



Art on the water

The Line to stage UK debut of Rasheed Araeen's participatory art Discosailing: A Ballet on Water in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Saturday 27 July and Friday 27 September



Discosailing, Rasheed Araeen. Image credit: Lorna Powell

This summer, as the world's leading athletes compete at the Paris 2024 Olympics, an altogether different sporting proposition is set to unfold in East London.

On Saturday 27 July and Friday 27 September, The Line presents the UK debut of Rasheed Araeen's extraordinary participatory art piece *Discosailing: A Ballet on Water* in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. First conceived in 1970, *Discosailing* is a system of meditative movement on water.

"Discosailing is conceived both as a work of art and water sport, thus questioning and breaking the boundary that separates art from other human activities of everyday life. Unlike traditional or prevailing concepts or forms of sailing, which require a boat or surfboard with a mast to which are fixed sails, Discosailing has no mast. The mast is in fact replaced by human body."



The underlying philosophy of Discosailing, is that we all belong to one reality spread across the globe, and that it is fundamental to our survival and wellbeing to recognise that we all are inter-related within a single unit or entity, and that we need within this entity collaboration and cooperation.”
– Rasheed Araeen, artist, Discosailing

The Karachi-born engineer-turned-artist Rasheed Araeen developed *Discosailing* as an opportunity for people to interact with his sculptures. Through a meditative, experimental encounter, participants are invited to play with a connection between the body, object, water and space – proposing an anti-sport or noncompetitive activity.

“We are delighted to present Rasheed Araeen’s ‘Discosailing: A Ballet on Water’ on The Line on the opening weekend of the Paris 2024 Games. Its location on the river, in the heart of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, reminds us of the cross-cultural links between art and sport, and the joy of participation in both, whatever the participant’s level. It is a privilege to present this work on The Line, allowing Rasheed to witness it in person for the first time.”
– Megan Piper, Co-Founder & Director, The Line

Participants stand on red floating discs approximately four feet in diameter and wear yellow sails. Lifting the arms raises the sails to catch the breeze and, by moving the body, the individual can balance and centre themselves on the disc. For the spectator, the effect is like watching a group of ballet dancers in slow motion, as they react to the effects of the wind and the water. *Discosailing* therefore exists as both a form of live performance, a water sport, and a sculptural artwork, making the argument for a new societal approach to physical leisure activity. It is a collaboration with London Youth Rowing, who have provided invaluable expertise and support in facilitating the project.

“London Youth Rowing are excited to be working on ‘Discosailing’. It is a unique and collaborative way to encourage more people to engage with the waterway and to get active on it.”
– Owen Shephard-Wyatt, Active Paddle and QEOP Manager, London Youth Rowing

The first performance of *Discosailing* will be held on Saturday 27 July, coinciding with the official opening of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, and will take place, aptly, on the river in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, site of the London Olympics 12 years ago.



“Our canals and rivers form such a vital part of what makes the park so special that it’s fitting to use them to host Rasheed Araeen’s work. It’s yet another wonderful collaboration celebrating the very best in East London’s vibrant arts and culture community.”

– Mark Camley, Executive Director of Park Operations and Venues, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Six 30-minute performances are planned for the two dates, each featuring nine participants drawn from a variety of local London performance and community groups, as well as volunteers from the wider public. Rasheed Araeen will also attend the July performance – the first time he will have seen his idea brought to life in the 55 years since he first conceived it.

Last presented in Moscow in 2019, but never before staged in the UK, *Discosailing* is co-curated by The Line – a 2012 Olympic legacy project and public art trail that connects Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and The O2, following the waterways and line of the Greenwich Meridian across East London. This marks the latest in a series of collaborations and co-curated projects with Arup Phase 2 and forms part of a wider presentation of Araeen’s practice, which includes a sculptural commission, a programme of workshops exploring creativity and engineering with local secondary schools, and an artist’s talk.

“This is Arup Phase 2’s third curatorial project with The Line and we are honoured and excited to be co-commissioning Rasheed Araeen. Discosailing is meditative and non-competitive, relying on collective interaction with air and water – the fundamentals of life. The discs have been carefully refined with input from materials specialists at Arup and Aquaplanet to enable further Discosailing events in the future.”

– Dr Jennifer Greitschus, Head of Cultural Heritage and Exhibitions, Arup

Discosailing will be performed on the Waterworks River between London Aquatics Centre and UCL East at what3words location [mixed.songs.motion](#) on 27 July and 27 September 2024. The six 30-minute performances will start on the half hour between 11.30am and 5pm on Saturday 27 July and a further afternoon/evening of performances will take place on Friday 27 September, exact times to be confirmed. More information about the performances – and the application form to participate – can be found here:

<https://forms.monday.com/forms/3a35419a6904145a248324b23e05efa9?r=euc1>

Supported by The Ampersand Foundation and Arts Council England.



Courtesy of the artist and Grosvenor Gallery.

For press information and images, please contact Tori Dance at theline@zetteler.co.uk

Notes for editors

Rasheed Araeen

The Karachi-born conceptual artist, writer and curator has been based in London since moving from Pakistan in 1964. Initially trained in civil engineering, Araeen pivoted into the visual arts when he moved to the UK, becoming an early and influential pioneer of minimalism in sculpture. For seven decades, his practice has combined art and activism, and his work has been instrumental in amplifying the Black voice in British art.

<https://www.grosvenorgallery.com/artists/50-rasheed-araeen/overview/>

The Line

The Line is East London's public art trail that connects Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and The O2, following the waterways and the line of the Greenwich Meridian. Its outdoor exhibition programme offers a journey through a dynamic urban landscape where everyone is free to explore art, nature and heritage.

The Line was co-founded in 2015 by its director Megan Piper, and the late regeneration expert Clive Dutton OBE (1953–2015) whose life's work was rooted in a commitment to improving the quality of life for people in urban environments. The project was established to democratise access to art by introducing sculptures that were previously hidden from public view into the public realm for audiences to experience for free.

The Line currently includes art installations by: Larry Achiampong, Alex Chinneck, Helen Cammock, Serge Attukwei Clottey, Tracey Emin, Simon Faithfull, Abigail Fallis, Laura Ford, Madge Gill, Antony Gormley, Ron Haselden, Carsten Holler, Gary Hume, Anish Kapoor, Somang Lee, Virginia Overton, Eva Rothschild, Thomson & Craighead, and Richard Wilson.

the-line.org
[@thelinelondon](https://www.instagram.com/thelinelondon)



Arup Phase 2

Phase 2 is a cultural programme at Arup which explores the intersection of art, design and engineering. In keeping with the ethos of Arup, the programme has cross-disciplinary collaboration at its heart as well as the showcasing of stories from Arup's rich cultural history.

[@phase2exhibitions](#)

London Youth Rowing

London Youth Rowing was founded by Jim Downing in 2004 in the hope that young people across London would have access to an otherwise traditionally niche sport and in turn help the rowing community become a more diverse, more inclusive environment. It went on to launch the National Junior Indoor Rowing Championships in 2007 and officially received charitable status in 2008.

Today, LYR works with around 5,000 young people in 120 partner schools and youth clubs across the country. Its mission is to provide access to a sport that can improve wellbeing, help develop crucial life skills, and nurture determination and success in all of their rowers.

londonyouthrowing.com

[@londonyouthrowing](#)

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park / London Legacy Development Corporation

Spread across 560 acres of parklands, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is home to beautifully landscaped gardens, historic waterways, famous sporting venues, a vibrant arts and events programme and the ArcelorMittal Orbit visitor attraction.

As the new heart of East London, the Park is still transforming, providing homes, jobs and an unrivalled education and cultural district housing Sadler's Wells East, BBC Music Studios, V&A East, UAL's London College of Fashion and UCL East.

The London Legacy Development Corporation promotes and delivers physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the surrounding area by maximising the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk

[@queenelizabetholympicpark](#)