

PRESS RELEASE

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www.jerwoodvisualarts.org

3-Phase: We Can't Float Here
 Larry Achiampong/ Mark Essen/ Nicola Singh

27 April – 9 June 2018, WORKPLACE, Gateshead



Nicola Singh *Soft Body* 2018, performance at Hongti Art Centre, Busan, South Korea March 2018. Courtesy of the artist

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 will continue 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.

Mark Essen will further explore the duality of power in a new installation. 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 one 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.

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 will produce a series of new works that continue to expand upon her ideas around exhibition making through the prism of action and performance. The works will be created during private workshops in the gallery prior to the exhibition, as Singh focuses 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 will bring 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.

3-Phase was first launched in 2015 through the Jerwood Encounters series, working with artists Kelly Best and Georgie Grace. It is an innovative model, which aims to identify artistic potential from across the Midlands, the North, and the rest of the UK, allowing for a UK wide peer group to form. This unique collaboration highlights the benefits of artists and organisations working together as part of a national dialogue; constructing a space of encounter between the thinking of selected artists and supporting arts organisations around the developing bodies of work.

For further details about the Workplace programme, please visit www.workplacegallery.co.uk.

Exhibition Information:

Title: 3-Phase: We Can't Float Here - Larry Achiampong/ Mark Essen/ Nicola Singh
 Dates: 27 April- 9 June 2018
 Address: Workplace Gateshead, The Old Post Office, 19-21 West Street, Gateshead, NE8 1AD
 Opening Times: Tuesday - Saturday 11am - 5pm
 Admission: Free
 Nearest Metro: Gateshead
 Website: www.workplacegallery.co.uk
 Twitter: @_workplace_
 Facebook: @workplacegallery
 Instagram: @workplacegallery

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Notes to editors

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). www.larryachiampong.co.uk

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. www.markessen.org

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. www.nicolasingh.co.uk

Project Credit

3-Phase is a partnership between Jerwood Charitable Foundation, WORKPLACE and Eastside Projects.

3-Phase is a new model for working in partnership to support the development of early career artist’s work over a sustained period of time. The three artists are selected to develop a new series of work with the curatorial assistance of each organisation, which will tour to each partner location. The project was first launched in 2015 through the Jerwood Encounters series, working with artists Kelly Best and Georgie Grace. www.jerwoodvisualarts.org/exhibitions/jerwood-encounters-3-phase/

Jerwood Charitable Foundation is dedicated to imaginative and responsible revenue funding of the arts, supporting artists to develop and grow at important stages in their careers. The aim of its funding is to allow artists and arts organisations to thrive; to continue to develop their skills, imagination and creativity with integrity. It works across art forms, from dance and theatre to literature, music and the visual arts. www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org

Jerwood Visual Arts is a national programme supporting visual arts practice, through which Jerwood Charitable Foundation works with early career artists to commission and present new work. Artist opportunities run throughout the year alongside a programme of related exhibitions, events and commissioned writing, taking place online, in London and across the UK. We advocate for the best possible conditions for the making of art by providing well-resourced opportunities for artists, supported by our staff team and established artists, writers, critics and curators who have a significant national or international profile. www.jerwoodvisualarts.org

Eastside Projects makes art public. It is an artist-run multiverse, commissioning, producing and presenting experimental art practices and demonstrating ways in which art may be useful as part of society. Eastside

Projects provides vital infrastructure, supports best practice and works to expand the role of the artist-run space. Alongside imagining, testing and modeling a free public gallery, it is increasingly engaged in an expanded range of public activities – it devises public art strategies, serves as a commissioning agent, produces national public art programmes and creates structures to support artists locally, nationally and internationally. Established in 2008, Eastside Projects is a Not for Profit Company and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, in partnership with Birmingham City University. eastsideprojects.org

WORKPLACE was founded by Miles Thurlow and Paul Moss in 2002.

Emerging out of post industrial Gateshead in the Northeast of England in the early 2000's, WORKPLACE seeks to address the exclusion and isolation encountered by artists living and working in an economically challenged region of the UK, engaging fully with the local context whilst simultaneously building meaningful connections to the international art world at its highest level.

WORKPLACE GALLERY is a commercial contemporary art gallery founded in Gateshead in the North of England in 2005 and with a gallery in Mayfair, London since 2013. Originally situated far from any of the UK's major cultural centres, the Gallery has worked vigorously over the past decade to access the international artworld. With the objective of working with artists to achieve critical acclaim, Workplace Gallery has become an important and integral part of the UK's cultural landscape, through a respected programme of exhibitions, taking part in the leading international art fairs, and long-term partnerships with highly esteemed international artists and galleries. Workplace Gallery has forged meaningful connections to a new generation of artists, collectors and curators worldwide.

WORKPLACE FOUNDATION is a Charitable Foundation that promotes Contemporary Art for public benefit and supports under-represented and emerging Contemporary art practice through a rigorous and engaging programme of exhibitions and events. The Foundation aims to enrich the cultural life of the North of England by creating opportunities for the public to engage with art of exceptional quality, and to create a much larger audience for art through the Foundation's local and international networks. Workplace Foundation serves the communities of Gateshead and the North of England and aims to contribute to the regional art scene, and establish the area as a vital cultural centre within the UK. Workplace Foundation is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations. The Foundation will be officially launched later in 2018.