

SLG

PRESS RELEASE

JOHN COSTI: FOUND FOOTBALL DIFFICULT 31 MARCH – 18 JUNE 2023 FIRE STATION GALLERIES 1&2, FREE

The South London Gallery's 12th Postgraduate Artist in Residence **John Costi**'s practice is rooted in healing and transformation. Titled *Found Football Difficult*, a quote from one of his childhood school reports, the exhibition in the SLG's Fire Station features new work made during Costi's six-month residency. The show explores life and loss through sculpture, sound, scent, and Costi's personal archives.

John Costi (b.1987) is an artist whose work draws on cultural and personal references from his Cypriot heritage, memories of growing up in north London and his time spent in prison. Through conversation, play and assemblage he aims to create art that brings people together and forms social connections.

He uses found objects to tell his story, a practice that he refers to as 'Culture-Mating', often taking past experiences and presenting them in confessional collages or diaristic sculptures exploring identity. The autobiographical themes explore broader, current conversations around men's mental health, how we process anger and systems of oppression.

Across two Fire Station galleries visitors will experience multi-sensory environments in which they can play a childhood game or learn a traditional Cypriot dance. The new work reflects on masculinity, gambling and luck, and includes collaged wallpaper, birdsong and nostalgic scents of popular early '00s colognes.

An audio work in the entrance to Fire Station will intermittently play the sound of birds mimicking human whistles and car alarms, evoking the sounds of London streets and playing with ideas of nature, nurture and mimicry.

In Gallery 1 a sculpture made up of found objects including a table leg, a garden ornament and a rubber face mask, fires bespoke pennies at the wall, a recreation of the game 'penny up'. Thought to have been played by the ancient Greeks, players take turns to throw a coin at a wall. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to play the game by picking up and throwing specially designed pennies with an image of a magic Eightball, an 'eighth' in slang, in reference to the unit of measurement used when selling or buying drugs. The sculpture will sit on a towel printed with three drains, a nod to the superstitious belief that walking over three drains brings bad luck.

On the gallery walls, images of blue places and objects are printed onto torn and layered wallpaper, alluding to the blue and white churches of Greece. A vinyl outline drawing of three men dancing with their arms wrapped around each other, and floor stickers with footprints, provide instructions on how to perform a traditional Cypriot dance while a layer of family photos reference ideas of John's mother and grandmother as curators of the home.

Gallery 2 also features a sensory sculptural work. The dimly lit space includes a diffuser that intermittently pumps out the scent of a well-known fragrance by JOOP!, images on the walls of Costi's family and a pair of shoes that visitors can pick up and use to listen to short, recorded stories from people close to him.

Costi says: “My work tackles several themes including addiction, criminality, mental health and masculinity. Almost always in the social sphere, the work is about weaponising trauma and reappropriating memories and triggers. Personal and autobiographical, the aim is always to heal from the work.”

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For further press information, images and interviews please contact Anna Jones, Head of Communications: anna.jones@southlondongallery.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

Address and Opening Hours

South London Gallery, Main Building
65–67 Peckham Road, London, SE5 8UH

South London Gallery, Fire Station
82 Peckham Road, London, SE15 5LQ

The gallery is open Tuesday – Sunday.
www.southlondongallery.org

Social Media

Twitter: [@SLG_artupdates](https://twitter.com/SLG_artupdates)

Instagram: [@southlondongallery](https://www.instagram.com/southlondongallery)

Facebook: [South London Gallery](https://www.facebook.com/SouthLondonGallery)

TikTok: [southlondongallery_](https://www.tiktok.com/southlondongallery)

About John Costi

John Costi (b.1987) is an artist whose work draws on his Cypriot and Irish heritage, and experience of growing up in London. He creates sculptures, installations, paintings and performance. Often improvised and informed by chance, the work lives in the social sphere. He is interested in dismantling hierarchies of art experience, turning passive audiences into active participants. Costi graduate from Central St Martins MA Fine Art in 2022.

Recent exhibitions include: *Trash Money*, Light Eye Mind, London, 2015; *Tiger Milk*, Krabbesholm Højskole, Denmark, 2022; performances at V22, London and Tate Modern, London; and *Inside* at Two Temple Place, London, 2023.

About the Residency

The South London Gallery Postgraduate Residency is an open submission six-month live-in residency that provides an early-career artist with a rare opportunity to produce a new body of work, which is then exhibited at the SLG. The residency is open to

artists who have completed a BA, and have undertaken a period of self-directed, peer-led or postgraduate study in the year prior to the residency. This can include alternative, peer organised and non-accredited programmes from an institution, collective or art school in the UK as well as an MA, MFA, PGDip, MRes.

The residency includes rent-free accommodation, a studio space, a £6,000 bursary to produce new work and support living expenses, mentoring and a solo exhibition in one of the SLG Fire Station galleries.

The Postgraduate Residency is supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment.

About the South London Gallery

The South London Gallery (SLG) was founded in the 19th century by philanthropist William Rossiter to 'bring art to the people of south London'. Today the gallery comprises its original site at 65 Peckham Road; the Fire Station which opened to the public in 2018; Art Block, a space for local children and families on Sceaux Gardens Estate and two permanent gardens.

The SLG has an international reputation for its contemporary art exhibitions by established, mid-career and younger artists and programme of film and performance events. Its highly regarded, free education programme includes a peer-led young people's forum; family workshops; artist-led projects and commissions on local housing estates; and a programme for looked after children.