



Concrete and glass and Shoreditch

Genre-busting East End arts festival aims to be “Venice Biennale meets Glastonbury”

Concrete and Glass is a new music and visual arts festival launching in the heart of what London listings bible Time Out now calls the “old” East End: Old Street, Shoreditch and Hoxton. (The “new” East End stretches to encompass London Fields, Hackney Wick and Stratford.) The event, which is determinedly edgy and underground in feel, plays to the Shoreditch Triangle’s traditional strengths – music (there is a thriving club scene) and art. The area was, of course, at the epicentre of the whole YBA phenomenon – many of whose most famous members still live there.

Since the heady days of the warehouse parties and studio cooperatives of the 1980s and 1990s, the area has changed enormously, with city developments and million-pound bachelor pads encroaching north into the high-rises of Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The organisers are independent music promoter Tom Baker, of Eat Your Own Ears, and curators Flora Fairbairn and Paul Hitchman. With music industry backing, they are making the most of 19 music venues, independent arts spaces, galleries and warehouses, all of which have flourished despite the ever-expanding financial district.

The focus is a two-day festival on Thursday 2 to Friday 3 October, with several of the art projects extending until Frieze weekend (18–19 October). The aim is to break down barriers between the art and music crowds, with live music and DJs at venues as disparate as Hearn Street Car Park and the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Meanwhile, the art goes on

show in numerous atmospheric locations, from the basement of Shoreditch Town Hall, to disused shops former factories and private dealers’ spaces.

“The idea is sort of Venice Biennale meets Glastonbury, or at least that’s what it would be great if it becomes,” says Fairbairn. She was still developing the programme as Art World went to press, but a number of must-see events have already emerged. Heart of Glass, in the Town Hall, is a site-specific, open submission show organised by Fairbairn with the Contemporary Art Society. Selections are being made by artists Marc Quinn and Gavin Turk, critic Rachel Campbell-Johnson, CAS director Paul Hobson and Philippa Adams of Saatchi Online, with artists given four days before the show opens to get everything installed.

Meanwhile, there will be a show of the likes of Jodie Carey and Ruth Claxton, and a new film by Gerry Fox; critics picks from the Saatchi Online team; a sound installation in the famous Arnold Circus bandstand at the centre of Britain’s first-ever housing estate; and an extraordinary performance by Kinetica Museum in dealer Kenny Schachter’s Hoxton Square space. Hip West End gallery Riflemaker is also responding to the musical theme: artists including Gavin Turk and Andrey Bartenev (a Russian known for his multimedia pieces) are taking part in a “sonic fantasy” which is part record store and part interactive performance piece.

● Concrete and Glass, various venues, Shoreditch, East London; www.concreteandglass.co.uk