

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **...in Dark Times**

**24 February – 15 April 2017**

**Preview: 6-8pm, Thursday 23 February 2017**

**Artists: James Ackerley, Rebecca Halliwell Sutton, Bex Ilsley, Charlie Godet Thomas, Lindsey Mendick, and Zadie Xa.**

### ***An exhibition on the thingness of things in the age of the thingless medium.***

Much of our contemporary experiences are increasingly mediated by the Internet and screen-based technologies, overwhelming us with images and information whilst distancing us from the direct experience of objects and things. With many artworks being produced that are not intended to survive beyond their first exhibition, the digital world offers them a second life in 'perfect' exhibition documentation, which can be shared, commented on, liked, loved, replayed, upvoted, regrammed and re-seen indefinitely - or for as long as they remain of interest - despite the *things* themselves being long gone.

Consequently, enduring artistic subjects such as the physical transience and fragility of existence, our perception of time and our finitude, take on a new light. In places the artists *...in Dark Times* indulge the potential of cheap, disposable, domestic and industrial materials to express their tactile qualities. Producing works which despite their humble parts are tangibly sublime, sometimes palpably subtle and sometimes powerfully visceral. They perhaps speak to the fleeting nature of human life in these particularly precarious times, when all things seem caught in a flow, where nothing feels solid, certain or safe.

In contrast to the works which focus in on their immanent materiality, other works *... in Dark Times* seem to be bursting at the seams with content, overflowing with surplus information and incessant references to history, tradition, identity, high art and pop culture. It is in the way these works are able to express a physical incapacity to contain content, a reluctance to present singular succinct narratives, which makes them indicative of our noisy, liquid and accelerated times.

**James Ackerley's** Studio Objects (2016 -) are small-scale totems of simple, logical shapes that juxtapose materials like budget Brâncuși's. Replacing the modernist master's carved wood, marble and cast bronze with cardboard, timbre and MDF, accurately cut, chopped and temporarily slotted together. **Charlie Godet Thomas's** Endpaper series (2014 -) features deftly controlled swirls of pigment solidified in rubber, like refrozen ice cream or the patterns found in metamorphic rock formed from exposure to high temperatures and pressures over long periods of time.

**Rebecca Halliwell Sutton's** mixed and buffed concrete is also a short cut to the qualities of more precious marble and stone. Like the coloured marble that resembles chopped meat and flesh, often used in the interior of churches that have stood for centuries, her collapsing concert columns contain naturally occurring streaks, fissures and mottling. Along with her sagging, slumping fabric bags printed with pixelated skin tones, reds and purples, Sutton's work functions like that church architecture, both seductive and repulsive, succulent with the horrors of the body, confronting viewers and worshipers with an experience of their own human frailty and finitude against the cold hard stone. Following the philosopher Julia Kristeva, Sutton sees herself in sync with women across generations, understanding her work as interwoven with theirs, rather than restrained by sequential time. **Zadie Xa** is also in

dialogue with more matriarchal traditions, such as Korean Mudang, where the shamanic role is largely performed by women. Originally from Vancouver, Canada, now living and working in London, Xa is interested in her relationship with the Korean diaspora, producing costumes, garments, wall hangings, video works and performances. She explores desire, identity and personal fantasy, mixing inspiration from Talchum (Korean, masked drama), American street fashion, hip hop and a kind of cosmic digital spirituality.

**Bex Ilsley** is also interested in the performance of the self, particularly in the digital realm. She combines a variety of fabricated and appropriated objects, props and locations to construct surreal, sci-fi portraits and video works; primarily disseminated via social media and her website. Distributing images, particularly of women online, provokes questions around the ethics and intentions involved. Ilsley acknowledges this tension but ultimately enjoys the autonomy of creating her own self-image on these digital platforms, seeing the potential for them to be more or less honest, artificial or authentic; they may also travel further and live on longer than Ilsley herself. Ilsley's amorphous, glittery, neon and candy coloured Blobs (2014-) are quintessential three dimensional things, flattened into digital images to be sold as products themselves or collaged together for t-shirt, wallpaper or phone cover prints, reaching an international community of fans including Miley Cyrus via Twitter and Instagram.

As a child of the 1990s **Linsley Mendick's** aesthetic sensibilities were forged in the decade that taste forgot. Her work presents a gloriously camp dreamscape of pattern and colour, with imagery pulled from culture high and low, from Botticelli to Liberace from the Gardens of Versailles to Las Vegas via The Big Breakfast. Everyday domestic objects and foodstuffs are elevated to a decadent and opulent platform. Into this Mendick weaves her own personal narratives, memories and relationships; including her mother's seamstress skills. Though there is a nod to the excesses of bad taste and hollow consumerism, Mendick nonetheless displays a particular sense of grace in her dance through our overflowing histories. A resplendent backstroke in a stream of perfect Instagram'd meals, daily celebrity updates and 24 hour global news.

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**For further information, to request images or to arrange interviews, please contact: Jennifer Dean, Communications and Audience Development Coordinator on [jennifer@castlefieldgallery.co.uk](mailto:jennifer@castlefieldgallery.co.uk) or call +44 (0)161 832 8034 / 07766046672.**

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#### **Listing information**

**Exhibition Title:** ...in Dark Times  
**Artists:** James Ackerley, Rebecca Halliwell Sutton, Bex Ilsley, Charlie Godet Thomas, Lindsey Mendick, Zadie Xa  
**Public Preview:** Thursday 23 February, 6-8pm  
**Press Preview:** Thursday 23 February, 5-6pm  
**Exhibition Dates:** 24 February – 15 April 2017\*  
\*closed Good Friday and Easter Sunday  
**Venue:** Castlefield Gallery, 2 Hewitt Street, Manchester, M15 4GB  
(behind Deansgate train station)  
**Tel:** 0161 832 8034  
**Web:** [castlefieldgallery.co.uk](http://castlefieldgallery.co.uk)  
**Opening Times:** Wed to Sun 1pm – 6pm  
**Admission:** FREE. The gallery is fully wheelchair accessible

**James Ackerley** (b.1990, Wrexham) lives and works in Manchester. Ackerley graduated from Manchester School of Art in 2013. Solo exhibitions include: *Piecework*, PERICLO, Wrexham (2016); and *The Frictionless World*, TOAST, Manchester (2015). Group exhibitions include: The Manchester

Contemporary with NEW WORK (2016); *One o' Those*, 9 Valerie Walk, Manchester (2015); The Manchester pavilion with TOAST at the Warrington Contemporary (2015); and *PUTT PUTT#2*, (as AV-CO OP), *Turf Projects*, Croyden (2014). [instagram.com/james.ackerley](https://www.instagram.com/james.ackerley)

**Bex Ilsley** (b.1988, Gravesend) lives and works in Liverpool and is the currently artist-in-residence with Make Liverpool, Elevator Studios. Ilsley graduated from Manchester School of Art in 2016 and was one of the 2016 Woon Art Prize winners. Exhibitions include: *The New Flesh*, VIVO Media Arts Centre, Vancouver, BC, Canada (2015), *Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Prize*, BALTIC39, Newcastle (2016) and the *Recent Graduates* exhibition at the Affordable Art Fair, Battersea, London (2016), where Ilsley live-streamed a performance for 37.5 hours. Ilsley will present her debut solo exhibition at Warrington Museum and Art Gallery in 2017 and is exhibiting in *The Endless and Mobile Beautiful Collapsible Labyrinth* /at Flux Factory, New York, USA (3-20 March 2017). Ilsley's work has reached an international audience and has been acquired into the collections of Miley Cyrus, and Wayne Coyne (Flaming Lips). [bexilsley.com](http://bexilsley.com)

**Lindsey Mendick** (b. 1987, London) lives and works in London. She is currently studying an MA in sculpture at the Royal College of Art, London. Recent and current exhibitions include: *She's Really Nice When You Get To Know Her*, Visual Arts Center, Austin Texas (2016), *My Own Private Idaho*, Chalton Gallery, London, (2016), *Anne et Lucie*, Musee de Valence, France (2016) *Résidence d'artistes de la Fondation Albert Gleizes*, Moly Sabata, France (2016), *EBC 005*, East Bristol Contemporary, Bristol (2016), *Blind Date*, Royal Standard, Liverpool (2016), *Performance: Disco 2000*, Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2015), *I'm TEN*, IMT gallery, London (2015), *Mostyn 19*, Mostyn Gallery, Wales (2015), *It Was A Dark and Stormy Night*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2015). [lindseymendick.com](http://lindseymendick.com)

**Rebecca Halliwell Sutton** (b.1991, Bolton) lives and works in Newcastle and has recently been awarded the Woon Foundation Fellowship in conjunction with BALTIC, Gateshead and Northumbria University. She graduated from Manchester School of Art, Fine Art (2016). Group exhibitions include: *Fools and Follies*, Tatton Park, Knutsford (2016), *Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Prize*, BALTIC39, Newcastle (2016), *Heaven is a Place Where Nothing Ever Happens*, Grosvenor Gallery, Manchester (2016). [rebeccakay.co.uk](http://rebeccakay.co.uk)

**Charlie Godet Thomas** (b.1985, London) lives and works in London and is represented by VITRINE, London / Basel. He holds an MA Fine Art (Sculpture), from the Royal College of Art, London (2014) where he was awarded the Bermuda Arts Council Scholarship and the Peter Leitner Scholarship and a BA Fine Art, Sculpture from Manchester School of Art (2009). Solo exhibitions include: *Strandline*, STCFTHOTS, Leeds (2016), *Preened, Blank & Amorous*, Losers Gym, Nottingham (2016), *Torschlusspanik*, VITRINE, London (2016), *To Be Is To Do, To Do Is To Be, Do Be Do Be Do*, The Telfer Gallery, Glasgow (2015), *In Comes the Good Air, Out Goes the Bad Air, In Comes the Good Air*, Cactus, Liverpool (2015), and *A Method for Writing/A Method for Making*, BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, UK (2014). Group exhibitions include: *The Surround X SeenThrough*, The Averard Hotel, London (2016), *The Winds Never Stopped*, Atelier '89, Oranjestad, Aruba (2016), *Re-interpreting the European Collection*, The Bermuda National Gallery, Bermuda (2012). Charlie Godet Thomas he was artist in residence at Caribbean Linked IV at Ateliers '89 in Oranjestad, Aruba (2016) and is featured in 'Bermuda Biennial 2016' Bermuda National Gallery. A public artwork has been commissioned by VITRINE for 'SCULPTURE AT Bermondsey Square (unveiled October 2017) and his debut solo show in the U.S.A will be in April 2017.

**Zadie Xa** (b.1983, Vancouver, Canada) lives and works in London. Xa completed an MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art (2014) and a BFA from Emily Carr University, Canada (2007). Recent exhibitions and performances include *Basic Instructions B4 Leaving*, programmed by PS/Y as part of *Hysteria 2017* Cafe OTO, London; *3 Thousand and 30 High Priestess of Pluto*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2016), *Linguistic Legacies and Lunar Exploration*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2016), *Kind of Flossy*, Assembly Point Gallery, London (2016), *A Rose Is Without a 'Why'. It Blooms Because It Blooms*, Carl Freedman Gallery, London (2016), *Ride the Chaktu // First Contact*, Serpentine Radio, London (2016), *With Institutions Like These*, Averard Hotel; *At Home Salon: Double Acts*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, London (2016).

**Castlefield Gallery (CG)** Founded in 1984, CG is a small registered charity. It is one of Northern England's most active and successful organisations/agencies for developing emerging contemporary artists and practice. Its ambitious curated exhibitions programme responds to national and international trends, promoting artists at key stages of their careers, including subsequent Turner Prize nominees/winners and exhibitors at international festivals. Central to CG's activities is an artist development programme including the CG Associates members scheme and the recently launched New Art Spaces. CG's vision is for the North to be where artists can develop work of international standing. Its mission is to nurture talent, explore cultural trends and deepen audience's relationship to contemporary art.

**Castlefield Gallery | Agency is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio, and is a Manchester City Council Cultural Partner. Additionally, CG is part of Arts Council England's Catalyst: Evolve fund, a new initiative from Arts Council England that aims to support arts organisations to grow private giving and build resilience. Money raised from new sources will be matched by the Arts Council via the fund over a period of three years, up to August 2019. Thanks also to Creative Tourist, G.F Smith and Fred Aldous for supporting our main gallery exhibition programme 2016-17.**

