

**Artists: Jeffrey Knopf, Theo Simpson, Hope Strickland**

Presented in partnership with the University of Salford Art Collection, **40 Years of the Future: Where Should We Be Now?** brings together the work of a sculptor, a photographer and an artist-filmmaker: Jeffrey Knopf, Theo Simpson, and Hope Strickland. These artists are deeply committed to their disciplines, but also keen to work with them in expanded and non-traditional ways.

In both the content of their work and materials used, Knopf, Simpson and Strickland explore our complex relationship with the past, present and future. As Castlefield Gallery marks 40 years, this exhibition asks us to pause, to reflect and consider how we might imagine the future with the recognition that history isn't the same for everyone; that amongst the artists we work with and the people that visit Castlefield Gallery, the past is felt and experienced differently.

This exhibition presents existing pieces alongside commissioned works developed in partnership with the University of Salford Art Collection, some of which will enter the University's collection for the benefit of future generations. This builds on Castlefield Gallery's decade of co-commissioning and artist development collaborations with the University of Salford Art Collection.

**Jeffrey Knopf**

*The Closest I Got to Freud's Desk* (2024) is the latest in a series of works following Knopf's attempts to surreptitiously make 3D digital scans of the archaeological objects (mainly small sculptures of deities from different cultures) on Sigmund Freud's desk, at the Freud Museum, London. His life size but

**Handout**

40 Years of the Future: Where Should We Be Now?  
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morphed version of Freud's desk is part of a new body of work by Knopf which includes 3D printed sculpture, ceramics and digital video. Freud's last book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) retold the story of Moses and theorised its lasting impacts on different faiths. Knopf's grandfather Jeff Joseph carried with him two silver plaques, depicting Moses, as he travelled from Iran through Egypt to become likely the first Persian Jew to settle in Manchester in 1913. Now housed in the Jewish Museum, Manchester, Knopf has scanned, 3D printed and then impression cast a version of these plaques in pewter and placed them next to the desk. Knopf's works intertwine personal stories, memories and experiences with wider social, political and historical narratives. His work is motivated by the realisation that not only people and objects but also principles and beliefs, can be displaced, lost sight of and changed over time. His disfigured, warped and defamiliarised sculptures and videos reflect this process, perhaps also suggesting the need to look again and look closer at things, to revisit the past to help inform the present.

**Theo Simpson**

The research, development, production and display of Simpson's work combines carefully considered decision making with the results of accidental encounters. In this way the works reflect our attempts and failures to understand and control the forces of history, nature, technology and politics that shape our world. Simpson's photographic works are made with a mixture of techniques from traditional hand printing, lithography and silkscreen to varied fabrication processes more commonly found in engineering and manufacturing. His work mixes original photography with printed material from

various sources such as newspapers, books, microfilm, television and auctions. The process of discovering and rediscovering these images is an important part of the development of the work. These ambiguous, cropped and collaged images may appear familiar in places if not fully recognisable. For Simpson there is potential in this ambiguity, as we may wonder how to read these fragments of imagery that connect events across different times and places from local and national protests of the 1970s and 80s to more recent global reactions to American foreign policy. How might this relate to *Map of horizons (Part 1)* (2024) which features seascapes showing the remains of a land referred to in Welsh legend as Cante'r Gwaelod, which reportedly disappeared under the Cardigan Bay. Or how decades old imagery and text from advertising and technical manuals which promised a bright future despite the context of a failing economy at the time might relate to us now.

In the first articles written about Castlefield Gallery when it opened in 1984, there is repeated mention of the difficult political and financial context of the 1980s, which sounds disappointingly similar to our current situation. This exhibition opens as another general election takes place and we may find ourselves asking: 'Will history continue to repeat itself?' or 'Where should we be now?'. *Reverse remainder* (2023-2024) by Simpson is made with unused off cuts, including the backs of pages which were not initially considered for previous works. In other works in this exhibition shape, texture and colour has been dictated by the use of recycled elements from past projects. These nonlinear works demonstrate the value of reconfiguring elements from the past, perhaps proposing that we can find the seeds of the future on the cutting room floor of history.

## Hope Strickland

Filmed in archives and museums across the UK, *I'll Be Back!*\* (2022) by Strickland explores a series of collections housing objects of colonial violence. Amongst these is a book containing a diagram of a slave ship, a key document in the abolitionist movement widely published for its shocking nature,

and a collection of insects gathered in Sierra Leone by a colonial topographer mapping borders and defining British and French territory in West Africa. The film begins and ends with the story of the rebel maroon Francois Mackandal, who was condemned to be burned at the stake in 1758, not only for his crimes but for his radical powers of metamorphosis. Shifting across digital, 16mm and archival formats, the film interrogates institutional collecting practices and reconsiders the distances between myth, history and machinations of power.

*\*I'll Be Back!* (2022) by Hope Strickland was commissioned by FACT Liverpool with public funding from Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council.

*Presented in collaboration with the University of Salford Art Collection:*

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