



Press Release - for immediate release

Date: 9 February 2022

Archives at Play

6 March – 24 April 2022

Archives at Play is an exhibition exploring our relationship with the past, and how this informs the way we make the future. At a time when it is more important than ever to challenge inherited ideas about ecology, equality, and identity, this exhibition uses archival structures - the ways we hold and engage with the past - as a tool for questioning the worlds we find ourselves within.

The artists Gregory Herbert, Kelly Jayne Jones, Dr. Yan Wang Preston, and Chester Tenneson have been invited to take the concept of the archive as a starting point to develop a series of new works for *Archives at Play*.

Both Tenneson and Jones are working directly with the objects and records accumulated by Castlefield Gallery across its 37 year history, developing absurd sculpture, text painting and ritual sound environments. Inspired by traditional Chinese bird-and-flower compositions, Wang Preston's photographic series 'English Gardens' uses plant species termed 'invasive' or 'alien' in black & white silver gelatin prints. It is shown alongside an installation by Herbert that interrupts the gallery's plumbing to create new ecosystems. All their works for *Archives at Play* will address structures of history - the traditions, the myths and obscured systems - by which constructs and beliefs become normalised, naturalised and unquestioned.

Throughout the exhibition the gallery will host a series of events that will respond to both the archive, as well the physical traces left behind in the fabric of the venue from the artists and events that have gone before. Through performance, sound, and readings the artists will bring their own distinct perspectives to Castlefield Gallery; its history and its yet unwritten future. The wider communities and visitors of Castlefield Gallery will also have opportunities to explore behind the scenes, dig into the gallery archive, and connect with the gallery team and artists in new ways.

Archives at Play is part of a wider Castlefield Gallery research project led by Thomas Dukes, a curator and PhD Candidate working with Castlefield Gallery and Manchester School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. Dukes' research into the 37 year-long Castlefield Gallery archive looks for ways to approach the gallery archive as more than a site to hold and preserve information as 'fact', but instead as a living and complex entity. One that doesn't exist in a single place, and that can be engaged with in the present to prompt dialogue and generate influence from many voices, in order to inform thinking about the future.

Thomas Dukes' research is being undertaken in the lead up to 2024, when Castlefield Gallery will mark 40 years of building dynamic relationships with and between artists, audiences and many partners based locally, nationally and internationally, with a series of exhibitions and events celebrating a history of making new art happen.

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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 / 07766046672.

Notes to editors

At **Castlefield Gallery (Est. 1984)**, we make new art possible. We are dedicated to the advancement of contemporary visual art. We are artist facing. We work with artists and creatives in Greater Manchester and beyond, at all career stages. We support them to develop their practice and careers, and to find ways not just to make art, but to make a living. We do this through: our gallery, and its free exhibitions and events that are open to all; through tailored career and practice development support; through our 200-strong artist Associates scheme; through the provision of low-cost studio and project space; through commissions and co-commissions; and through collaboration with universities, including annual graduate programmes that provide mentoring, coaching and more. For 35 years, we have supported young and older artists, new graduates right through to established artists, connecting them to each other, and to our international network of curators, arts organisations, artists and collectors. Castlefield Gallery's international work is focused on exchange between artists in the North West of England, and the rest of the world. We have an established track record in public art commissioning and public realm animation and activation. We are a female led organisation and a registered charity. Castlefield Gallery is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and Manchester City Council Cultural Partner. Our Artist Patron is the celebrated Ryan Gander, OBE.

Dr. Yan Wang Preston Based in the North West, award winning photographer Dr. Yan Wang Preston develops projects with arresting visual language, investigating complex dynamics of history and society. This new work looks at the layers of history, and the decisions that lie behind the politics of 'nature' and 'balance'. Working with forms from Chinese landscape painting, Preston uses plants brought to the UK from colonial botanists, along with instances of plants designated 'non-native', to tell a story of politics and power.

These works are photographic studies of light and form, part of a long tradition of floral composition – but give time to reflect on dynamics of cultural history. How are our expectations of beauty shaped by the past? How does our vocabulary influence our experience of the future? yanwangpreston.com

Gregory Herbert Living in Liverpool and a graduate of Manchester Metropolitan University, Greg Herbert makes work exploring different kinds of relationships in and with nature. Recently, Herbert's work was shown as part of Sheffield DocFest at COP26 – a piece of video imagining how the exchange between fungal roots and plant cells might appear. Herbert's artwork in video and installation considers how different human and organic actors co-exist, and the structures that build to support these ongoing relationships. gregoryherbert.co.uk

Chester Tenneson explores the absurdity within the norms of institutional design and authority, examining the idiosyncratic nature of commonplace objects and language. His position as a transgender man living and working in Greater Manchester is important; his artworks frequently reflect his experience as an outsider from everyday norms and language, which have a cisgender base. His artworks question the absurdity of these everyday norms, playing with gendered gestures and objects, as well as more general rules and instructions which command our everyday experience and public placing. chestertenneson.com

Kelly Jayne Jones combines performance, installation and sound. Based in Manchester, she began working in experimental concrete music and her practice has expanded to include dance, stone sculpture and film. Jones' recent work develops ancient and future rituals to explore animist ideas to encourage listening to the world around us, mountains, rivers, buildings, and streets. kellyjaynejones.org

Exhibition Title: Archives at Play

Public Preview: Thursday 3 March, 6-8pm (pre-booking required)

Saturday Slow-Preview: Saturday 5 March, 12noon – 5:30pm (pre-booking required)

Exhibition Dates: 6 March - 24 April 2022*

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

Tel: 0161 832 8034

Web: castlefieldgallery.co.uk

info@castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Opening Times: Wed to Sun 12noon – 5:30pm

*Castlefield Gallery will be closed on Friday 15, Saturday 16, and Sunday 17 April 2022 for Easter

Admission is FREE

The gallery is fully wheelchair accessible, including provision of an accessible bathroom.

Archives at Play is supported by



Castlefield Gallery Funders and supporters



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