

# Liverpool Biennial

---

ARCHIVE

THE CUNARD BUILDING

2012

The Unexpected Guest

15 September – 25 November 2012



*The Unexpected Guest* explores notions of hospitality. Leading and emerging artists have been commissioned to make permanent and temporary public artworks as well as long-term community-based projects. Works by over 60 artists from across the globe, unfold across the city in its major galleries (the Bluecoat, FACT, Open Eye Gallery, Metal, Tate Liverpool and The Walker Art Gallery), as well as a variety of public realm sites including The Cunard Building, the Liverpool John Moores Copperas Hill Building, The Royal Standard, The Monro, Liverpool ONE, Everton Park and Anfield and Breckfield.

Hospitality is the welcome we extend to strangers, an attitude and a code of conduct fundamental to civilisation, as well as a metaphor whose conditions and energy inspires artists. In a globalising world,

increasing mobility and interdependence are changing the rules of hospitality. There are different 'cultures of hospitality' often increasingly co-existent in the same place.

Our awareness of such complexity and migration between nations and cultures makes clear distinctions between host and guest increasingly difficult. Where lies the threshold? Hospitality, after all, is based on power, a temporary accord between host and guest subject to negotiation. If we extend this metaphor to include the influence of technology in fields such as communication, medicine and biology the picture becomes even more complex.

The Cunard Building occupies an unrivalled waterside position within Liverpool taking centre stage as one of the city's famous 'Three Graces', sited between the Port of Liverpool Building and the Royal Liver Building. The building was once the Headquarters and main passenger terminal for the world's most famous shipping company, the Cunard Steamship Company.

It was constructed between 1914 and 1917 with the firm relocating from their previous headquarters situated at the junction of Water Street and Rumford Street on the adjacent side of the strand from Pier Head. The Cunard Steamship Company later merged with the White Star Line, the owners of the fateful Titanic, who were previously located within Albion House, situated close to the Merseyrail James Street Transport Interchange.

The Cunard Building acted as the central headquarters for the shipping line providing office accommodation, administration accommodation and ship designing facilities on the upper floors. The lower floors of the building were utilised for passenger facilities both ahead of, and following, their departure/arrival on the Cunard passenger liners in Liverpool.

A range of facilities were in place within the building including first, second and third class passenger waiting rooms and canteens, storage facilities for customers luggage and facilities for the Cunard employees based both on land and at sea. The Cunard Line vacated the building in the 1960's, relocating to new headquarters in Southampton.

Merseyside Pension Fund purchased the property in November 2001, to add to their growing property investment portfolio. The building today is occupied by a range of public and private organisations playing an integral part within the developing Liverpool business community.

**The Cunard Building**  
**Water Street**  
**Liverpool**  
**L3 1ES**