# Magnus Hastings’ major drag exhibition 'Queen'



Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery is set to host 'Queen,' the largest exhibition to date by award-winning photographer - and friend of JAKE - Magnus Hastings. Running from 27 July to 25 August, the showcase promises an immersive exploration into the world of drag, celebrating its artistry and the collective spirit of pride.

Magnus Hastings, originally from London but now residing in Los Angeles, has an extensive career capturing the diverse expressions within the LGBTQ+ community, particularly focusing on drag performers. Hastings' journey into the world of drag began in childhood, marked by secret indulgences in his sister's clothes and his mother's heels and feather boas. However, societal pressures eventually shamed him out of openly expressing his drag inclinations.

The 'Queen' exhibition, described by the gallery as the “first of its kind,” will feature newly commissioned photographs spotlighting dozens of Liverpool's drag artists, captured in the city's vibrant Pride Quarter. These images will be displayed alongside some of Hastings' most renowned works, including portraits of famous drag queens such as Bianca del Rio, Courtney Act, and Trixie Mattel.

“My photographs are about celebrating the art form rather than going: ‘This is a man in a dress who’s never going to be happy doing his makeup into a mirror.’” said Hastings. "You’re looking at these incredible faces and the work that’s gone into it, the hours spent putting on makeup and shading. It’s about seeing drag as art – because when drag is good, it’s incredible. There’s a massive freedom in it.”

Hastings, who is self-taught, rose to prominence photographing prominent figures from various sectors including Todrick Hall, Boy George, Luke Evans, and Cheyenne Jackson. His expertise has also been showcased on popular television shows such as RuPaul's Drag Race, where he appeared as a guest photographer, and The Boulet Brothers' Dragula, where he served as a judge.

The exhibition aims to delve into the multifaceted roots of drag and its continual evolution. It will spotlight a wide spectrum of performers, from “comedy queens, bearded queens, and full female illusionists” to “drag kings and gender benders.” By doing so, Hastings seeks to underscore the inclusivity and diversity inherent in the drag community.

Numerous prominent drag queens have Liverpool connections, including the late Lily Savage and newer stars like Danny Beard, winner of RuPaul's Drag Race UK season four. “England has a rich, long tradition of drag, from drag queens in pubs to Lily Savage and Danny La Rue,” Hastings stated.

“It’s so terrifying in America right now, I’m stuck to the news every day. Hatred and fear are being stoked up. I’ve got a lot of trans friends, and they’re just being threatened all the time.”

David Watson, the executive director of audiences and media at National Museums Liverpool, commented on the significance of the exhibition. “Through the brilliant lens of Magnus Hastings, this showcase offers a captivating glimpse into the vibrant, diverse, and unapologetically expressive world of drag, which has long been an integral part of Liverpool’s cultural fabric.”

**liverpoolmuseums.co.uk**