

Exhibition Guide

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE

FRANCE-LISE MCGURN



Sat 22 August – Sun 15 November 2026

DCA
Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate
Dundee, DD1 4DY
01382 213 610
Scottish Charity No. SCO26631

Open Tue – Sun 11:00-18:00
Open late Thu 19:00
Admission free
www.dca.org.uk



BOSCH, 2026, fridge with marker pen drawing (detail)

Cover image: *The Charm Offensive*, 2026, oil, marker and spray paint on canvas

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

The Charm Offensive is a major new exhibition by Scottish artist France-Lise McGurn and her most significant presentation in a UK institution to date. It features her latest body of work, bringing together paintings alongside drawings, furniture, objects and ephemera from McGurn's studio, staged in constellations across both galleries.

For the exhibition, McGurn intuitively assembles varied objects and images, from a white van to film posters, video stills to furniture, club flyers to memories, to evoke different places, times and emotional states. Inspiration comes from a graffitied fragment of risqué urban humour etched into the dirt of a white van and the flash of a Kylie Minogue poster pinned inside as the rear door closes. These fleeting encounters speak to the dense layers of imagery and text that compete for our attention, shaping what we desire, buy, remember and imagine ourselves to be.

Collages of printed visual material that the artist has lived with over time and revisited, replayed and become attached to form the ground upon which new images are layered in oil paint, spray paint and marker pen. The paintings become the basis of an assemblage of objects and textiles in which the boundaries between domestic space and the street, and the past and the present become increasingly indistinct.

Lines and fields of colour spill from the canvases onto the walls and spread like graffiti across magazines, printed television sets, props and motors, obscuring, cutting into and remaking familiar forms. Acts of homage, destruction and creation become part of McGurn's working process as each painting develops through an evolving network of personal, cultural and historical references.

Among these wider cultural references are deeply autobiographical ones. The exhibition's title comes from a childhood memory of McGurn's mother in Glasgow, while traces of the city, her mother and her daughter recur throughout the exhibition, most explicitly in the paintings *The Motor* and *Camping Together*, a collaboration with her daughter.

The formative significance of Glasgow in McGurn's life is evident in works such as *The Finnieston Crane*, *No Mean City* and *What Every Woman Wants* which peel back the layers of the city's history, cultural mythology and collective memory. *No Mean City* takes its title from the notorious 1935 account of life in Glasgow's Gorbals by Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, a phrase later reappropriated as the title of the theme tune for the long-running detective series *Taggart*. *What Every Woman Wants* references the Glasgow discount retail chain founded in the 1970s, evoking a distinctly Scottish experience of affordable glamour, aspiration and post-industrial change.



No Mean City, 2026, oil and marker on digital printed canvas

The exhibition's seductive and unsettling preoccupation with spectacle and control comes more explicitly into view in works such as *FUN, FUN* and *Katy Perry taking coke on the moon* that hold together exhilaration, aftermath and longing, while remaining alert to the fragility that often shadows excess.

Partially obliterated by paint, the images in these works are both concealed and reimagined, collapsing disparate cultural and personal narratives into a single, unstable composition. Moments of joy coexist with vulnerability, nostalgia and melancholy.

Ultimately, *The Charm Offensive* is an environment through which viewers move, linger and become involved within a network of associations and relationships. Rather than offering fixed meanings or stable identities, McGurn constructs an installation in which memory, fantasy, intimacy and popular culture continually intersect. Textures, materials and imagery vibrate like many conversations happening at once, producing a heightened sense of presence that reflects on desire, grief, nostalgia and the passage of time. McGurn's world is one in constant motion. As she says, "I approach painting as though it were life, not of life..."

GLOSSARY

Assemblage: an artistic form or medium usually consisting of 3D objects attached to a solid base. It is similar to collage, where existing 2D or flat images are cut and pasted together to form a new work. Assemblage often incorporates manufactured and non-art objects found and collected by the artist, as opposed to work that is drawn, painted or carved.

Collage: an artistic form or medium where existing 2D materials such as paper, fabric or flat images are cut and pasted together to form a new work.

Collective memory: a shared pool of memories, knowledge, and information held by a social group, community, or nation. Coined by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, it shapes a group's identity, links past generations to the present, and differs from formal, objective history.

Cultural mythology: a collection of traditional stories, beliefs, and sacred narratives belonging to a specific group or society. These symbolic tales feature gods, heroes, or supernatural ancestors to explain the origins of the world, natural events, and core societal values. These myths serve as a way for cultures to pass down historical knowledge, reinforce social norms and provide a sense of identity.

Ephemera: refers to minor, transient documents or collectible items that were originally meant to be used briefly and discarded, rather than saved. This includes items such as ticket stubs, movie posters, flyers, greeting cards and matchbooks.

Gorbals: a historic district on the south bank of the River Clyde in Glasgow. Once a small rural settlement called Brigend, it grew into a major industrial and overcrowded tenement area in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It later became famous for radical post-war regeneration following a period marked by extreme poverty.

Homage: a show of great respect, honour, or dedicated praise toward a person, group, or thing. It can also describe a specific artistic creation like a film, song, or book made to explicitly recognize the influence or memory of another work or creator.

Nostalgia: a bittersweet emotional feeling. It is a mix of pleasure and slight sadness when you think about a time, place, or person from the past.

Post-industrial: refers to nations, often in the West such as the UK, who have transitioned from an economy earning its wealth through the manufacturing of goods to an economy of services, with the direct production of goods moved elsewhere. Post-industrial society services are often orientated towards newer disciplines such as technology and cybernetics.

Spectacle: an impressive, striking, or unusual public display, event, or sight.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support of the France-Lise McGurn Supporters' Circle and The Modern Institute.

The artist and DCA would to thank:

MASSIMODECARLO and The Modern Institute

Jon Rust

Rita Donnelly

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John Douglas Millar

Katie Shannon

Tayside Re-Users

Sean Donnelly

Curatorial Advisory: Róisín McQueirns

France-Lise McGurn Studio Team: Róisín McQueirns and Patrick McAlindon

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Artwork images courtesy of the Artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow and MASSIMODECARLO.

Thanks to Scott Gordon for the van.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Family Man, 2026, oil and marker on digital printed canvas

France-Lise McGurn was born 1983, Glasgow. She lives and works between London and Glasgow. She studied her BA at DJCAD at the University of Dundee in 2005, her MA in London at the Royal College of Art, London and her MA painting exchange at Hunter College of Art, New York in 2012.

Selected solo exhibitions include: *DEE-TOUR*, MASSIMODECARLO, Domus Haus, Basel (2026); *Bad TV, Strawberry*, MASSIMODECARLO, London (2024); *What Everyone Wants*, The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2024); *Studio Voltaire*, London (2023); *Aloud*, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museums, Glasgow (2022); *In Emotia*, Tramway, Glasgow (2020); *Bodytronic*, Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel (2020) and *Sleepless*, Tate Britain, London (2019). She will have a two-year commission, *Kicking Silk: France-Lise McGurn at the Rodin*, Rodin Museum, Philadelphia, USA, from 27 February 2027 - 31 December 2028.

France-Lise McGurn is represented by MASSIMODECARLO and The Modern Institute.

NEW EDITION AND PUBLICATION

We are delighted that France-Lise McGurn is currently working on a new DCA print edition with DCA's Print Studio team. It will be available to purchase from DCA Shop in-person and online, and further details will be announced on our website and social media channels.

We are also producing a new publication to accompany the exhibition, which will be available in October. The publication is generously supported by The Modern Institute and features newly commissioned writing by John Douglas Millar and an introduction by DCA's Head of Exhibitions, Dan Brown, alongside full colour images of the exhibition.

INFORMATION SPACE

Visit the Information Space next to the galleries to learn more about the exhibition. Here, you can watch a short, filmed interview with France-Lise McGurn. It will also be available to view online.

Along with the artist, we have also chosen a selection of reading material connecting to the exhibition. These are listed below and are available to browse on the bookshelves.

READING LIST

David Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 2000

France-Lise & Rita McGurn, *Matching Mother and Daughter Tattoos*, 2023

France-Lise McGurn, *Bodytronic*, Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2020

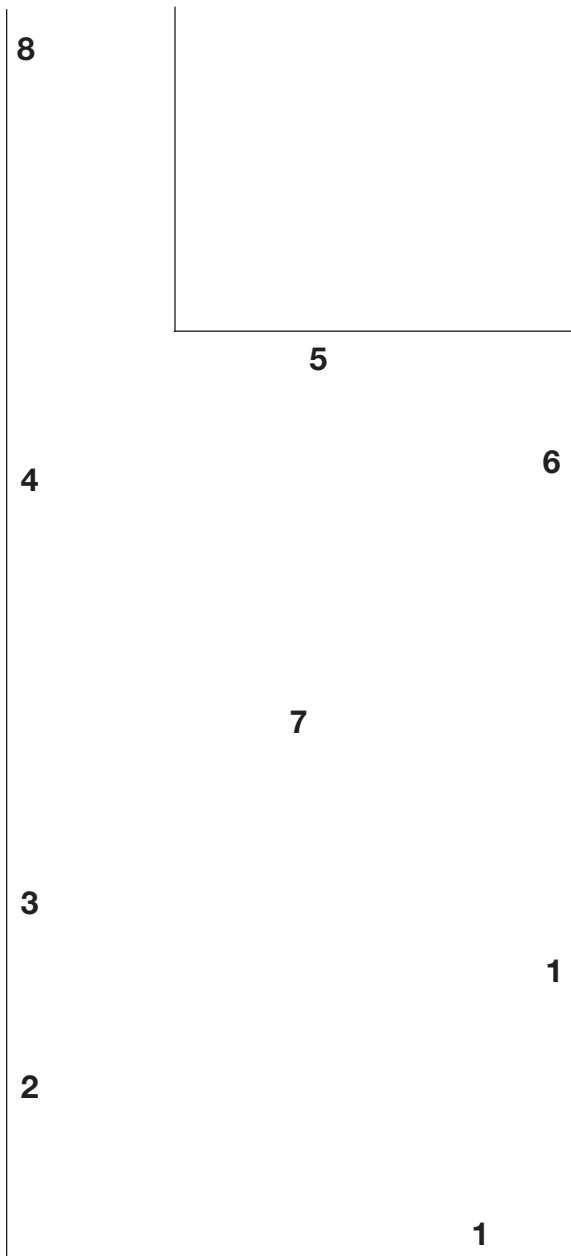
Marcus Lodwick, *The Gallery Companion: Understanding Western Art*, 2002

MARFA journal 25, 2026

Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, 2026

Virginia Woolf, Tate exhibition catalogue, 2018

GALLERY 1 & CORRIDOR



1. *Up your bum*

Oil, marker and spray paint on digital printed canvas

2. *Pepsi*

Oil and marker on canvas

3. *PR*

Mulberry clutch bag with marker pen

4. *What Every Woman Wants*

Oil and marker on digital printed canvas

5. *The Finnieston Crane*

Oil and marker on canvas

6. *Camping Together*

Oil and marker on canvas

In collaboration with Rita Donnelly

7. *Berlin*

Oil, marker and collage on canvas

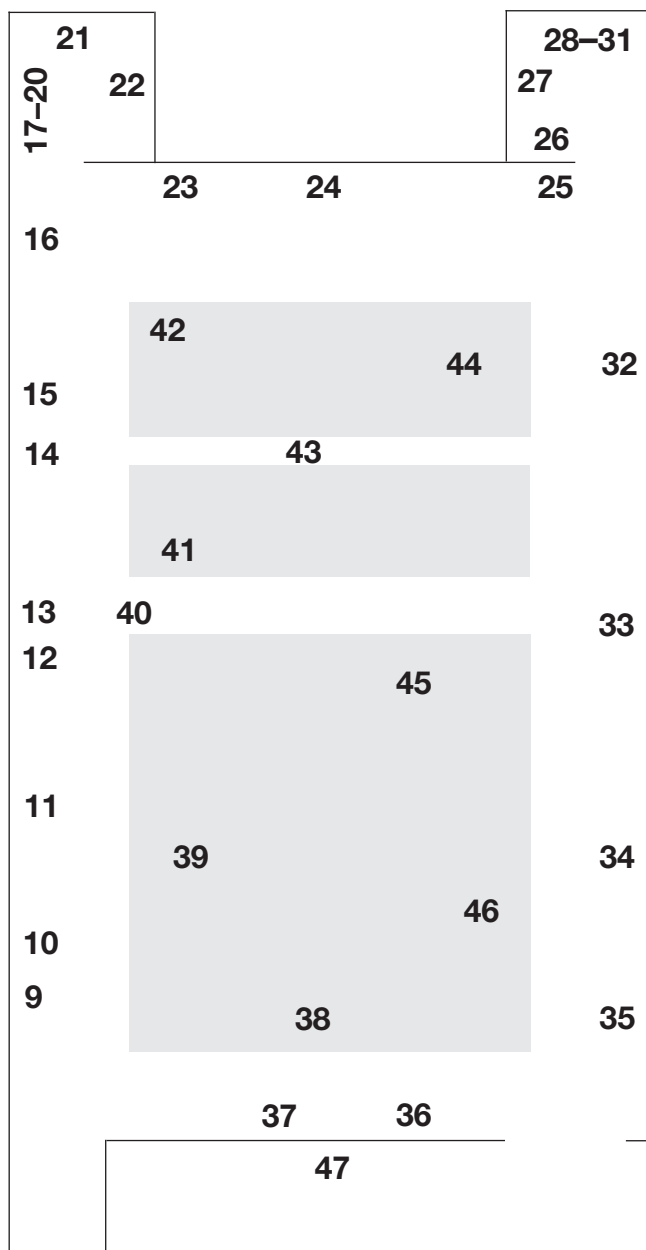
Spray painted Peugeot Bipper van

8. *Family Man*

Oil and marker on digital printed canvas

All works 2026

GALLERY 2



9. *FUN FUN*

Oil and marker on digital printed canvas

10. *Illusions*

Oil, marker and spray paint on digital printed canvas

11. *Pupil*

Oil on canvas in custom angled sapele tray frame

12. *I Am Curious (Red)*

Found wallet with marker pen in custom cherry wood frame

13. *Accessorize*

Mulberry purse with marker pen in custom cherry wood frame

14. *Oxymoron*

Oil and marker on canvas

15. *Blow your house down*

Oil and marker on canvas

16. *ESPRIT*

Oil on canvas and promotional wooden screen

17- 21. From left to right:

Women in Sussex love Impressionism

Quantum Agnostic

Blink 2005

Gable End

Analog

Layered pencil drawings on vellum and notepad paper in custom sapele wood frame

22. *Cowgirl*

Oil and marker on canvas

23. *Peru2*

Oil and marker on canvas

24. *The Charm Offensive*

Oil, marker and spray paint on canvas

25. *Katy Perry taking coke on the moon*

Oil on digital printed canvas

26. *Mr Xoffee*

Oil, marker, restaurant matchbooks and resin on canvas

27 - 31. From top left

The Future, w/c 10 Dec 2026

The Future, w/c 21 Sep 2026

The Future, w/c 31 Aug 2026

The Future, w/c 3 Aug 2026

The Future, w/c 23 Feb 2026

All works pen on weekly planner paper in custom tulip wood frame

32. *Shopping*

Oil, marker and spray paint on digital printed canvas

33. *The Motor*

Oil on digital printed canvas

34. *Spilt Milk, 2025*

Oil and marker on canvas

35. *A gift from France*

Oil, marker and spray paint on canvas

36. *Natural*

Oil on canvas in custom sapele tray

37. *What me, worry?*

Oil and marker on canvas

38. *Head in a bin*

Found promotional prop; plastic chair, cigarette

39. *Twosome*

Painted sofa; coffee table with missing glass; *The Future, w/c 21 Dec 2026*, pen on weekly planner paper

40. *Fresher*

Oil on canvas mounted on promotional wooden panel

41. *Heart table*

Heart shaped table with drawing on weekly planner paper, cigarette, video rental section header, mixed archival material and glass; sofa; found fabric

42. Rita's chair; lit club seating

43. *NOW AND FOREVER, 2025*, T-shirt, bio resin and light fixture

44. *BOSCH*

Fridge with marker pen drawing; sofa; bamboo pillar; white rabbit; *Get felt on the table*, T-shirt, bio resin, light fixture

45. Sofa; *Visitscotland.com, 2026*, oil on canvas; found fabric; bamboo pillar; shell shaped found object

46. *Threesome*

Sofa; found fabric; lightbulb

47. *No Mean City*

Oil and marker on digital printed canvas

All works 2026 unless otherwise stated

TALKS AND EVENTS

For more information and to book tickets visit www.dca.org.uk

Exhibition Tours

Thu 3 September, 18:00–19:00

Thu 15 October, 11:00–12:00

Thu 19 November, 14:00–15:00

Galleries

Please book in advance

Donate What You Can, £0–£8

Join us for a slow-looking tour of the exhibition with DCA's Head of Exhibitions, Dan Brown. This guided tour will encourage a thoughtful and unhurried engagement with the artworks, providing space to explore the themes, processes and practices in France-Lise McGurn's exhibition.

Brown will offer insights into the works, highlighting connections, context and the artist's approaches, while giving participants the time to reflect and respond at their own pace.

Drawing and Collage with Katie McGroarty

Tue 15 September, 18:00 – 19:30

Galleries

Please book in advance

Donate What You Can, £0–£8

All welcome, no experience necessary.

Spend an evening in DCA galleries exploring McGurn's exhibition in a special drawing and collage session. DCA has invited Dundee-based artist Katie McGroarty to lead a workshop

inspired by the processes and techniques McGurn uses to make her work. McGroarty will guide you in drawing and layering images and text from magazines and popular culture to create your own artwork and gain an insight into the artist's way of working.

Paper, collage and drawing materials will be provided, but feel free to bring your own art materials. Please note we will be using dry materials only, paint and water pots will not be permitted in the gallery. This event is aimed at adults: for our family programme see the For Younger Visitors and Families section of this guide.

Katie McGroarty is an internationally exhibited and multi-award winning visual artist based in Dundee. She is also the founder of the Dundee Artists Database, the Edinburgh Creative Database, the West Dunbartonshire Creative Database and The Scottish Art Show as well as co-founder of the Scottish Working Class Database. She completed an MFA in Art and Humanities at DJCAD, University of Dundee in 2022, when she also started facilitating life drawing in Dundee.

**Murals, Mums and What Every
Woman Wants: France-Lise
McGurn, Fashion and Public Space**

Sat 24 October, 14:00–15:30

Galleries

Please book in advance

Donate What You Can, £0–£8

Join fashion and textile designer and printmaker Beca Lipscombe in conversation with Dan Brown, DCA's Head of Exhibitions, as they explore McGurn's work through the lens of their shared experience of growing up in Scotland's Central Belt during the 1980s and 1990s.

From the legacy of Scottish muralism to the rise of emergent fast fashion, Lipscombe and Brown will trace the cultural transformation of Scotland during a period of industrial decline, examining how changing public spaces, consumer culture, and visual identity shaped everyday life. Their discussion will consider the intersections of fashion, art, memory, and place, offering fresh perspectives on the social and cultural landscapes that inform McGurn's practice.

Beca Lipscombe is a fashion and textile designer, printmaker, and one half of Atelier E.B. which she runs in partnership with artist Lucy McKenzie. A graduate of Central Saint Martins, Lipscombe's professional practice is multi-layered and draws upon a vernacular aesthetic. This sensibility was evident in both her eponymous label (2000-2007) and her work as a freelance designer. Lipscombe's

varied practice has included the production of fashion, commissioned display and interiors for public and private spaces, textiles, furniture and publishing.

**Book Launch: France-Lise McGurn,
*The Charm Offensive***

Date to be confirmed. Please check the website or speak to a member of staff for further information.

Join us for the launch of a new publication accompanying *The Charm Offensive*.

Celebrate the release of this beautifully designed publication, offering a lasting insight into McGurn's multi-faceted practice through newly commissioned writing, exhibition imagery and reflections on the artist's work. Guests will have the opportunity to hear from France-Lise McGurn and members of DCA Exhibitions team in conversation, followed by audience questions and book signings.

ARTIST'S CHOICE SCREENINGS

Whenever possible, we invite artists to select a film to screen in DCA cinema as part of our exhibition events programme. With films chosen to expand on and complement the exhibition, we hope audiences enjoy the chance to consider themes explored by artists in a different way.

The following films have been selected by France-Lise McGurn. A short, filmed introduction by the artist will shown in the cinema before each screening.

Please see our website for prices and to book tickets.

Looking for Mr Goodbar (35mm)

Tue 20 October, 20:00

Cinema

Diane Keaton stars in this provocative film from 1977, the same year as her star-making turn in *Annie Hall*. The film is based on the 1975 novel of the same name by Judith Rossner, which in turn was inspired by real-life events.

Keaton plays Theresa Dunn, a role that many consider one of her best. Dunn is a charismatic, dedicated, young schoolteacher whose active nightlife and enjoyment of bars and discos in the evening begins to impact her daily life as she encounters dangerous characters.

The film also features early roles for Richard Gere, Tom Berenger, and LeVar Burton. Keaton gives an utterly

fearless performance in a film that builds an intoxicating nocturnal atmosphere, culminating in an unforgettably harrowing conclusion.

Director: Richard Brooks / USA / 1977
/ 2h 16 m / 18

Wish You Were Here

Mon 14 September, 18:15

Cinema

Emily Lloyd gives a critically acclaimed, breakthrough performance as Lynda, a spirited, outspoken 16-year-old who lives with her hairdresser father and her “boring bloody sister” in a seaside town in England in the early 1950s.

Both sharply humorous and heartbreaking, the film is loosely inspired by real-life events. It follows Lynda's journey through adolescence, navigating sexuality, rebellion and societal judgement in postwar Britain.

Wish You Were Here also links the past with the present and shows that, when it comes to affairs of the heart, we have little to guide us but the ignorance and prejudice of successive generations.

Director: David Leland / UK / 1987 /
1h 28 m / 15

FOR YOUNGER VISITORS AND FAMILIES

Create Space

Tue – Sun, 11:00 – 18:00

Free, drop in. Children must always be accompanied by an adult

Create Space is a flexible, comfortable and imaginative space; a space in which people of all ages can see, think, make and do, filled with DIY art making activities inspired by our exhibitions.

You can pick up a Follow and Find trail activity sheet to help you explore the artworks in the galleries, then make your own artwork inspired by the exhibition.

Create Space is occasionally closed for workshops: please check the Family Calendar on our website for full opening hours before visiting. If closed, you can find a selection of activity sheets and materials on our Art Cart which is in the Information Space.

Bring a Baby Gallery Tours

Tue 8 September, 11:30 – 12:00 and 14:00 – 14:30

Galleries

Free, drop-in for adults with infants under 3 years old

Join DCA's Learning Team for a relaxed gallery tour of *The Charm Offensive*. Designed for caregivers with babies in buggies or wee ones under 3 years. We will move around the galleries slowly with time for questions and chat.

Family Art Lab: France-Lise

McGurn, *The Charm Offensive*

Sun 13 September, 11:00 – 13:00

Sun 25 October, 11:00 – 13:00

Sun 15 November, 11:00 – 13:00

Donate What You Can, £0–£8

Please book an individual ticket for everyone who is coming along, adults and children. Suitable for all ages together in family groups. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Family Art Labs, held in Create Space, offer relaxed time and space to get making as a family. Try out creative activities and explore techniques such as painting and collage in this session led by local artists.

Please come for the start and introduction, which includes a short visit to the galleries. You can stay as long as you like or leave when you feel you need to.

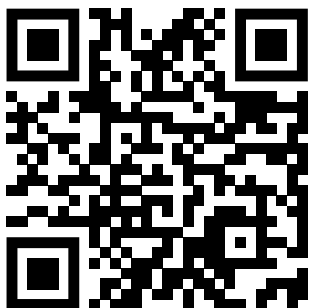
AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

Listen to audio descriptions written by artist and visual describer Juliana Capes as she describes key works in the exhibition.

With more than 15 years' experience providing audio descriptions and interpretation for galleries across Scotland, Capes has developed a poetic and emotional describing style which expands on and illuminates artworks in new ways, particularly for audiences who are blind, have low vision or sensory impairments.

This audio tour will move through the exhibition, offering visual descriptions of selected artworks on display. Capes will spend time elaborating on the exhibition to encourage slow looking, listening and contemplation.

The tour is accessible on your own device through the Bloomberg Connects app and DCA's SoundCloud which you can access by scanning the QR code below.



LARGE PRINT, EASY READ AND AUDIO GUIDES

Large Print, Easy Read and audio versions of this leaflet are available, please ask a Visitor Assistant for more information.

The Easy Read guide is an accessible, illustrated introduction to the artist's themes and ideas in the exhibition.

BLOOMBERG CONNECTS

The Bloomberg Connects app is available for download from Google Play, the App Store, and via the QR codes at the entrances to our galleries. On it, alongside our content you'll find free digital guides to cultural organisations around the world.

Offering a new way to explore our exhibitions programme, the app allows you to listen to our exhibition notes, watch artist interviews, and find out what's on.

Please see our website and the Bloomberg Connects app for further details. For assistance locating these recordings, please speak to one of our Visitor Assistants.

JUST ASK

Our friendly Visitor Assistants are always happy to help with your questions, or provide an introduction to the exhibition.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Keep up to date with the very latest from DCA by visiting www.dca.org.uk or by following us on Facebook, BlueSky and Instagram. Share your thoughts on the exhibition using **#helloDCA**.

SUPPORTED GROUP VISITS

If you are part of, or support a group based in Tayside and would like to come to DCA for a supported exhibition visit or art making session, get in touch with our Learning team at learning@dca.org.uk

Alternatively, speak to a member of our team at DCA Box Office or phone on 01382 213610.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Filling in our short exhibition survey helps us to understand our audiences and their thoughts about the exhibition. To fill in the survey, speak to a Visitor Assistant or scan the QR code below.



SUPPORT DCA

Our exhibitions are always free to access, but DCA is a charity and donations are welcome and appreciated.

You can tap to donate at one of the contactless points in our building or donate online at dca.org.uk/support/donate-to-dca

Thank you for your support!



Berlin, 2026, oil, marker and collage on canvas



This leaflet is printed on recycled paper. DCA is proud to be an Active Member of the Gallery Climate Coalition: for more information about our work to reduce carbon emissions, visit our website.