

**PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release**

**Dated: 10 January 2018**

## **Ruth Barker & Hannah Leighton-Boyce**

**9 March – 29 April 2018\***

**Public preview: 6pm-8pm, Thursday 8 March 2018 (press preview: 5pm-6pm)**

**Premiere performance of *If this is the last thing that I say* by Ruth Barker / 6:15pm, Thursday 8 March 2018**

**Touring to Glasgow Women's Library: 1 February – 23 March 2019 (Preview: 31 January 2019)**

**Co-commissioned with the University of Salford Art Collection.**

2018 marks the 100th anniversary of The Representation of the People's Act, brought in to reform the electoral system in Great Britain. Enfranchising women over 30 who met minimum property qualifications, the Act marked a key stage in the continuing journey towards universal suffrage.

Previewing on Thursday 8 March; International Women's Day, and as part of Manchester's Wonder Women Festival, the exhibition will include newly commissioned work by **Ruth Barker** and **Hannah Leighton-Boyce**. The University of Salford Chancellor and 'writer in residence', the award-winning writer of fiction, poetry and plays Professor Jackie Kay MBE, will also write a commissioned poem inspired by the exhibition.

Paired by Castlefield Gallery, both women's practice sees them undertake in-depth research projects with the artists often embedding themselves in communities to explore people and place. New work for this exhibition has been made during 2017 when Castlefield Gallery supported Ruth Barker (Glasgow) and Hannah Leighton-Boyce (Manchester) to undertake research residencies: Leighton-Boyce in Scotland with Glasgow Women's Library, and Barker in Salford with the University of Salford and University of Salford Art Collection. Over the course of the year Barker and Leighton-Boyce have exchanged many ideas, thoughts and stories, in particular through conversation and letters. New works will premiere at Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, before touring in 2019 to Glasgow Women's Library, and acquisition into the University of Salford Art Collection.

Barker primarily works in performance and performative-writing, and has an on-going engagement with the 'voice'. As a mother of two young children, she is clear that her recent experience of traumatic birth precedes but does not define her new body of work *If this is the last thing that I say*.

The central figure in *If this is the last thing that I say* is an ambiguous 'pulley- woman', a (ready-made) clothes pulley standing in for Barker's absence. Alongside other works, this becomes a way for Barker to talk about her own mortality and an anxiety around motherhood, illness, physical vulnerability. Brutal world politics, and the economic conditions of contemporary Britain are, Barker feels, rapidly coalescing to render her publicly mute.

*If this is the last thing that I say* will come together through an assemblage of spoken word and sound, and will include wall based fabric works, and sculptural objects. A black fabric performance costume hung up to dry alongside an incomplete papier mâché female torso - suggesting nothing more than an ineffectual Winged Victory, while a 'rug' depicting a child's drawing of the face of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar.

Children from Salford's Clarendon Road Primary School will be recorded performing a sonic meditation inspired by the founder of "Deep Listening", the late Pauline Oliveros, in the University of Salford's Anechoic Chamber (a room designed to absorb all sound, rendering the room completely silent). The

audio recording will be accompanied by the sound of Barker's own breath works, infant babble, and performed monologue.

The rug work will be made using specialist production techniques at the University of Salford's fibre workshop with artist assistant Alena Donely.

Leighton-Boyce explores historical narratives through site-specific actions, sculpture, drawing, sound and installation.

Leighton-Boyce describes her recent residency with Glasgow Women's Library as having a profound effect on herself and her work. She states - *"What I realised, or was reminded of on my last trip to Glasgow, was how recent personal experiences connect to the works I am developing; how trauma, loss, healing, reflection have informed decisions and conflated with the themes around the works. The library has been a place where I could feel vulnerable but also supported, where I could let thoughts settle amongst the books I was reading and items in the archive, and to reflect on these through different conversations"*

During her residency the welcoming embrace of the library especially struck Leighton-Boyce, and new works for the exhibition take inspiration from a large circular table centrally placed in Glasgow Women's Library, one used for meetings, tea, lunch breaks and conversation.

For Leighton-Boyce the table was reminiscent of the round table in the house of Emmeline Pankhurst, the leader of the British suffragette movement (now the Pankhurst Centre), which was the birthplace of the Women's Social and Political Union; and 'The Table of Sentiments', a domestic parlour table used by American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to draft 'The Declaration of Women's Rights' at Seneca Falls in 1848.

Her new works will echo her experiences, specifically through her decision to work with salt, drawing on its inherent properties of healing, energy, and the charge of 'coming together' she experienced at Glasgow Women's Library.

In developing her work, Leighton-Boyce entwines ideas and materials, echoing the physical imprints and human presence, the traces of labour and emotion. Her research led her to explore salt as a metaphor for both the physical extraction process of researching and the laboured mind, singular and collective; of form and fluidity, of resistance and preservation.

As with Barker's work, historical narratives have informed and will be present in the new works. In reflecting on the multiple bodies that form the body of the archive and the importance of looking back, Leighton-Boyce references the story of *Lot's (unnamed) Wife* who was turned to a pillar of salt because she defied the angels and turned to look back on the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:26). The powerful new body of salt-inspired and made works will signal the presence of the body; the blood, sweat and tears of the mind, body and soul.

**Event: 10 March 2018, 1.30-4pm**

Exhibition tour and discussion over tea and cake with artist Hannah Leighton-Boyce, Glasgow Women's Library Life Long Learning and Creative Development Manager Dr Adele Patrick, Castlefield Gallery Director Helen Wewiora and Curator Matthew Pendergast, and University of Salford Art Curator, Lindsay Taylor.

Further events to be announced

**For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact: Jennifer Dean, Communications and Audience Development Coordinator at Castlefield Gallery, on [jennifer@castlefieldgallery.co.uk](mailto:jennifer@castlefieldgallery.co.uk) / 0161 832 8034 or 07766046672.**

**ENDS//**

**Listing information**

**Exhibition Title:** Ruth Barker & Hannah Leighton-Boyce

**Public Preview:** 6-8pm, Thursday 8 March 2018

**Press Preview:** 5-6pm, Thursday 8 March 2018

**Exhibition Dates:** 9 March – 29 April 2018\*

**Venue:** Castlefield Gallery, 2 Hewitt Street, Manchester, M15 4GB

**Tel:** 0161 832 8034

**Web:** [castlefieldgallery.co.uk](http://castlefieldgallery.co.uk)

**Opening Times:** Wed to Sun 1pm – 6pm

\*Closed: Friday 30 March, Saturday 31 March, and Sunday 1 April 2018

**Admission:** FREE. The gallery is fully wheelchair accessible

**Ruth Barker** (b. 1979, Leeds) lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. On first examination Barker's work foregrounds her own daily experiences and the quotidian narratives of her day to day life, however it equally suggests echoes of the larger, longer stories of our own mortality, our sense of self, and our internalisation of ancient myth. Her words are layered in structure and intensity, yet have unexpected moments of humour.

In 2017 she completed a PhD in Fine Art Practice at Newcastle University. She graduated from the MFA (Master of Fine Art) at Glasgow School of Art in 2004 after also completing the BA (Hons) at Glasgow School of Art in 2001. In 2013 Barker was nominated for the Canonsgate 'Future Forty'. Recent projects include Mega Hammer in collaboration with Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Glasgow International, (Glasgow); performance - The Foot Exerts a Pressure On The Surface Of The Glass, and commission Glass, Blinded To The Room, for wewioraprojects' Tall Tales at Freud Museum, London; The Space Beneath My Skin Is Closed To My Reason Today for: A Goddess for a Beauty Centre, online performance with Yeo Chee Kiong, curated by Yen Peng, NAFA Singapore; Uprising 1870, ATLAS Arts, Isle of Skye and Strange Attractor, at the Agency gallery London, with Man Ray, Ulla von Brandenburg and Dominique Koch a./o., curated by Bea Gassmann de Sousa; new work for CCA (Glasgow), Siobhan Davies Dance (London), Radiophrenia (Glasgow), Resonance FM (London), Camden Arts Centre (London), Sils Projects (Rotterdam), Glasgow International festival of Visual Art; Cartel Gallery, (London) and Machon Hamayim (Tel Aviv). Ruth Barker is represented by the Agency Gallery, London. [ruthbarker.com](http://ruthbarker.com)

**Hannah Leighton-Boyce** (b. 1980, Stroud) lives and works in Manchester, England. Recent works include a collaborative live sculpture made with residents of Helmshore, Lancashire (2014), set within the context of the area's industrial heritage; and a sound installation at Touchstones Rochdale (2016) funded by a New Opportunities Award [New Expressions3], which explored ideas of disembodiment and labour through the resonant properties and work history of objects within the museum's collection. Recent group exhibitions include Excuse Me While I am Changing, Rogue Projects Space, Manchester; New Work, The Manchester Contemporary 2016; Women Artists from 1861 -2015, Touchstones Art Gallery, Rochdale; For Posterity, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2015); People and Process: A history of Salts Mill, Salts Mill, Saltaire.

She graduated with a BA (Hons) in textiles from Winchester School of Art in 2005 and completed the MA in Textiles at Manchester School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2012.

She has works in private and public collections including: Touchstones Art Gallery, Rochdale; Salts Mill, West Yorkshire; Ackworth Quaker School, West Yorkshire. [hannahleightonboyce.com](http://hannahleightonboyce.com)

**Castlefield Gallery** is a contemporary art gallery and agency, established in 1984, focused on showing new and commissioned work from its city centre venue in Manchester, as well as off-site and in the public realm. The organisation supports artists' career development, in particular through partnership working and services. New Art Spaces is a Castlefield Gallery run scheme that repurposes empty spaces for use by artists across Greater Manchester, accessed by its plus 200 strong Castlefield Gallery Associates. Castlefield Gallery artist patron is the award-winning artist Ryan Gander. The gallery is a Manchester City Council Cultural Partner, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and currently a recipient of Arts Council England Catalyst Evolve Funding. Catalyst Evolve is an initiative from Arts Council England supporting arts and cultural organisations to grow private giving and build resilience.

This means that, between 2016 and August 2019, Arts Council England will match every pound we secure from new Trust & Foundation sources, corporate sponsorship and donations, as well as individual donations made to Castlefield Gallery, on a 1:1 basis.

Help Castlefield Gallery 'double our money'; we will invest funds raised into our charitable activities to support artists' careers and talent development across the Greater Manchester City Region, North West and beyond. [castlefieldgallery.co.uk](http://castlefieldgallery.co.uk)

**The University of Salford Art Collection** contains almost 700 works of modern and contemporary art, and exists for the benefit of students, staff and the public. It is accessible in key buildings across the University campus, and is loaned to other arts organisations and museums. The collection is distinctive in that it has an active acquisitions policy focused on three collecting strands: 'About the Digital', 'From the North', and 'Chinese Contemporary Art'. Most acquisitions are developed through strategic partnerships with external exhibition and commissioning collaborators such as Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, Castlefield Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery and HOME.

**The University of Salford** received its charter in 1967, however its history can be traced back to 1850 with the formation of the Pendleton Mechanics Institute. Today the University operates 7 schools, with 20,000 students and 2,500 staff. The regeneration of Salford has created new opportunities which bring the university firmly into the 21st Century. The University has joined the BBC and ITV at the MediaCityUK development in Salford Quays and has ambitious plans to redevelop its existing campus over the next 20 years. The flagship New Adelphi building, the new home of the School of Arts and Media opened in 2017. [artcollection.salford.ac.uk/](http://artcollection.salford.ac.uk/)

**Glasgow Women's Library** is the only Accredited Museum in the UK dedicated to women's lives, histories and achievements, with a lending library, archive collections and innovative programme of public events and learning opportunities. Glasgow Women's Library's vision is of a world in which every woman is able to fulfil her potential and where women's historical, cultural and political contributions to society are fully recognised, valued and celebrated. The organisation celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2016. As a Recognised Collection of National Significance, Glasgow Women's Library is used, visited and loved by people from around the world and around the corner. Since its inception Glasgow Women's Library has supported and been supported by the agency of creatives. It collaborates with an array of cultural partners and is active in commissioning, exhibiting and collecting innovative artworks including those by diverse artists, writers and filmmakers. [womenslibrary.org.uk](http://womenslibrary.org.uk)

**Co-commissioned with the University of Salford Art Collection.**

**With special thanks to Clarendon Road Primary School and James Mycock.**

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