THE TIMES

The ten best exhibitions to see at the Edinburgh Art Festival 2026

From a five-star survey of Gwen John's radiant paintings to Sgàire Wood's look at the troubled history of Belfast, our art critic picks her highlights



Elizabeth Blackadder: A Life in Colour

PHIL WILKINSON



Nancy Durrant

Tuesday August 18 2026, 5.00pm, The Times

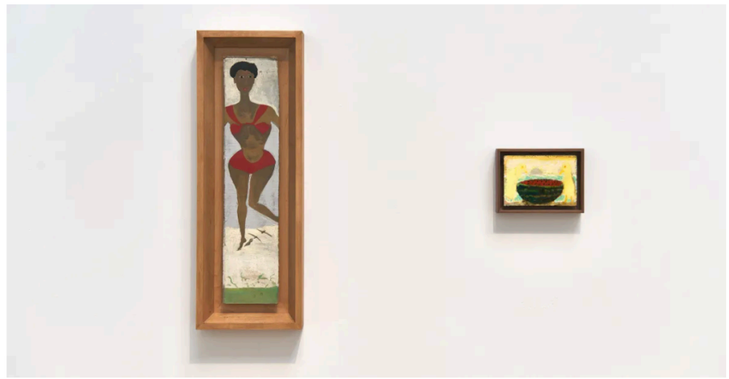
The Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF) is a curious beastie. It has its own commissions and exhibitions, and a year-round civic programme, but this August jamboree of art functions is more of an umbrella than a fully curated programme; a way of bringing together in one place — in this case a slightly annoying website — all the many visual art activities that are still going on in a city that, at this time of year, many visitors forget has galleries at all.

But despite this disparate format, while trawling the 40 galleries and venues taking part in the EAF, a thematic through-line does appear: the underrepresented and the rarely seen. Whether that's in documentation of the lives of the city's working class, or responses to the secret world of the soil beneath our feet, or the hidden work of artists who remained unknown until after their deaths now coming out into the light, there is something new and worth discovering in almost every exhibition.

If you're weary of the Fringe and want to just look instead of listen, duck into one of these ten richly rewarding shows.

3. Songs of Innocence and Experience: Part II

★★★★☆



Out of the Swim, Frank Walter; Look out, Andrew Cranston

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MCKENZIE.

This exhibition celebrates the centenary of the singular Antiguan painter Frank Walter. Artists who have admired or responded to Walter's work — the likes of Peter Doig, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, David Austen, Tal R, Andrew Cranston, Alvaro Barrington, Ellen Siebers and more — have sent their own to be shown alongside his small, eloquent paintings depicting the landscape, flora and fauna and people of Antigua.

The result is a beautiful, harmonious and gently surprising meditation on the work of a true visionary. Don't miss the exhibition upstairs too, of quiet, atmospheric still lifes by the Chilean artist Sebastián Espejo.
Ingleby Gallery, to Sep 12, inglebygallery.com