



PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release

Fanspeak

Exhibition dates: 2 - 24 November 2019

Preview: Friday 1 November, 6-8pm (press preview 5–6pm)

Venue: Castlefield Gallery, Manchester

Artists: Kurdwin Ayub, Lydia Blakeley, Maya Ben David, Graham Dolphin, Ashley Holmes, Owen G Parry, Beth Emily Richards, Rosa Uddoh, and Salford Zine Library

Curated by **Shy Bairns**

Fanspeak features artists whose work appropriates fan-like production, emulating the content, objects and homages produced by fans of movies, music, sports, celebrities, and TV shows. Working with sculpture, painting and video, the artists interrogate pop and sub-cultural references in order to disrupt our relationship with them. The exhibition brings together an exciting group of artists working with relevant and timely subject matter.

Fan Speak (noun): slang or jargon present in fandom, particularly the acronyms, in-jokes and obscure terms used among readers and writers of science fiction fanzines.

In the worlds of Fandom, the message boards of obscure websites overflow with heightened emotions on subjects that have little value to the uninitiated. Fandom sees its creators dissecting their obsessions, becoming over-attached as they over-analyse them, ultimately mixing adoration with critique. The nature of this dedicated study enables fans to deconstruct the thing they love and rebuild it. They learn more about it, comparing it to their reality, and then rewriting it, inserting themselves into a fan-fiction hybrid.

The artists in this exhibition explore this phenomenon, with sensitivity, intelligence and, at times, humor, including: Lydia Blakeley's paintings of aspirational luxury which move from the banal to the uncanny; Kurdwin Ayub's uncomfortable homemade homages to actors and singers; Maya Ben David's sexualized Pokémorphs; Graham Dolphin's sculptural remakes of public memorials made by fans of dead icons.

Fanspeak was selected from proposals submitted by Castlefield Gallery Associates by guest selector **Sam Thorne**, Director Nottingham Contemporary and Castlefield Gallery's Curator Matthew Pendergast. Thorne is a contributing editor at Frieze magazine and co-founder of Open School East (2013). His book *School: Conversations on Self-Organised Art Education* was published by Sternberg Press in 2017. He was formerly Artistic Director at Tate St Ives (2014 – 16). **Shy Bairns** is a collective of artists, designers and curators, based in Manchester comprising of George Gibson, Izzy Kroese, Erin Blamire and Eleanor Haswell. Since 2016, they have been working together on a responsive programme of zines, exhibitions and workshops.

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Listing information

Exhibition Title: Fanspeak

Public Preview: 6pm-8pm, Friday 1 November 2019

Press Preview: 5pm-6pm, Friday 1 November 2019

Exhibition Dates: 2 - 24 November 2019

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

Tel: 0161 832 8034

Web: castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Opening Times: Wed to Sun 12noon – 5.30pm

Admission: FREE. The gallery is fully wheelchair accessible

EVENTS

Saturday 9 November, 12noon – 2:00pm

Exhibition Tour, Show and Tell

Alongside the exhibition will be a day of related activities led by Shy Bairns; a collective-led tour of the exhibition will invite visitors to contribute to the conversation, with the opportunity to discuss the works presented and the ideas behind the exhibition. Visitors will also be invited to bring and share their own pop and alt cultural obsessions, opening up a wider dialogue around fan culture and production.

Saturday 9 November, 3pm – 5:30pm

Zine making workshop £5, free tickets available for low-income participants or access support workers

An afternoon zine making workshop, situated within the exhibition's zine library, will explore the history of zine making and methods of zine production. Attendees will work collaboratively alongside Shy Bairns to produce a new zine for display within the exhibition.

[Both the tour and workshop will be relaxed and seating will be provided.]

More on the artists

Kurdwin Ayub (b. 1990, Dohuk, Iraq) is an independent director, writer and performance artist based in Vienna. In a series of video works she takes on the persona of a YouTube style vlogger, attempting Miley Cyrus dance moves, sharing her drawings of Ryan Gosling and singing along to Adele. These works mimic the characteristically uncomfortable yet brave performances found in the homemade homages fans publish online.

kurdwinayub.com - represented by SIXPACKFILM sixpackfilm.com/en

Lydia Blakeley (b. 1980, Bracknell, UK) creates paintings of aspirational luxury that move from the banal to the uncanny. Her series *You're Doing Amazing, Sweetie* (2018) depicts the homes of the Kardashians in a manner which draws attention to the strangeness of their universality. Blakeley invites us to wonder why, despite being some of the biggest influencers in the world, obsession with the Kardashians is rarely seen as fandom, perhaps because it is so universal? lydiablakeley.com

Maya Ben David (b. 1991, Toronto, Canada) is a Toronto-based Jewish-Iranian artist working with video, installation and performance. She creates worlds and characters that aid her ongoing exploration of anthropomorphism, cosplay and performative personas. *POKÉMORPH ME* is a video performance commenting on, and dedicated to, the Pokémon universe and fandom. Pokémorphs are fan-made, anthropomorphised and sexualised versions of the original Pokémon characters. By transforming into a Pokémon herself, Ben David aims to bring agency to these sexualised and dehumanised female creatures. This work imagines a world where female-identifying Pokémorphs rebel against their oppression. mayabendavid.net

Graham Dolphin (b. 1972, Stafford, UK) remakes public shrines and tributes made by fans as memorials to dead rock stars. The objects and locations chosen as the site of veneration are often arbitrary; fans make pilgrimages to these sites seeking the stars' aura in the physical remnants left behind by them, or strongly associated with them. Dolphin's interest is not in making replicas or facsimiles. The fans' shrines are living artefacts, constantly changing and being added to. When Dolphin makes a version of them, he wants the sculptural object to become itself, not a copy.

grahamdolphin.co.uk

Ashley Holmes (b. 1990, Luton, UK) is a Sheffield-based artist interested in the complexities and nuances that surround postcolonial theory and its impact on contemporary attitudes to political, economic and social systems. His series of works based on Panini football stickers considers the demonisation that runs parallel to idolisation, particularly for people of colour in the public eye. ashleyholmes.co.uk

Owen G. Parry (b. 1983, Neath, Wales) is an artist and researcher working across performance cultures, exploring subjects including trash, gay sex, biopolitics, fandoms, fascism and Yoko Ono. Parry initiated the Fan Riot project (fanriot.tumblr.com) in 2015, which explores the relationship between art and fan practices, including Fan Clubs, publications, artworks and performances. owengparry.com

Beth Emily Richards' (b. 1986, Plymouth, UK) work investigates contemporary myth-making, often exploring popular culture and its idiosyncratic subcultures. Frequently the work complicates accepted narratives and dominant histories by reperforming them in ways that use absurdism and failure to undermine them. bethemilyrichards.com

Salford Zine Library (currently housed at Nexus Art Café, Dale Street in Manchester) promotes zines and DIY culture through workshops, exhibitions and events. Historically, Manchester and Salford have been hubs for fan culture with deep roots in fanatic creation, particularly music-based fanzines in the 1980's and early 1990's. Containing over 1,500 zines donated by zine makers and collectors from around the world, the library features zines of all shapes and sizes, covering subjects from football and feminism to veganism and poetry. Salford Zine Library is run by Ingrid Francis, Cherry Styles, Elizabeth Murray Jones and Steve Carlton. salfordzinelibrary.co.uk

Rosa Uddoh (b. 1993, Croydon, UK) is an artist exploring an over-identification with places, objects or celebrities in British popular culture, decolonisation, and the effects of this on self-esteem. In *The Serve* (YEAR) Uddoh compares the interconnections between her life and the Williams Sisters through her TV screen. Reality and fiction, the artist's life and theirs blur with the speed of Venus Williams' double handed backhand. rosajohanuddoh.com

Shy Bairns is the collaborative practice of artists, designers and curators Izzy Kroese (b. 1996, Newcastle, UK), Erin Blamire (1996, Oxford, UK), Eleanor Haswell (b. 1996, Shotley Bridge, UK) and George Gibson (1995, Sunderland, UK). They are interested in the accessibility and interactivity of contemporary art, and through their practice aim to create a conversation between exhibition/artwork and viewer, rather than the traditional one-way approach. Often considering ideas of identity (both individual and communal) they begin to explore the relationship of viewer to work, and work to viewer, with projects focusing on the space in-between.

George Gibson is a Castlefield Gallery Associate and one of three 2018-19 Castlefield Gallery / Manchester School of Art mentees, selected by Castlefield Gallery's Director Helen Wewiora from Manchester School of Art 2018 graduates. [@shybairnsgetnowt](https://www.shybairns.co.uk)

Castlefield Gallery Associates are a 200 plus strong group of artists, curators and writers living and working across Greater Manchester, the North West of England as well as further afield, including internationally.

Castlefield Gallery Members Exhibitions build on the gallery's previous Launch Pad programme. The exhibition strand has been developed to support the work of the gallery's Castlefield Gallery Associates in the realisation of ambitious, exciting and timely projects, designed to progress both their practice and careers. Successful candidates whose proposals are selected for the gallery programme are supported through project development and delivery by an experienced gallery team, enhanced budget and exhibition period. For more information on, or to join Castlefield Gallery Associates, see castlefieldgallery.co.uk/associates/ including dates of future Members Exhibition opportunities.

Castlefield Gallery is a contemporary art gallery and artist focused organisation established in 1984. The gallery exhibits new and commissioned work at its main venue in Manchester, off-site and in the public realm. Castlefield Gallery works locally, nationally and internationally - often through dynamic partnerships and exchange. The organisation supports artists' practice and career development, working especially with artists at early and mid-career stages. Castlefield Gallery New Art Spaces re-purposes temporarily vacant property for use by artists across Greater Manchester and the North West of England, accessed by its 200 strong plus Castlefield Gallery Associates. The celebrated Ryan Gander OBE is Castlefield Gallery's Artist Patron. www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Castlefield Gallery Funders



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