

Ceremony

17 May – 9 June

NO 20
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Tue-Sun 10-18
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No 20 is delighted to present 'Ceremony', an exhibition curated by Jim Threapleton with works by Mike Ballard, Teresita Dennis, Philip Gurrey, Arthur Lanyon, Claude Temin-Vergez, Jim Threapleton, and Sarah Shaw.

'Poetic shapes, upholding their sparkle from a destruction of the real, remain at the mercy of nothingness, must rub it, draw from it their ambiguous and desirable aspect: they already have the strangeness of the unknown, the eyes of the blind.' Georges Bataille

Ceremony — an event of ritual significance, performed on a special occasion. A physical demonstration, a material gesture testifying to an experience of limit, to the possibility of an encounter with the immaterial — an expression of the desire to ascend from the profane to the sacred. For the dissident surrealist French philosopher, Georges Bataille, however, the gesture of ritual articulated instead an anti-hierarchical impulse, a drive from the sacred to the profane. Writing during the interwar period — an 'age of anxiety' that prompted a fundamental recalibration of inner experience to the secular — Bataille's provocative use of language embraced risk and chance to undermine cultural structures and articulate a particular silence, one loaded with the possibility of non-knowledge.

Under the tutelary spirit of Bataille, this exhibition brings together a group of artists fascinated by how paint moves — both in terms of plastic immediacy and subjective potential. Each refuses to discount a certain painterly-ness in the navigation of the territory between representation and abstraction. While such expressionist methods have been castigated, this exhibition aims to reconsider the materiality of gesture as the site of meaning where narrative and form collapse into subjectivity.

Painting has much of the ceremonial about it. Studio practice is riven with ritual — with the transubstantiation of pigment, canvas, panel, and oil. Image becomes contingent on a material act of faith, on a roll of the dice. While using disparate visual vocabularies, for these painters ceremony is a common language of chance, improvisation, and surface.

Mike Ballard uses the territorial markers that form the boundaries between public and private property to re-evaluate visual codes and image hierarchies of contemporary urban society. Teresita Dennis makes direct and physical contact with the surfaces she works with, developing processes and strategies for creating from from her body in movement. Philip Gurrey's painting explores the tension between gesture and surface via a vernacular of political slogans, art historical precedents and twenty-first century signifiers. Exposing the sediment of material process, Arthur Lanyon uses compositional tension to trigger unreliable memory and association. Claude Temin-Vergez develops forms that traverse identifications: from sexual connotation, through Baroque ornament, to nature. Both surface and image are metamorphic and constructed from a linearity that traces force. Jim Threapleton explores the figurative possibilities of abstraction through historical remnants of vanitas painting and the kinetic, indeterminate potential of mark making. Sarah Shaw employs a process of improvisation that allows her to excavate fragments of form to investigate memory as an abject state.

Mike Ballard is a London based artist. In 2007 he was awarded his MA Fine Art from Central Saint Martins College, London. He is the recipient of the Griffin Gallery Residency 2017 and the Hermes Wanderland commission at The Saatchi Gallery, (2015). Recent shows include 'If Destroyed Even More True', Block Madrid, Madrid (2016); 'Capital Slang', Lubomirov/Angus-Hughes Gallery, London (2016); 'Venturing Beyond', Somerset House, London (2016); 'Earth is our Radio', KARST Plymouth (2016); and 'The Eternal Broadcast', Lust & the Apple Gallery, Temple, Scotland (2015).

Teresita Dennis studied Fine Art and Critical Theory at Goldsmiths College and has an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, where she was awarded the Painters-Stainers Prize. In 1999 she won the Mark Rothko painting prize, USA. Her work can be found in public and private collections including Nomura Bank, BBC National Art collection, RCA and British Airways. She has exhibited in the UK and internationally. Selected exhibitions include 'The Good the Bad and the Ugly', Charlie Smith, London (2016), 'Deeper Bite', Lychee One, London (2015); 'Making Sense', Number 57 Gallery, London (2014).

Philip Gurrey was born in York in 1984. He completed his undergraduate degree in Painting and Printmaking from the Glasgow School of Art in 2007 and Masters of Letters Degree in 2012. He was awarded the PULSE Prize in New York in 2008. His work has been exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, the Mark Moore Gallery in Los Angeles and the Pippy Houldsworth Gallery in London. He has works in the Fondation Francès collection in Senlis, France and the Mercer Art Gallery collection in Harrogate. More recently he has exhibited at the Museum Dr. Guislain in Ghent, Belgium, and as part of Glasgow International Arts Festival.

Arthur Lanyon was born in 1985. He graduated from Cardiff School of Art and Design with a BA in Fine Art in 2008. He was featured in Saatchi's 2008 group show 'New Sensations'. In 2014, his work was selected for the Aesthetica Art Prize. Recent shows include 'Return to the Whale: Arthur Lanyon', Anima-Mundi, St Ives, Cornwall (2016); From Silence, The Herrick Gallery, London (2016); 'Kith and Kin', Falmouth Art Gallery (2015); 'The London Group Open - Part 2', The Cello Factory, London (2015).

Claude Temin-Vergez was born in Paris (France), and she lives and work in London. She attended Chelsea College of Art, Central St Martins, and the Royal Academy Schools, London. In 2005 she was awarded an Abbey Fellowship in Painting at the British School at Rome. She has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. Solo exhibitions include: Madison Gallery, London (2009) and l'École supérieure d'art et design de Valence, France 2010. Selected group Exhibitions include: 'La Peinture est Presque Abstraite' at DRAC of Bourges France (2009); 'The expanded Painting Show' at Art Basel Miami, US (2007); and 'Painting London' as part of the Venice Biennale's programme (2005).

Jim Threapleton is a painter and filmmaker working in London. In 2008 his BIFA nominated feature film, 'Extraordinary Rendition' premiered in competition at the Edinburgh and Locarno International Film Festivals. He completed his MA Fine Art in 2010 at Camberwell College, and has recently been awarded his doctorate in Fine Art (painting) from Chelsea College of Art, London. Recent shows include 'Metamorphosis', West

No 20

Contemporary, London (2017); 'Impression', Contemporary International Printmaking Exchange, Macau (2016), WAC Prize exhibition, Wells, Somerset (2016), 'Jim Threapleton, Memories of the Hunt: Paintings and Prints', Serena Morton Gallery, London (2015).

Sarah Shaw lives and works in Brighton. She graduated from Falmouth College of Art in 2001. Recent shows include 'Flux', Truman Brewery, London (2016); National Open Art Competition, Mercers Hall, London (2016); 'Anglomania', Dadaprojects, Thiene, Italy (2016); 'Chroma', Brighton (2016); 'AAF Battersea', The Bo-Lee Gallery, London (2015); and 'Wanderlust', Lacey Contemporary, London (2015).