

Press release
31 March 2023



Shezad Dawood's Leviathan Cycle launches Hybrid Futures in the North West of England

Partnership of galleries act on climate change by introducing sustainability in commissioning, exhibiting and collecting art for their region

Castlefield Gallery in Manchester, **Grundy Art Gallery** in Blackpool, **Touchstones Rochdale**, **University of Salford Art Collection** and **Shezad Dawood Studio** are working in partnership on a pilot project that they believe will change the way that galleries should operate in the future.

The Hybrid Futures partners are exploring collective and more sustainable ways of working by pooling their expertise to influence how the partnership commissions, exhibits and collects new work by visual artists. This change they consider will benefit and be more relevant to their audiences, now and in the future. This pilot will be used to provide a framework that can be shared with other public galleries and collections in the UK.

A series of exhibitions across the North West of England will feature new work and co-commissions by artists Shezad Dawood, Jessica El Mal, Parham Ghalamdar and RA Walden that will address the urgent thematic focus of climate change.

Launching Hybrid Futures, **Shezad Dawood's Leviathan: From the Forest to the Sea** opens 3 June – 12 August 2023 at Touchstones Rochdale premieres the latest instalment in Dawood's film series *Leviathan Cycle*. **Episode 8: Cris, Sandra, Papa & Yasmine** was developed remotely, in collaboration with Guarani scriptwriters, directors and activists Carlos Papá, Cristine Takuá, Sandra Benites and Brazilian artist and researcher Anita Ekman. This film not only expands the collective and horizontal filmmaking method that has become a central feature of the cycle's second half but reduces its own environmental impact through an intimate yet remote co-authorship.

Set in the Brazilian Atlantic Forest - one of the most ecologically diverse and threatened biomes on earth - It intersperses the imagined journey of Dawood's protagonist Yasmine with accounts, songs and the retelling of foundational Guarani origin stories. Blending indigenous cosmology with fictional narrative, shot footage and especially commissioned animation by Anita Ekman, Episode 8 charts an

embodied, spiritual and ecological journey along the age-old Guarani path that links the forest to the sea.

The plurality of voices involved in the Leviathan universe is manifested in the multiplicity of media throughout the show: from video to textile-based painting, and from traditional craft techniques to the research papers that contribute to each part of the process. The accompanying exhibited works interrogate histories of economic and social process, land-use, and our evolving relationship to the forest and the sea. In blending fact and speculative fiction, narrative and documentary, Dawood enacts a unique, sliding temporal scale that underlies the entire Leviathan project, connecting deep time to tentative future.

The Poetics of Water opens 25 June-24 September 2023 at **Castlefield Gallery** featuring new work by **Jessica El Mal** and **Parham Ghalamdar** that is motivated by the effects of capitalism, corruption and colonialism on the natural environment. Through a series of ceramics and colour saturated oil paintings of dystopian landscapes, Ghalamdar is reflecting on a recurring theme in Persian mythology: a struggle to prevent the separation of soil and water and the repression of growth and knowledge that would cause. Ghalamdar feels this struggle is taking on an absurd tone as it gets repeated in contemporary politics without success. Alongside ongoing research into the history of climate injustice El Mal is working with field and voice recordings and developing imagery with cyanotype prints made with rainfall in Morocco. The resulting works are poetic rather than prescriptive, aiming for a more emotional and expansive experience of their subject matter. A shared point of reference for El Mal and Ghalamdar is contrasting attitudes towards rainfall; particularly between Manchester where regular rainfall is a common source of complaint and Morocco and Iran where droughts and water shortages are an increasingly serious problem. Together their works invite visitors to look across landscapes, borders and centuries and to think deeply about these fundamental elements of soil and water.

As part of **The Grundy** at **Lightpool Festival**, 20-28 October 2023, a new commission from **RA Walden** and a newly acquired work by **Shezad Dawood** will be presented at Blackpool's festival of light. In collaboration with physicists and climate scientists, RA Walden will create a series of equations that intertwine the sick body and the sickness of the planet, looking at the ways in which energy, consumption, extractivism and capital function, in relation to both the smallest of particles and the expanse of space.

The University of Salford Art Collection will bring together the work by **Shezad Dawood**, Jessica El Mal, **Parham Galamdar** and **RA Walden** in **Hybrid Futures** (23 March – 22 September 2024), a group show at **Salford Museum and Art Gallery**. The exhibition will be accompanied by a national symposium, where learning from this pilot project will be shared (date tbc).

The partnership will also be working with **Collective Futures**, a group of people from their local communities with a shared concern about the climate crisis. This group will investigate how creative production can help to shine a light on these issues and create solutions to the problems caused by the changing global environment.

Notes to editors:

More information at <https://hybrid-futures.salford.ac.uk/>

Hybrid Futures: a multi-part collaboration focusing on climate, sustainability, collaborative learning and co-production between Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, Touchstones Rochdale, University of Salford Art Collection and Shezad Dawood Studio, and generously supported by Arts Council England and Art Fund.

Shezad Dawood is a multidisciplinary artist who interweaves stories, realities and symbolism to create richly layered artworks, spanning painting, textiles, sculpture, film and digital media. Fascinated by ecologies and architecture, his work takes a philosophical approach, asking questions and exploring alternative futures through what Dawood describes as 'world-building' and 'imagineering'. His practice is animated by research, working with multiple audiences and communities to delve into narrative, history and embodiment.

Selected solo exhibitions and commissions include Zien (2023), Integrations, Barakat Contemporary, Seoul (2023), HMS Alice Liddell, St Pancras Wires commission, London (2022), Hybrid Landscapes, Deutsche Bank Frieze Lounges (2022), Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2021), Concert From Bangladesh, commission for British Council Digital Collaboration Fund (2021), Timothy Taylor, London (2020-21), MOCA Toronto (2019), FriezeLIVE, London (2019), Kunstverein, Munich (2019), Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2017), Pioneer Works, Brooklyn (2015), Fig.2 at the ICA studio, London (2015), Parasol Unit, London (2014), and Modern Art Oxford (2012).

Selected group exhibitions and commissions include Qatar Museums, Doha (2022), DesertX AIUla, KSA (2022), Toronto Biennial of Art (2022), Sea Art Festival, Busan (2021), Paradise Row, London (2021), Folkestone Triennial (2021), Guggenheim, New York (2021), Southbank Centre, London (2020- 21), Boghossian Foundation – Villa Empain (2020), WIELS Bruxelles (2020), Manifesta 13 (2020), Lahore Biennial (2020), Dhaka Art Summit (2020), Sharjah Biennial 14, UAE (2019) – Jury Prize for Encroachments, Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2018), Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2016), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), Taipei Biennial (2014), Marrakech Biennial (2014), MACBA Barcelona (2014), Witte de With (2013), Busan Biennale (2010), Tate Triennial: Altermodern (2009), and Venice Biennale (2009).

Selected collections include Guggenheim Arts Council Collection, Tate, University of Salford Art Collection, UBS, LACMA, Los Angeles, National Gallery of Canada, Government Art Collection, UK, US Government Art Collection, The British Museum, London, Sharjah Art Foundation, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, and Mathaf, Doha.

His film works have been screened internationally, including at the ICA, London, MoMA, New York, and Guggenheim, New York.

Jessica El Mal is a British-Moroccan artist and curator with a particular interest in ecology and care. Her work addresses global structures of power through critical research, multidisciplinary projects, and speculative future imaginaries. She works internationally, having had projects with Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, Manchester Museum, Esmat Publishing Ciaro and MAMA Rotterdam to name a few. In the UK, she runs arts programs in nature for people with experience of migration, as a way of addressing accessibility of green spaces whilst also building community networks. Jessica is also the co-founder of A.MAL Projects, an art and research initiative between Europe and North Africa, dedicated to providing paid opportunities for artists.

Parham Ghalamdar is a painter with a background in graffiti. He studied MA in painting at Manchester School of Art, specialising in oil painting. Ghalamdar expanded his painting and drawing practice into the digital realm

in 2020 and has recently finished two short animations/films in collaboration with the director Martin Cooper, commissioned by the Oscar-winning artist, animator and filmmaker, Joan Gratz. He is a member of the Workplace Foundation's Community of Artists. Recent solo exhibitions include Painting: An Unending HOME Manchester, Fig.1 at Caustic Coastal, A Fine Kettle of Fish at Granada Foundation Galleries HOME, Manchester and Against the Absurdity of Life at Maria Behnam-Bakhtiar Gallery, Monte-Carlo. Recent group exhibitions include The Lowry, Salford, Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London, London Paint Club, Floorr Magazine, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, Manchester Art Gallery, the Whitworth, Manchester, Beep Painting Biennale, Swansea, Asia Now Art Fair, Paris. His work is also in University of Salford Art Collection.

RA Walden is a transdisciplinary artist whose work centres a queer, disabled perspective on the fragility of the body. Their practice spans sculpture, installation, video, and printed matter, all of which is undertaken with a socially engaged and research-led working methodology. Walden is interested in our ability and failure to navigate physicality, interdependency and vulnerability both communally and individually, understanding world-building not as a visionary tool for an imagined future but as an embodied methodology for the now. Recent work has been shown at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, UK, HAU, Berlin, The National Gallery of Australia, SOHO20, NYC, and Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam. Walden has been a resident of Shandaken Storm King, NYC, Wysing Arts Centre, UK, Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin, and La Becque, Switzerland. Their solo exhibition access points // or // alternative states of matter(ing) will open in May 2023 at Storm King Art Center, NYC.

**CASTLEFIELD
GALLERY**

GRUNDY ART GALLERY

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