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NEWS

Three to see: London

Aliens and robots descend on the Barbican while Alice Neel's portraits take us back to mid-century Upper Manhattan

by HANNAH MCGIVERN, JOSÉ DA SILVA, JULIA MICHALSKA | 2 June 2017



A film still from Star Trek (1979), which is one of the 800 works on show at the Barbican (Courtesy of Paramount Pictures)

The hulking, Brutalist **Barbican Centre**—which recently inspired the film adaptation of J.G. Ballard's dystopian 1975 novel *High-Rise*—makes an apt venue for a new “festival-style” exhibition exploring the boundless possibilities of science fiction. Aliens, dinosaurs and robots all play a part in [Into the Unknown: a Journey through Science Fiction](#) (3 June-1 September), which spills from the Curve gallery and into the foyers, while a 6ft video installation from the cult *Black Mirror* television series dominates the building's main entrance. Contemporary art is just one component of the 800 works on show, which range from original manuscripts and drawings by Jules Verne, to the spacesuit worn by Spock in *Star Trek*. Look out for sci-fi-inspired films by Isaac Julien and Larissa Sansour, as well as new kinetic sculptures by Trevor Paglen in the foyer and Conrad Shawcross in the Pit Theatre.

[Alice Neel: Uptown](#) (until 29 July) at **Victoria Miro** focuses on works the US artist made while living in Upper Manhattan, which at the time, from the late 1930s until the 1980s was an unfashionable and largely poor area of the city. Here she painted neighbours, people she met in the street, friends, as well as more prominent figures linked to the civil rights movement in Harlem. This selection of portraits of African Americans, Latinos and Asian people who lived in the area was chosen by the celebrated *New Yorker* critic Hilton Als. In a recent interview with the *Guardian* newspaper, Als said of Neel—who was white—that “she wasn't a visitor from a Bohemian lifestyle downtown, she really lived there [in Harlem]. She was very sensitive to the ways people of colour were depicted.”

Trash—that ever-popular artistic material—is at the heart of [The Poetry of Detritus](#), the first UK exhibition of works by David Raffini and Tatiana Wolska at **l'étrangère** gallery (until 15 July). A self-proclaimed “junk collector”, Polish-born Wolska uses discarded plastic bottles, rustic nails and foam mattresses to construct her biomorphic sculptures. Raffini also salvages the rejected and abandoned, allowing dust and other detritus to settle on his painted surfaces before finishing the works. Shown together, Wolska's sculptures wrap around Raffini's paintings, making a beautiful case for recycling.