

Delaine Le Bas: Un-Fair-Ground

13 February – 31 May 2026



The Whitworth is proud to present *Delaine Le Bas: Un-Fair-Ground*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition following her Turner Prize nomination in 2024. Delaine Le Bas will transform the Whitworth's special exhibition galleries into an all-encompassing mixed media installation featuring paintings, sculpture, and video. The exhibition will draw on the Whitworth's collection, which will be reimagined and reframed by Le Bas in the expansive context of her artmaking.

Inspired by the concept of 'the metabolic museum' proposed by curator and thinker Clémentine Deliss in her influential book of the same name, Le Bas will present a space for a critical rethinking of museum collections and their logic. The artist employs feminist magic and emancipatory ritual to transform the original meanings of a diverse range of artworks, from William Blake's iconic *The Ancient of Days* to works from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection. More than 20 artworks from the Whitworth's collection, spanning 200 years and many media, have been selected by the artist to be displayed in an improvisational and energetic scenography.

The exhibition will unfold in four parts, incorporating new and existing works by Le Bas across the installation. It will include a large-scale witch house installation, featuring a wallpaper design created by Le Bas in recognition of the Whitworth's extensive collection of this medium. At the heart of the exhibition, a stage set will frame a dynamic, double-sided performance space. The

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exhibition will also host new works by Le Bas in dialogue with key collection pieces by artist precursors and peers, including Madge Gill and Ana Maria Pacheco, exploring the artist's deep engagement with magic, folklore and witchcraft. *Un-Fair-Ground*, a monumental mural created by Le Bas for the 2024 Glastonbury Festival, will be exhibited for the first time in a gallery context.

Le Bas has invited two artists from Venture Arts, a Manchester-based visual arts organisation working with learning disabled artists, to collaborate with her in making a part of the show. Sarah Lee and Leslie Thompson will make new work with Le Bas, to be displayed within the gallery spaces.

Delaine Le Bas, the artist, said: "I have been able to select works from the Whitworth Collection which speak to and inspire me to share as part of my installation. Visitors to the gallery will have a new experience of how they see works displayed - embedded within the installation and see works they might not know from the collection. A particular drawing I am fascinated by, for example, is *A Witch with a Brand* by John Hamilton Mortimer. This collaboration has opened many possibilities for my work through the ongoing curatorial conversations and how I am able to engage with the museum and art gallery as an artist. It's a very involved, intricate untangling of formality with the residency approach and 'radical operation' working with costumes, wallpaper, prints, drawing, painting and sculpture. I am excited at being able to build spaces within spaces, create new performances and invite local artists to engage directly with the installation."

Professor Sook-Kyung Lee, Director of the Whitworth, said: "*Un-Fair-Ground* is a powerful and timely exploration of identity, belonging and the resilience of lived experience. The artist's singular vision invites us to rethink what an art gallery can be, challenging how collections are displayed, whose voices are centred, and how stories are told. Her radical rethinking and deep engagement with the Whitworth's collection creates a space that is both critically charged and truly welcoming. We are proud to support an artist whose work expands the possibilities of creativity, collaboration, and care."

Valentin Diakonov, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, the Whitworth, said: "We are extremely happy to follow Delaine Le Bas' lead on reimagining the collections of the Whitworth in a way that foregrounds female artists and underrepresented communities through the transformative power of magic and non-linear thinking. Delaine Le Bas's commitment to social and political justice is a powerful example of a practice that helps build inclusive and poetic narratives for the future."

About Delaine Le Bas

Delaine Le Bas (1965 Worthing, UK) studied at St. Martin's School of Art, London. A practising artist since 1988, she works with fabrics, film, performance, painting, photography and sculpture, creating large-scale immersive installations. She was one of sixteen artists who formed 'Paradise Lost' at the First Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2007. She worked with her late husband, artist Damian Le Bas (1963-2017), on the installations 'Safe European Home?' and 'Frontier De Luxe'. In 2017, they collaborated on the stage designs, costumes and texts for 'Roma Armee', Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin.

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In 2015, she created the ongoing installation and performance work 'Romani Embassy'. Her works were shown in; Prague Biennale in 2005 & 2007, the Venice Biennale in 2007, 2017, and 2023, the Gwangju Biennale in 2012, Critical Contemplations at Tate Modern 2017, and the ANTI Athens Biennale in 2018. She has participated in all of the Berlin Herbstsalons, most recently in 2025.

In 2022, Le Bas was commissioned by Tate Liverpool, as part of their 'Radical Landscapes' exhibition. She presented 'The House of Le Bas Established: 1984' at the Whitechapel Gallery Archive in 2023. Site-specific installation 'Incipit Vita Nova' was created for Secession Vienna in 2023. A major solo show, 'Delainia17071965Unfolding' opened at Tramway for Glasgow International in 2024. Delaine Le Bas was a nominee for the 40th Turner Prize, showing a new version of 'Incipit Vita Nova' at Tate Britain, London, from September 2024 to February 2025.

In 2025, Le Bas was in residence at 'The White House', Dagenham, for Create London, making the installation and performance work 'A Stranger In Silver, Walking On Air' and presented a solo exhibition of new work '+Fabricating My Own Myth Red Threads & Silver Needles' at Newcastle Contemporary Art. Represented by Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, she presented a solo booth installation at Frieze London, and she artist in residence at Celle Ligure in Genoa.

Public collections include The British Council, Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MUCEM) and Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.

Lincoln Cato supports the scenography, sculptural furniture, figures and performative elements of Delaine Le Bas installation works.

Exhibition credit

The exhibition is organised by the Whitworth, The University of Manchester and co-curated by the artist Delaine Le Bas with Valentin Diakonov, Curator (Modern and Contemporary Art) and Hannah Vollam, Assistant Curator (Art) at the Whitworth.

With thanks to our official paint sponsor Little Greene. With thanks to Palmieri Contemporary, Celle Ligure SV.

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Image credit

Delaine Le Bas, '+Fabricating My Own Myth – Red Threads & Silver Needles' at Newcastle Contemporary Art 2025. Photo credit: Toby Lloyd

Press Preview

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An exclusive press preview will be held on the afternoon of Thursday 12 February 2026. The programme will include introductory remarks from the artist and curator. Please RSVP to the press contact for further details and to confirm your attendance.

Exhibition Preview Evening

Exhibition opening with a live performance from Delaine Le Bas, Ronke Osinow and Hérã Santos, Thursday 12 February 2026, 6pm – 8pm, at the Whitworth. Further details will be announced soon.

Listings Information

Delaine Le Bas: Un-Fair-Ground

13 February – 31 May 2026

The Whitworth, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6ER

Open Tue-Sun 10-5pm (till 9pm on Thursday)

Free entry

Programme Highlights

Delaine Le Bas in conversation with Clémentine Deliss – 23 April 2026

Neurodivergent friendly tour for Neurodiversity Awareness Day with Sally Hirst – 19 March

Full public programme and booking information will be announced on our website in early 2026.

About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for “the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester” it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm

www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

About Venture Arts

Venture Arts is an award-winning visual arts organisation working with learning disabled artists. Through our studio programmes, exhibitions and collaborative projects, we remove barriers to the arts, put artists in the lead, champion neurodiversity and provide pathways for every individual to develop their creative identity. Venture Arts equips people to succeed as artists, advocates, cultural workers, educators, curators and critics. Each year the Venture Arts team mentor over 200 artists across a wide range of specialisms. Studio artists exhibit regionally, nationally and internationally and work is represented in collections worldwide.

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About Lincoln Cato

Lincoln Cato is a furniture designer and maker of objects based in Brighton on the South Coast of England. His practice explores the use of traditional materials and techniques combined together in unusual combinations. From 1978, he was taught by his father about antiques and in 1987, after his father's death, he decided to design and make furniture and objects.

Lincoln Cato has collaborated with multiple interior designers, including Colefax & Fowler and Ngila Boyd. Cato has been working with Delaine Le Bas since 2019 collaborating on the scenography for 'Zigeuner Sauce' at Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix London in 2021, 'Beware Of Linguistic Engineering 5: Berliner Herbstsalon' at Gorki, Berlin 2022, and 'Incipit Vita Nova' Secession Vienna 2023. Delaine was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2024 for this work, which included sculptural furniture designed by Cato.

Cato has produced the Scenography with Delaine for 'Delainia 17071965 Unfolding' at Tramway for Glasgow International 2024, 'Rags Of Evidence' at John Marchant Brighton 2024 and Quench Margate 2025. He is currently working with Delaine on the scenography and sculptural objects for '+ Fabricating My Own Myth Red Threads and Silver Needles' for NCA Newcastle. He has also worked and performed in several performances with Delaine & Hérã Santos.

About Ronke Osinowo - performer

Ronke Osinowo (b.1973) is a British Nigerian artist based in London. Raised in a Romany household, their multidisciplinary practice spans written text, imagery and performance. Their work examines identities that exist beyond the confines of traditional class structures, often focusing on the liminal, the dislocated and the uncanny.

Ronke has collaborated with Delaine throughout the years in various guises, with notable performances in 'To Gypsyland' (2013) at 198 Contemporary, 'Stranger in Silver Walking on Air' (2025) at The White House and '+Fabricating My Own Myth Red Threads & Silver Needles' (2025) at Newcastle Contemporary Art.

About Hérã Santos – performer

Hérã Santos is a trans artist and activist whose practice centres on performance, visual arts, and fashion. Their work explores themes of gender, identity, trauma, memory, and movement, employing various mediums to create an experimental biographical expression infused with abstraction. Hérã's artistic journey navigates the intersections of these complex concepts, offering a profound exploration of personal and societal narratives.