

Top Five Exhibitions for October



This October, Barbican Centre rejects the polished and perfect stereotypes of the fashion industry, instead considering how dirt and decay have shaped design and activism. At Stills, Edinburgh, Matthew Arthur Williams continues his career-long investigation into memory, queerness and race, whilst Fidelio Faustino's analogue works, deeply rooted in the Afro-Caribbean experience, are exhibited aboard an Amsterdam ferry. Karimah Ashadu, one of contemporary art's most exciting names, premieres a new film at Camden Arts Centre, sharing the lives of bodybuilders in Lagos, Nigeria. Huxley Parlour, meanwhile, displays the iconic work of Jem Southam, who has dedicated decades to capturing the changing landscape of Cornwall.



In Consideration of Our Times

Stills, Edinburgh | Until 18 October

Matthew Arthur Williams is known for merging family archives and oral histories to consider memory, queerness and race. His new body of work, on display at Stills, Edinburgh, continues his investigation into the absence of representation in traditional archives and national histories. In one poignant moving-image artwork, a violinist wanders through rural Britain, searching for a lost romantic symphony. Elsewhere, self-portraits and landscape photographs capture places “in a state of constant loss.” The artist explains: “At the top of the list for me when producing work that carries multiple themes or subject matters, my obsession with the power of image making and how we read an image comes first. My work is saying something very loudly to me, and I like to leave it up to the viewer if those things resonate for them. This show at Stills is no different and continues to take a moment to stop or move at a slower pace.”



Fidelio Faustino: Tapsei

Foam, Amsterdam | Until 23 November

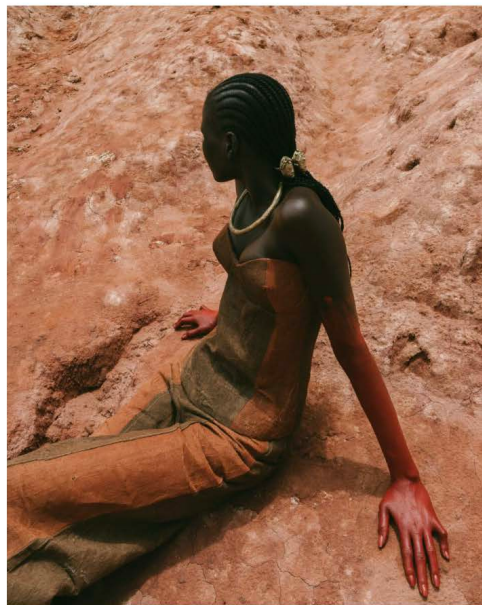
In Sranantogo, a language originating in Suriname, the word “Tapsei” translates to “upwards.” Beyond its literal meaning, it is used to refer to a way of orienting oneself in the world, navigating through landscape, memory and community. In a new analogue work, artist Fidelio Faustino draws on this concept and how it influences memory, spirituality and imagination. It is a meditation on how histories, both inherited and personal, are carried within the body and across generations. His practice is deeply rooted in the Afro-Caribbean experience, spotlighting the lived experiences of Black and Indigenous communities. What’s particularly unique about this exhibition is that it is located aboard ferry F2, departing from Amsterdam Central Station. It is a bold and forward-looking curatorial decision that mirrors the artist’s decision to forge a creative path beyond the conventional routes of the art world.



Karimah Ashadu: *Tendered*

Camden Arts Centre, London | 10 October – 22 March

Tendered is the first UK solo exhibition by filmmaker Karimah Ashadu. The artist is an exciting figure on the global scene, winning the Silver Lion for Promising Young Artist at the 2024 Venice Biennale. Camden Arts Centre's show premieres *Muscle*, which tells an intimate story of bodybuilders in the heart of Lagos' slums as they strive for a "hyper-masculine ideal." This new work is accompanied by earlier films, also set in Nigeria, such as *King of Boys* (2015), which offers a window into the inner workings of the Makoko abattoir, and *Cowboy* (2022), a two-channel piece that follows a man who dedicates his life to the care of horses. Ashadu's practice is rooted in her upbringing between the UK and Nigeria, creating a point of view that is at once intimate and slightly removed. It is through this personal experience that Ashadu observes the lives of men at work – such earlier works like *Plateau* (2022), which follows the lives of tin miners.



Dirty Looks: *Desire and Decay in Fashion*

Barbican Centre, London | Until 25 January

Fashion has long been linked to glossy perfection, polish and refinement. Think of glamorous red-carpets, the exclusive Met Gala, or the "clean girl" aesthetic that recently dominated make-up trends. But that's not the only story. Barbican Centre's latest show, *Dirty Looks*, revels in alternative style – foregrounding looks that defy beauty standards by embracing dirt and decay. Audiences will encounter scuffed trainers and "bogcore" to dresses buried underground. A new exhibition at Barbican Centre asks: what does this desire

for decay tell us about ourselves and the state of fashion? The show brings together 60 designers from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. It tracks how grime became a symbol of resistance and later, a tool to question consumerism, redefine luxury and reconnect with nature. Shanay Jhaveri, Head of Visual Art, says: “*Dirty Looks* invites us to reconsider beauty and the regenerative power of making in a world in flux.”



Jem Southam: The Red River

Huxley Parlour, London | From 24 October

Jem Southam's *The Red River* was first exhibited in 1987 and has remained central to his career ever since. It portrays rural, post-industrial Cornwall, focusing on the intersection of manufactured landscapes with the natural world. Southam followed the path of the iconic Red River from its source near Troon, along its heavy industrialised valley, to the sea. The water is striking, dyed an unnatural shade by the tin mines that once dominated the area. Over the course of two decades, Southam documented the decline and almost entire disappearance of these mines, which were once the heartbeat of industry and employment in the area. He photographs scattered, decaying relics of this waning era as they slowly merge with local flora, leaving scars on the land. In this exhibition, Southam brings to light how history is never truly forgotten. Instead, it becomes part of our surroundings and shapes the landscape for the next generation.

Words: Emma Jacob

Image Credits:

1. Jem Southam, *Brea*, 1982-1994
2. Matthew Arthur Williams, *Emollition Man*, 2023.
3. IAMISIGO, handwoven raffia-cotton blend look dyed with coffee and mud, Shadows, Spring/Summer 2024. Photograph by Fred Odede. Courtesy of IAMISIGO.
4. IAMISIGO, clay-dyed bark cloth dress, Shadows, Spring/Summer 2024. Photograph by Fred Odede. Courtesy of IAMISIGO.
5. Karimah Ashadu, *Plateau* (still), 2021-2022. Courtesy of the artist, Fondazione In Between Art Film and Sadie Coles HQ.
6. IAMISIGO, handwoven raffia-cotton blend look dyed with coffee and mud, Shadows, Spring/Summer 2024. Photograph by Fred Odede. Courtesy of IAMISIGO.
7. IAMISIGO, clay-dyed barkcloth dress, Shadows, Spring/Summer 2024. Photograph by Fred Odede. Courtesy of IAMISIGO.
8. Jem Southam, *The Stream at Menadarva*, 1982-1994.