

MEDIA RELEASE

THE ART OF SUMMER STARTS NOW: SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2023 SET TO SOAR

4 January 2023

Sydney Festival's high-summer program of spectacular art and culture lands in the city from tomorrow, 5 January, with an expansive line-up of touring artists, world premiere works, new commissions, Australian exclusives, local talent and an extensive free events program.

Exclusive to Sydney – and commencing a day ahead of the festival's official opening – *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* explores the life and work of one of history's most influential artists: Frida Kahlo. Taking over Barangaroo's The Cutaway with nine rooms of multi-sensory experiences, the exhibition features historical photographs and original films, captivating holography, 360° projections and a virtual reality system that will literally transport attendees inside Kahlo's most famous works. Traditional Mexican musicians and dancers will also perform live within the space, providing further sights and sounds from Frida's world. Co-created by the **Frida Kahlo Corporation** and the renowned Spanish digital arts company **Layers of Reality**, this Australian premiere is set to be a summertime showstopper.

And, in a coup for Sydney-siders and visitors alike, there are now even more opportunities to experience this Sydney-only showcase with the announcement today of the extension of *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* through to **7 March**.

On the eve of the 2023 festival opening, Artistic Director **Olivia Ansell** said: "We're beyond thrilled to present an exhilarating summer of art right across greater Sydney, kicking off with blockbuster experience *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* and hugely popular *Afrique en Cirque* at Riverside Theatres Parramatta. With over 100 events and 1000 Australian and international artists, this year's festival, which features 18 world premieres and 14 Australian exclusives, will attract visitors and Sydneysiders to a huge array of immersive theatre, opera, cabaret, visual art, dance and family entertainment alongside a range of free and low-cost events, including our dedicated music club – *The Weary Traveller*. We invite you to rediscover this city differently."

Minister for Tourism and the Arts **Ben Franklin** said *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* will showcase Sydney as a global cultural destination.

"This extraordinary exploration of one of the greatest cultural icons of the 20th century is the perfect way to open Sydney Festival," Mr Franklin said.

"*Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* provides audiences with a uniquely immersive experience through interactive spaces, incorporating photographs, films, digital environments, collector's items, music and live performance."

"This incredible Frida Kahlo exhibition is expected to draw thousands of visitors to Sydney and inject \$3 million into the NSW economy."

Running through to 29 January, Sydney Festival's program of art, theatre, live music, dance and performance will engulf the city at large. Highlights include the award-winning opera performance, *Sun & Sea* from Lithuanian artists **Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė**, **Vaiva Grainytė**, and **Lina Lapelytė**; the world premiere of the immensely powerful *Tracker* from Wiradjuri director-choreographer **Daniel Riley** and **Australian Dance Theatre**; the ferocious talents of Spain's formidable queen of flamenco, **Sara Baras** in *Alma* at the Sydney Opera House; and *ROOM*, the latest surreal work from Swiss-born auteur **James Thiérée**.

Across 25 days the festival will reimagine Sydney's venues old, beloved and undiscovered, with site-specific programming that will have audiences seeing their city anew. Central to this is the festival's late night hub and pop-up venue, *The Weary Traveller*, housed in the underground bar of the Harry Siedler-designed Commercial Travellers' Association building in Martin Place. The space plays host to 16 nights of live music, including gigs from **Alice Skye**, **Astral People**, **Automatic**, **June**

Jones, Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith, Lil Silva, Party Dozen, Tom Snowdon, Moktar, Two Birds with Bayand, Coloured Stone, HTRK and Potion. And in the above ground hotel rooms of the building's mushroom facade is Kelsey Lu's *The Lucid: A Dream Portal to Awakening*, an 8 hour audio work that sees punters stay overnight for a sonic slumber like no other.

Elsewhere, Jenny Kee's *The Aunties*, a playful pair of inflated beings will pop up at South Eveleigh; UK poet and experimental saxophonist Alabaster dePlume has created a bespoke poetry work for the confines of the Kimpton Margot Hotel's basement safe entitled *In Chamber*; some of Australia's most beloved female performers bring their vocal prowess to the festival's Women in Cabaret series at the Wharf, including Ursula Yovich, Christie Whelan Browne, Katie Noonan and Prinnie Stevens.

Vigil: Awaken brings together the peoples of Eora at Barangaroo Reserve on the evening of 25 January to re-awaken the spirit of Me-Mel (formerly Goat Island), which has been a key landmark of Sydney Harbour for several hundred years and a sacred place for the clans of Eora for tens of thousands. Created by Jacob Nash and Stephen Page, and featuring ceremonial smoke, flares, music, light, performance and narration, *Vigil: Awaken* will create a dramatic and mesmerising multimedia art piece in a cleansing of place and an honouring of sovereignty. The event will also be available to stream via **Sydney Festival at Home**, ensuring audiences everywhere can take part.

Carriageworks is home to a dynamic line-up, including the Sydney premiere of the dazzling new stage show by visual theatre masterminds **Dead Puppet Society** and Sydney physical theatre virtuosos **Legs On The Wall**, **Holding Achilles**; **WORD MADE FLESH**, an architecturally-scaled artistic installation from Australian multidisciplinary artist, Paul Yore; and the Australian premiere of *Antarctica*, an ambitious new opera collaboration from world-class Dutch ensemble **Asko | Schönberg** and the **Sydney Chamber Opera**.

The world premiere of *Hide the Dog*, a cross-Tasman collaboration from **Performing Lines TAS** set to delight families with its brilliant costuming and adventurous story, will be presented at the Sydney Opera House. Also at the Opera House is UK dance work, *Neighbours*, performed by two extraordinary and culturally distinct dancers, **Brigel Gjoka** (ex-Netherlands Dance Theatre) and **Rauf "RubberLegz" Yasit** as they explore what binds and separates us with stellar technique and surprising intimacy.

The city's theatres will play host to a remarkable line-up of new works and acclaimed storytelling with the world premiere of **Melanie Tait's** (*The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* razor sharp new comedy), **A Broadcast Coup** and **Thomas Weatherall's** (*Heartbreak High*) self-penned **Blue** at Belvoir Street Theatre, alongside the Australian Premiere of Edinburgh Fringe First Award-winner and heart-warmer, **Happy Meal**.

Meanwhile, the Seymour Centre will provide a theatre-filled festival hub, with DJs and tasty eats available in the courtyard, alongside productions of the commanding one-woman play *Girls & Boys* starring **Justine Clarke**, clowning sensation **Thom Monckton's** hilarious *The Artist* and the circus, comedy and cabaret extravaganza, **Werk It** by **Circus TrickTease**.

For families, the award-winning **Insect Circus** from **London's String Theatre** enlivens the traditional marionette artform; **Restless Dance Theatre's** highly original dance work, **Guttered**, will be performed in bowling alley lanes of the Parramatta Leagues Club; the Australian Museum invites kids to plunge into the world of sharks in an immersive "underwater" adventure, **Erth's Shark Dive**; and a six-metre-tall magical water-play park, **Cupid's Koi Garden**, arrives at Tumbalong Park.

The festival also expands into the city's west with the acrobatic, musical and choreographic talents of West African circus group, **Afrique en Cirque** at Parramatta's Riverside Theatre, the façade of Old Government House will be wrapped in the projected photographic work of **Brenda L Croft** for **Dyin Nura (Women's Place)** and the beloved **Sydney Symphony Under the Stars** event returns to Parramatta Park in celebration of Lunar New Year. And in South Western Sydney, Casula Powerhouse will take **FLIGHT** with an epic visual art exhibition that explores aerodynamics and aviation.

The festival's **Tix for Next to Nix** initiative returns once again in 2023, with limited same day tickets available for select shows for just \$26.00 (plus booking fee). Every morning during the festival, between 9am and 10am, an exclusive number of tickets for limited performances later that same day will be made available for *next to nix*. Plus this year, punters won't need to queue, with the program now operating digitally via the Sydney Festival [website](https://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/).

And the **Sydney Festival at Home** digital programming will bring the festival to audiences everywhere, with special festival content accessible online and from home, including a livestream of aerial dance work *The Air Between Us*, in conversations with the artists behind *Tracker* and *Sun & Sea* and a special live recording of *Holding Achilles* available on demand for a limited time, following the season at Carriageworks.

NOTES TO EDITOR

- Sydney Festival runs from 5-29 January 2023
- Tickets on sale now
- For a complete summary of this year's program strands including all free events visit [sydneyfestival.org.au/](https://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/) for more

details

- *Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon* runs through to 7 March

MEDIA KIT

Imagery and media sheets are available [here](#)

'The Art of Summer' visual trailer [here](#)

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