

3-Phase: We Can't Float Here

Larry Achiampong/ Mark Essen/ Nicola Singh

27 April – 9 June 2018, WORKPLACE, Gateshead

Workplace is delighted to present *3-Phase: We Can't Float Here*, a group exhibition of new and existing work by **Larry Achiampong**, **Mark Essen** and **Nicola Singh**. This is the second of three exhibition moments showcasing work by the artists over an 18-month period, as part of the unique development initiative *3-Phase: We Can't Float Here* was preceded by a group exhibition at Jerwood Space (November – December 2017) and will culminate in a solo show for each artist at Eastside Projects in the Autumn of 2018. The initiative offers a supported opportunity and critical platform for the artists to engage with three national organisations over an extended period during which time they will experiment and realise ambitious, compelling ideas.

The selected artists, each at pivotal moments in their careers, have demonstrated a commitment to challenging and pushing the boundaries of traditional modes of exhibition making. Inherent to their respective bodies of work are a strong research-base and pertinent social narratives, which surface through sculpture, performance and technology.

Larry Achiampong continues to present elements from his ongoing, multi-disciplinary project, *Relic Traveller*. Taking place across various landscapes and locations, the project builds upon a postcolonial perspective informed by technology, agency and the body, and narratives of migration. In this speculative project, the title character appears in different landscapes, uncovering fragments that bear witness to colonial history. Central to the exhibition at Workplace is *PAN AFRICAN FLAG FOR THE RELIC TRAVELLERS' ALLIANCE (2017)*, an appliqué flag commissioned by, and recently hung on top of Somerset House in London. The flag includes 54 stars that represent the 54 countries of Africa; the colour green reflecting its land; the colour black its people; and the colour red a reminder of the struggles the continent has endured. The field of yellow gold presents a new day and prosperity.

Observing the flag within the context of the gallery offers the viewer an opportunity to appreciate the appliqué technique up close, and consider the symbolism within flag's design. As part of *We Can't Float Here*, Achiampong has produced a new poster version of the flag which will be distributed throughout the local community and is available free in the gallery for visitors to take away. Alongside the flag is *The Voyage and The Grid (2018)*, a film that acts as a visual bridge between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Achiampong's 'Relic Traveller' project - by merging unused imagery created during the filming processes of works *Relic 0 (2017)* and *Relic 1 (2018)* with new visuals that the artist has been currently generating, in plans to implement in future films

Mark Essen further explores the duality of power in a new installation *hyperbolic hypnotic hyperbole 2018*. The work gestures towards Degrowth, a political, economic and social movement based on ecological economics, that challenges society's values, questioning how they might be reconfigured in the future. The starting point for Essen's new work is the Ancient Roman God Janus who was depicted with two faces, one to look into the future and the other to look into the past.

The image of Janus was the primary influence for Italian Futurist artist Renato Bertelli when he was commissioned to depict the Italian Fascist leader Mussolini, a man who thought he had 360 vision. Essen's installation comprises a series of objects on wall mounted Vitsoe 606 shelving, a modular system originally designed by Dieter Rams, a successor to the Bauhaus movement that was disbanded by the Nazis in 1933. On the first shelf sits a Bonsai tree. On another shelf is a reworked continuous profile of Mussolini's head by Renato Bertelli in which Essen has inverted head the to create a ceramic vase, a clichéd optical illusion intended to feminise Mussolini and function as a critique of his masculinity. Within this vase sits a dying Lily, the national flower of Italy. Together the shelving, the Bonsai, and the head relate to the historical relationship of the 1940 Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan during the Second World War.

On another shelf is a ceramic head of Thomas Spence, using the continuous profile technique adopted by Bertelli, this time giving Spence the full 360 vision. Also included is a domestic scale Aeroponics System growing lettuce. Together the two elements represent a contemporary interpretation and application of Spence's work. Spence fought for rights of the common land of The Town Moor, Newcastle in 1771 believing that everyone has the right to grow and use nature for their own needs, a genuine vision for society that led to him being described as the 'first modern socialist'. Karl Marx was born 4 years after the death of Thomas Spence.

Nicola Singh has produced a series of new works that continue to expand upon her ideas around exhibition making through the prism of action and performance. The works, each entitled *within [her] reach (2018)*, were created privately in the gallery prior to the exhibition where Singh focused on an intimate negotiation of her own body to find new forms.

For the past 2 months, Singh was artist in residence at Hongti Art Centre in Busan, South Korea. During her residency she explored ways of capturing touch, sensation and movement in relation to the body, in an attempt to preserve and prioritise the felt or feeling experience. She made a series of new works through rubbing, grabbing, spreading and tracing the form of her body with pigment beneath a range of materials include Koran Hanji paper and clay, all improvised processes of making contact with her body. She also shared this practice in a public workshop at the gallery.

At Workplace, Singh has brought together the ideas explored during her time in Korea, introducing a range of new materials alongside the development of a text piece, written in parallel to the artist's physical exploration of touch and sensation towards her own body. For this work, Singh is exploring the notion of creation through performance and action as a solo and private process. She is interested in how the positioning of the performance process as a private moment can challenge the culture of performance in a visual arts context.

3-Phase is a unique development initiative led by Jerwood Charitable Foundation, through its gallery programme Jerwood Visual Arts; Eastside Projects, Birmingham and WORKPLACE, Gateshead.

The selection was made by an independent panel comprising: Kelly Best, Artist and 2015 3-Phase exhibitor; Paul Moss, Co-Director, WORKPLACE; Gavin Wade, Director, Eastside Projects and Sarah Williams, Head of Programme, Jerwood Visual Arts. Artists were selected based on the quality and potential of their work and the developmental impact the opportunity is likely to have upon their practice.

Artist biographies

Larry Achiampong is a London based artist. He is influenced by connections between the digital age and communal and personal histories. He completed his BA in Mixed Media Fine Art University of Westminster in 2005, followed by an MA in Sculpture at The Slade School of Fine Art in 2008. He has since exhibited and performed at venues nationally and internationally including Tate Modern, the British Film Institute, Somerset House, The British Library, Iniva, The Showroom, Fabrica, Dolph Projects, Modern Art Oxford, The Logan Centre (Chicago, USA), ICI/Savvy Contemporary (Berlin, Germany) and The Photography Centre (Lectore, France).

Mark Essen is a Birmingham based artist. He graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Birmingham City University (2007) before completing his MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art (2012). He has exhibited at Cass Sculpture Park, Lychee One Gallery, Tate St Ives, Studio Leigh and curated shows at Division of Labour. He has been invited onto residency programmes led by a range arts organisations including Wysing Arts Centre, Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, Doremifasolasido at Florence Art Centre, South London Infinity Projects. In 2017, he will open Modern Clay, Birmingham – a socially engaged ceramics studio aiming to remove the boundaries between fine and applied arts and crafts.

Nicola Singh is a Newcastle based artist. Her practice is rooted in performance and is made in response to contexts of location and place, encounter and dialogue, feelings and chance. Recent projects include a solo show at BALTIC 39, Newcastle and a performance for LUX and LUX Scotland at Glasgow Film Theatre. Nicola has recently completed a practice-based PhD in Fine Art at Northumbria University.

List of Works

Larry Achiampong

PAN AFRICAN FLAG FOR THE RELIC TRAVELLERS' ALLIANCE, 2017

Appliqué Flag

200 x 300 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Commissioned by Somerset House

Larry Achiampong

PAN AFRICAN FLAG FOR THE RELIC TRAVELLERS' ALLIANCE, 2018

unlimited giveaway poster

140gsm Matt paper

29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Larry Achiampong

The Voyage and The Grid, 2018

4K Colour Video

Duration 06:32

Courtesy of the artist

Mark Essen

hyperbolic hypnotic hyperbole, 2018

Vitsoe 606 shelving, Bonsai Tree, Ceramics, Lily, Aeroponics System, 57.5 x 270.5 x 31.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Nicola Singh

Journal, 2018

Ink on paper

2 x A4 sheets

Courtesy of the artist

Nicola Singh

within [her] reach (White #2), 2018

Pigment on Silicone

150 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Nicola Singh

within [her] reach (Grey #2), 2018

Pigment on Silicone

150 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Nicola Singh

within [her] reach (Yellow #2), 2018

Pigment on Silicone

150 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist

All works Commissioned for 3-Phase, a partnership between Jerwood Charitable Foundation, WORKPLACE and Eastside Projects except *The Voyage and The Grid*, 2018.

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