

SLG

Press Release

Ranti Bam: Sacred Groves

Dates: 1 May – 23 August 2026

Fire Station Galleries

This summer, the South London Gallery (SLG) will present a solo exhibition *Sacred Groves* by British Nigerian artist Ranti Bam (b.1982, Lagos), in the Fire Station galleries.

Ranti Bam works across sculpture, performance, film and photography. Her ceramic practice is divided into two connected bodies of work, the *Ifas* and *Abstract Vessels*. The *Ifas* are large stoneware sculptures, created by Bam embracing wet clay against her body to form vessels that collapse, crack and fold. At the SLG she will exhibit monumental new sculptures, her largest works to date, which are finished with a metallic glaze that reflects the body. Bam is interested in the rawness of the clay she works with, and connecting with the material enables her to connect back to the earth.

Bam views clay as a language and divining tool so her practice sits closer to ritual or ancestral vessel traditions than studio ceramics. In the studio, her works have spirits and function like votive offerings. The word “Ifa” in Yoruba means both *ifá*, a spiritual system of divination, and *I-fàá*, to hold something close. Her new body of work, *Sacred Groves*, continues this inquiry into space as holding.

As part of her SLG exhibition, Bam will debut a film produced in Ọsun-Ọşogbo, a sacred site of the Yoruba fertility goddess Osun. Sacred groves are sites of gathering and quiet presence, where what is felt by the believer carries more weight than what is seen. Made while on residency at Guest Artists Space Foundation in Lagos, the film tracks the river’s path and the impact of human activity on the landscape. The site is one of the last surviving sacred groves in the region due to stigma around the belief system, environmental changes and pressure on land use.

Bam says: “A grove exists in the in-between, neither fully inside nor exposed. It is a clearing, sheltered yet open to sky, a meeting place of human and divine. The grove becomes the body expanded into landscape, a place where intimacy can root and vulnerability is held. Protection does not contain; it creates the conditions to unfold.”

Inspired by textiles and language, the *Abstract Vessels* incorporate pattern and colour, both inside and outside. The works are constructed by hand through slab building, where

pieces wrap around each other to form a skin. Bam pierces this skin by hand, revealing the glaze inside the body of the vessel. The act of rolling out the clay, puncturing and studding the surface with pattern, painting with slip glazes, and then firing combines all the elements she is drawn to – earth, air, fire and water.

Ranti Bam lives and works between Paris and Lagos. Bam has exhibited internationally including *Anima*, at James Cohan, New York (2024), *Hard/Soft: Textiles and Ceramics in Contemporary Art*, Museum of Applied Arts, Austria, (2023), and Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool (2023). In June 2026, Bam will unveil her permanent public artwork for ‘Climate Clock’ curated by Alice Sharp, Invisible Dust for Oulu26 Finland, European Capital of Culture. Ranti Bam was invited to be the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia by Koyo Kouoh.

An exhibition of new paintings by Brazilian artist Paulo Nimer Pjota will be on show in the Main Gallery during the same period, 1 May – 23 August 2026.

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 Wednesday – Sunday.
southlondongallery.org

Social Media

Instagram: @southlondongallery
Facebook: South London Gallery
TikTok: @southlondongallery_

About the South London Gallery

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 Communities & Learning programme includes a peer-led young people’s collective; family workshops; artist-led projects on local housing estates; and a programme for looked after children.

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 an artist-designed garden.

The SLG is a registered charity, which raises more than half of its income from trusts and foundations, sponsors and fundraising events.

Exhibition generously supported by:

Major exhibition donor: The Burger Collection

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