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Public artworks brighten up cityscape once more

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Polly March

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This week the streets of Swansea will once more become a canvas for artists who have created new public works for the city.

If the **last Art Across the City** festival escaped you then make sure you don't miss the chance to see these new creations in situ.

The project, which has been commissioned and curated by Locws International, aims to bring art to the people by brightening up otherwise derelict or unremarkable corners of Swansea.

This time the festival features 12 artworks - five which have been newly commissioned and seven which are permanent, having been created for previous events.

The new works include the largest ever mural by the famous music artist **Pete Fowler**, which has been installed opposite Swansea train station on a disused night club front and is a homage to the city's most famous son, Dylan Thomas.



Pete Fowler's The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Octopus. Image: Locws International/Pete Fowler

The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Octopus draws from the life and works of Thomas and pays tribute to his playfulness, while leaving room for the public to draw their own conclusions.

Also new for this festival are two big sculpture pieces by the internationally acclaimed Swiss artist Olaf Breuning, which will be on show in Castle Square. They are giant versions of his initials mounted by the two words yes and no and poke fun at consumerism and the modern world.

Situated on the high street is Sinta Tantra's contribution - **geometric shapes topped with palm fronds**. The artist, who was born in New York but is of Balinese descent, used the travel sketches of the writer Truman Capote as inspiration.

She said: "I'm fascinated in the way in which architecture and public art leads our bodies in certain directions across the city."

"Primarily, I wanted people passing by to engage with colour and imagery and then to ask broader questions to themselves such as, how they want to live, build communities and interact with each other."

The Swansea illustrator David Long has created a new heraldic crest for the city which is attached to a freestanding scaffold outside the Dylan Thomas Centre. It is emblazoned with the opening line from Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood, "To Begin at the Beginning".



David Long, To Begin at the Beginning. Image courtesy of the artist/Locws International

He told Locws' blog that the work "represents a new chapter or even the turning over of a new leaf for the community."

A piece has also been commissioned from another Swansea artist, Phil Cheater.

Land-Marked is a brightly coloured geometric sculpture which references the city's many office buildings and its skyline, while responding to the city's regeneration. The pieces can be seen on the green outside the Guildhall.

Seven permanent commissions further support the programme and include works by artists Sean Puleston, Rik Bennett, Bristow Lloyd, Bedwyr Williams, Birmingham and Robinson, Mark Folds and Niamh McCann.



Philip Cheater, Land-Marked. Image courtesy of the artist/Locws International

I spoke to Locws International's project manager, Gordon Dalton, ahead of the festival's opening.

He said: "2012 was a big leap for us in terms of recognition by the public but this is double that."

"The high street is already attracting attention as you come out of the station and see Pete Fowler's work and it acts as a wonderful gateway to the city."

"Pete is so well-known and popular that this was a big coup for us, as was getting Olaf Breuning, who is one of the world's most successful artists and has exhibited in galleries and museums internationally."

"We have also featured two young artists from Swansea and I think it's important to include them and treat them the same as the more well-known artists, giving the same amount of attention and budget."

"As with last time, all the artworks are within walking distance, so it's very accessible and people won't be able to miss them."

The latest festival runs from 28 March to 12 May and there is a launch event at Mosaic Bar on the High Street from 6-8pm on the opening night.

The **Art Across the City website** features a map showing where all the works are located and a printable version of its 2013 brochure. If you get lost there are three information pods in the city centre offering directions and information on the art.

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