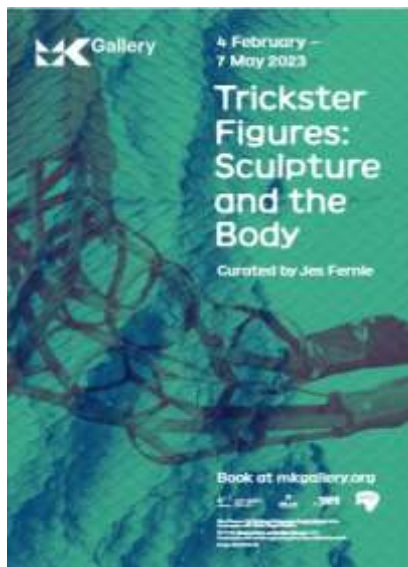


The next chapter in the story of British Sculpture at MK Gallery



Trickster Figures: Sculpture and the body

Curated by Jes Fernie

4 February – 7 May 2023

A new exhibition exploring the next chapter of British sculpture will take place at MK Gallery from
4 February – 7 May 2023

Trickster Figures: Sculpture and the Body, curated by Jes Fernie, brings together work by eleven contemporary artists: Saelia Aparicio, Alice Channer, Jesse Darling, Nicolas Deshayes, Kira Freije, Siobhán Hapaska, Nnena Kalu, Joe Namy, Harold Offeh, Ro Robertson and Vanessa da Silva.

The exhibition and accompanying catalogue explore the next chapter in the story of British sculpture. By providing a platform for a wide pool of practitioners, including non-binary and trans artists, and neurodiverse and Black artists, *Trickster Figures* reaches beyond the 'women only' format of recent group exhibitions of sculpture in a way that reflects many current social, political, environmental and artistic concerns.

Throughout the twentieth century, the UK produced generations of British sculptors – with figures from Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth to Bill Woodrow and Rachel Whiteread – who have been celebrated across the world. This survey of contemporary sculpture seeks to continue, as well as question, previous exhibitions that captured radical new developments in sculptural form, such as *New Aspects of British Sculpture* (Venice Biennale, 1952), *New Generation Sculpture* (Whitechapel Gallery, 1965), *New British Sculpture/Bristol* (Arnolfini, 1968) *The Sculpture Show* (Serpentine and Hayward Gallery, 1983), *Here and Now: Twenty-five years of British Sculpture from 1970 to the Present* (Serpentine 1995), *Early One Morning* (Whitechapel, 2002) and *Modern British Sculpture* (Royal Academy 2011). These exhibitions, often following catastrophic events or moments of collective trauma, looked to capture generational tendencies within the field of sculpture. *Trickster Figures* reflects on our own 'age of anxiety' and draws on current themes relating to vulnerability, contagion and the climate crisis.

Encompassing sculpture in its widest sense, the exhibition includes play, touch and sound. Works made from crab shells, tree roots, shopping bags, and hosiery sit alongside a dance floor and a water fountain. Visitors will be able to discover elements that change and grow, sculptures that are made to be worn and things that will never be finished.

The artists' work provides a direct challenge to the assumption that sculpture is something we walk around; is positioned on a gallery floor; and is valued and discussed according to its size, solidity and weight. In *Trickster Figures*, sculptures will be installed on the ceiling and the walls, as well as the floor. Some works will be small, organic, almost weightless, while others will look like drawings and videos. All works will reference the language of sculpture. The concept of the 'expanded field' will be explored, as well as the idea of 'sculpture as more' – something which embraces literature, performance, participation and installation.

In bringing together work by eleven contemporary sculptors, Fernie aims to explore and develop new thinking around current sculptural practices. Her project is rooted in the idea that new relations to the world are under construction, involving powerful slippages between bodily and binary systems, as well as humans, animals, identities and the environment.

As Fernie said: 'There is a leakage, a seepage in these works. Many of them allude to bodies or systems that relate to bodies. Jealous bodies, broken bodies, fossilised bodies, contaminated bodies. There is also love, tenderness, glamour and compulsion. A kind of letting go of old systems and categories, authorship and control. An embrace of fluidity, instability, something beyond language and gender.'

Anthony Spira, Director MK Gallery, said: 'The title, *Trickster Figures*, references mythical characters who disobey rules and defy conventions. Described by feminist theorist Donna Haraway as a 'wild card' who reconfigures possible worlds, the exhibiting artists could all be considered tricksters of a kind. This will be the first sculpture show in MK Gallery's new exhibition spaces and we are excited to see how the artists make full use of all the generous spaces.'

To book <https://mkgallery.org/event/trickster-figures/>

For further information contact MK Gallery

press@mkgallery.org

or

Sam Matthews/Sam Lennon

smatthews@mkgallery.org / slennon@mkgallery.org

01908 558 314

01908 558 302

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

MK Gallery is an educational charitable trust. The Gallery re-opened its doors in early 2019 after a major renovation and expansion, designed by 6a architects. The new, fully accessible, facility won three RIBA awards and has more than doubled the Gallery's footprint with enhanced GIS compliant exhibition galleries, a new auditorium and social and learning spaces.

The original Gallery opened in 1999 with a solo exhibition of Gilbert & George and had, prior to re-opening, presented over 60 wide-ranging exhibitions of contemporary art including solo exhibitions of Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Craig-Martin, Mark Leckey, Nasreen Mohamedi, Olivia Plender, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Melanie Smith and Andy Warhol.

Since re-opening, the Gallery has expanded its remit to show historic exhibitions alongside the contemporary. In the new Gallery's opening year, it welcomed more than 150,000 visitors to its critically acclaimed exhibitions: *The Lie of the Land*; *Paula Rego: Obedience and Defiance*; and *George Stubbs: 'all done from Nature'*.

In 2019/20 it presented a major overview of Memphis the radical 1980s design group; *Laura Knight: A Panoramic View*; and the Turner Prize nominated *Ingrid Pollard: Carbon Slowly Turning*. The Gallery runs dynamic outreach and events programmes and is a regular publisher and commissioner of new work, often in partnership with an extensive international network. MK Gallery is part of the Arts Council's National Portfolio and a member of the Plus Tate network.



[MK Gallery review – utterly, thrillingly Milton Keynesian | Architecture | The Guardian](#)

[George Stubbs's animal instinct | Apollo Magazine \(apollo-magazine.com\)](#)

[Unmistakable, unignorable and unmissable — Paula Rego at MK Gallery review | Times2 | The Times](#)

<https://inews.co.uk/culture/ingrid-pollard-carbon-slowly-turning-mk-gallery-review-a-chilling-revelatory-show-1517479>

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/may/03/ingrid-pollard-the-turner-nominee-uncovering-britains-secret-shame-review>

Jes Fernie is an independent curator and writer with twenty-five years' experience of working with galleries, architectural practices and public realm organisations on exhibitions, public programmes, commissioning schemes and residency projects across the UK and abroad. In 2021, she launched the Archive of Destruction (<https://archiveofdestruction.com/>), a story-telling platform that brings together narratives around destruction and public art. Fernie has a particular interest in contemporary sculpture and has worked as a curator, writer and lecturer with organisations including Focal Point Gallery, Tate, Flat Time House, Serpentine Gallery, RIBA, Turf Projects, Seventeen Gallery, Matt's Gallery, St Paul's Cathedral, Central St Martins, Goldsmiths, University of Essex, Lund Cathedral, and the RCA.

Saelia Aparicio <https://www.saelito.com/>

Alice Channer <https://alicechanner.com/>

Jesse Darling <https://bravenewwhat.org/> or <https://arcadiamissa.com/jesse-darling/> ?

Nicolas Deshayes <https://modernart.net/artists/nicolas-deshayes>

Kira Freije <https://theapproach.co.uk/artists/kira-freije/images/>

Siobhán Hapaska <https://www.kerlingallery.com/artists/siobhan-hapaska>

Nnena Kalu <https://actionspace.org/artists/nnena-kalu/>

Joe Namy <http://www.olivetones.com/>

Harold Offeh <https://www.haroldoffeh.com/>

Ro Robertson <https://maximillianwilliam.com/artist/ro-robertson/>

Vanessa da Silva <https://www.vanessadasilva.com/>

Trickster Figures: Sculpture and the Body is supported by the Henry Moore Foundation, essay by Francis Whorrall-Campbell supported by the Association of Art History.



