing good design to all. Liberty's iconic Ianthe design has been layered on a composite image to form the final artwork for St Mary le Strand in collaboration with Louise Giovanelli - Ianthe design is copyright © Liberty Fabric Limited.

Libertylondon.com

#StrandAldwych

Location: Strand Aldwych, London WC2R 1ES