

# YBAs: THE NEXT GENERATION ON SHOW

The line-up of the prestigious British Art Show 7 is revealed today by 'The Independent', write **Arifa Akbar** and **Jonathan Brown**

**T**he British Art Show may be held just once every five years, but it is one of the most significant events in this country's cultural life.

In 1995, for instance, it showcased talents such as Damien Hirst, Chris Ofili and Sam Taylor-Wood at a time when London was the blazing core of the art world. And in recent years it has been a reasonable bet that those who join the Hayward Gallery's nationwide tour of the best and the brightest are among the hottest emerging stars to watch out for.

The last time the popular travelling exhibition toured the country in 2005, it included work from all four nominated artists on that year's Turner Prize list; two other artists in that show - Zarina Bhimji and Nathan Coley - featured on last year's Turner Prize list.

The selection of names for the British Art Show 7 is revealed today by *The Independent*. The exhibition, which will start touring the country in October, will provide Britain's best emerging artistic talent the opportunity to be seen by thousands.

What makes it special for the art fan is that in the normal course of the art world, the privilege of witnessing such cutting-edge work is usually restricted to those who have an eye - or a wallet - like Charles Saatchi's.

This year's British Art Show, which takes its subtitle from HG Wells's utopian novel *In the Days of the Comet*, will unleash 39 artists and artist groups on the public in major exhibitions in four cities across the country.

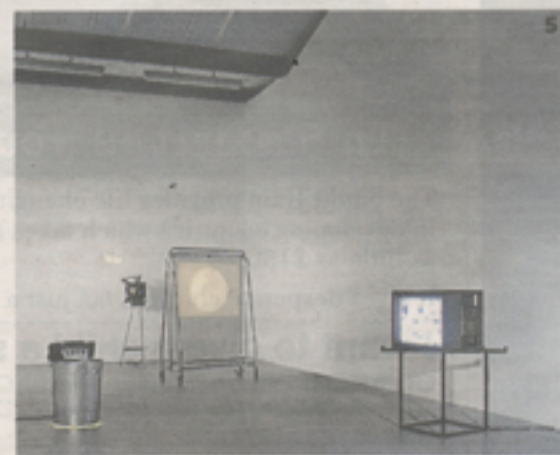
The work will travel from Nottingham to London, Glasgow and Plymouth and it is expected that more than 300,000 visitors will attend over the year-long duration of the show.

There will be some highly experienced artists who are taking their work in a new direction, such as the (former) Young British Artist, Sarah Lucas, and Alasdair Gray, the 75-year-old Scottish author and poet, who is the oldest artist in the show.

There will too be younger names that look likely to become much better known. The youngest is the installation and performance artist Tris Vonna-Michell, 28, who combines storytelling with performance and who recently topped a poll of curators asking them to name their favourite young star.

Tom Morton, who is co-curator of the exhibition with Lisa Le Feuvre, said that the show has had a dramatic impact on artists down the years.

"What has been interesting talking to some of the artists in the show is that going to see a British Art Show when they were a sixth-former or student



## FIVE TO WATCH

### 1 Phoebe Unwin

Unwin is a painter who was born in 1979 in Cambridge, studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, and lives in London. A former "Saatchi star" in the lead-up to the opening of his new gallery in west London, she creates paintings from observations of familiar objects and gestures, such as an airplane meal or a pair of sunglasses falling off a face.



### 2 Mick Peter

The sculptor was born 1974 in Berlin, studied at Glasgow School of Art, and Ruskin, and lives in Glasgow. His sculptures appear to be made from heavy concrete but are in fact polystyrene and are carefully crafted by hand.



### 3 Duncan Campbell

A film-maker who was born in 1972 in Dublin, he studied at Glasgow School of Art and the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. He lives in Glasgow and is interested in the "seductive power of stories" with references to Samuel Beckett's humour.



### 4 Tris Vonna-Michell

An installation and performance artist, he was born in 1982 and studied at Glasgow School of Art and Städelschule in Frankfurt. Now divides his time between Southend-on-Sea in Essex, and Sweden. He employs the tradition of storytelling to produce energetic performances that take audiences on mental and physical journeys.



### 5 Haroon Mirza

He concentrates on sound works and installation. Born in 1977, he studied at Chelsea Art School and Goldsmiths and lives in London and Sheffield. His work includes *Adhān* (2009) which combines the call to prayer with a clip of the singer, Cat Stevens, playing acoustic guitar.



was one of the major things that inspired them to be an artist," he said.

While critics might say the British art scene may not enjoy the same towering profile as it did in 1995, Mr Morton said the talent on display this year was equally fresh and vital. "Every generation finds their own times really exciting," he added.

The curators said they had not set out to provide a comprehensive survey of the current scene but instead had spent a year researching what they regarded as the most significant artists working in Britain over the past five years. Of the work that will go on show, around 80 per cent will be specially created, some of it specifically for the settings where it will be displayed.

There were also representatives from six different nationalities and multiple ethnic backgrounds working in Britain today. No single medium will dominate with the entire range of the creative output represented, from painting to sculpture.

Ralph Rugoff, director of the Hayward Gallery, said the show had been at the "forefront of innovation" since it began in 1979 and he promised this year would be no exception.

He said: "It allows visitors the chance to discover younger artists, and also re-evaluate and re-connect with artists whose work they thought they were familiar with, but whose new developments hold many surprises."

But while the title of the show may

be taken from one of the best-known science-fiction novels of the Edwardian age, it is the notion of the looping comet through the ages acting as a harbinger of transformation that will provide the central theme, rather than spaceships or aliens.

"We are interested in the recurrent nature of the comet as a symbol of how each version of the present collides with the past and the future. The work of the artists in the show, in many different ways, contests assumptions of how 'the now' might be understood," the curators said.

*In the Days of the Comet* was written in 1906, and Wells charts the near-future appearance of the strange heavenly body over the skies of Britain. A

green gas is released, creating a huge change in all mankind, leading to a rejection of war and exploitation, and a heightened appreciation of beauty.

The British Art Show 7 begins in Nottingham before moving to the Hayward Gallery in February. It will be in Glasgow between May and August 2011, arriving in Plymouth in September and concluding in December.

The first show was in 1979 when 112 artists work were toured to Sheffield, Newcastle and Bristol. In 2005-6 a record 330,000 people went to see it. In 1990, it formed part of Glasgow's celebrations as European Capital of Culture. The show has drawn comparisons with the biennial exhibitions of the Whitney Museum of American Art.