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Julian Perry: There rolls the deep The Rising Sea Level Paintings

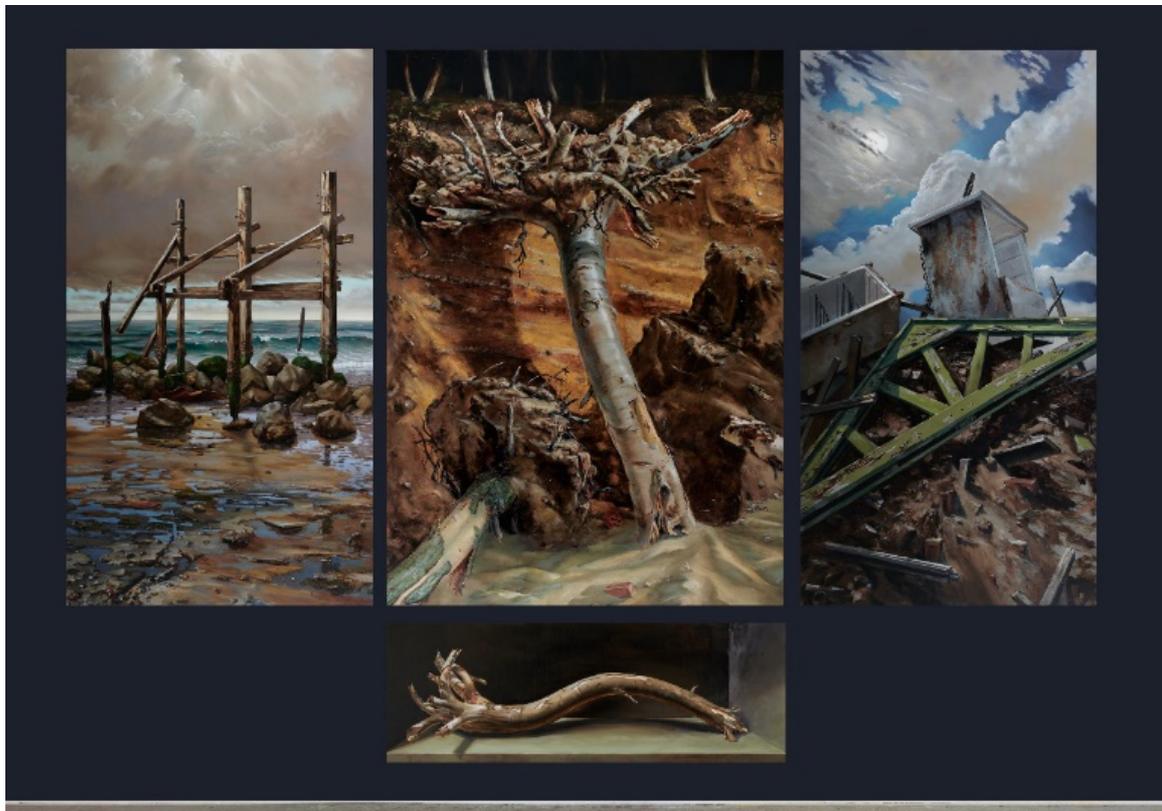
Southampton City Art Gallery
18 February – 4 June 2022

There rolls the deep where grew the tree. O earth, what changes hast thou seen!

In Memoriam, Alfred Lord Tennyson

In line with Southampton's UK City of Culture 2025 ambitions, Southampton City Art Gallery is excited to announce a major exhibition of work by Julian Perry in Spring 2022, presenting new paintings that explore coastal erosion as emblematic of a world in crisis. The exhibition is a passionate response to Climate Breakdown an especially important issue as the UK hosts the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow this week.

Disintegration, loss and the tragedy of Climate Breakdown provide the context and inspiration for the artist's haunting new works. The damaging effects of rising sea levels and resulting erosion on the UK's coastline have inspired the artist to produce powerful new images. These works, funded by a grant from Arts Council England, reflect the current anxieties about the impending environmental catastrophe.



Altarpiece to the Assumption of CO², 2021
Oil on panel, overall: 244 x 302cm

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As the exhibition's centrepiece, Perry has created an extraordinary 'secular altarpiece to the Assumption of CO²' which depicts scenes of coastal erosion over four large panels which evoke the emotional drama of the Crucifixion. As Perry says:

"As a devout atheist I was attracted to appropriating all the sorrow, theatre and wretchedness of a crucifixion to express the tragedy of what is happening to the world's climate and its dependant ecology".

Each panel depicts locations on the East coast of England: Suffolk, Norfolk and East Yorkshire, all locations where the coastline is fast eroding due to a combination of its geology, extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

Situated on the gallery walls around the 'altarpiece' will be fourteen newly created three-dimensional 'cube' works. Each features two paintings within transparent boxes and a mirror to reflect a painting back at the viewer that would otherwise have been hidden. Each work creates a world in miniature.

In addition to exhibiting the "altarpiece" for the first time in the UK, Perry will be displaying three large works (The Benacre Birch Series) he made for the 2015 Venice Biennale. These are huge paintings of uprooted trees the artist found on the eroding cliffs of Eastern England.

Perry's work has attracted considerable international attention, including exhibiting at the 2015 Venice Biennale and featuring in papers published by the Paul Mellon Center for studies in British Art at Yale in the United States.

Environmental concerns are central to Perry's practise. He says:

"In my work, each of the thousands of painted marks represents a commitment on my behalf to communicate the [truth/tragedy] of what is being lost."

Councillor Spiros Vassiliou, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Heritage, Southampton City Council, said: *"Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face, and this compelling exhibition shows the current and impending effects it has on our local environment. It's an important story to tell as Southampton bids to become UK City of Culture 2025 and for our commitment to delivering Net Zero by 2050 in Southampton."*

The exhibition will contain over 30 new works by Perry as well as studies and objects found on our eroding shores. Also included within the exhibition will be works from Southampton's internationally renowned fine art collection that have inspired Perry by artists including J.M.W. Turner, Albrecht Dürer, Gustave Courbet and William Nicholson.

Notes to Editors:

For high-resolution images or information contact nicholas.upton@southampton.gov.uk, 02380 834345

A fully illustrated publication will accompany the exhibition, including essays by Prof David Matless and Prof Paul Gough.

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The creation of new work was made possible by generous support from Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants programme.



Southampton City Art Gallery holds an internationally renowned fine art collection often described as one of the best outside London. Its nationally important collection comprises over 5,000 art works spanning eight centuries of European art from the Renaissance to the present day. The core, however, is British 20th- century and contemporary art. Alongside displays of the collection, the gallery features a regular programme of temporary exhibitions in collaboration with leading artists and arts institutions in its stunning art deco building, opened in 1939. Admission is free. More at southamptoncityartgallery.com

Southampton 2025

Southampton is bidding to be UK City of Culture 2025. UK City of Culture is a title given to a city in the United Kingdom for a period of one year. Bidding to be UK City of Culture brings tangible economic, cultural, and social benefits leading up to, during and beyond the year that the city holds the status. The competition is administered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and has a panel of independent judges. The delivery of the bid is led by the Southampton 2025 Trust working with partners and stakeholders from across Southampton and the wider region.
southampton2025.co.uk