

# 1700



Bryan  
Blundell

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## 1708

Blue Coat School for orphans founded at St. Peter's Church by Rev. Robert Styth and master mariner Bryan Blundell.

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## 1715

Old Dock completed. Bryan Blundell's ship *The Mulberry* is first to enter. Liverpool population around 6,000.

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## 1716

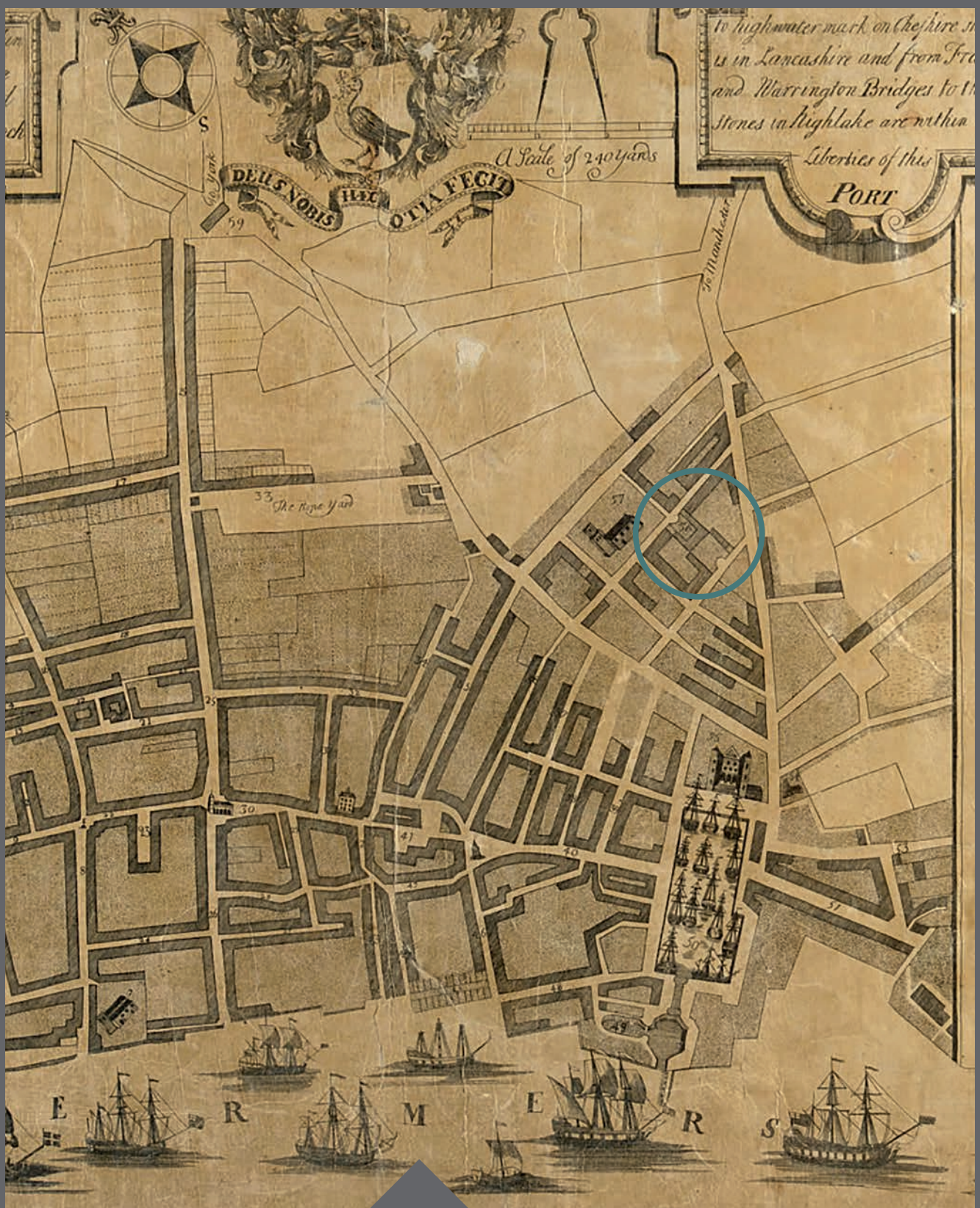
Foundation stone laid for new, larger Blue Coat school.

❧1717❧

Building dedicated,  
with Latin inscription,  
and is in use the  
following year.







# 1725

## Liverpool, with Blue Coat School circled and Old Dock close by.

James Chadwick, *The Mapp of all the streets, lanes and alleys within the town of Liverpool*, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Libraries

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**1725**

Construction completed at cost of £2,288. Built by mason Edward Litherland and engineer Thomas Steers, who were responsible for Liverpool's Old Dock.

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**1732**

Liverpool's first workhouse built by the Blue Coat on land leased by the Corporation.

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**1756**

Blundell dies and is succeeded as Treasurer by his son Richard, then in 1760 by Jonathan Blundell.

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**1770**

William Roscoe's poem *Mount Pleasant* refers to Bluecoat as 'yon calm retreat, where screened from every ill/The helpless orphan's throbbing heart lies still;/And finds delighted, in the peaceful dome,/A better parent, and a happier home'.

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**1771**

Benefactors of school protest it is profiting from children's labours. Manufactory converted into warehouse for rent. Slaves in England were emancipated, but Transatlantic slavery continued to contribute funds to the school.

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**1796**

Graffiti from this year can still be seen carved into a cornerstone in the front courtyard.



# 1800

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## 1800

107 pupils run away after attending Liverpool Fair.

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## 1800s

School adopts Dr Bell's 'Madras system', where older pupils teach younger ones.

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## 1820s

Curved elevation added to central block and wings at back of the building extended.



## Late 1800s

The school refectory.

**Late 1800s**  
School girls  
in the laundry.



**Late 1800s**  
Boy at front gates

# 1900

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## 1906

School moves to new building in Wavertree.

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## 1907

Sandon Studios Society, a breakaway from University of Liverpool's School of Applied Art, moves into vacant building, establishing an artistic presence that continues today.

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## 1908

Painting by Impressionist Claude Monet included in exhibition staged by the Sandon, whose honorary members include Augustus John and Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

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## 1909

Charles Reilly, head of the University's School of Architecture, persuades Port Sunlight soap magnate William Lever (later Lord Leverhulme) to rent the building. He buys and renames it Liberty Buildings. Reilly's department moves in, staying till 1918.





**1910**

University of Liverpool Architecture  
students at work upstairs.



**1910**

Liberty  
Buildings



**S**ANDON STUDIOS SOCIETY  
EXHIBITION OF MODERN ART  
INCLUDING WORKS BY THE  
POST-IMPRESSIONISTS, AT LIBERTY  
BUILDINGS, OLD BLUE COAT SCHOOL  
SCHOOL LANE, LIVERPOOL, FROM  
MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> TO APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>, 1911.

OPEN DAILY FROM 10 A.M. TILL  
DUSK. ADMISSION, INCLUDING  
CATALOGUE, ONE SHILLING

## 1911

A radical year in Liverpool's history. Art by Picasso, Matisse, Van Gogh and Cézanne shown alongside Sandon artists' work in a version of the seminal Post-Impressionists exhibition seen the previous year in London. This year also sees the General Transport Strike, so serious in Liverpool that Churchill sends a warship to the Mersey. The Liver Building opens.

## 1914

Contemporary Art Society purchases for the nation exhibited, including paintings by Gwen John, Duncan Grant and Walter Sickert. World War One starts, in which several Sandon artists die.



## 1925

Sculptor Herbert Tyson Smith's studio established. His best known public works include reliefs on Liverpool cenotaph, St. George's Plateau. Leverhulme dies, leaving no provision for Bluecoat in his will.

❖ 1927 ❖



**B**luecoat Society of Arts founded, following successful campaign led by Fanny Calder to save the building, which becomes the UK's first arts centre, its principles enshrined in a constitution.





## 1928

Restoration work provides a concert hall and studios for artists, architects, craftspeople, photographers and cultural organisations.

## 1929

Annual exhibition includes a Henry Moore *Reclining Woman* sculpture and other works by artists at the forefront of modern British art. It is curated by Sandon artist and medallist Edward Carter Preston, known for his Anglican Cathedral sculptures.



## 1931

Jacob Epstein's sculpture *Genesis* displayed. Nearly 50,000 visitors, each paying sixpence, view Britain's most controversial sculpture, generating funds for the building.

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## 1934

Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, dining at Bluecoat, asks fellow diners to stand and honour 'England's greatest composer', Sir Edward Elgar, who'd died that day.

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## 1939

Liverpool Corporation starts staging exhibitions at Bluecoat while the Walker Art Gallery is requisitioned by the Ministry of Food. The programme continues long after the War ends, Bluecoat becoming the city's main art gallery in this period.

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## 1941

Building suffers extensive damage during the May Blitz when Liverpool experiences heavy bombing. Fire spreads from adjacent premises, gutting the concert hall and East wing. Sculptor and firewatcher Herbert Tyson Smith raises the alarm.

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## 1948

Merseyside Film Institute Society installs new cinema. A popular film club with 2,000 members at its height, it continues adventurous film programming until the 1990s.

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## 1951

Bluecoat reopens after two-year reconstruction, aided by funds from War Damages Commission and Arts Council of Great Britain, with classical music series in new concert hall. Liverpool's Festival of Britain programme organised from the building.

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## 1952

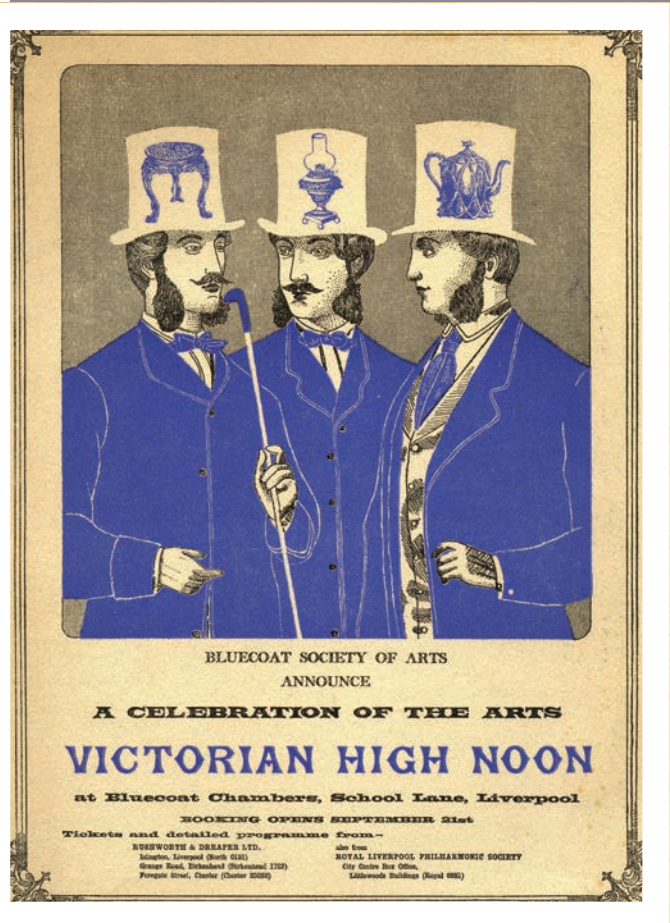
Building receives Grade One listing for its historical and architectural significance.

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## 1955

Liverpool Corporation opens a library on the ground floor.





## 1957

In the year the Walker stages its first John Moores Painting Prize exhibition, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation funding helps Bluecoat's final refurbishment, marked by three annual arts celebrations: The Augustan Age (1958), Victorian High Noon (1959), and The Turn of the Century (1960).

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## 1958

Bluecoat Display Centre established overlooking the garden, and becomes a leading UK contemporary craft gallery.

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## 1961

Bluecoat Arts Forum set up to bring together the building's cultural societies and artists, take on Merseyside-wide role to promote the arts, and develop adventurous programmes.

10-15 June

Bluecoat 63



## 1963

Bluecoat 63 festival demonstrates building's popularity as a venue combining visual, performing and literary arts.



# ART IN A CITY

John Willett



## 1967

In a year that sees The Beatles' LP *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* released, the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King opened, and *The Mersey Sound* poetry volume published, Yoko Ono performs to a packed Bluecoat. John Willett's Bluecoat-commissioned study *Art in a City* published, the first sociology of art about a single city.



## 1967

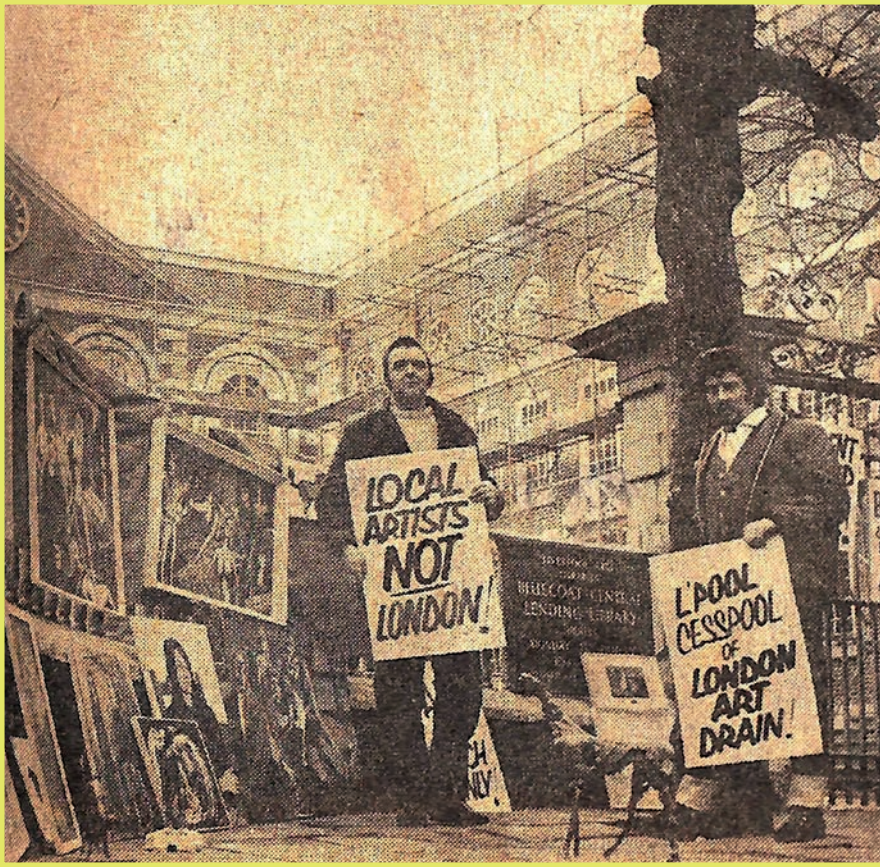
Yoko Ono

Photo Sheridan Davies



## 1968

Gallery formalised. Artist Arthur Dooley leads protest outside about local artists being priced out. Displays on Bluecoat railings then become a regular Saturday feature.



## 1968

Liverpool Lieder Circle set up, adding to Bluecoat's classical music activity, alongside Liverpool Mozart Orchestra, Sandon Music Group, festivals and teaching.



Liverpool Mozart Orchestra, 1965.  
Photo Lancashire Life





## 1972

Cult Californian rock musician Captain Beefheart's first ever exhibition of paintings at Bluecoat.



Photo Sean Halligan

## 1977

Queen Elizabeth's silver Jubilee is also Bluecoat Society's golden jubilee. A ceramic plaque installed at College Lane entrance is designed by long-time tenant, Julia Carter Preston, known for her distinctive s'graffito pottery.



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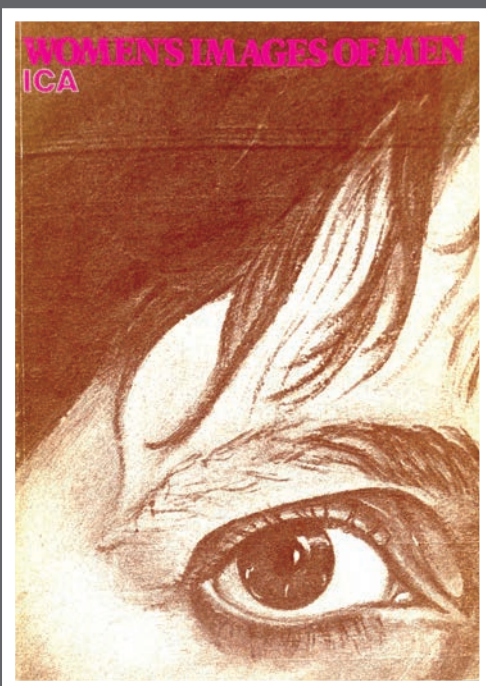
## 1978

The year sees the 'winter of discontent' and the Anglican Cathedral completed after 74 years, while Bluecoat's mortgage from 1927 is finally repaid.

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## 1981

There are disturbances, dubbed by the media the 'Toxteth Riots'. National touring exhibition *Women's Images of Men* comes to Bluecoat. Further group and solo women's shows follow.



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## 1982

Cindy Sherman and Keith Haring among New York artists in *Urban Kisses* at Bluecoat, on tour from London's ICA. Retractable seating installed in the concert hall, improving facilities for dance and concerts.

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## 1983

George Melly becomes Bluecoat Friends' patron, reconnecting to the venue that introduced him to bohemia as a child, as recounted in his autobiography *Scouse Mouse*.

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## 1985

Militant-controlled Liverpool City Council passes an illegal budget, while at Bluecoat *Black Skin Bluecoat*, an exhibition by emerging Black British artists including Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers and Keith Piper, marks the start of a long engagement with artists addressing issues of race and diversity.

## 1987

Bluecoat's first cultural exchange programme with Liverpool's German twin city of Cologne starts, revived in 2000 as *Eight Days a Week*.



## 1987

George Melly and Adrian Henri in the gallery.

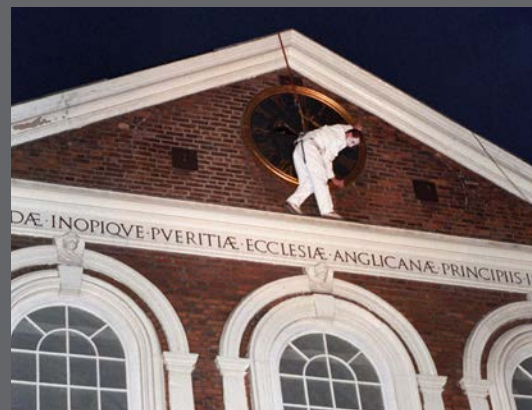


Photo Mark McNulty

## 1988

The week that 'Tate of the North' (Tate Liverpool) opens, Liverpool performance group Visual Stress 'cleanse' Bluecoat of its slave history. Merseyside Moviola becomes a tenant, organising the *Video Positive* festivals, before leaving - as FACT - in 2003.

## 1989

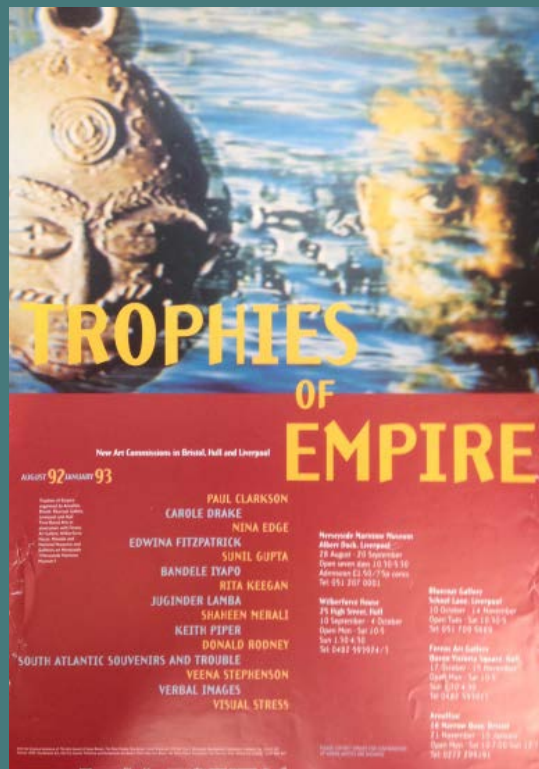
The year the Berlin Wall falls, Bluecoat stages first UK appearance by underground Leningrad performance group Pop Mechanica at St. George's Hall.





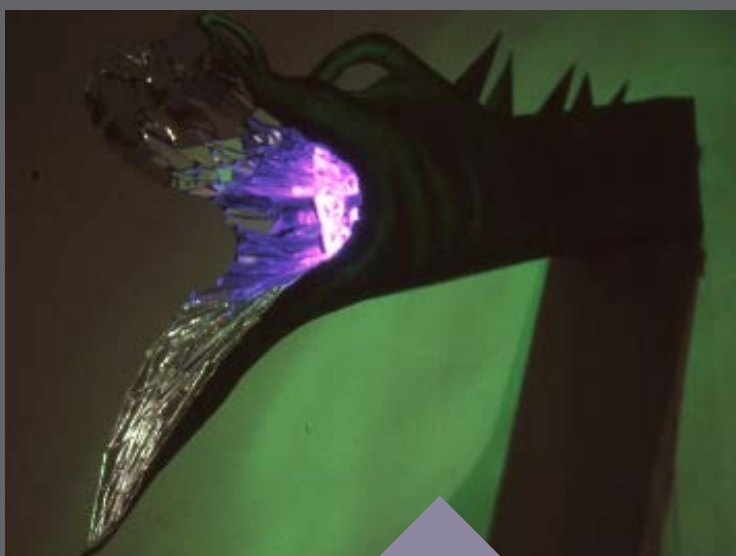
## 1990

US jazz legend Sun Ra and his Arkestra play a rare Liverpool gig. Lily Savage (Paul O'Grady) comperes alternative Merseyside Festival of Comedy festival queen



## 1992

Artists' commission project *Trophies of Empire* responds to colonial and imperial legacies in Liverpool, Bristol and Hull, and the re-shaping of Europe. It's the year of the Columbus Quincentenary and the Maastricht Treaty that creates the European Union, leading to single currency, the euro.



## 1991

US artist Tony Oursler installation in *Video Positive*



## 1994

Artist Ann Whitehurst's *On the Map: Placing Disability* critiques Liverpool's and Bluecoat's disabling environments through a life-sized board game.

## 1996

Alan Dunn is Football Artist in Residence during Liverpool's hosting of the Euro96 championships, in a programme including a fashion show, *Tackle*.





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## 1997

One of Bluecoat's live art commissions around the reported death of vinyl, Jeremy Deller's *Acid Brass*, premiered at LIPA, featured house music anthems played by the Williams Fairey Brass Band. For *Independent Thoughts*, artists were commissioned to interrogate independence in the context of the 50th anniversary of India's independence and the partition of Pakistan.



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## 1998

Access ramps installed at entrance and in the garden. Collaboration starts with Liverpool Arabic Centre, leading in 2002 to Liverpool Arab Arts Festival, the UK's first such event.

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## 1999

Bluecoat contributes to first Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art and is involved in all subsequent editions. Bluecoatconnect established, a collaboration programme with artists and day centres for people with learning disabilities, which develops into Blue Room in 2008.

# 2000



## 2002

Bluecoat curates first of several *Liverpool Live* programmes for the Biennial. Memorable events include Chinese artists Mad for Real's naked soy sauce and tomato ketchup fight in the courtyard.

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## 2004

Liverpool designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, in which Bluecoat is the oldest building.



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## 2005

Building closes for capital refurbishment, its outreach participation programme continuing off site.

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## 2006

TV show *Most Haunted* films in the empty building, hoping to summon up Bluecoat's famous ghosts. Humberto Velez's *The Welcoming* at Albert Dock during the Biennial involves local migrant communities symbolically welcoming Afghan asylum seekers.

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## 2007

Five-year ART Valley programme established in partnership, taking art and artists into communities across the city.



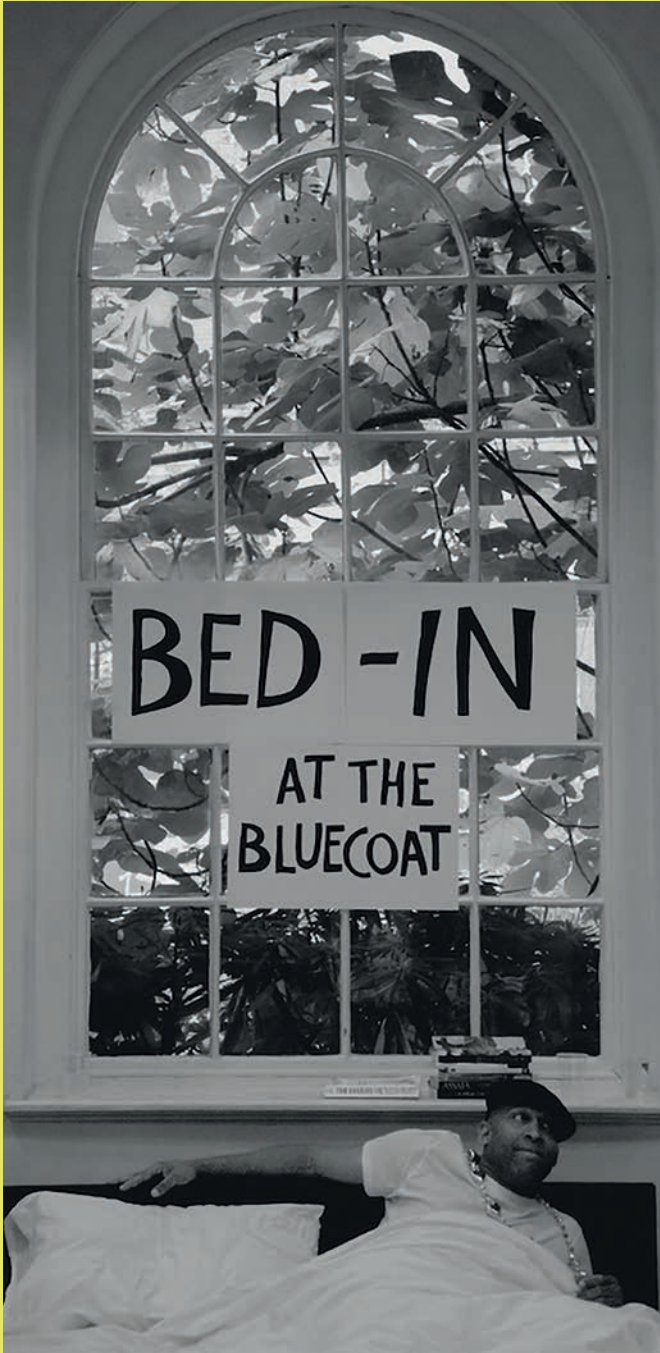
Photo Stefan Müller

## 2008

Building reopens in Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture with a new arts wing, restoration of its historic fabric, and access improvements, designed by Rotterdam architects, Birkbeck. Yoko Ono performance live streamed to the city centre. New tenants include deaf and disability arts festival DaDaFest. Blue Room welcomes artists with learning disabilities to Bluecoat each week.

## 2009

Print making offer in the building extended with addition of screen printing.



Poet Chuck Perkins on the bed

## 2010

Bluecoat Bed-In actions 'for a better world' staged over 62 consecutive days in the Hub.

**LIVERPOOL CITY OF RADICALS 2011**

**Democratic Promenade**

An exhibition by 40 artists engaging with ideas around democracy and the radical

30 September – 27 November 2011  
10am – 6pm. Free

at the Bluecoat.

Liverpool City Council  
Supported by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND  
Thanks to the City of Liverpool for its financial support

## 2011

*Democratic Promenade* exhibition, part of 'City of Radicals'-themed year, looking at Liverpool's radical traditions.





## 2013

*The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, curated by Mark Leckey, one of several exhibition collaborations with Hayward Touring made possible since the gallery was enlarged.

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## 2016

Over 650,000 visits to the building recorded.



❧ 2017 ❧

CELEBRATING  
300 YEARS

1717  
2017

**B**uilding celebrates  
its 300th Anniversary

