



Images: (Left to Right) Liz Miller Kovacs, 'Supernatural,' 2024, Michelle Blanke, 'Secret Garden', 2023, Åsikò, 'New World Giants', 2022

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The Future Is Now: Two Landmark Exhibitions

Redefining Contemporary Art This Autumn

19 September 2024 – 25 January 2025

At a time when the UK's cultural spotlight remains firmly fixed on London, **From Memory to Possibility** and **Future Tense** signal a meaningful shift. These are not satellite shows or regional supplements - they are major exhibitions with national and international relevance, rooted proudly in the North. This is contemporary art at its most ambitious, critical and globally engaged.

Taking place in **York**, a city fast gaining recognition for its leadership in media arts and cross-disciplinary innovation, these shows challenge the long-standing assumption that cultural leadership must be metropolitan. They form part of a wider movement across the North to **Look Up** - to think big, act boldly, and create cultural experiences that rival anything happening in the capital. York's position as a UNESCO City of Media Arts only strengthens this momentum, placing it firmly on the map as a place where ideas and art thrive.

This autumn, **York Art Gallery** presents two landmark exhibitions that speak directly to the urgencies of our time: *From Memory to Possibility*, the 2025 edition of the **Aesthetica Art Prize**, and *Future Tense: Art in the Age of Transformation*, a bold exploration of sensory and immersive installation. Together, they offer something rare in today's cultural landscape - a space where art becomes a catalyst for dialogue, connection and real-world reflection.

From Memory to Possibility:

The 2025 Aesthetica Art Prize

From Memory to Possibility brings together 25 of the most exciting artists working today. More than a prize show, this is a dynamic platform for cultural exchange and cross-disciplinary conversation - one that challenges conventional exhibition formats and invites visitors to think deeply about who we are, and who we could become.

This year's finalists span five continents and bring diverse perspectives to bear on some of the most pressing issues of our time: from climate collapse and digital surveillance to diasporic identity, neurodivergence, queerness, and postcolonial memory. Their work reflects the ways in which personal stories intersect with global events - exploring trauma, resilience, connection and transformation.

Featured artists include **Academy Award-shortlisted Brendan Dawes**, **Jarman Award winner Morgan Quaintance**, and rising international voices such as **Àsikò**, **Mónica Alcázar-Duarte**, **Princess Arinola Adegbite**, **Sujata Setia**, **Bart Nelissen**, **Ellie Davies**, and **Hussina Raja**. Their practices span film, sculpture, performance, photography, AI and generative media, echoing the global discourse of artists like Kara Walker, Refik Anadol, Olafur Eliasson and Shirin Neshat.

This is an exhibition where creativity and activism meet - a space for ideas, exchange and action. Through themes of memory and identity, the Aesthetica Art Prize amplifies underrepresented voices and offers alternative visions of belonging, technology, and care in an increasingly complex world.

The shortlisted artists for the 2025 Aesthetica Art Prize are:

Àsikò, **Mónica Alcázar-Duarte**, **Princess Arinola Adegbite**, **Joanne Coates**, **Rayvenn D'Clark**, **Ellie Davies**, **Brendan Dawes**, **Sofi Djalil**, **Gala Hernández López**, **Daisy Hulbert**, **Bart Nelissen**, **Tobi Onabolu**, **Morgan Quaintance**, **Hussina Raja**, **Emma Scarafiotti**, **Sujata Setia**, and others to be announced.

Future Tense: Art in the Age of Transformation

What does it mean to live in the "future tense"?

This groundbreaking exhibition explores how artists are responding to our times - marked by environmental crisis, social justice movements, and the rapid evolution of digital technology - with vision, urgency and hope.

At its centre are large-scale, immersive installations from two pioneers of sensory and digital art: **Liz West** and **Squidsoup**. West's chromatic spaces envelop visitors in radiant colour and light, encouraging emotional connection, wonder, and reflection. In contrast, Squidsoup's digital constellations use data, light and interaction to explore presence, connection and the intangible dimensions of experience in a hyperconnected world.

Together, these works create a compelling journey through light, space, and emotion. But more than just spectacle, **Future Tense** is a call to action: a space where creativity challenges the status quo, offering new ways to imagine sustainability, equity, and togetherness in an uncertain world.

A National Platform for Innovation and Dialogue

Both exhibitions are curated by **Cherie Federico** and produced in partnership with **York Museums Trust**. Together, they showcase how contemporary art can spark transformative conversations across disciplines and communities.

Set against the backdrop of York's thriving cultural ecosystem - and its designation as a **UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts** - this year's exhibitions reaffirm the power of art to shape more connected, inclusive, and imaginative futures.

These are not passive viewing experiences. Visitors are invited to engage, respond, and participate. Whether walking through an algorithm-generated environment or encountering personal stories of migration and memory, audiences will leave transformed.

From Memory to Possibility and **Future Tense** are the season's must-see exhibitions - an invitation to reflect, reimagine, and take part in building the future we want.

Cherie Federico, Director of Aesthetica and Curator of Art Prize, says: "This year's exhibition amplifies the voices of 25 shortlisted artists that challenge traditional power structures, and represent diverse global perspectives, from diasporic communities to indigenous territories, creating a rich and urgent narrative that addresses the complexities of today's world. Climate emergency, digital culture, racial injustice, memory and identity are just some of the themes highlighted. Several works transform personal histories and everyday objects into powerful statements about presence, value, and resilience. This dynamic exhibition embraces embodied knowledge, queerness, and neurodivergence, inviting audiences to experience art as a transformative, sensory encounter. It offers visitors a rare opportunity to engage with some of the most important contemporary art of our time - work that challenges, inspires and invites us all to imagine new possibilities for the future."

Livia Turnbull, Curator of Contemporary Art at York Art Gallery says: "We are so pleased to welcome the Aesthetica Art Prize back for another year. It's always a pleasure to celebrate such creative talent and display important and innovative contemporary artworks at York Art Gallery. These displays complement the contemporary works in our own collection and bring artistic diversity to the exhibitions programme."

Exhibition Dates

19 September 2024 – 25 January 2026
York Art Gallery, Exhibition Square, York YO1 7EW
www.aestheticamagazine.com/art-prize
www.yorkartgallery.org.uk

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Notes for Editors

- To watch video interviews with the shortlisted artists, [click here](#).
- To learn more about the 2025 Aesthetica Art Prize, [click here](#).
- To download press images, [click here](#).
- The Aesthetica Art Prize Exhibition runs 19 September – 25 January 2026 at York Art Gallery.
- The Prize is a celebration of the most exciting emerging and established artists from across the world, inviting audiences to be inspired by a wealth of ideas and perspectives. The £10,000 award celebrates contemporary art in all its forms, offering opportunities for publication and exhibition at a major public gallery. Entries are open for the next edition until 30 September. To find out more, [click here](#).
- The Art Prize is hosted Aesthetica Magazine: www.aestheticamagazine.com/