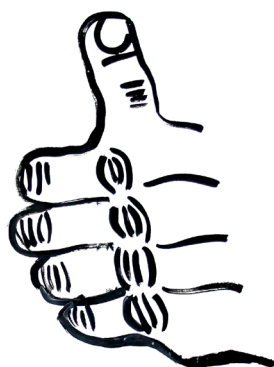


Thumbs Up



MICHAEL BEARD FRANCES DISLEY
HARRY MEADLEY LESLIE THOMPSON

Thumbs Up has been commissioned,
curated and produced by

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Thumbs Up

24 January – 8 March 2020

'Thumbs Up' has been supported by the
University of Salford Art Collection and
work by each artist will enter the collection
as a permanent legacy of the exhibition.

For further information visit

www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk

www.venturearts.org

www.artcollection.salford.ac.uk

Michael Beard

Upper Gallery

Untitled (2019)
Paint on paper

Lower Gallery

Airport London series (2019)
Oil pastel on paper with
wooden frame

Christmas New York (2020)
Oil pastel on paper

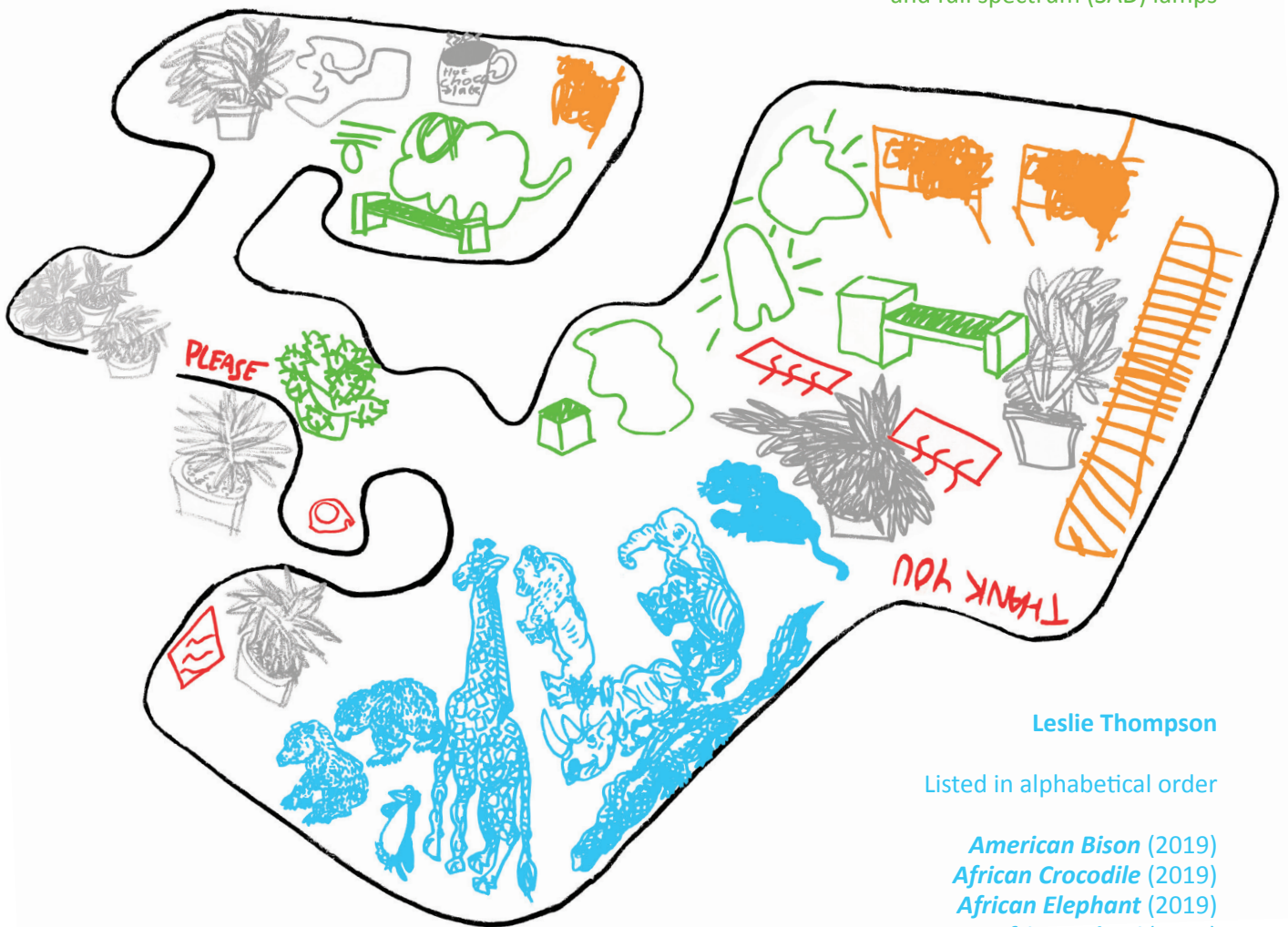
Frances Disley

Beneath the boundary layer (2019)
Ceramic vessels

Hurley Chill (2020)
Emulsion and heat reactive paint

Joy Ride Dual Run (2019)
Bench cushions, calico, foam and fabric paint

Warm Breeze (2019)
Diptych light boxes: acrylic, wood, paint
and full spectrum (SAD) lamps



Leslie Thompson

Listed in alphabetical order

American Bison (2019)
African Crocodile (2019)
African Elephant (2019)
African Okapi (2019)
Brown Bear (2019)
Brown Bear (2019)
Brown Bear (2020)
Giraffe (2020)
In the European Jungle (2019)
Jungle (2019)
Jungle Safari (2020)
North African Black Panther (2019)
Penguin Antarctica (2020)
Safari (2019)
Safari (2020)
Acrylic paint on fabric

Harry Meadley

Please (2020)
LED sign

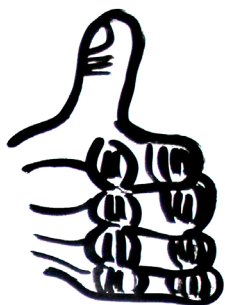
Sorry (2019)
Terracotta

Thank you (2020)
LED sign

Whoam (2020)
Infrared heating panel

Over the course of the past seven months **Michael Beard**, **Frances Disley**, **Harry Meadley**, and **Leslie Thompson** have made regular trips to Castlefield Gallery, visited other cultural venues and events in the North West, and made use of Venture Arts' facilities at Studio 53 in Hulme. Whilst making work alongside each other the artists considered how they would like visitors to encounter their work in the gallery, and how galleries could be more welcoming and inclusive spaces. This dialogue was extended to include expert advice from staff and academics at the University of Salford, Venture Arts, and Castlefield Gallery on topics including: curating, horticulture, psychology, and the effects of colour on the brain. For the artists this has inspired ideas for new works, and informed the way their works are displayed. For the gallery this process has contributed to our ongoing reflection on how we operate.

Frances Disley's works address ambient elements of the gallery space. *Hurley Chill (2020)* is a site-specific painting that washes across the gallery walls, reducing the harshness of Castlefield Gallery's brilliant white spaces. *Joy Ride Dual Run(2019)* is a series of hand-painted cushions for the gallery furniture. The colour scheme is influenced by a tracksuit, researched and designed by the sportswear brand Nike, to be the optimum colours to wear during a yoga session. Both these works are informed by research into the potential psychological effects of colour on mood, happiness, and wellbeing. *Warm Breeze (2019)* is a pair of hand-painted lightboxes which are in fact light therapy units intended to simulate the effects of exposure to bright sunlight. These lightboxes are also known as SAD lamps and may be used to treat seasonal affective disorder, a condition that influences mood during the change in seasons. Disley's works can be encountered first and foremost as abstract paintings but may also offer the viewer additional benefits in return for their gaze.



Michael Beard works with painting, illustration and ceramics. He embraces the capacities and constraints of the materials he uses with repetitive mark-making and a vibrant colour palette. Vigorously overlapped handwriting conveys the energy and speed with which he works. The finished pieces express his passion for travel, often starting with words, names and signage associated with travel and transport - places he has visited or wishes to. Over the last seven months Beard has been able to develop his working methods and in particular be more ambitious with scale. *Christmas New York (2020)* is his largest work to date, a site-specific piece developed for the lower gallery space. As with much of his work it embodies a sense of movement that encourages our gaze to travel with it, across and throughout the gallery.

Leslie Thompson is well known for his illustration, often also working with animation and textiles. He has a highly developed drawing style which dominates his practice, whether working from memory or responding to live situations. Leslie Thompson, the self-titled **Superstar Artist Drawer**, has appeared at events up and down the country working from observation, capturing people and their surroundings live, and creating ambitious detailed sketches. For 'Thumbs Up' Thompson has made a series of large-scale works on fabric designed to hang in the gallery's double-height space. In developing these works Thompson has recalled memories of a trip to Chester Zoo with his mother in 2010, in particular the large animals from North Africa and India. Thompson has also worked with Harry Meadley to reimagine the gallery map, taking inspiration from the maps you would use to orientate yourself in a park or zoo.

Harry Meadley's *Whoam (2020)*, features a photograph of the 'Thumbs Up' artists' studio space taken by Meadley at the end of their residency. The photograph has been printed onto an energy efficient infrared heating panel which slowly warms the viewer as they spend more time with the work. Castlefield Gallery can sometimes feel cold, especially in the winter months, which may have an impact on how long visitors spend engaging with works on display. Elsewhere Meadley has introduced additional infrared heating panels into the gallery intended to make visitors feel more comfortable.

The artists have also proposed that the gallery makes hot drinks available for visitors. A self-service drinks stand stocked with Thompson's favourite Cadbury Drinking Chocolate (amongst other warm beverages), has been introduced into the venue, an addition which may become a regular feature.

Some good suggestions were not possible to achieve. For example, Meadley asked Castlefield Gallery to relax its policy that does not allow dogs in the building other than assistance dogs, and began working at Studio 53 to hone his pottery skills with the hope of producing a ceramic dog bowl for the gallery. After thorough consideration of this request the gallery has opted to uphold its policy on the grounds that not every visitor will be comfortable with the presence of dogs. There also remains a concern for the integrity of the artworks the gallery is committed to showing. What has found its way into the gallery is *Sorry (2019)* one of Meadley's terracotta dog bowl prototypes.

The greenery you see in the gallery is the result of several discussions between the artists, staff, and academics about the potential benefits of spending time with plants. Disley has also made *Beneath the boundary layer (2019)* a series of handmade, interlinked, pinch pots which host small plants at different stages of growth. To focus on the tasks we carry out in our daily lives we will often have to block out incoming distractions for extended periods of time, this can lead to what is referred to as directed attention fatigue. According to Attention Restoration Theory the benefit of spending time with plants is that they do not make any demands upon us to interpret their meaning. Observing the overlapping, repeated patterns found in the leaves, stems and branches of plants with 'undirected attention' and 'soft fascination' has a restorative effect on the brain. Contrary to this artworks are predominantly made with intention, by someone who has reflected on their memories, desires, and the world in which they live. Encountering artworks requires us to consider what potential meaning they may have for us, rewarding us in other ways. We hope that this exhibition can be a place for both intellectual stimulation and restoration. A space which moves at a different speed to the world outside, but is not disconnected from it. As Meadley's signs say *Please (2019)* come in, take your time, help yourself to a hot drink, and *Thank you (2019)* for coming.

The seating in the gallery is made from wood recycled from previous exhibitions. It is intended to be movable to accommodate different usage of the space. Please ask a member of staff for assistance if you would like to rearrange the seating during your visit.

Artists tour and talk

Saturday 1 February 13:00 – 14:00

The four artists will lead a tour of 'Thumbs Up' and discuss the ways that they have worked alongside each other on the development of the exhibition.

Panel discussion with academic experts from the University of Salford

Saturday 1 February 14:30 – 16:00

Frances Disley and Harry Meadley will join a panel discussion with academic and technical experts who have provided advice on topics including horticulture, psychology and colour theory.

For further information and to book tickets go to www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk

We would especially like to thank the following people for their contribution to the exhibition:

Michael Beard, Frances Disley, Harry Meadley, Leslie Thompson

University of Salford

Dr Richard Fitton MRICS, Reader in Energy Performance of Buildings
Professor Philip James, Professor of Ecology
Michael Lomas, Lecturer in Environmental Psychology
Dr Catherine Thompson, Lecturer in Cognitive Psychology

Cürv

Ben Hollins, Operations Manager
Richard Pink, Managing Director

Flow With Fran

Francesca Giacomozzi

All the staff and volunteers at Castlefield Gallery, Venture Arts, and the University of Salford Art Collection, with a special mention for 'Thumbs Up' Producer Debbie Chan, Venture Arts Artist Facilitator Sarah Crosby, and Castlefield Gallery Technician Johnny Billinge.