**Poet Slash Artist**

**Exhibition dates: Fri 2 Jul - Mon 30 Aug 2021**

**Part of Manchester**

**International Festival (MIF) - 1-18 Jul 2021**

Poet Slash Artist is an exhibition of poets who interact with visual arts and visual artists who connect through poetry, co-curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lemn Sissay. From gallery walls to city streets, twenty-five globally distributed poet-slash-artists present work that amplifies the symbiotic relationship between words and images, spanning cultures, continents, languages and generations in this multifaceted group show.

Throughout the history of art and literature today there are more words and images passing between us than ever. Challenging the homogeneity of the Western alphabet and the illusory restraints of linear sentence-form, diverse languages - from First Nations to Arab, African and Islamic - mix with logographic and pictographic scripts to collapse, rebuild and interrogate both image and word as a repository for memory and meaning.

Each poet-slash-artist has also created a newly commissioned work for outdoor poster site presentation, distributed throughout the streets of Manchester.

For more information about the locations of the posters please click [here](https://mif.co.uk/).

**Featuring work by:** Etel Adnan, Adonis, Jay Bernard, Anne Boyer, Julien Creuzet, Imtiaz Dharker, Jimmie Durham, Inua Ellams, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Tracey Emin, Renee Gladman, Vivienne Griffin, Lubaina Himid, Sky Hopinka, Isaiah Hull, Tarek Lakhrissi, Lebogang Mashifane, Friederike Mayröcker, Jota Mombaça, Precious Okoyomon, Heather Phillipson, Tiffany Sia, Cecilia Vicuña, Xu Bing, Gozo Yoshimasu.

Dedicated to the memory of Friederike Mayröcker

(1924-2021)

Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist & Lemn Sissay

Catch a Fire live event curated by Cerys Matthews

Film season by Rachel Hayward & Jason Wood.

**Introduction**

Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and poet Lemn Sissay first met at a dinner for Manchester International Festival’s Artistic Advisors, and it became clear almost instantly that they would need to do a project together. Hans Ulrich’s perception that poetry has (again) become the most urgent artform of our times has been crucial to his thinking in recent years, while Lemn has long been fascinated by how poetry can create a surprisingly visual impact – as evidenced by his own public artworks, huge poems on the walls and streets of Manchester and London.

Poet Slash Artist is a very literal exploration of this shared appreciation and curiosity: an invitation to poets who are also visual artists, and visual artists who write poetry, to share their double practice on the walls of the gallery and the city.

By making such a simple ask of artists, Hans Ulrich and Lemn have created a truly rich and complex show. Every artist in this exhibition explores and expresses the relationship of art and poetry in a different way. And so we experience not just a series of extraordinary works, but a wide-ranging meditation on the possibilities of art and words.

It made immediate sense for this ambitious new venture to be sited at HOME, Manchester’s multi-disciplinary space, where art, performance and film meet each other and mix in the minds and lives of audiences. We’re delighted that HOME has also developed a film programme to accompany the exhibition.

And this exhibition doesn’t stop at the walls of HOME – it extends to the wonderful new posters that each artist has created, bring the questioning energy of the project to the streets of the city. We will be surprised by poetry-art throughout Manchester during MIF21 (1–18 July).

Enormous thanks are due to Hans Ulrich, Lemn, our 25 extraordinary poet/artists (not least the great Friederike Mäyrocker, who sadly passed away in June) and to all who made this great gathering of ideas and imaginations possible.

John McGrath

Artistic Director & Chief Executive,

Manchester International Festival

**Curator Biographies**

**Hans Ulrich Obrist**

Hans Ulrich Obrist (b. 1968, Zürich, Switzerland) is Artistic Director of the Serpentine Galleries in London. Prior to this, he was Curator of the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Since his first show World Soup (The Kitchen Show) in 1991, he has curated more than 300 exhibitions. Most notable among these are the Do It series (1993–); Take Me (I’m Yours) in London (1995), Paris (2015), New York (2016) and Milan (2017); and the Swiss Pavilion at the 14th International Architecture Biennale in Venice (2014).Obrist has also co-curated the Cities on the Move series (1996–2000), Laboratorium (1999), the operatic group exhibition Il Tempo del Postino at MIF07 (2007) and Basel (2009), and The 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 Rooms series (2011–2015). Obrist’s recent shows include IT’S URGENT at LUMA Arles (2019-2021) and Enzo Mari at Triennale Milano (2020). The Handwriting Project, which protests the disappearance of handwriting in the digital age, has been taking place on Instagram since 2013 (@hansulrichobrist)

**Lemn Sissay**

Google the name ‘Lemn Sissay’ and all the returning hits will be about him because there is only one Lemn Sissay in the world. Lemn Sissay is a BAFTA-nominated award-winning writer, international poet, performer, playwright, artist and broadcaster. He has read on stage throughout the world: from the Library of Congress in the United States to the University of Addis Ababa, from Singapore to Sri Lanka, from Bangalore to Dubai, from Bali to Greenland AND Wigan Library. He was awarded an OBE for services to literature and charity by the Queen.

Along with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Margaret Atwood, he won a PEN Pinter Prize in 2019. He is Chancellor of the University of Manchester and an Honorary Doctor from the Universities of Huddersfield, Manchester, Kent and Brunei. He is Dr Dr Dr Dr Lemn Sissay. He was the first poet commissioned to write for the London Olympics and poet of the FA Cup.

Manchester International Festival (MIF) Manchester International Festival (MIF) commissions, produces and presents new work by leading artists across the arts. Alongside our biennial Festival, we run a year-round creative programme in communities across Greater Manchester and offer training in the skill required for creative industries careers via The Factory Academy. MIF’s future home is The Factory, a new cultural space backed by Manchester City Council, HM Government and Arts Council England, and currently being built in the heart of the city.

For more information about Manchester International Festival 2021 please click [here](https://mif.co.uk/).

**Artist Biographies**

**Etel Adnan (b. 1925, Lebanon)**

Adnan is widely recognized as one of the foremost authors, poets and playwrights of her generation. Widely known for her literary work, she moves between the disciplines of writing and art. In love

with nature and its symbiosis with our existence, Adnan paints landscapes without human figures. Seeking to represent only the physical beauty of the universe and the intense bond she has with it, the artist executes her paintings with clear, confident strokes.

**Adonis (b. 1930, Syria)**

Arab poet, translator, editor, and theorist Ali Ahmad Said Esber was the eldest of six children born to a family of farmers in Syria’s Al

Qassabin village. In his late teens, he began writing under the name Adonis, after the Greek god of fertility. Breaking with the tradition of formal structure in Arabic poetry, Adonis experiments with free verse, variable meters, and prose poetry as he engages themes of exile and transformation, in a voice at once playful and prophetic.

**Jay Bernard (b. 1988, UK)**

A writer, poet and artist, Jay Bernard has a practice that is interdisciplinary, critical, queer and rooted in archives and social history. They were was named a Foyle Young Poet of the year in 2005. Bernard won the 2017 Ted Hughes Award for new poetry for their multimedia performance work Surge: Side A, inspired by the 1981 New Cross house fire at a birthday party in which thirteen young black people were killed, cited as a ground-breaking work of excavation, memory and activism.

**Anne Boyer (b. 1973, USA)**

Anne Boyer is a poet and essayist whose work explores the possibilities of literature as an instrument for thinking about experiences often excluded from literature, particularly around gender, class, labour, and illness. Her books include The Undying (2019), a medication upon cancer, care and what it means to be sick inside our data-saturated moment in history, and A Handbook of Disappointed Fate (2018) a collection of essays and fables about poetry, love, death, and other impossible questions.

**Julien Creuzet (b. 1986, France)**

Julien Creuzetis a French-Caribbean artist who lives and works in Paris. A visual artist and poet, he actively intertwines these two practices via sculpture, installation and textual intervention that frequently address his own diasporic experience. Inspired by the poetic and philosophical reflections of Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant on creolisation and migration, Creuzet’s work focuses on the troubled intersection of the history of Martinique and the events of European modernity.

**Imtiaz Dharker (b. 1954, Pakistan)**

A Pakistan-born British poet, artist and documentary filmmaker, Imtiaz Dharker has also scripted and directed over a hundred video films, working in the area of shelter, education and health for women and children. All her poetry collections are illustrated with her drawings, which form an integral part of the books. Themes include home, freedom, journeys geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict and gender politics. Winner of the Queen’s Gold Medal for poetry.

**Jimmie Durham (b. 1940, USA)**

An internationally acclaimed artist, activist, and writer, Jimmie Durham’s work explores the relationship between power and national identity to create potent works that challenge and deconstruct Western hegemony. His artistic practice encompasse sculpture, installation, drawing, video, performance, and photography. Through objects, images, and words, he reveals the prejudices and assumptions of a Western-centric view of the world and gives voice to alternative, non-Western modes of thought.

**Inua Ellams (b. 1984, Nigeria)**

Inua Ellams is a poet, playwright and performer, graphic artist and designer. Identity, displacement and destiny are recurring themes in his work, where he mixes the old with the new: traditional African oral storytelling with contemporary poetics, paint with pixel, texture with vector. His Fuck/Concrete work in the exhibition is from his first full poetry collection The Actual. His interest in exploring multiple artforms and cultural expressions has compelled him into founding The R.A.P Party (Rhythm And Poetry Party), Poetry + Film Hack and The Midnight Run.

**Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan)**

Ibrahim El-Salahi is a Sudanese artist who combines

painting and drawing often using motifs from African,

Arab and Islamic art as well as Western references. He completed his degree at the Slade School of Art in London and returned to Sudan to teach, establishing the Sudanese Embassy’s first ever Department of Culture. El-Salahi spent just over six months wrongly imprisoned without trial in Sudan. The hardship he endured there has informed much of his later work.

**Tracey Emin (b. 1963, UK)**

Emin’s work has an immediacy and often sexually provocative attitude that firmly locates her oeuvre within the tradition of feminist discourse. Emin’s art is one of disclosure, using her life events as inspiration for works ranging from painting, drawing, video and installation, to photography, needlework and sculpture. Emin reveals her hopes, humiliations, failures, and successes in candid and, at times, excoriating work that is frequently both tragic and humorous.

**Renee Gladman (b.1971, USA)**

Renee Gladman is a writer and artist preoccupied with crossings, thresholds, and geographies as they play out at the intersections of poetry, prose, drawing and architecture. She is the author of nine works of prose and one collection of poetry. Gladman describes her practice as “writing that is also drawing”. These works appear in the guise of architectural plans, planetary drawings, scores, charts, maths, among other shapes and lexicons. Some are intended for the book, others the wall.

**Vivienne Griffin (b. 1975, Ireland)**

Griffin makes sculptures, drawings, and audio works in their antidisciplinary practice. The voice, vernacular language and noise are used in text works (2D and aural) and free poetic form is applied to assemblages of objects (found and made). They are currently focussing on the problematics of hyperindividualism in a new body of work and the uses of sound (and/of silence), dance music, meditation, singing and podcasts as means of transcendence of the self.

**Lubaina Himid (b. 1954, Zanzibar)**

Lubaina Himid is a British painter who has dedicated her four-decades-long career to uncovering marginalised and silenced histories, figures, and cultural expressions. She studied Theatre Design at Wimbledon College of Art and went on to receive an MA in Cultural History from the Royal College of Art. Himid currently lives and works in Preston, UK, and is a professor at the University of Central Lancashire. She was the winner of the Turner Prize in 2017.

**Sky Hopinka (b. 1984, USA)**

Sky Hopinka is a Ho-Chunk Nation national and descendent of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians. He is a video artist and language teacher. He studied and taught Chinuk Wawa, a language indigenous to the Lower Columbia River Basin. His work centers around personal positions of homeland and landscape, designs of language and facets of culture contained within, and the play between the accessibility of the known and the unknowable.

**Isaiah Hull (b.1997, UK)**

Isaiah Hull is one of the Roundhouse/Radio 1 Extra finalists in 2015 at the age of 18, having participated in Wordcup, a national youth slam run by Apples and Snakes. Hull is inspired by Saul Williams, Philip Larkin and classical Greek tragedies. He is a member of the young writers collective, Young Identity, which was formed in Moss Side to encourage young adults and teenagers to express themselves through poetry. He has supported Kae Tempest, Lemn Sissay and Skepta.

**Tarek Lakhrissi (b. 1992, France)**

Tarek Lakhrissi is a French artist and poet with a background in literature. He works across installation, performance, film, text and sculpture, engaging with political and social issues around transformative narratives within language, magic, weirdness, codes and love. His work questions how to defend oneself, particularly individuals or groups who are marginalised and persecuted, in order to maintain one’s identity and reflect on a desire to stay alive an be unapologetic.

**Lebogang Mashifane (b. 1989, South Africa)**

Lebogang Mashifane is a member of the Inkanyiso collective; South African visual activists an photographers who produce, educate, and disseminate information for the LGBTI community and marginalised people. They incorporate photography, poetry and writing in their work. Mashifane believes testimony through photography, text and spoken word is paramount to face the challenges in thei community and beyond, as a way to articulate their existence, solidarity, and resistance.

**Friederike Mayröcker (1924-2021, Austria)**

Friederike Mayröcker was among the most influential and decorated German-language poets of the postwar period, producing an immense body of work that encompassed nearly every literary genre. Her work was formally inventive, much of it exploiting the imaginative potential of language to capture the minutiae of daily life, the natural world, love and grief. Her poems have been compared to linguistic collages, mystical or hallucinatory montages of language and experience.

**Jota Mombaça (b. 1991, Brazil)**

Jota Mombaça defines themselves as a non-binary black bicha, born and raised in Natal, in the northeast of Brazil. Bicha has traditionally been a Brazilian slang used against homosexual men. For the artist these characteristics are forms of reappropriation. Mombaça investigates the relationship between monstrosity and humanity, queer studies, political intersectionality, anti-colonial justice, redistribution of violence, visionary fictions and the end of the world.

**Precious Okoyomon (b. 1993, UK)**

Okoyomon’s multidisciplinary practice investigates the racialisation of the natural world (Okoyomon believes the sun to be indisputably black), Christianity, intimacy, and ideas and experiences of life, death and time. Their installations, sculptures, performances, and poetry often draw from their family history as well as their encounters with queerness and the internet, and frequently return to figures like the angel, the sun and the trees as visual and conceptual motifs.

**Heather Phillipson (b. 1978, UK)**

Heather Phillipson works across video, sculpture, web projects, music, drawing and poetry. She describes her works as ‘quantum thought experiments’. They often carry an underlying sense of threat – a suggestion that, in the artist’s words, ‘received ideas, images and the systems that underpin them may be on the verge of collapse’. She was commissioned for the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, and recipient of The Tate Britain Commission 2021.

**Tiffany Sia (b. 1988, Hong Kong)**

Tiffany Sia is an artist, filmmaker, poet and founder of Speculative Place, an experimental, independent project space hosting residents working in film, writing and art in Hong Kong. Sia interrogates the limits of intimacy and political solidarity between systems of knowledge, employing aesthetics of the illicit, or the unseeable - whether through face-pixelation, staging leaks, or smut - as potent sites for smuggling sensitive material intended to stage discursive, critical encounters.

**Cecilia Vicuña (b.1948, Chile)**

Cecilia Vicuña is a poet, artist, filmmaker and activist. Her work addresses pressing concerns of the modern world, including ecological destruction, human rights, and cultural homogenization. Her multi-dimensional works begin as a poem, an image that morphs into a film, a song, a sculpture, or a collective performance. She calls these “lo precario” (the precarious): transformative acts that bridge the gap between art and life, the ancestral and the avant-garde.

**Xu Bing (b.1955, China)**

Xu Bing has developed a system for writing English called “square word calligraphy,” which organizes the letters of each English word into structures that resemble Chinese characters. One consequence of his project is that non-Chinese speakers can understand how Chinese characters are similarly composed of discrete phonetic and lexigraphic components. In his work for Poet Slash Artist, Xu Bing ‘translates’ an extract of Lemn Sissay’s poem, Gold from the Stone (2021).

**Gozo Yoshimasu (b. 1939, Japan)**

Gōzō Yoshimasuis a pioneer of unexplored linguistic landscapes in modern Japanese poetry. Repetitions, references, talking in many voices, interruptions, subscripts, blank lines and marginal notes introduce

intentional disruptions in his work, and at the same time, highlight the effect and visual representation of the Japanese language. Yoshimasu has published more than 30 collections of poetry and is considered a key figure in contemporary Japanese poetry.

**Poet Slash Artist Film Season**

As part of MIF’s Poet Slash Artist, HOME has curated a corresponding film season to look at inter-disciplinary practice and figures who overlap between the worlds of art and poetry.

Curated by Rachel Hayward, Head of Film and Jason Wood, Artistic Director: Film and Culture.

**Double Bill/Looking for Langston + Derek (15)**

**Tue 6 Jul, 17:45**

**Dir Isaac Julien**

Award-winning British filmmaker Isaac Julien’s lyrical and poetic consideration of the life of revered Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes plus Julien’s collaboration with Tilda Swinton on the life of Derek

Jarman. Using archive footage, the documentary is centred in a day-long interview Jarman gave

to Colin McCabe in the 80s.

**La Belle et la Bête (PG)**

**Sun 11 Jul, 15:30**

**Dir Jean Cocteau**

Cocteau’s spellbinding, sensuous masterpiece was recently described by Guillermo del Toro as ‘the most perfect cinematic fable ever told’. A hapless merchant, lost in a dark forest, seeks refuge in the castle of a hideous monster who threatens to kill him unless one of his three daughters will agree to take his place. But when Beauty appears, the Beast falls madly in love with her.

**Where I Am is Here: Margaret Tait at 100 (12A)**

**Thu 8 Jul, 18:30**

Dir Margaret Tait Margaret Tait (1918-1999), stands out as one of Scotland’s most innovative and stridently independent filmmakers. Although her work was relatively unknown during her lifetime, recent years have heralded a more wide-spread acknowledgement of her significance across several areas of the arts in Scotland – film, art, poetry. We’ll be screening a selection of her shorts released in 2018 to mark the 100th anniversary of Margaret Tait’s birth.

**Heart of a Dog (PG)**

**Mon 12 Jul, 18:15**

**Dir Laurie Anderson**

2011 marked a watershed in the life of artist and musician Laurie Anderson. Her beloved dog Lolabelle passed away. Not long after that she also lost her mother, to be followed less than two years later by Lou Reed Anderson. Like her multimedia performances, Heart of a Dog is a patchwork of disparate elements, interspersing animations and 8mm home movies with found footage.

For more information about the Poet Slash Artist film season please click [here](https://homemcr.org/event/poet-slash-artist-film-season/).

**Special thanks**

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In memory of Friederike Mayröcker 20 December 1924 – 4 June 2021