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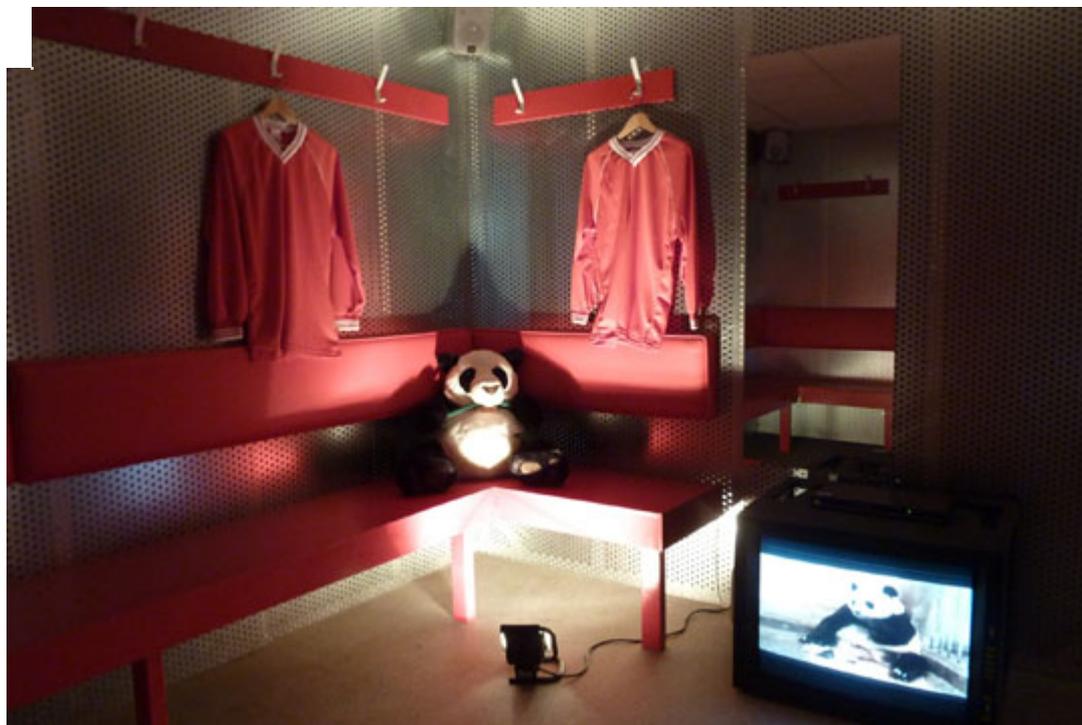
Review: Liverpool Biennial

Vanessa Bartlett is a Liverpool-based artist and writer, who currently works as Performance Programmer at the [Bluecoat](#) gallery. Here, she gives us the lowdown on the first week of the [Liverpool Biennial](#), the UK's biggest visual arts festival...

The approach of Biennial time means three things for anyone involved with the arts in Liverpool: hard work, lots of parties and some very bizarre antics. I have had some wonderful experiences, including leading a live horse around the interior of one of Liverpool's largest hotels, and working with a team of volunteer stewards who spent most evenings after work drinking free wine at exhibition previews. Not only does Liverpool Biennial inject £30m into the city's economy, it also yields a wealth of opportunity for young creatives to showcase their artwork and experience life behind the scenes of the UK's largest visual arts festival.

Liverpool Biennial was founded in 1998; its sixth event kicked off on 18 September and runs for 10 weeks. Featuring 900 artists and over 100 venues, the festival is a mix of international shows presented at major galleries, public realm commissions for unusual sites, and artist-led DIY installations in disused shop spaces, hotel lobbies and pubs.

This year, the International strand responds to the theme of "Touched", and asks if art can have an emotional impact on the inhabitants of a city. Must-see works include Korean artist Do-Ho Suh's public realm installation *Bridging Home* (pictured above), which replicates a life-size traditional Seoul house wedged between two vacant warehouse buildings on Duke Street. At city-centre art space the [Bluecoat](#) (where I work as Performance Programmer), Bulgarian-born artist Daniel Bozhkov has created a replica of Liverpool Football Club dressing room to house his installation *Music Not Good For Pigeons* (pictured below). Having returned to the city almost 25 years after his first visit, his work investigates the Liverpoolian cultural icons that caught his attention both then and now.



In addition to major commissions produced by big galleries, Liverpool Biennial has a thriving fringe programme of artist-led ventures keen to capitalise on the festival. These low-budget, high-enthusiasm projects are often where the most vigorous and interesting work is shown. An old hardware shop on Renshaw Street hosts arts collective [Mercy's Midnight Specials](#): experimental performances with cutting-edge artists held every Saturday at midnight. Studio group [The Royal Standard](#) are exhibiting the work of maverick artists Pil and Galia Kollektiv, whose videos of cutlery wielding youths in elaborate costumes are not to be missed.

If all of the above sounds enticing, then fear not: there is still time to get involved in this year's event. Both Liverpool Biennial and the Bluecoat are currently recruiting for festival volunteers. Potential visitors should check out [Mercy's weekly pod cast](#), for an insider's perspective on what to see and do. A visit to [Liverpool Independents' website](#) also provides a useful index of grassroots activity where savvy young artists may be able to negotiate an exhibition.

Above all, this is an event with countless opportunities for anyone who is ready and willing to experiment and explore.

[Liverpool Biennial](#) is on until 28 November 2010. For information about volunteering, drop an email to volunteer@biennial.com.

Do-Ho Suh, Bridging Home: image courtesy of Alex Wolkowicz/Liverpool Biennial.

Danie Bozhkov, Music Not Good For Pigeons: image courtesy of Phil Olsen/Bluecoat.

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