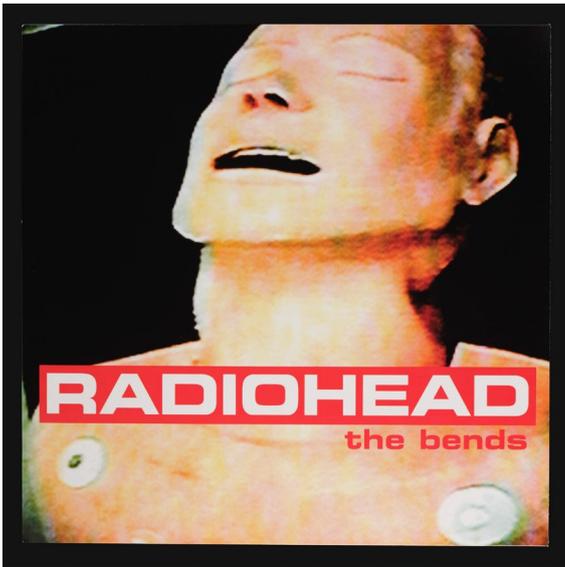


THIS IS WHAT YOU GET
STANLEY DONWOOD | RADIOHEAD | THOM YORKE

6 August 2025–11 January 2026



Stanley Donwood (b. 1968) and Thom Yorke (b. 1968)
The Bends, 1995
Album cover
© 1995 XL Recordings Ltd.

This is What You Get will be the first large institutional show exploring the visual art of Stanley Donwood, Thom Yorke and the iconic images of Radiohead. The exhibition will look at the artists' 30-year collaboration with over 180 objects ranging from the original paintings for album covers to digital compositions and etchings, to unpublished drawings and lyrics in their sketchbooks. Developed and curated with Donwood and Yorke, the show offers a unique opportunity to look at the creative forces behind some of the most important and influential music of the past few decades.

Radiohead was formed in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, in the mid-1980s. Comprising front-man Thom Yorke, brothers Jonny and Colin Greenwood, Ed O'Brien and Philip Selway, the band was signed to EMI in 1991. Their first single, *Creep* (1992), was an international hit before it reached a wider UK audience. To date the band has sold 30 million records worldwide. They were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2019.

Thom Yorke (b. 1968) and the artist Stanley Donwood (b. 1968) became friends at Exeter University where they were both studying English literature and fine art. They first joined forces in 1994 to design the cover of

Radiohead's single *My Iron Lung* and the related second album, *The Bends*. Having sneaked into the basement of Oxford's John Radcliffe hospital, they filmed a resuscitation dummy whose face was 'like that of an android discovering for the first time the sensations of ecstasy and agony, simultaneously'. Back home, they photographed the film visuals on a TV screen, which resulted in the iconic, pixelated image that harmonised with the distorted feel of the album.

Organised chronologically, the exhibition showcases the great variety of their work and explores the evolution of the images for Radiohead's legendary albums and Yorke's musical projects outside the band. The show opens with a floor to ceiling display of LP covers, all potentially evocative of the period of their creation. Each album was accompanied by a collaborative visual art project. From a bedrock of images, one was selected for a cover, while the others accompanied the album on CD booklets, vinyl records, t-shirts and merchandise, and on their website. Radiohead have had, perhaps uniquely, complete creative control of the visual content of all platforms accompanying their music.

The exhibition reveals how the artists played with early technology. The artwork for *OK Computer* (1997) was made on a computer with a self-imposed challenge, forbidding themselves from using the 'undo' function. Any mistakes had to be rubbed out with the eraser or covered with something else. Following this, Donwood moved towards painting at scale, working with acrylic and oil paint, charcoal and artex. Some images created for *Kid A* (2000) were influenced by war photography coming out of the former Yugoslavia. Donwood recalled the impact of a newspaper image of snow marked with boots, cigarette



Stanley Donwood (b. 1968) and Thom Yorke (b. 1968)
Get Out Before Saturday, 2000
Acrylic on canvas, 167.9 x 167.9 cm
Private Collection
© Stanley Donwood and Thom Yorke

butts and blood. Underneath the snowy landscapes of *Kid A* are the concentration camps, the violence covered over with paint as the reality was hidden by snow.

Experimenting with a great range of artistic materials, styles and sizes, Yorke and Donwood's work has been concerned with landscape in the most expansive sense. Encompassing cityscapes, suburbs, the countryside, moonscapes, dreamscapes, current events and psychic states, their visual worlds are evoked by each project's unique sound. Their work offers an intense aesthetic and psychological experience of what it is like to live with anxiety over what we're losing with our ecologically destructive lifestyles. Donwood's linocut for Yorke's debut solo album, *The Eraser* (2006), was inspired by the Boscastle flood in Cornwall: it shows familiar London landmarks engulfed in a huge dark wave while a lone figure issues a futile command to the sea. The inspiration for *The King of Limbs* (2011) was Wistman's Wood and ancient trees. Both artists have described drawing trees as 'meditative' or 'addictive'.

Throughout the exhibition, Yorke and Donwood's workings are shown in unpublished notebooks and sketches which have never before been shown to the public. Yorke has kept pages and pages of lyrics, scribbled out and re-written in different versions. He will take snippets of phrases or thoughts on pieces of paper that are piled up in the recording studio to be grabbed at random when a piece of music needs a new idea.

The exhibition closes with newer paintings that feature on The Smile's *A Light for Attracting Attention* (2022), *Wall of Eyes* (2024) and *Cutouts* (2024). The pandemic and cancelled schedules afforded the artists time to turn a corner, working side by side on the same canvas in a small shed at Yorke's home. Drawing inspiration from an exhibition at the Bodleian Libraries, *Talking Maps* (2019-20), they created their most optimistic and colourful paintings to date - vibrant, benevolent landscapes. In another departure, they have found these paintings lend themselves to being reproduced as large tapestries, woven in Brussels, which will also be shown in the Ashmolean's permanent music and tapestry gallery.

Dr Lena Fritsch, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Ashmolean Museum, says: '*This Is What You Get*, the exhibition title, is a line taken from Radiohead's well-known song *Karma Police* (1997). It represents Stanley and Thom's creative approach: direct, honest, poetic, dark, and sometimes comedic. Showcasing their unique artistic collaboration, this exhibition offers fresh views on the art of album covers, exploring the complex relationships between visual art, music, and text.'

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▪ PRESS IMAGES

Images for editorial use are available to download at: <https://go.glam.ox.ac.uk/Radiohead>



Thom Yorke (b. 1968) and Stanley Donwood (b. 1968)
OK Computer, 1997
Album cover
© 1997 XL Recordings Ltd

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Exhibition: *This is What You Get: Stanley Donwood | Radiohead | Thom Yorke*
Dates: 6 August 2025–11 January 2026
Venue: John Sainsbury Exhibition Galleries, Floor 3, Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH
Open: Daily, 10:00–17:00
Tickets: £8.10–£18.00, tickets available at the Museum or [online](#)
Press View: Friday 1 August 2025, 11:00–14:00
Catalogue: The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue available to pre-order from the Ashmolean shop [online](#) and the [Radiohead Store](#) for £30.00.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Stanley Donwood (b. 1968) is an artist and writer, who has exhibited all over the world and been the official artist of Glastonbury Festival for over 20 years. He has worked with Radiohead since 1994, producing all album and promotional artwork, winning two Grammys. His paintings, drawings and prints address socio-political issues, often employing satire that draws comparisons to Hogarth, Insa and Banksy. He lives and works in Brighton, England.

Thom Yorke (b. 1968) is a musician, artist and composer. He is best known as lead singer and songwriter of award-winning band Radiohead; he has also released music as a solo artist and as part of Atoms for Peace and The Smile. Yorke lives and works between London and Rome.

Yorke and Donwood first met in the 1980s at Exeter University and have been collaborating creatively ever since. In 2022, an exhibition of their drawings from 1999–2001 (during the creation of *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*) at TIN MAN ART garnered acclaim, following a major Christie's sale. Since 2021, while working on cover art for The Smile's *A Light for Attracting Attention* (2022), they have enhanced their practice by painting together, side by side at the canvas, for the first time, as showcased in 2023 exhibitions 'The Crow Flies: part one' and 'part two'.

CREDITS

This is What You Get is curated by Dr Lena Fritsch, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Ashmolean Museum and produced with thanks to [TIN MAN ART](#) and Radiohead. The artists are represented by TIN MAN ART.

ABOUT THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

The [Ashmolean](#) is the University of Oxford's museum of art and archaeology, founded in 1683. Our world-famous collections range from Egyptian mummies to contemporary art, telling human stories across cultures and across time.

Admission: free
Open: daily, 10:00–17:00