

Press Release

19 June 2017

Artists announced for Syllabus III – an alternative peer-led learning programme

Ten artists have been selected for Syllabus III, a national, alternative peer led learning programme, jointly delivered by Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge; Eastside Projects, Birmingham; New Contemporaries, national; S1 Artspace, Sheffield; Spike Island, Bristol; Studio Voltaire, London and new partner Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), London.

The selected artists for Syllabus III are: **Frederica Agbah, Chris Alton, Conor Baird, Ilker Cinarel, Phoebe Davies, Freya Dooley, Rose Gibbs, Jill McKnight, Ben Sanderson and Karis Upton.**

Now in its third year, Syllabus III provides a programme for artists over a nine-month period and is supported using public funding from Arts Council England, with additional support from The Fenton Arts Trust. It is developed collaboratively with the participating artists, partner institutions and lead artists, who this year are **Jesse Darling** and **Harold Offeh.**

The Syllabus III artists are from many areas of practice including photography, painting, sculpture, installation, writing, performance, poetry, and interdisciplinary and collaborative work that defies a genre. They live and work across the UK, including Cardiff, Folkestone, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Norwich and St. Ives.

Beginning at Wysing in September 2017, Syllabus III artists will come together to share their work and co-develop the year's syllabus alongside the partners and lead artists. Meeting throughout the year, the cohort will invite guest artists, curators, writers and other practitioners to deliver intensive sessions hosted by each of the partners. Previous years of The Syllabus have invited guest artists such as Barby Asante, Ruth Beale, Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Céline Condorelli, Anthea Hamilton, Andy Holden, Mark Leckey, Katrina Palmer, Richard Wentworth and Rehana Zaman.

The full list of alumni and sessions from previous years of The Syllabus are available on Wysing Arts Centre's website [here](#). Great collaborations and opportunities have come out of the first two iterations of The Syllabus, including **The Brilliant State**, a new pop band project between Rory Pilgrim and Susie Green which has toured internationally, a week-long residency and group exhibition *The Opposite of Now* held at Yinka Shonibare's Guest Projects space in London in June 2017 and solo exhibitions at Grand Union and Eastside Projects (both in Birmingham).

Karis Upton, selected for this year's programme, commented: *"All the organisations involved have a vision for supporting and developing UK artists. As a self-taught painter, Syllabus III will provide a solitary artist like me with collaborative experiences and networks that have been absent in my artistic journey*

so far – all things necessary for any artist to move into new directions that help to sustain artistic vision and energies into the future. I can't wait to begin and see where we go.”

Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva said: *“What’s remarkable about Syllabus is its ability to draw artists together who are keen to shape their learning and progression through collective action – these artists are helping to define the meaning of peer-led development. For Iniva, it’s important to support artists in those ambitions, so I’m really excited to be a partner in this national programme. Syllabus’ desire to transform the lives of artists is one that meshes with Iniva’s mission to support artists at different stages in their careers.”*

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Notes to editors

Participating Artist Biographies

Frederica Agbah is a Yorkshire-born photographer and visual artist based in London. Working predominantly with available and ambient light, her work focuses on candid opportunistic portraiture often capturing subjects approached on the street or selected at group and mass participation events. Her work explores powerlessness, personal identity, and peer relationships, and is driven by her experience of an uprooted life, moving abruptly during early adolescence from a nuclear familial upbringing in the north of England to the communal living environment of a west African city and back again. Her practice primarily employs the medium of photography to capture interrelated characters within communities or cliques, exploring the opportunity to construct layered visual narratives, illuminating shared cultural histories. Agbah was a joint prize winner in the recent Harts Lane Gallery exhibition *Greetings from New Cross Gate*.

Chris Alton is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice often brings together distant, yet connected cultural phenomena. Whether deploying disco music against fascism or playing table tennis in competition with aggressive architecture, he utilises seemingly incongruous juxtapositions to address the multi-layered nature of prevailing social and political conditions. Working across a range of media, such as; pseudo-documentary film, live events and actions, online interventions and open source games, Alton's practice shifts and adapts, reacting to context-specific stimuli. His projects are humorous and playful, frequently seeking to undermine, expose and excoriate the power structures that shape our world. Recent commissions and exhibitions include; *Adam Speaks*, The National Trust, Croome, Worcestershire, 2017; *Keeley Round*, Turf Projects, Croydon, 2016; *Under the Shade I Flourish*, xero, kline & coma, London, 2016; and *Outdancing Formations*, Edith-Russ-Haus, Oldenburg, 2015 (dual, with Marta Popivoda).

Conor Baird is a Scottish artist, performance maker and facilitator based in Glasgow. Having studied Sculpture at Gray’s School of Art and AKI ArTEZ, they have exhibited in galleries and prominent performance festivals such as GENERATORprojects, Glasgow Project Room, //BUZZCUT, Tempting

Failure, RSA and The Pipe Factory. Baird was previously a Committee Member at Market Gallery and also participated in residencies at Hospitalfield, AADK Spain and Scottish Sculpture Workshop. Their personal practice focuses on notions of the self, the body, intimacy, sex and gender. They are particularly interested in embedding duration and authentic processes within a daily life to question risk, freedom, failure and consequential aesthetics within 'work'. Upcoming exhibitions include working with 'Thank You Very Much' at David Dale Gallery.

Ilker Cinarel is a Turkish-British artist based in St. Ives, Cornwall. Cinarel works individually and collaboratively across painting, sculpture, video, installation, spatial intervention, sound, text, performance and curatorial practice. Cinarel's work explores identity and what it means to be both 'rural' and queer, looking at inner feelings through a psychoanalytical and philosophical approach. Their work questions the politics that surround the family through the personal prism of their own childhood, where hyper-macho pop culture spilled over into reality. Exhibitions include Inland Art Festival, Redruth UK, 2016; Newlyn Art Festival, Newlyn Art Gallery, 2015; Backlane West, Redruth, 2015; and Exchange Gallery, Penzance, 2015.

Phoebe Davies is a Welsh artist and producer. Her practice is defined by its location and context, investigating and exploring how people perceive their social framework. Her outcomes are often project dependent, including: constructed social spaces, live performances, video, audio and print works. Often she works with, and in response to, individuals and communities, generating work through collaboration and collective action. Her work is often ephemeral and chanced upon, existing in pedestrian and community spaces as well as in galleries and institutions, including: Tate Britain and Tate Modern London; Artsadmin, London; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Raven Row, London; Arnolfini, Bristol; Fierce Festival, Birmingham; Art Licks Weekend, London; Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Austria); Assembly, Portland, USA; and SA-UK SEASONS 2015, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Freya Dooley lives and works in Cardiff. She works with writing, voice, moving image and publication. Her recent solo exhibition *Rhythms and Disturbances*, g39, Cardiff was part of Cardiff Contemporary Festival 2016 and her publication of the same name was launched this year. She also has a collaborative practice with artist Cinzia Mutigli, making lo-fi performances and publications combining pop songs and semi-fictions. Other exhibitions and projects include: *In Memory of JB*, The Free Shop, Rotterdam, 2017; Lle, Helsinki, Finland, 2016; *Enter Text*, Arteles Residency Centre, Finland, 2015; *Unit(e) Residency*, g39, Cardiff, 2015; and GO West Residency at the New Art Gallery Walsall, 2013. In collaboration with Cinzia Mutigli: *What Everybody Wants*, commissioned by Stabbing Les for WORK at Broadacre House, Newcastle, 2016 and *On Record*, an exhibition and events programme for analogue and experimental sound and performance works, commissioned for the Cardiff Contemporary Festival, 2014. Dooley is a studio member of Spit and Sawdust, Cardiff.

Rose Gibbs is an artist and writer who regularly initiates and contributes to talks, symposiums and discussions. Her work seeks to think through feminist concerns via these different mediums and platforms. She is co-founder of a number of collaborative projects and has an ongoing research project looking into feminist collectives. She co-curated the exhibition *Feminist Practices in Dialogue* at the ICA, and co-edited a publication of the same name. In July 2015 she organized *Women Working Collectively what is your Value?* at the ICA, as part of her research and art collective The Temporary Separatists. She

writes a blog for the Huffington Post, has worked with The East London Fawcett Group and in 2013 was director of One Billion Rising – a campaign to end violence towards women and girls. In 2014 she organized *Taking Up Space – Women Only shows*, a discussion which invited Iwona Blazwick and Ann Gallagher, amongst others, to reflect on the benefits of women only exhibitions. She is currently working with Hackney's SERA group (Labour's social and environmental justice group), and the KEEP IT COMPLEX collective which seeks to encourage people to get involved in everyday politics. Recent talks have included *Who's Holding the Baby? Women's art Collectives past and present* at Tate Britain.

Jill McKnight lives and works in Leeds. McKnight's sculptural and text-based works could be viewed as artefacts made to perform as evidence of her existence in an imagined future. Objects reference formal and figurative elements of sculpture, but are disembodied from a whole. Recent text work investigates the relationship between art objects and subjective experience from her upbringing in Sunderland, with particular focus on female identities. McKnight graduated from Goldsmiths in 2013 and became a co-director of The Institute of Jamais Vu in the same year. She co-founded Serf in 2016 and currently holds a studio there. Solo and duo exhibitions include: *Punctum*, Serf, Leeds, 2017; *Modular Intercourse*, Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun, Leeds, 2016; and *One Million Years B.C.*, CBS Gallery, Liverpool, 2015. Recent group exhibitions include: *Junk In The Trunk*, Bones & Pearl / Copeland Park & Bussey Building / Turf Projects / The Bomb Factory Art Foundation; Hybrid Art Fair, Madrid; *Woodham Fever: Clubland*, DIY Space For London, all 2017; and The Manchester Contemporary, Manchester, 2016.

Ben Sanderson is a painter whose work explores the relationship between history and non-linear time. He is interested in exploring how an over-saturation of information can give rise to fleeting synaptic connections and feelings of distraction and repetition. Sanderson is one of 16 artists based at CAST in Helston, Cornwall. In January 2017 he was artist-in-residence at Crossroads, a Dementia Care Home in Scorrier. Recent exhibitions include *What Is The place?*, Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall, 2017; *Smile Orange*, Cubitt Gallery, London, 2015; and *Testing Tropes*, Kestle Barton, Cornwall, 2015.

Karis Upton is a self-taught painter and multi-disciplinary artist. Her work is located in the surreal and symbolic. She attempts to exercise the ephemeral nature of the figure and a fragmented mode of representation to explore philosophical concepts of identity, mortality and interpersonal relationships. Research interests focus on modern re-readings of historical and philosophical texts, representations of diasporic and 'marginal' subjectivities and therapeutic arts practice. Selected exhibitions include *Ultimately/refuge/THEN*, The Barber Shop, Norwich, 2016; *Refuge: work in progress*, St Etheldreda Studios, Norwich, 2016; and *SIX*, (with Alice Lee), Studio Baustelle, Berlin, 2015.

Lead Artists Biographies

Jesse Darling works in sculpture, installation, text, sound, drawing and digital. Their work and research is broadly centered on narratives of power, technology and subjectivity and how these are produced and maintained through history. Recent projects include solo presentation *Armes Blanches: History is Other People* at Sultana Galerie in Paris and the curated exhibition *Mene Mene Tekel Parsin* at Wysing Art Centre. JD has published their texts in print and online and teaches at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam.

Harold Offeh was born in Accra, Ghana and grew up in London. He lives in Cambridge and works in Leeds and London, UK. Offeh works in a range of media including performance, video, photography, learning and social arts practice. He often employs humour as a means to confront the viewer with historical narratives and contemporary culture and is interested in the space created by the inhabiting or embodying of history. He has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. In 2017 he will be exhibiting as part of Untitled: art on the conditions of our time at New Art Exchange in Nottingham, UK and Tous, des sangsmêlés at MAC VAL, Museum of Contemporary Art in Val de Marne, France.



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