

🕒 This article is more than **6 months old**

Dark depths with Emin, a homoerotic saint and punchy political posters – the week in art

Tracey gathers the melancholy giants, a lost London is remembered and collages celebrate Scots strugglers – [all in your weekly dispatch](#)



📷 A melancholy swell ... Deben 03 03 2022 by Johnnie Shand Kydd. Photograph: Courtesy of the Artist and Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate



Jonathan Jones

Fri 16 Jan 2026 12.55 CET

 Prefer the Guardian on Google

Exhibition of the week

Crossing into Darkness

Tracey Emin curates an exhibition about thresholds of despair and the power of melancholy featuring Goya, Munch, Bourgeois, Baselitz and other visionary artists.

- [Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate](#), opens Sunday

Also showing

Ming Wong

The National Gallery's artist in residence responds to homoerotic paintings of Saint Sebastian.

- [National Gallery, London](#), until 5 April

Souvenir

Artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard curate this homage to the lost London of the late 1970s and early 1980s, with Michael Bracewell, Sal Pittman and more.

- [Fitzrovia Chapel, London](#), until 8 February

Story Painters, Picture Writers

The power of narrative and the mysterious relation of words to images engross the artists here including Julian Bell, Gala Hills and Jane Griffiths.

- [St John's College, Oxford](#), 20 January to 2 February

Solidarity Wins

Community-made posters, collages and other artworks testify to the power of popular struggle in north Edinburgh.

- [Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh](#), until 30 April

Image of the week





📷 Photograph: René Gerritsen/Mauritshuis

Bucolic scene The Bull by Paulus Potter is one of the star paintings at the Mauritshuis in The Hague. But research has shown that the bull's testicles were halved in size by the artist to respect 17th-century sensibilities. The image above shows the original outline of the beast's build, against the painting's final form. Abbie Vandivere, a paintings conservator at the museum, says: "[The bull's] balls were bigger and lower, his whole back end was shifted - but, indeed, the balls are the biggest change." [More details here.](#)

What we learned

[Ian McKellen will lip-sync to previously unheard audio tapes of LS Lowry](#)

[Performance artist Tehching Hsieh lived in a cage, jumped from a window and spent a year tied to a friend](#)

[David Bowie visited a psychiatric clinic in 1994 to spend time with outsider artists](#)

[Joseph Beuys' bathtub contains all the horrors of modern history](#)

[Piet Mondrian may owe his success to a cross-dressing lesbian artist who lived in a Cornish cove](#)

[Abstract painter Sean Scully uses loss, breakdown and schooling by 'scary nuns' to fuel his art](#)

✉ Free newsletter | Weekly

Sign up to Art Weekly

Your weekly art world round-up, sketching out all the biggest stories, scandals and exhibitions

👁 [Preview latest](#)

Enter your email

[Sign up](#)

[Trump has put museums and galleries in jeopardy across the States](#)

[Martin Roemers' remarkable photo series Homo Mobilis tells us what a person's vehicle says about them](#)

Masterpiece of the week

Saint Cecilia by Pietro da Cortona





Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Images

Women often take centre stage in the religious art of the baroque - the emotive, sometimes lurid, often spectacular style that emerged in early 17th-century Italy to serve a renewed Catholic church in its battle for hearts and souls. This paved the way for a female visionary, Artemisia Gentileschi, to depict women as heroes and avengers: but as this work by one of her male contemporaries in early 1600s Rome reveals, that focus on the female was not unique to her. Perhaps it was a way for the church to involve and control women, for Cortona portrays Saint Cecilia as a bland-faced icon of chastity: the story of this early Christian figure had it that she refused to let her husband touch her. She also stands by a pipe organ, for Cecilia became patron saint of music in the middle ages. Harmonious and virtuous,

Cortona's Cecilia urges women to emulate her, and do as they are told by the church.

● [National Gallery](#)

Sign up to the Art Weekly newsletter

If you don't already receive our regular roundup of art and design news via email, [please sign up here](#).

Get in Touch

If you have any questions or comments about any of our newsletters please email newsletters@theguardian.com

We know this is annoying ... so here is 50% off

Seeing these messages can be repetitive. We know that. (Imagine what it's like writing them ...)

But it's also extremely important. One of the Guardian's most valuable assets is its reader funding.

1. Reader funding means we can cover what we like. We're not beholden to the political whims of a billionaire owner. No one can tell us what not to say or what not to report.

2. Reader funding means we don't have to chase clicks and traffic. We're not desperately seeking your attention for the sake of it: we pursue the stories that our editorial team deems important, and believe are worthy of your time.

3. Reader funding means we can keep our website open, allowing as many people as possible to read quality journalism from around the world - especially those who live in places where the free press is in peril.

Right now, the Guardian's work is funded by just 2.4% of our regular readers. We know that not everyone can afford to pay for news, but if it would help to convince people like you from Germany to support us, for a limited time, we're offering **50% off for six months or 50% off an annual subscription to All-access digital and Digital plus**. All-access digital gives you an enhanced, ad-free Guardian experience, while Digital plus includes all the benefits of All-access digital, along with our 200-year archive, the digital newspaper and the Guardian Weekly digital magazine. **We value every contribution, but whether you choose Supporter Plus or Digital Plus, you'll be helping fund our most crucial, fearless journalism. As our thanks, we can offer you some great benefits (including making these messages go away). We've made it quick and easy to set up, so we hope you'll consider it. Thank you.**

☐ Support €4/monthly

☐ Support €12 ~~€14~~ €6/monthly

Unlock **All-access digital** benefits:

50% off

Unlock full access digital benefits.

Far fewer asks for support

Ad-free reading

Unlimited access to the Guardian app

Exclusive newsletter for supporters

Unlimited access to the Feast App

☐ Support with another amount

Continue →

Remind me in September

VISA



**AMERICAN
EXPRESS**

PayPal

Most viewed