

## Contested Bodies

Wed 25 October 2023 – Sat 6 April 2024

Curated by Marcelle Joseph, independent curator and collector, and Dr Laura Claveria, Exhibitions Curator at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery



**Private View, Tue 24 October, 6pm-8pm**

**Curator tours available Tue 24 October and by appointment**

Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, Parkinson Building, University of Leeds  
Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9JT

The University of Leeds' Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery announces its major autumn exhibition, *Contested Bodies*, a group show that interrogates and celebrates the performativity of gender as a social construct. The exhibition understands gender as a cultural fiction with no fixed, natural or innate characteristics, but as an act that is performed and reproduced at individual, societal and institutional levels.

Opening on **Wednesday 25 October**, the show has been curated by Marcelle Joseph, independent curator and collector, and Dr Laura Claveria, Exhibitions Curator at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery.

*Contested Bodies* brings together the work of over 40 artists from across the gender spectrum who use the human body as a medium or as a subject matter. In their respective practices, some explore gender stereotypes, self-representation or shapeshifting through fashion, while other artists address notions of race, class, objectification, pleasure or desire. Many artworks in the show also allude to aspects of vulnerability, empowerment, kinship, community building or humanity's relationship with the environment.

Featuring works made over the last decade in painting, sculpture, photography, drawing, printmaking and video, this exhibition also reflects the philosophy of the Marcelle Joseph and GIRLPOWER Collections from which all the artworks on display in the gallery derive. Participating

artists include, among others, **Jonathan Baldock, Jesse Darling, Martine Gutierrez, Sin Wai Kin, Jala Wahid, Alberta Whittle, Gray Wielebinski** and **Zadie Xa**.

Appropriating the title of a course from the MA in Gender Studies at the University of Leeds, *Contested Bodies* fractures and intersects discourses, from feminist and queer theories to postcolonial studies. This exhibition attempts to eliminate gender, sexual and racial hierarchies altogether in order to recognise every person's humanity.

As a clarion call for cultural legitimacy and political viability for these previously marginalised voices, this exhibition attempts to transgress, subvert and disrupt imposed societal norms and exclusionary gender binaries in favour of more fluid, hybrid and complex gender subjectivities.

The full list of artists include: Larry Achiampong (b. 1984, United Kingdom), Rebecca Ackroyd (b. 1987, United Kingdom), Nel Aerts (b. 1987, Belgium), Saelia Aparicio (b. 1982, Spain), Jonathan Baldock (b. 1980, United Kingdom), Boris Camaca (b. 1987, France), Eileen Cooper (b. 1953, United Kingdom), Leo Costelloe (b. 1993, Australia), Coco Crampton (b. 1983, United Kingdom), Jesse Darling (b. 1981, United Kingdom), Maryam Eisler (b. 1968, Iran), Kira Freije (b. 1985, United Kingdom), Penny Goring (b. 1962, United Kingdom), Martine Gutierrez (b. 1989, USA), Neil Haas (b. 1971, United Kingdom), Lisa-Marie Harris (b. 1983, Trinidad & Tobago), Sam Keelan (b. 1992, United Kingdom), Paul Kindersley (b. 1985, United Kingdom), Jakob Lena Knebl (b. 1970, Austria), Sandra Lane (b. United Kingdom), Jesse Makinson (b. 1985, United Kingdom), Richard Malone (b. 1991, Ireland), Alexi Marshall (b. 1995, United Kingdom), Lindsey Mendick (b. 1987, United Kingdom), Ad Minoliti (b. 1980, Argentina), Paul Mpagi Sepuya (b. 1982, USA), Rose Nestler (b. 1983, USA), Sola Olulode (b. 1996, United Kingdom), Rithika Pandey (b. 1998, India), Anna Perach (b. 1985, Ukraine), Amber Pinkerton (b. 1997, Jamaica), Paloma Proudfoot (b. 1992, United Kingdom), Zayn Qahtani (b. 1997, Bahrain), Agnes Questionmark (b. 1995, Italy), Alicia Reyes McNamara (b. 1984, USA), Devlin Shea (b. 1976, USA), Sin Wai Kin (b. 1991, Canada), Tenant of Culture (b. 1990, Netherlands), Jala Wahid (b. 1988, United Kingdom), Alberta Whittle (b. 1980, Barbados), Gray Wielebinski (b. 1991, USA), Caroline Wong (b. 1986, United Kingdom) and Zadie Xa (b. 1980, Canada).

As part of *Contested Bodies*, the University of Leeds has also commissioned Leeds-based artist and alumnus Tiegan Handley to make a new large-scale textile artwork for Parkinson Court.

A long history of LGBTQI+ and feminist advocacy in and around the University of Leeds, and in particular the radical and internationally recognised research and teaching in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, gives a fitting context for this important and timely group show.

Co-curator **Dr Laura Claveria** comments:

*"The University of Leeds prides itself in placing equity, diversity and inclusion at its core, and aims to create a supportive environment that is reflective of its community. As such, we are delighted to be able to share this thought-provoking and necessary exhibition with everyone in Leeds.*

*"We really hope that it helps to open up meaningful and nuanced conversations and bring people together to celebrate the fluid, hybrid and complex gender subjectivities of our society today."*

Co-curator **Marcelle Joseph** adds:

*“As the complexities of the world continue to expand around the policing of gender and certain bodies, this exhibition could not have come at a more opportune time. I am thrilled to lend the works in this exhibition to the ever-dynamic Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, especially given Leeds’ rich history of feminist and queer activism.*

*“The artists here instruct us toward new ways of understanding gender and recognising humanity outside of exclusionary heteronormative binaries.”*

*Contested Bodies* opens on Wednesday 25 October at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, and runs until Saturday 6 April 2024. Admission is free, with no booking necessary, and the Gallery is open from 10am – 5pm, Tuesday – Saturday. For more information visit [library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1900/galleries](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1900/galleries)

An accompanying events programme of tours, talks, artist performances, and a movement performance in partnership with Stage@Leeds will be announced shortly, and a full exhibition catalogue will be launched at the Private View.

**/ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors:**

### **The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery**

The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery is an accredited art museum at the heart of the University of Leeds campus, refurbished in 2008 with funds from the Audrey & Stanley Burton Charitable Trust. The Gallery offers both a programme of temporary exhibitions and a display of selected treasures from the University Art Collection, in its main gallery. An Education Room houses the University’s collection of drawings and works on paper, while also offering space for private study, research and teaching.

**The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery** is open 10am-5pm Tuesday-Saturday. Admission is free. Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT. Telephone 0113 343 2778 or email [gallery@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gallery@leeds.ac.uk).

### **University of Leeds**

The University of Leeds is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK, with more than 38,000 students from more than 150 different countries, and a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities.

We are a top 10 university for research and impact power in the UK, according to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, and in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings 2019. Additionally, the University was awarded a Gold rating by the Government’s Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017, recognising its ‘consistently outstanding’ teaching and learning provision. Twenty-six of our academics have been awarded National Teaching Fellowships – more than any other institution in England, Northern Ireland and Wales – reflecting the excellence of our teaching. [www.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.leeds.ac.uk)

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### **Marcelle Joseph**

Marcelle Joseph is an American-born independent curator and collector based in the United Kingdom. In 2011, Joseph founded Marcelle Joseph Projects, a nomadic curatorial platform that has produced over 45 exhibitions in the UK and the rest of Europe, featuring the work of over 300 international artists. Joseph holds an MA in Art History with Distinction from Birkbeck, University of London with a specialization in feminist art practice. Her curatorial work focuses on gender and the performative construction of identity with an emphasis on material-led artistic practices.

Joseph is the executive editor of *Korean Art: The Power of Now* (Thames & Hudson, 2013). Additionally, Joseph is the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of Mimosa House, London. She is also an Ambassador of the Royal Academy Schools, London, and a member of the Advisory Board of Procreate Project, London, and the Selection Panel of PLOP Residency, London. She served as a trustee of Matt's Gallery in London from 2018-2022 and served on the jury of the 2017-2019 Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti, and the Mother Art Prize 2018.

She also collects artworks by female-identifying artists under the collecting partnership, GIRLPOWER Collection, as well as more generally as part of the Marcelle Joseph Collection. In 2022, her collection was on public display for the first time in the UK in a travelling exhibition co-curated by Joseph launched at the Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, Rugby. Joseph also co-curated her first museum exhibition in the United States in 2022 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles titled 'The Condition of Being Addressable'.

<https://marcellejoseph.com/>

### **The GIRLPOWER Collection**

The GIRLPOWER Collection is a collecting partnership founded in 2012 between Marcelle Joseph and Zurich-based lawyer Kimberly Morris who is currently Chief HR & Services Officer at FIFA. This 50:50 partnership collects exclusively the work of female-identifying artists.