

PRESS RELEASE 18/05/26

***Searching for Lost Rain* to open at St Mary le Strand Church**

27 May – 4 June 2026

St Mary le Strand and Strand Aldwych, London, WC2R 1ES



[Link to images](#)

Searching for Lost Rain is a curatorial project featuring works by artist Gala Porras-Kim, taking place at St Mary le Strand Church.

This project is curated by MA Curating students at the Courtauld Institute of Art and is a collaboration with St Mary le Strand Church and Westminster Council.

Bringing together two works, *Precipitation for an Arid Landscape* (2021–) and *Mediating with the Rain* (2021–), the exhibition explores what happens when sacred, ritual, or culturally significant objects are removed from the environments and beliefs that once gave them meaning.

Gala Porras-Kim is a Los Angeles-based interdisciplinary artist and current resident at the nearby Somerset House Studios. Both works emerge from Porras-Kim's research into 30,000 objects removed from The Sacred Cenote, a natural sinkhole at Chichén Itzá in

Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Originally offered to the Maya rain god Chaac, these objects including ceramic, gold, jade, obsidian, cloth, and human remains stayed submerged for centuries. In the early twentieth century, they were dredged by archaeologist Edward H. Thompson (1857–1935) and later entered the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, USA.

Mediating with the Rain, located in the church courtyard, presents a letter written by Porras-Kim to the Peabody Museum, in which she advocates for the reintroduction of rainwater to the artefacts, arguing that "their owner, the rain, is still around."

Inside St Mary le Strand Church, *Precipitation for an Arid Landscape* takes the form of a sculptural work. Dust gathered from the Peabody Museum's storage has been combined with copal resin to create an object that metaphorically represents the displaced artefacts.

Over the course of the exhibition, visitors are invited to add rainwater collected on the Strand to the sculpture. They are symbolically returning rainwater to the traces of objects once placed in the Sacred Cenote. This gesture reconnects these objects to the ceremonies interrupted by their removal into museum collections.

While the project does not attempt to resolve the histories the artworks invoke, it makes them materially, spiritually, and institutionally present within St Mary le Strand Church, a site shaped by belief, memory, and care.

The curatorial team consists of: Aida Daghigh, Aliyah Ratcliffe, Angela Black, Carlotta Hildenbrand, Dora Lynas Pain, Eeshan Banerjee, Ebony Morris, India Armstrong Brown, Micheal Do, Rosie Norman, Tia Blythe, Unity Saunders.

Exhibition Information

Searching for Lost Rain

27 May – 4 June 2026

St Mary le Strand and Strand Aldwych, WC2R 1ES

Free admission

Opening hours: 12:00 - 16:00

Opening preview

Tuesday 26 May 2026, 18:00 – 21:00

This will be the first opportunity for the public to view the works and activate *Precipitation of an Arid Landscape* by adding rainwater as a communal act, open to all visitors. Complimentary drinks will be served.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Mediations on the Sacred: Ritual and Contemporary Practice.

Monday 1 June 2026: Free, Research Forum, the Courtauld Institute, WC1X 9EW 18:00 – 20:00

A panel discussion exploring the lives of cultural artefacts which have been removed from and presented outside of their original contexts and how these can be engaged with ethically. This will be followed by a drinks reception.

From Chorus to Conversation: Ritual and the Sacred in Contemporary Art.

Tuesday 2 June 2026: Free, St. Mary Le Strand Church, WC2R 1ES, 18:00 – 20:00

A panel discussion examining how ritual and belief systems could inform contemporary exhibition practices, and how the cultural heritage of objects can be reinterpreted today. This is followed by a choral performance by Mayfair Community Choir.

Tickets available via [the Research Forum Website](#).

MEDIA CONTACTS

Dora Pain - dora.pain@courtauld.ac.uk

India Armstrong Brown - c1611623@courtauld.ac.uk

Press images are available here, with installation shots to follow after the opening on 26

May: [Link to images](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Courtauld

The Courtauld works to advance how we see and understand the visual arts, as an internationally renowned centre for the teaching and research of art history and a major public gallery. Founded by collectors and philanthropists in 1932, the organisation has been at the forefront of the study of art ever since through advanced research and conservation practice, innovative teaching, the renowned collection and inspiring exhibitions of its gallery, and engaging and accessible activities, education and events.