

UNDERCURRENTS

SAT 15
TALK 5PM
PV 6 - 10PM
PERFORMANCE 8PM

AT THE ARTESIAN WELL

15/16 DEC 2018 11AM - 6 PM

**OLIVIA BAX // HAZEL BRILL
LEA COLLET & MARIOS STAMATIS
BOB EIKELBOOM // MARGARITA GLUZBERG
RUBIE GREEN // LEWIS HENDERSON
GABRIELLA HIRST // MADELEINE PLEDGE
HANNAH ROWAN // LARA SMITHSON
JOHN STRUTTON**

Shrouded beneath a layer of dust, chiselled bacchanalian creatures and hand-painted mythical frescoes rest quietly at The Artesian Well. The outlandish former nightclub in Clapham, now protected by live-in residents, has been turned from a public into a temporary domestic space over the past five years. Originally a Victorian Public House, brothers Rudy and Tony Weller, and owner Carmel Azzopardi, collaborated to transform the space into a fantasy collage of various artistic periods. The nightclub was forced to close down in 2013, reflecting the ever-changing nature of buildings in London.

Over the 15/16th December, *Undercurrents* resurrects the club's hedonistic past life with works exploring water, mythology and rituals of pressure and release.

Co-curated by artists Neena Percy and Lizzy Drury

As artists themselves, the curators have considered the rituals of pressure and release involved in the making of an artwork. The build up to an exhibition and the Private View event act as both an anxiety-inducing experience and celebratory release. Restaging the opening as a substitute club event, sculpture, video and performance are brought together to create a temporal mise-en-scene. Responding to the themes and decor of The Artesian Well, the exhibition intends to agitate the expected relationship between art and its situational context.

1.

Myths also attach themselves to objects, costumes and images through the interweaving of factual accounts and poetry in Hazel Brill and Lara Smithson's video works. The digital and the hand-made combine to manipulate real objects and filmed footage. Using the image of a dead creature at the bottom of a well, Brill humorously reflects upon the potential dangers of fearmongering. Smithson uses herself in her videos to create a circulation of strange loops; a frustrating cyclical pathway in which one finds oneself in a self-referencing paradox. As with many artworks, the compelling nature of myth draws the audience in, whilst allowing the artist to be converted by their own invented systems of belief.

SW8 3JF

Reflecting upon the current residential use of the venue, several works collapse the boundary between domestic object and sculpture. Emphasis is placed on the blurred distinctions between prop and fine art, as well as public and private spaces.

Presented alongside the existing furnishings of The Artesian Well, Bob Eikelboom's painterly chair, Madeleine Pledge's coffee table *E1027 with Ruffle* and Lewis Henderson's fan assemblage *AirWair* all explore the ambiguous role of the potentially functional artwork. Pledge fuses clothing and design to give subjectivity to an inanimate object. Similarly, Eikelboom's chair invites the viewer to play their role in activating the artwork. Henderson's precariously assembled fan structure balances function and malfunction. He plays with the disparity between the real sensation of blowing air and the flat moving image of a tumbleweed. Presented collectively, these works draw out associations of the club's past; a moment of relief from condensed bodies on the dancefloor, a flood of fresher air.

Standing boldly at human height, Olivia Bax's sculpture *Roar* acts as another body performing within the space. Bax's abstracted forms embedded with familiar vessel and handle shapes suggest more nonsensical associations with the use of an object. Her cyclical process of using water to make her sculptures is integral to their construction. The saturated papier-mache pulp dries to leave fossilised traces of the artist's fingers.

Highlighting the felt history of the hundreds of people who have revelled in release at The Artesian Well from expected societal behaviour, Gabriella Hirst's practice explores the norms of daily conduct. Her investigations into intimate approaches to conversational slippage materialise in a performance that responds to the space itself. The performance both frustrates and dissolves into the nightclub's crafted, idiosyncratic decor.

3.

An artesian well is formed by naturally pressurised underground water. Watering holes have long existed as points of transient gathering, whether at ancient springs or modern day pubs. Rubie Green's performance and Lea Collet & Mario Stamatis' video draw together these socially ritualistic moments. Collet & Stamatis' documentation of a pool-based performance engages with the theatricality of collective experience, restaging an event through dance and posturing. While memory of the event is further evoked through the familiar smell of chlorinated water alongside the duo's video, Green utilises the hypnotic pull of crashing waves on a beach. Green's *Sea Song* incorporates the audience and choral singing in a performance that taps into the timeless mystery of the sea.

In its ever-changing physical form, water is constantly moving in a cycle. In and out of the body, through and around nature's ecosystem, these cyclical processes echo the start, end and looping journey of time-based video. Reflecting the desire to capture the metaphorical and physical substance of water, films by Hannah Rowan and John Strutton both demonstrate the human need to control water networks. Rowan's video *Water Atlas - Atacama* captures the rare moments of flowing water in the driest place on Earth, the Atacama Desert; whereas Strutton's *Rising Damp* explores the 'myth' of damp lingering in the subterranean underworlds of the city.

Mythic Loops

The temporary revival of The Artesian Well coincides with the resurgence of transcendence and mythology in art, at a critical moment when the borders between truth and myth appear to be crumbling away. Myth being a story, or belief followed by many despite questionable truth or provenance, has played a fundamental role in societies throughout time. Replaced by the transcendent universal philosophy of modernism and later rejected by postmodern scepticism, mythic systems were left behind. But, over recent decades artists and writers are returning to, or reconstructing mythology, perhaps reflecting our world of distorted images and fake news.

Margarita Gluzberg's *Reel* presents a slideshow of images that question the structure of research itself. Gluzberg presents distorted, multi-layered images in a manner reminiscent of a university lecture. Stemming from hearsay research into illegal Soviet vinyl discs that were cut into old medical x-ray sheets, Gluzberg projects her own fragmented photos onto graphite. The very material of graphite, it's carbon composite found in all living things as well as a common artist's material, exposes the artist's role in embellishing facts. As myths are generated through the collective recycling of information, the context of Gluzberg's slides alongside various other artworks in *Undercurrents* potentially alters the reading of them.

2.

To know more about the artists please visit their websites:

www.oliviabax.com
www.hazelbrill.com
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www.larasmithson.com
www.johnstrutton.com

www.neenapercy.com
www.lizzydrury.com

"The Artesian Well isn't in Clapham, or even on this planet. It is a night-long wonderland, where you can stay, immersed in its surreal escapism, oblivious to the outside world, until you are turfed back out into early morning reality."
[Alistair Martin 23 Feb 2011]

"a throbbing hive of drinking, dancing, flirting and frolicking"
[Laura Lock 29 Nov 2009]

We are extremely grateful to the residents of The Artesian Well: Charlie, Wes, Julie, and Marianne for letting us use their home as a temporary exhibition space. This project would not have been possible without their kindness and generosity.

Thank you to Brew By Numbers for providing delicious beers.

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