

REALM

HAZEL BRILL, RICHARD DOWNES & MR. X

The Gallery // 20 March - 28 April // Wed - Sun // 11am - 5pm

Preview // Sunday 17 March // 3 - 6pm

Realm is an experimental residency-based commission between a trio of London based artists Hazel Brill, Richard Downes and Mr. X.

Referred to as the 'Lungs of London'* since the 18th century, our public parks are crucial to the balance of our urban lives. They are physical and mental sanctuaries, spaces that enable meditation, rejuvenation, pleasure and escape.

Over a thirteen-day residency based on site at The Gallery, the artists have developed a new collective body of work that has manifested in an immersive multi-media scene. The installation responds to the gallery's park setting as a space for play, contemplation and the passing of time.

Realm resembles a DIY theatre set; a cyclical ecosystem that rotates and reboots itself every twelve minutes, providing the gallery with its own automated life cycle. Together the artists have created a safe, enveloping environment within a precarious world, each taking control using their preferred device: sculpture, sound, and light.

Realm is a futuristic sanctuary and contemplative space where Mr X's cardboard skyscrapers and Plane trees** allude to its imagined inhabitants and histories. His cabin is a window into a micro-realm of warped nature, reflecting and transforming Richard's park photographs.

Hazel Brill choreographs the space with sequenced dancing lights, reservoirs and a new video which puts nature at the very core of the tilting universe. This work is partly inspired by local environmentalist and social reformer Ada Salter's crusade to make Bermondsey and its communities a greener, healthier and happier place in the early 1900s.

Salter's sundial, installed in 1936 in her rose garden by the lake, mirrors the cyclic aspect of this exhibition, addressing the passing of time and contemplation encouraged by our parks and green spaces.

A manifesto for the Realm has been written and recorded by Richard Downes, a series of encouraging seventeen two-line poems, inspired by Alec Finlay's sculpture trail in the park and Yoko Ono's meditations on nature***. In his collaborative video with Hazel, *The First Thread to the Realm*, Richard spurs us to be alert to nature and to our own imagination.

Videos are projected across an amphitheatre-style stage, a deconstructed screen and hybrid of recognisable forms inspired by the unique architecture of our Dilston Grove gallery and the tunnelling trellis structures in the rose garden.

Realm is a co-commission between CGP London, Outside In and Bethlem Gallery. The artists were invited to participate by each of the three partner organisations, collectively commissioning them to create a new body of work.

Hazel Brill is a visual artist based in Bermondsey, invited by CGP London; Richard Downes, a socially engaged activist, poet and photographer was selected following a call out by Outside In; and Mr X, an accomplished artist-maker, was selected by our friends at Bethlem Gallery.

*The 'Lungs of London' are said to be the many parks and squares in London, and it conveys the idea of their importance to the well being of its inhabitants. It was first attributed to William Pitt (1708-1778) the Earl of Chatham, by Right Hon. William Windham in a speech in the House of Commons on 30 June 1808, during a debate on encroachment of buildings upon Hyde Park.

** London Plane trees (*Platanus x Hispanica*) are planted for their ability to adapt to urban conditions and its resistance to pollution. They were planted in our park by Ada Salter, Mayor of Bermondsey, as part of her Beautification strategy in the 1920s and 1930s to improve the air quality and lives of her constituents.

***Richard's *Rules for the Realm* will be available to listen to in full in our gallery bookshop and on our gallery website.

This text is also available in large print on request.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Hazel Brill works across film, sound, animation, text, sculpture and installation. Videos are staged theatrically; creating 'shows' that feature multiple protagonists, both human and non-human, who enact a plurality of narratives. Brill creates intimate worlds that cannibalise themselves, dissolving the notion of the private internal and public external.

Hazel graduated in 2017 with a MFA Fine Art Media from Slade School of Art, London. Recent exhibitions include: Survey, Jerwood, London (2018); Shonisaurus Popularis, Turf Projects (2018); Woke Up In Spring, Zabłudowicz (2018); Artagon III, Paris (2017) and Workplace, Workplace Foundation, Gateshead (2016).

Richard Downes is an engaged activist, poet, author, photographer and community worker. His work focuses on his personal experience of disability alongside ideas of forming and working with communities.

"I am hoping for an introduction to another world that becomes less strange the more I interact with it and somewhere I can continue to emerge from as an artist, a poet, a community worker, a more complete person."

Mr X is an industrious artist who makes inventive structures and vehicles from his room and a temporary workshop within the Bethlem Royal Hospital, London. Capitalising on the ubiquity of cardboard and various found objects from the hospital to make his work, Mr X constantly negotiates obstacles and restrictions encountered within the psychiatric institution and finds ways to continue his practice and keep building. His interactive sculptural practice has a strong element of performance that acts as a 'sophisticated engagement tactic where he can generously share the joy of his inventions'.

OUR PARTNERS

The Bethlem Gallery, established 1997, is situated on the grounds of The Bethlem Royal Hospital. Managed by a small, artist-led team, the gallery provides a professional space for high-quality artwork and fosters a supportive artist-focused environment.

Bethlem Gallery has worked with artists, communities and cultural venues to deliver a range of exhibitions and collaborations both on-site within the grounds of the Royal Bethlem Hospital and off-site with partner organisations. The exhibition programme focuses on developing solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, collaborative opportunities and residencies for artists who are current or former patients of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. We campaign for access to the arts in healthcare environments and engage audiences in learning and debate on the subject of mental health and artistic practice.

Bethlem Gallery receives core support from Maudsley Charity and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Outside In was founded in 2006 by Marc Steene at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, West Sussex. Its aim then, as it is now, was to provide a platform for artists who face a significant barrier to the art world due to health, disability, social circumstances or isolation.

In 2016, Outside In became an independent charity and in 2017 it joined the Arts Council England's National Portfolio. Since its inception, Outside In has engaged with more than 5,000 artists traditionally excluded from the mainstream art world, reached a quarter of a million audience members and gained more than 80 partner organisations nationally. It has held more than 50 exhibitions to date and now provides opportunities and support for more than 2,600 artists. In the next three years the charity will work to create a national platform to support the delivery of its programmes through working in partnership with key strategic arts organisations across the UK to act as hubs of activity and support.

Outside In receive core support from Arts Council England, Investec, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and The Schroder Foundation.



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