

**Press Release**

## ***Walled Gardens in an Insane Eden***

**curated by Marcelle Joseph**

**Sara Zanin Gallery, Rome  
9<sup>th</sup> February – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

*“Is it only the external landscape which is altering? How often recently most of us have had the feeling of déjà vu, of having seen all this before, in fact of remembering these swamps and lagoons all too well. However selective the conscious mind may be, most biological memories are unpleasant ones, echoes of danger and terror. Nothing endures for so long as fear.”*

- J.G. Ballard from *The Drowned World* (1962)

In line with the prevailing mood across Europe after an overthrow of political certainties in 2016, this exhibition curated by Marcelle Joseph features the artwork of seven London-based artists brought to Rome, many for the first time.

Hijacking a phrase from *The Drowned World*, J.G. Ballard’s first science fiction novel and one of his London-based dystopic tales, *Walled Gardens in an Insane Eden* portrays the world we live in today - on the precipice but hopeful for a less fragile future. Some of the artworks assembled for this exhibition may be construed to express skepticism, from Marie Jacotey’s text-based drawings screaming “No!” and “Can’t you see you have done enough damage here?” to Gabriella Boyd’s painting of a man holding a glass half empty, but art is often spoken about as a catalyst for social change. Viewers may look for the silver lining in Rhys Coren’s cartoon-like cloud-shaped painted marquetry work or be captivated by the flames in Zadie Xa’s hanging textile work that represent a symbol of magic and cleansing in her personal supernatural narratives inspired by Korean shaman lore. Continuing this theme of art as therapy, Florence Peake will actively channel both physically and orally the personal losses and political concerns of various audience members at her performance of *Voicings* on 10<sup>th</sup> March, acting as a conduit between imagined and material place as she embodies the collective spirit of the audience. In the last gallery of the exhibition, viewers will enter a sculptural labyrinth similar to the London milieu of Ballard’s *The Drowned World*. But instead of an uninhabited, unbearably hot swamp ruled by primeval reptilian life and aggressive tropical vegetation, one enters an urban jungle of another sort – a more hospitable space populated with body parts and figures, both small and large, of diverse materials and colours, existing together in harmony courtesy of artists Rebecca Ackroyd, Kira Freije and Peake. May your glass be half full in 2017.

### **Bios of the Artists**

**Rebecca Ackroyd** (b. 1987, Cheltenham, UK) lives and works in London. She graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2015 after completing her BA in Fine Art at Byam Shaw School of Art in 2010. Ackroyd's work excavates the remains of an object and reconstructs it into something new, creating sculptures and drawings that reflect a history and yet also exist between places, becoming simultaneously familiar and unknown. Scale shifts to create figurative works that meander through

space like air conditioning ducts - breathing structures that inhabit and divide a room. While smaller works invite a more intimate encounter, a reflection perhaps on the overwhelming shift between global and individual desire, these works explore an individual framework within which to exist or build meaning. Ackroyd has shown her work in London at solo exhibitions at Hunter/Whitfield (2015), Kinman Gallery (2014) and Marsden Woo Gallery (2013). Recent group exhibitions in 2015-6 include: *Modest Villa Immense Versailles* (co-curator), Kinman Gallery, London; *At Home Salon: Double Acts*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, Ascot; *Bloody Life*, Herald St, London; *All Over*, Studio Leigh, London; *Is it heavy or is it light*, Assembly Point, London; *With institutions like these*, Averard Hotel, London; *Opals*, Galerie Opdahl, Stavanger, Norway; *Royal Academy Schools Degree Show*, London; *Works in Residence*, David Roberts Art Foundation, London; and *The London Open*, Whitechapel Gallery, London. In 2013, her work was included in *Bloomberg New Contemporaries* (ICA, London and Spike Island, Bristol).

**Gabriella Boyd** (b. 1988, Glasgow, UK) lives and works in London. Boyd studied at Glasgow School of Art 2007-11 (Chairman's Medal 2011) and is at the Royal Academy Schools London 2014-2017. She was one of the five winners of the John Moores Painting Prize in 2016 where her work was exhibited at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2016). Her works, which consist mainly of oil paintings on canvas, revolve around the merging of private and public spaces. Boyd builds up paintings of imagined locations in stages, often allowing purely formal considerations of colour and line to determine their direction. It is through this process that figures emerge. Psychological states become theatrically realised as characters' inner and outer realities blur and shift. Working from photographs, drawings and recalled social observations, Boyd tries to depict fleeting interactions or moments of failed intimacy. Her work has featured in the following solo and two-person shows: *Gabriella Boyd & Marco Giordano*, Glasgow International, House for an Art Lover, Glasgow (2016); *Illustrated Freud's Interpreting Dreams*, Folio Society, London (2015); and *Strong Necks*, High House Gallery, Oxford (2013). Selected group exhibitions include: *Everyone is Rich Now Apparently*, Supplement & Arcadia Missa at CANAL St, New York (2017); *Premiums: Interim Projects*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2016); *Masks*, Hunter/Whitfield, London (2016); *Whispers*, Ronchini Gallery, London (2015); *Go Figure*, Cob Gallery, London (2014); *Catlin Art Prize 2012*, Londonewcastle Project Space, London (2012); *Beijing International Art Biennale*, Beijing (2012); *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Cob Gallery, London (2012); and *Saatchi New Sensations* (special commendation), Victoria House, London (2011). In early 2016, Boyd studied under Peter Doig at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf during a three-month exchange programme.

**Rhys Coren** (b. 1983, Plymouth, UK) is a London-based artist who completed a Postgraduate Diploma at the Royal Academy Schools, London in 2016. Coren works across animation, writing, performance and painted marquetry, each media displaying an obvious pleasure in rhythm, form, colour, texture, space and negative space. The wall works contain cartoon-like clouds broken by grids of colour and texture, raking perspectives, drop shadows and the interplay of frenetic lines. Coren describes the direct link between his experience of music and the visual language of his practice, crediting the structure and strategies found in electronic dance music, jazz and disco as the genesis of the works. Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include those at Seventeen, London (March 2017), galeriepcp, Paris (December

2016), Jerwood Project Space, London (2014), Horatio Jr., London (2014), and SPACE, London (2013). He recently curated the group exhibition *Cuts, Shapes, Breaks and Scrapes* at Seventeen, London alongside Gabriel Hartley and he has co-founded curatorial projects including [Opening Times](#) and [bubblebyte.org](#). Selected recent group exhibitions include: *Beyond the Cartoon*, Cassina Projects with ARTUNER, New York (2016); *Royal Academy Schools Degree Show*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2016); Studio Leigh, London (2015); *Drawing Biennial 2015*, Drawing Room, London (2015); *E-Vapor-8*, Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK (2014); *Symbolic Logic*, Identity Gallery, Hong Kong (2014); *Stop / Action*, Test Space, Spike Island, Bristol, UK (2013); *Young London*, V22, London (2013); and *Magic 8 Ball*, FOLD, London (2013); *The Response*, The Sunday Painter, London (2012); *Happy Accident*, Wandering Around Wandering, New York (2012); *VIDEO PROGETTO*, Grand Union, Birmingham and 26CC, Rome, Italy (2010). Coren is represented by Seventeen in London.

**Kira Freije** (b. 1985, London) is a London-based artist who graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma from the Royal Academy Schools, London in 2016 after completing her BA in Fine Art from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art at University of Oxford in 2011. Using metal, fabric, silkscreened images and found materials, Freije makes materially rich but austere sculptures that explore surreal or exaggerated narrative situations driven by empathy. In the artist's own words, "We share the potential for murderous intent, we can become hysterical... or paranoid, jealous, sacrificial, promiscuous, elated, erratic, monastic..." The sculptures are figurative symbols even when they do not appear as literal figures. They represent the human capacity to love and to hate, asking whether it is possible to be a good or a bad person. By making physical that which is inherently closeted, these works reveal themselves to be guilt-ridden, anxiety-driven, sometimes-happy contradictions. In other words, just the same as me and you and them. Recent exhibitions include: *God's Finger*, Kinman Gallery, London (2016); *Our Tongues Are The Replaceable Filaments* (solo), Occidental Temporary, Paris (2016); *The rose is without a "why". It blooms because it blooms*, Carl Freedman Gallery, London (2016); *Royal Academy Schools Degree Show*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2016); *All About My Mother*, The Keepers Studio, Royal Academy, London; *Chimp Cracks Nut (To What Extent Is It Asking a Question)*, Kennington Residency, London (2015); *Yesterday Night*, Rowhill Mansions, London; *Testing Tropes*, Kestle Barton, Cornwall; *Premiums Interim Projects*, Royal Academy, London (2015); *Corso Aperto*, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy; *Greenhorn*, Tintype, London (2012); *Red Mansion Art Prize*, Burlington Gardens, London. Freije has been awarded the following residencies and awards: Land Securities Studio Award; Chelsea Arts Club Trust Special Project Award; Advanced Course in Visual Arts (visiting professor Matt Mullican), Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy; Red Mansion Residency, Beijing, China; and Pirye Prize, Oxford University. Her work can be found in the Permanent Collection of the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

**Marie Jacotey** (b. 1988, Paris, France) is a London-based artist who graduated with an MA in Printmaking from the Royal College of Art, London in 2013 after completing a DNSAD in 2011 from École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. Jacotey's work draws inspiration from the gathering of people together, the expression of emotions in their many and varied interactions and the contexts and details in which these engagements take place - architecture, landscape, or place;

picking out wallpaper, furniture, clothes, and zooming in further to detail pattern, patina, texture... Her works - though insistently manual in their making (paintings on plaster and dust sheets, pencil drawings, sewing and fabric) – make use of perspectives that reference the world of cinema and slo-mo, the photographer's point and shoot, identifying an artist who has come of age in the smartphone world with its prevalent verbs – zoom, scroll, tap, drag, swipe etc. Recent solo exhibitions include those at McQueen Project Space, London (2016), Francis Carrette Galerie, Brussels (2016), Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2015 and 2014), Robert Blumenthal Gallery, Hamptons, NY (2015), Heike Moras Art, London (2015), and Galerie du CROUS, Paris (2013). In 2014, her work was included in *Bloomberg New Contemporaries* (ICA, London, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool and Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall). Recent group exhibitions include: *Rhythm and depiction*, Center for Recent Drawing, London (2016); *PLAYROOM*, Union Club Studios, London (2016); *The Names*, Transition Gallery, London (2016); *What's the meaning of a goldfish*, Tatjana Pieters Gallery, Ghent, Belgium (2015); *She came to stay*, Rook and Raven Gallery, London (2015); *East London Painting Prize*, Rum Factory, London (2015); and *Parisianer*, Hôtel de Ville and Cité des Arts, Paris (2013-4). In 2015, Jacotey was commissioned by Granby Workshop to make a set of limited edition digital prints for its shop. Granby Workshop is Assemble's Turner Prize-winning community-rebuilding project in Liverpool. Her work can be found in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Jacotey is represented by Hannah Barry Gallery, London.

**Florence Peake** is a London-based artist who has been making work since 1995. With an extensive training in dance and a background in painting, Peake's performance practice uses drawing, painting and sculpture materials combined with found and fabricated objects placed in relationship to the moving body. Site and audience, live and recorded text, wit and humour are key to her work. Recent performance work has taken themes from popular spiritual practices and appropriating them to interact intimately with audiences, exploring a range of states of being to test what is assumed of reality. Her painting work with mixed media attempts to capture the live experience of performing, the performers' inner states and memory of a given performance, re-performing the live works through large scale canvases and fresco works. Ceramic explorations also include performance as the subject, making clay forms through the live performance to extract new autonomous sculptural works. Recent work includes; *The Keeners*, SPACE, London (2016), *Voicings*, Serpentine Gallery Offsite Project, London (2016), *Lay me down*, NoTT Dance Festival, Nottingham, UK (2015) and Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK (2015), *Swell the Thickening Surface of*, Hayward Gallery, London (2014), *MAKE*, BALTIC, Gateshead, UK (2013) and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Yorkshire, UK (2012); *REMAKE*, Baltic 39, Gateshead, UK (2012) and Lanchester Gallery, Coventry, UK (2012); *Chorus; Swell the Thickening Surface of*, Tintype, London (2013); *Paper Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, London (2010). As a performer, Peake works with filmmakers, artists and choreographers, Joe Moran, Gaby Agis, Serena Korda, Nicola Conibere, and Gary Stevens and touring with Station House Opera's Roadmetal and Sweetbread. Peake lectures at leading dance conservatories and at Camberwell School of Art in London, and is a recent recipient of the Jerwood Choreographic Research Award.

**Zadie Xa** is a London-based Canadian artist whose work explores identity, desire and personal fantasy. Zadie completed an MA in Painting from the Royal College of

Art (2014) and a BFA from Emily Carr University (2007), Vancouver, Canada. Selected exhibitions, projects and performances include: *Basic Instructions B4 Leaving*, Café OTO, London (2016); *Deep Space Mathematics*, #WanderingWilding: Movement as Movement (curated by Legacy Russell for Daata Editions) (2016); *Kind of Flossy* (curated by C.R.E.A.M.), Assembly Point Gallery, London (2016); *3 Thousand and 30 High Priestess of Pluto* (with Eunjung Kim and Taylor Le Melle), Artsy X Whitechapel First Futures, Whitechapel Gallery London (2016); *Coral North* (curated by easy!upstream), Schwabinger Tor, Munich; *Linguistic Legacies and Lunar Exploration*, Saturday's Live, Serpentine Gallery, London (2016); *Looking at people, looking at art* (curated by Mark Essen), Division of Labour, London (2016); *The rose is without a "why". It blooms because it blooms* (curated by Sean Steadman), Carl Freedman Gallery, London (2016); *At Home Salon: Double Acts*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, Ascot; *Ride the Chaktu*, Serpentine Radio, Serpentine Gallery, London (2016); *With Institutions Like These* (curated by Victor Wang and Alex Meurice), The Averard Hotel, London (2016); *Meduse-Caput*, Westminster Waste, London (2016); *Living Room in the Tropics*, NTU Centre of Contemporary Art, Singapore (2015); *Silent Barn*, Brooklyn, New York (2015); *Video Nacht Klub*, Brussels Art Department, Brussels (2015); *Space Station 51*, Area 51, London (2015); *Faux Sho*, Assembly House, Leeds (2015); *Studio Voltaire Open: 2015* (selected by Cory Arcangel and Hanne Mugaas), Studio Voltaire, London (2015); and *Figuratively Speaking*, Marcelle Joseph Projects at heike moras art, London, (2015).