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Gareth Harris, "Critic's pick of Yorkshire Sculpture International," *The Art Newspaper*, June 25, 2019.



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Critic's pick of Yorkshire Sculpture International

GARETH HARRIS

The new event posits the Northern English county as a prime arts destination

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Could the new Yorkshire Sculpture International initiative turn the northern England region into a new hotspot in Europe for sculpture, providing a viable alternative to the acclaimed German festival Sculpture Projects Münster? The UK artist Phyllida Barlow has provided a curatorial thesis for the festival: "Sculpture is the most anthropological of the art forms" (or, as the YSI website states, there is a basic human impulse to make and connect with objects).

The ambitious new festival takes place across four partner venues: the Leeds-based Henry Moore Institute, the Leeds Art Gallery, the Hepworth Wakefield and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park until 29 September 2019. The event encompasses a wealth of new commissions, more than ten exhibitions and an associate artist scheme. We picked out some highlights.

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Tau Lewis, Hepworth Wakefield. Photo: Gareth Harris

One of the most impressive aspects of the festival is the inclusion of artists showing works for the first time in the UK. Toronto-born Tau Lewis presents a series of works made from discarded or donated textiles, including a large-scale quilt entitled *The Coral Reef Preservation Society* (2019). This absorbing, unsettling patchwork, awash with aquatic life forms, harks back to her childhood home.

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Nobuko Tsuchiya, Leeds Art Gallery. Photo: Gareth Harris

Tsuchiya is another emerging artist given a prime platform at the festival, presenting her first solo exhibition in a UK gallery. The Japanese artist creates random assemblages from scraps of detritus, creating wisps and scraps bound delicately together such as *Soporific Machine* (2019). Tsuchiya has created the works in-situ over the past six weeks, creating her own sculptural narrative within the four walls of the gallery.

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Damien Hirst, Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Photo: Gareth Harris

Hirst's gargantuan sculpture of a flayed female torso, *The Virgin Mother* (2005-6), looks strangely at home within the rolling dales of Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Hirst's startling piece shows a heavily pregnant woman from one side with her skin and skeleton intact; encircle the work, and a cartoonish foetus becomes visible along with raw flesh and a disturbing, manic skull.

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Rashid Johnson, Henry Moore Institute. Photo: Gareth Harris

Prepare to get messy and moist in this installation made from shea butter (Shea Butter Three Ways, 2019), a material used in cosmetics extracted from the African shea tree. Visitors are invited to mould some of the butter blocks, creating their own masterpieces. Johnson has increasingly used the greasy, malleable matter, making it an integral part of his practice.

Nairy Baghramian, Hepworth Wakefield. Photo: Gareth Harris

The Iranian artist Nairy Baghramian combines aluminium casts, coloured wax pieces and lacquer painted braces into architectural compositions that look as precarious as they are intriguing. Her Maintainers series (2018) appear both fragile and sturdy, with nooks and crannies that demand inspection. Another work, Coude à Coude (2019), is just as innovative, comprising a pair of coloured slabs nestled together 'elbow to elbow'.

Ayşe Erkmen, Leeds Art Gallery. Photo: Gareth Harris

The Turkish artist Ayşe Erkmen has transformed the Central Court, reconfiguring this historic exhibition space by inserting a new roof closer to the floor. She has filled the court with a vast aluminium frame, entitled, three of four (2019), that envelops visitors, changing how they engage with the space. Erkmen has effectively created a contemporary room within an historic room, shifting perspectives.