# New fourth plinth installation celebrates trans communities



Trafalgar Square’s renowned fourth plinth has a new tenant: an evocative art installation by Mexican artist Teresa Margolles that tells the stories of trans and gender variant people. The installation features 726 plaster cast masks, each bearing unique names and features. These masks are designed to weather and deteriorate over the next two years, symbolically reflecting the relentless elements and struggles faced by the community it aims to represent.

The fourth plinth, originally intended to host a statue of William IV in 1841, has become a stage for temporary artworks since 1998. Teresa Margolles, a 63-year-old former forensic pathologist, has utilised her profound understanding of death and deterioration to create this powerful piece. The installation will be on display until 2026 before being succeeded by other planned artworks.

Margolles's inspiration for this work stems from her friendship with Karla La Borrada, a murdered trans singer and retired sex worker. "We are giving faces to them all," Margolles stated, highlighting the visibility she aims to bring to a community often blending into the larger cisgender population. Margolles adds subtle details such as lipstick and even half an eyebrow to reflect individuality within the masks.

Karla La Borrada, a pillar within the trans community, was tragically murdered on 22 December 2015, a crime for which no one has been charged. Margolles collaborated with La Borrada in the past and has infused her memory into this installation, which she describes as a “collective artistic hug” for La Borrada and the broader trans community.

Margolles’s work has often explored themes of death, even using bodily fluids from deceased persons in past projects. For this installation, however, she has chosen to celebrate life by casting masks from living trans and gender variant people across the globe, including participants from the UK. Each mask's unique attributes symbolize protest against the violence faced by individuals within this vulnerable community.

A notable feature of the installation is that it does not display the outer masks. Instead, Margolles allows them to naturally degrade, stating, “They will fade and transform. It’s a natural process.” By doing so, she aims to preserve the ‘soul’ of each mask, with organic materials reacting uniquely to the elements over time.

Following the end of this installation in 2026, New York-born artist Tschabalala Self’s sculpture Lady In Blue will take its place. This piece is described as being inspired by a modern “everywoman”. Subsequently, in 2028, a piece by Romanian artist Andra Ursuta titled Untitled will be showcased, featuring a hollow, shrouded horse intended to provoke thought regarding public art.

Discussing her upcoming piece, Ursuta remarked, “My work deals with history; history makes sense of us as we try to make sense of it. Trafalgar Square is a place where multiple histories face one another in an open-ended standoff. It will never be finished. This is such a crucial, and beautiful, accident.”

Trafalgar Square’s fourth plinth continues to serve as a dynamic platform for public art, bringing forward works that engage with social, historical, and cultural narratives across the spectrum.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)