

SAINSBURY CENTRE

Living Art Sharing Stories

Press Release

The Sainsbury Centre asks: Can activism in museums help people talk about the toughest topics in life?



9 September – 26 October 2025

Sainsbury Centre, Norwich

The Sainsbury Centre invites an intervention by the protest and art collective Not here to be liked, which asks: can activism in museums help people consider their agency and power differently, in the context of the climate crisis?

The installation, a blue shipping container installed in the Sainsbury Centre's sculpture park, provides a glimpse into a universe where environmental activists aren't kept away from institutions and instead invited in – creating space for visitors to engage with deeper questions of life, death and urgency through the language of action.

Titled *Octopus Container* (2025), the installation is emblazoned with the statement “seas die, we die” and invites visitors to reflect on their grief for the dying seas and contemplate the desperate action of activists in a museum context. Its central proposition is that we need art that defends life; and the work directly asks visitors to engage with possible futures by choosing via which door to enter: the ‘Portal of sorrow’ or the ‘Gate of rage’.

Depending on the door chosen, the container configures itself into one of two modes: the first a contemplative space where the visitor is immersed in the sounds of the sea and recordings of the loneliest whale - also known as the 52 Hz whale, the only known whale of its kind, which sings at a frequency that other whales cannot hear. A calm voice reads out scientific predictions about the bleak prospects of life in the oceans, whilst a backlit fishtank containing a sole Lego octopus sits in the middle of the space. Entering alternatively through the Gate of rage, visitors experience an ongoing protest staged in a museum. Anthems sung by a sea shanty choir provides the soundtrack to an installation consisting of a ceramic octopus dripping oil onto a 3d-printed, life-sized interpretation of the centrepiece of the Sainsbury Centre: Henry Moore’s *Mother and Child*.

The Sainsbury Centre recognises the living lifeforce of art, with each six-month season of exhibitions asking a different big question. Past seasons have included *What is Truth?* and *Why Do We Take Drugs?*

NOTES TO EDITORS

Octopus Container (2025)
Mixed media installation, 6.06m x 2.44m x 2.59m
Not here to be liked

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For more information, interviews and images:

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Opening times

Tuesday – Friday 9am-6pm (exhibitions open 9.30am)
Saturday – Sunday 10am-5pm
Closed Mondays, including bank holidays

Entry

Tickets operate on a 'Pay Only If and What You Want' basis, so you can choose the price from free through to full membership. A Universal Ticket grants access to the permanent collection, Lower and Mezzanine Galleries, and Sculpture Park.

The Sainsbury Centre is a world-class art museum with a unique perspective on how art can foster cultural dialogue and exchange. Following a radical relaunch in 2023 the Sainsbury Centre formally recognises the living life force of art, enabling people to build relationships across an arts landscape.

The art of the Sainsbury Centre can help reframe and answer the most important questions people have in their lives. It is not a museum to only learn more about artists, cultures or movements like Francis Bacon, the Tang Dynasty or Modernism, it is a place of experience, where collections are animate, and visitors are emotionally connected.

One of the first museums in the world to display art from all around the globe and from all time periods equally and collectively, Sir Robert and Lady Lisa Sainsbury created one of the most sought after yet non-conformist art collections. In 1973 they donated their collection, which transcended traditional barriers between art, architecture, archaeology and anthropology, to the University of East Anglia, and created an entirely new type of museum. Housed in Sir Norman Foster's revolutionary first ever public building, the space aimed for an interactive relationship between people, object and landscape, where art was placed within an open yet intimate 'living area'.

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