

CANDIDA POWELL-WILLIAMS TILT SHIFT: SHADOWS OF THE SEASONED SUN

Lake & Dilston Galleries // 1 May – 26 June 2022

Wednesday – Sunday, 11am – 5pm

Preview: Saturday 30 April // 2 – 6pm

Southwark Park Galleries are delighted to present across our two distinctive spaces *Tilt Shift: Shadows of the Seasoned Sun*, Candida Powell-Williams' most ambitious exhibition to date. Dilston Gallery features an installation of newly commissioned sculptures while Lake Gallery stages a body of recent work that oscillates between sculpture, installation, drawing, animation, costume and performance.

Inspired by gardens that drip with myths, mysticism and metaphorical associations to female bodies, *Tilt Shift: Shadows of the Seasoned Sun* responds and reimagines Southwark Park. With a nod to Ada Salter (1866–1942) – renowned local social reformer and environmentalist whose mayoral centennial celebration is this year – and her hand in the cultivation of Southwark Park and the 'beautification' of Bermondsey, Powell-Williams centres the exhibition around quintessential architectural garden elements of the past: the fountain and the folly.

Using these features, *Tilt Shift* continues Powell-Williams' exploration into bodily encounters with the environment, spirituality and consciousness. She is interested in 'how follies and statues often mediate a journey through the idealistic English landscape and how it gets peppered with monuments and memory and imagination and the history of the desire to rationalise and control. [...] As follies have no function, they're just these symbolic, often quite poetic, structures which animate the border between cultivation and the notion of wilderness. Often they take the form of a temple, which is a space of reflection and meditation [...] people can both have an experience of the material world and a conscious experience of the world of ideas.'

Seeing these realms through a female lens is important to Powell-Williams' practice and a group of women artists, including Leonor Fini (1907-96), Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929), Maruja Mallo (1902-95), Betye Saar (b. 1926) and Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002), have particularly had an impact on her thinking around the body and its environment, the mind and systems of belief. Formally, their influence can also be seen in Powell-Williams' maximalist, biomorphic and surreal aesthetic.

Somewhat like a theatre set (she worked backstage for over 10 years), Powell-Williams tells stories with playful saccharine installations in which the audience can meander through the anecdotal remnants and artefacts. She interweaves a wealth of references such as ancient mythology, poetry, absurdist literature and occult practices. As referred to in the title of a series of works, *The Gates of Apophenia*, Powell-Williams uses the human propensity to perceive connections or patterns in disparate things and replicates that quality in the way she works.

In Dilston Gallery, a Grade II listed deconsecrated church loaded with spiritual histories and memories, four ornate carnivalesque sculptures are presented alongside a lightbox work and subtly chiming ceramic bells. The sculptures are particularly influenced by the woodcuts from the 15th century novel *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* by Francesco Colonna (1433-1527) – an obscure tale on the pursuit of love through a dreamlike landscape – and includes ornamental animals, body parts, labyrinths and shells. Using Powell-Williams' signature marbled and iridescent candy colours cast in a hybrid of jesmonite and ceramic, the works contrast with the hollowed out concrete nave.

Conflicting and confusing materials is crucial to Powell-Williams' work: 'I want to create a range of impacts that carries the viewer across and through the space just like the variety of brushstrokes across a canvas. I'm mostly bothered about the surface and whether or not it is soft, shiny, sharp, roughly shaped, or like a pebble worn away by the sea.' Often ceramic is rough and jesmonite smooth, cardboard and papier-mâché seem heavy while clay looks lightweight.

Literally stepping in through a Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) inspired *Mysterious Baths* portico at Lake Gallery, a 'chorus' of over 50 recent works are re-presented together as though entering a surrealist painting. Amongst the array of sculptural animals (some have featured in previous performances), tarot card dioramas, anthropomorphised and warrior-like bells, Powell-Williams has made a new ceramic model of Southwark Park Galleries' iconic pre-Brutalist Dilston Gallery. Titled *Axis Mundi*, the model is accompanied by dried flowers from Powell-Williams' mother's garden and sits within a cloche on top of a mottled ceramic chariot. This is a hint to another muse Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450-1516) and his most famous painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1500), where the outside panels of the triptych reveal that the universe is contained by a glass-like sphere. Playing here again with portals and spatial perception, it suggests that by crossing the park you step inside that which is held in the cloche.

Another world within a world, Powell-Williams' *Orbicular Overlay* (2020) – a hypnotic grotto packed with objects alluding to motherhood, fertility, the female sublime and Hellenic hair-cutting rituals – is found at the foot of Lake Gallery. From ancient nymphaeum sanctuaries to 17th century follies to present day abandoned buildings, Powell-Williams draws parallels between subjects across millenia. 'I noticed the potential of the garden to anchor humankind to the natural world of our ancestors through memory, unearthing not just in our lived experience, but the scientific notion that we carry within our nervous system memories of the ancient world right back to the cells we all originate from.'

Tilt Shift: Shadows of the Seasoned Sun is commissioned by Southwark Park Galleries and is generously supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment, Ada's Circle (Aude Fourcade, Marcelle Joseph and Bosse & Baum) and Arts Council England.

Orbicular Overlay (2020) was originally commissioned by The Rectory Projects, London.

NOTES TO EDITOR

LISTING INFORMATION

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Southwark Park Galleries, 1 Park Approach, Southwark Park, London SE16 2UA

Free entry

Website: www.southwarkparkgalleries.org

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ABOUT CANDIDA POWELL-WILLIAMS

Candida Powell-Williams (b. 1984, London) has an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art, London (2011) and a BA in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art London (2009).

Recent exhibitions include *Orbit within the echoes*, a performance as part of Whitechapel Gallery's *Nocturnal Creatures* (2021), *The Gates of Apophenia*, Bosse & Baum, London (2019); *Command Lines*, Void Gallery, Northern Ireland (2019); *Lessness, still quorum*, performance, Serpentine Galleries, London (2018); *Boredom and its Acid Touch*, Frieze

Live, London (2017); *Tongue Town*, Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo (2017); *Cache*, Art Night Associate Programme, London (2017); *Vernacular History of the Golden Rhubarb*, Bosse & Baum, London (2017); PIC performance festival, Melbourne, Australia (2016); and *Coade's Elixir-an occupation*, Hayward Gallery, London (2014). In 2022, she will be exhibiting in Whitechapel Gallery's *The London Open*.

Powell-Williams' has been awarded: Mother Art Prize (2018); Artist in Residence at The Warburg Institute (2018-19); Sainsbury Scholarship at the British School at Rome (2012-13); Eric and Jean Cass Sculpture Award (2010-11); and Paris Residency at Cite Internationale des Arts (2010).

Candida Powell-Williams is represented by Bosse & Baum, London.

ABOUT SOUTHWARK PARK GALLERIES

Southwark Park Galleries is a contemporary arts organisation delivering exhibitions, events and engagement programmes across two galleries in the heart of Southwark Park, Bermondsey.

We are committed to providing local people of all ages and economic, social, cultural and historical backgrounds with meaningful and free creative experiences; inspiring everyone to celebrate their own cultures through creative participation.

We present exhibitions of national significance and local relevance. We foster creative career development by providing excellent opportunities for artists and curators at a crucial point in their career to significantly transcend their practice and make their most ambitious work to date.

Southwark Park Galleries is the operating name of Bermondsey Artists' Group, a charitable company. The Charity is a member of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations (NPO).

ABOUT ADA'S CIRCLE

Ada's Circle is a dedicated group of passionate patrons whose vital support champions and enables major commissions and exhibitions by female-identifying artists across both our galleries each year.

The circle is named in honour of local heroine Ada Salter, a passionate social reformer and environmentalist. As a founder of The Women's Labour League and the first female mayor in London (Mayor of Bermondsey, appointed in 1922), Ada was a leader in social change and a trail-blazer who fought against the odds for women's suffrage.

To join Ada's Circle, please contact our Director Judith Carlton via admin@southwarkparkgalleries.org or call us on 0207 237 1230.