

# Castlefield Gallery Exhibition Programme 2020-2021



## Soft Bodies

16<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

Artists: Emma Cousin, Stine Deja, George Gibson, Aliyah Hussain and Anna Bunting-Branch (Potential Wor(l)ds), Robin Megannity, Sadé Mica, Jake Moore and Semi Precious, Sam Rushton, Megan Snowe, Xiuching Tsay.

Soft-body dynamics is a field of computer-generated graphics which creates simulations of soft materials such as muscle, fat, hair, vegetation and fabric. The increasing availability of this kind of software has given artists new tools to make work; manipulating 'digital clay' in limitless space. These 3D digital works are however primarily experienced via the flat surface of the screen, as still or moving images. This may prompt questions about the contribution these works make to how we experience, understand and imagine our bodies. Do these smooth interfaces ultimately leave us feeling distanced and disembodied - and is that necessarily a bad thing? *Soft Bodies* places works made with these digital technologies alongside photography, painting, drawing, and print in order to consider the shared limits and potential of these mediums, in particular their ability to call forth worlds beyond their two dimensional surfaces. With figurative and abstract, actual and virtual content, this exhibition explores how these works might inform our experience of being in a body, with its own insides and outs, boundaries and internal worlds. In places the exhibition points towards experiences of the body that are beyond everyday language, considering the speculative potential of these works to inform our comprehension of the body in relation to politics, technology, the image, gender, race, sexuality and the future.

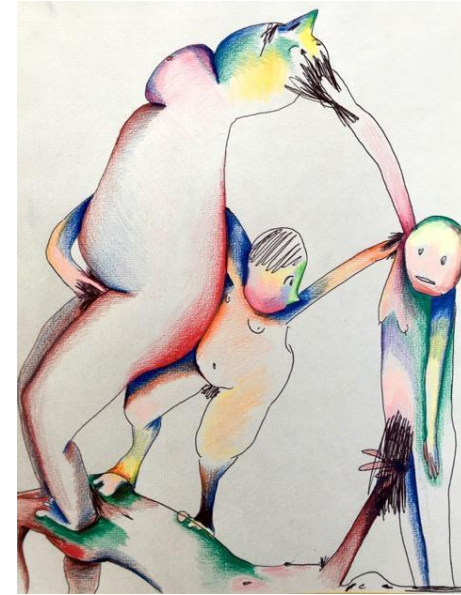
Conceived long before the arrival of Covid-19, this exhibition will now not escape its context. In many ways it has become more relevant than ever, speaking to the experience of screen-based interaction and our changing relationship with the bodies of others.

This exhibition recognises that we all have a body and are all continually working out how we understand it, and how it informs our experience of the world. Art and technology offer us tools to explore the world and ourselves, to celebrate and interrogate it for better or worse. With mediums old and new art can be a reflection of its time, it can also be speculative about the future. In this exhibition, art's particular ability to occupy a space which seems alien and abstract but nevertheless direct and emotive is praised above all else. Art enables us to relate to the unfamiliar, the unrecognisable within ourselves and others. In this way it contributes to our ever developing understanding and ability to communicate with others no matter how different we may appear to each other.

To learn more about the works in this exhibition please see the [gallery handout](#).



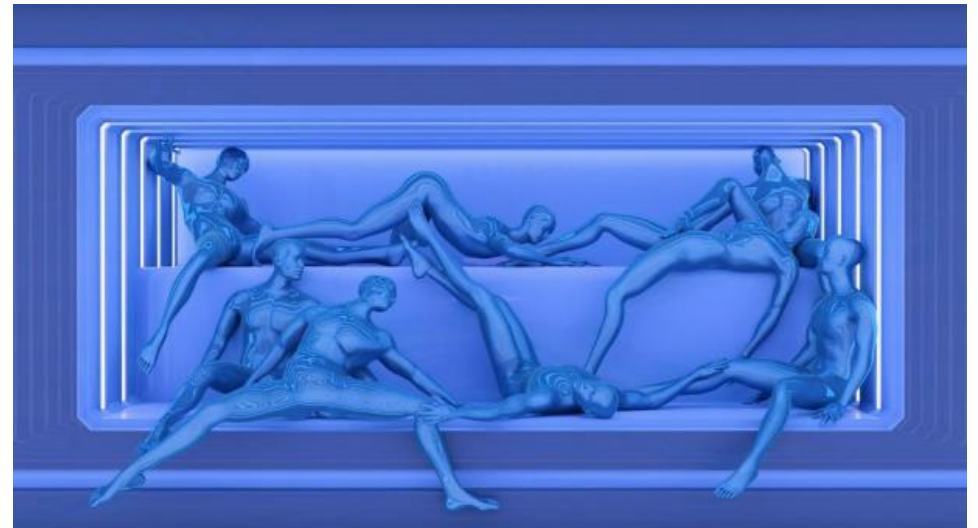
Sadé Mica, *Tests in Malham No.3*, 2019, digital print on photographic paper.



Emma Cousin, *Growth*, 2020, coloured pencil on paper.



Xiuching Tsay, *She has her own island*, 2019, oil on canvas.



Jake Moore and Semi Precious, *Other Life*, 2019, film still.

## Obstructions

5<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Artists: Heather Bell, Maya Chowdhry, Tara Collette, Alena Ruth Donely, Jack Doyle, Jane Fairhurst, Sarah Feinmann, Tina Finch, Sabrina Fuller, Parham Ghalamdar, Claire Hignett, Paddy O'Donnell, Chris Rainham, Katie Tomlinson, Ian Vines.

Fifteen artists have been invited to re-make an existing piece of their work for this exhibition - with one condition - an 'obstruction' given to them by another artist in the exhibition. Selected from Salford Scholars who are supported by University of Salford Art Collection, Castlefield Gallery Mentees from Manchester School of Art, and the gallery's bOlder programme, all the artists are either under 30 or over 50 years of age, creating the opportunity to foster a conversation between two distinct generations. At a time when perceptions of different generations may be fraught with misconceptions, this process has enabled them to learn from each other.

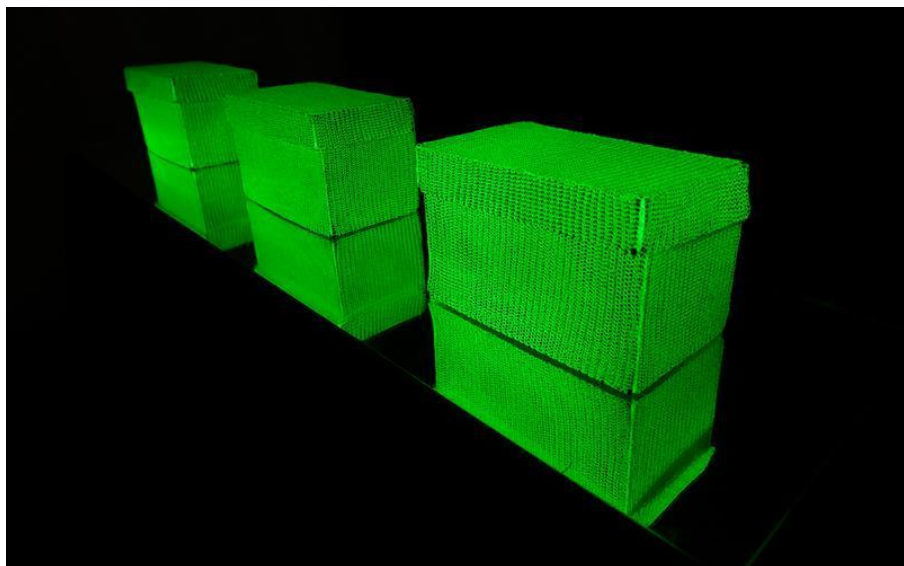
This exhibition project is in part a response to the restrictions and disruptions caused by Covid – 19, and it is also inspired by the long history of artists using self-imposed restrictions to aid creative or free thinking.

The 'Obstructions' are derived from conversations between the artists and are bespoke for each individual artist. With a desire to be supportive but also to challenge each other, each will inevitably be received with a mix of reactions. What may appear to be a subtle request, may in fact be a great challenge for an artist as they are pushed out of their comfort zone, either with the materials they have to use or the way they have to think, promising some revelatory results. Currently the artists are working with a variety of materials including: textiles, film, painting, projection mapping, performance, sculpture and photography. What they find themselves working with for this exhibition may be a surprise to them.

The exchange of these 'Obstructions' requires the artists to get to know each other's work and learn about the ebb and flow of their current practice. This exchange and the process leading up to them is a method or device for supporting learning between the artists.

With the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, alongside their 'Obstruction' they have also been given a relatively short time frame to develop new work. They will have to work quickly, improvising with what is to hand. The potential for failure is part of the excitement of the project. The artists know well that the benefit from risks taken now may have a long-lasting effect on their future work.

As the artists in this exhibition are North West-based with the majority in Greater Manchester, the gallery is able to focus its support during this testing time, supporting them with an opportunity to show work and to connect with their peers and other artists in their locality that they might not otherwise encounter.



Claire Hignett, *Secret and Sacred*, 2015. Photo courtesy David Burrows.



Parham Ghalamdar, *Spectre*, 2019. Photo courtesy John Makenzie.



Tina Finch, *Monday*, 2020.



Heather Bell, *Drowning in supplies*, 2020.

## Nicola Ellis and Ritherdon & Co Ltd: No gaps in the line

27<sup>th</sup> March – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**Nicola Ellis and Ritherdon & Co Ltd: No gaps in the line** is Ellis's first major solo exhibition and will mark the end of her two year placement at Ritherdon & Co Ltd: a manufacturer of steel enclosures based in Darwen, Lancashire. [Nicola Ellis's](#) work includes site-responsive installation, sculpture, painting, drawing, video and photography. Recent projects have seen her operating within existing workplace ecosystems, making artworks which respond to the relationships between people, materials and processes. Some works feature loaned or exchanged waste materials, which are temporarily transformed, often into large scale sculpture.

Following a short Art in Manufacturing ([festivalofmaking.co.uk](http://festivalofmaking.co.uk)) residency in 2018, Ellis discussed continuing her placement with Managing Director Ben Ritherdon and, after securing Arts Council England funding, was welcomed back to the factory in February 2019. Throughout the Return to Ritherdon project she has been observing, participating in and at times disrupting the ecosystem of the factory and its associated business operations. New works and methodologies have been informed in particular by studying the application of Lean Manufacturing philosophy – a philosophy aimed at the reduction of waste in the form of time, energy and materials. The nature of Ellis's project resonates with the activity of the Artist Placement Group (APG). Founded in 1966, the organisation sought to reposition the role of the artist within a wider social context, including government and commerce. APG material at Tate Archive has informed Ellis's thinking throughout the project.

Ultimately Return to Ritherdon has created opportunities for an artist and a manufacturer to witness each other's work in the factory, studio, gallery and respective communities. Site-responsive works are being developed for this exhibition which will continue this process, connecting the factory and the gallery space and sharing the project with wider audiences. Large abstract metal sculptures which are the result of feeding CAD programmed machines instructions to punch out drawings of themselves or other machines in sheets of metal will reach up into the gallery's double height space interacting with its architecture to form works which will tower over visitors. Industrial strip lights in the gallery will be linked to light sensors in the factory, communicating the rhythm of welders working in real time. A video installation will also display documentation of the factory's industrial processes showing how pace and rhythm is set, changed and communicated. The exhibition will feature new works from Ellis' 'dead powder' series - metal panels coated with 'dead powder', the leftover paint from the factory's daily jobs. A mixture of standard industrial colours and vibrant one-off colours are sprayed onto the metal sheets until an excess of paint slips and drips as it dries. These works can be seen as paintings but also as documentation of the jobs processed in the paint shop over the course of that day.

Castlefield Gallery has supported and followed Ellis's work over several years. She has taken part in numerous exhibitions at the gallery including: [LAUNCH PAD: Meanwhile See This](#) (2012), [Nicola Ellis & Aura Satz](#) (2013) and [Oh, it is easy to be clever if one does not know all these questions](#) (2018). In 2019 we celebrated our 35th anniversary with the exhibition [No Particular Place to Go? 35 years of sculpture at Castlefield Gallery](#) which included work by Ellis, and later that year we took her work to the Manchester Contemporary Art Fair where Dead powder series: Yellow, (2019) was selected by The Manchester Contemporary Art Fund for acquisition into the public collection of Manchester Art Gallery, where it will go on display later this year.

This exhibition is being supported by the Ronnie Duncan Art Foundation and Castlefield Gallery Commissioning Patron Prof. Chris Klingenberg.



Nicola Ellis, *Live powder series: MOP*, 2019, Powder coated stainless steel.



Nicola Ellis, *Dead powder series: How to survive everyday life*, 2019, Dead powder and discarded steel.



Nicola Ellis, *Black consoles*, Watercolour on paper.



Photograph of the Ritherdon paintshop. Image courtesy: Nicola Ellis.

## **The Naming of Things: a group exhibition curated by Castlefield Gallery Associate Bryony Dawson**

## **The Annotated Reader: A publication-as-exhibition and exhibition-as-publication conceived by Ryan Gander and Jonathan P. Watts**

Both exhibitions 26<sup>th</sup> June – 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Originally planned to be exhibited at the gallery in May 2020.

**The Naming of Things** features the work of Sriwhana Spong, Lydia Davies, Jeanne Constantin, Sarah Tripp, James McAleer and Bryony Dawson, Charlie Godet Thomas and Jessica Higgins.

Language has always been in a state of flux, but the acceleration of change led by new media platforms and formats is dramatically changing the way that language is written, read and understood. The artists chosen for this exhibition embrace this unreliability by using and mis-using language as a way to imagine architectural spaces and alternative viewpoints. With works involving text, audio, sculpture and film they explore the semiotic relationships between images, sounds and words.

### **The Annotated Reader**

*Imagine you've missed the last train. Is there one piece of writing that you would want with you for company in the small hours? Perhaps this text transformed your thinking. It might be a mantra continually returned to. Perhaps it is a text you felt should be read by younger generations or that you wish you'd encountered as a student.*

Artist Ryan Gander and critic and writer Jonathan P. Watts put this question to a range of creatives, artists, academics, writers, musicians, and designers, inviting them to suggest such a piece of writing and then annotate it. The annotations add a further layer to the texts, demonstrating and suggesting ways of reading, displaying thought, complicating the relationship between image and text, reading and looking. With almost 300 contributors including Marina Abramović, Art & Language, Paul Clinton, Tom Godfrey, Ragnar Kjartansson, Sarah Lucas, Alistair Hudson and Hans Ulrich Obrist it forms an educational resource that can be used as a teaching aid for future generations. The Annotated Reader is a curriculum, an index and an ethics.

With both these exhibitions there is a focus on language, learning and communicating ideas. Reimagining familiar platforms of exchange in order to disseminate knowledge and share experiences in different ways both between artists at different stages of their careers and audiences. *The Naming of Things* was selected from proposals submitted by Castlefield Gallery Associates by guest selector Ryan Gander and Castlefield Gallery Curator Matthew Pendergast as part of our Members Exhibition programme.

Bryony Dawson ([bryonydawson.com](http://bryonydawson.com)) is an artist, curator and a founding member of the curatorial project Soft Spot ([softspotssoftspot.com](http://softspotssoftspot.com)). She was one of Castlefield Gallery's 2019-20 Manchester School of Art Graduate Mentees. *The Naming of Things* is the first exhibition she has curated in a publicly funded

gallery, and as well as contributing to her development as a curator, it has also enabled her to explore how her practice as an artist is orientated in relation to her peers and artists further along in their career who share similar interests in their work.



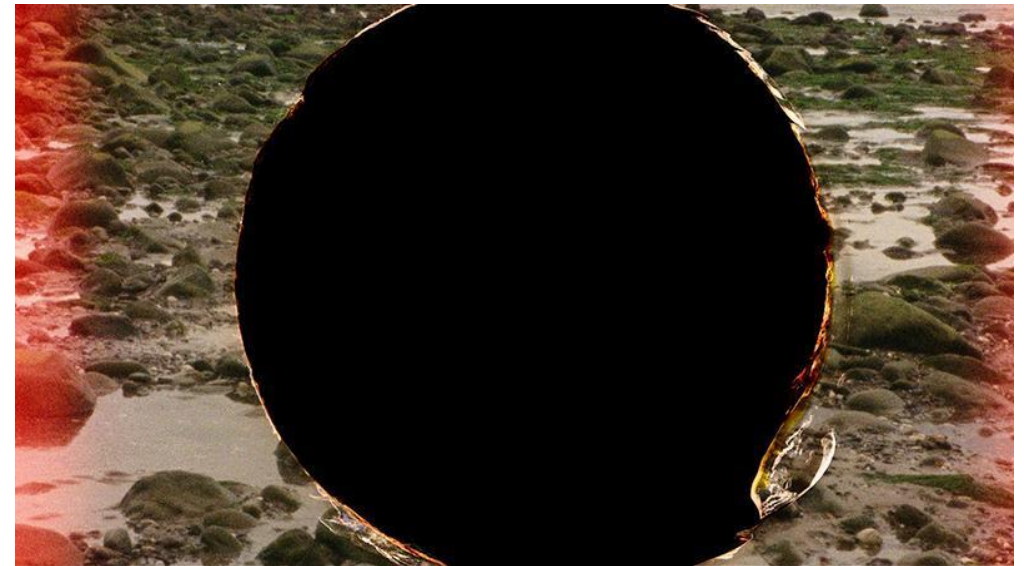
Jonathan P Watts and Ryan Gander, *The Annotated Reader*, 2019, installation at Quartz Studio, Turin. Image by Beppe Giardino.



Bryony Dawson (Collaboration with Rosie Burslem), *Biorhythm*, 2019, Video still.



Jeanne Constantin, *W(hole)*, 2018.



Sriwhana Spong, *castle-crystal*, 2019, video still. Image courtesy the artist and Michael Lett.



## Castlefield Gallery Associates Members exhibition

11<sup>th</sup> September – 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021.

Mariama Attah, curator at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, is guest selector for our spring 2021 Castlefield Gallery Associates [Members Exhibition](#), alongside Castlefield Gallery curator Matthew Pendergast.

The selected associate member will receive a budget of £2,000 (for fees and production) as well as curatorial guidance and technical support to produce an exhibition as part of the gallery programme. The Members Exhibition is intended to be an opportunity for those involved to develop their practice and profile, by taking something to the next level or trying out something new. We also welcome proposals that think beyond standard exhibition formats; previously selected proposals have included: an edition of the publication [Psychick Dancehall](#), a search for 'free' spaces in the ['economic powerhouse of the north'](#) and an [artists' shaggy dog story](#).

Mariama Attah is a photography curator and editor with a particular interest in overlooked visual histories, and in using photography and visual culture to amplify under and misrepresented voices. Before joining the Open Eye Gallery team, Mariama was assistant editor of Foam Magazine. Prior to that, she was Curator of Photoworks, where she was responsible for developing and curating programmes and events such as the Brighton Photo Biennial and was commissioning and managing editor of the yearly magazine, Photoworks Annual.



*Fanspeak* (installation image) curated by Shy Bairns. Image courtesy Annie Feng.



*Sources* (installation image) curated by Joe Preston. Image courtesy Annie Feng.

## John Powell Jones: Cyber Junk

16<sup>th</sup> October – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Castlefield Gallery will be closed from Sunday 19 December to Wednesday 5 January.

Jones' work deals with empathy or the lack of it, in contemporary society. His use of speculative fiction is intended to form a dialogue with our present predicament and an imagined dystopian future which we may learn from in the present. A body of multimedia work will depict a narrative running for hundreds of years, starting with characters introduced in Jones' previous work *Technotrash: The Fellowship of Technoid*. The presentation at Castlefield Gallery will take the form of performance, video (a combination of live action, 2D and 3D animation), tufted wall hangings and ceramic sculpture, all housed in an immersive installation in bright blues, fleshy pinks and slime greens, and populated with life size characters. Audiences will be transported to this Cyber Junk universe as spectral observers of a looped timeline spanning thousands of years.

Castlefield Gallery continues to partner with IMT Gallery, London to deliver this exhibition which will be presented in two parts across both venues.

[johnpowell-jones.co.uk](http://johnpowell-jones.co.uk)



John Powell-Jones, *URWOTUEAT*, 2017.



John Powell-Jones, *Tomb Machines*, 2018. Image courtesy Aliyah Hussain.



John Powell-Jones, *F.I.E.N.D.S.*, installation for SUBI at Castlefield Gallery. Image courtesy Stuart Southwell.



John Powell-Jones, *Tomb Machines* prop, 2018.