



Richard Dean Hughes, *Towards Words*, 2023 (detail)

Centre of the Periphery

October 5 - December 2, 2023

Concealed within an old tram depot in Greater Manchester, six artists have established an autonomous site for their respective practices. Far from the constraints of the institutionalised studio model, Nina Chua, Nicola Ellis, Parham Ghalamdar, Tommy Harrison, Richard Dean Hughes and Robin Megannity have created a space that functions for each of their unique creative paths. With its industrial architecture and mechanical history, the studio nurtures the drive and rigorous work ethic present for all of these artists as they each push the traditions of their mediums in a highly considered direction. *Centre of the Periphery* presents their work for the first time as a group, honouring their differences whilst at the same time articulating the subtle overlaps and influences that naturally occur within a shared environment.

One year on from Pipeline's inaugural exhibition with painter Tommy Harrison, Harrison exhibits *Puppet Show II* (2023). Interested in the tensions that exist between the systems of paint and subject, Harrison reimagines subjects from art history or visual culture. Compositions are fractured into new geometries and surfaces are transformed as Harrison occupies himself with the rich unfolding process of a painting.

Also relishing in their medium and the challenges that lie within it is artist Nina Chua. Chua allows her drawings to unfold before her, extending the language of mark making with a distinctively intuitive approach. In *Marker 709* (2022), sound and motion feel present, demonstrating the synesthetic potential and material quality of pen on paper.

In stark contrast to Chua's work is Richard Dean Hughes' ghostly piano. Hughes explores the relationship between object and image with *Towards Words* (2023), combining traditional methodologies of making with cold contemporary methods of production and material. A soft drained oil painting sits on the music stand, a homage to the emotiveness of the object. In this presentation the sculpture seems to act as a stand in, generating a tension between the real and hypothetical. It is ghostly still, yet charged with potential. This push and pull is evident also in the work of Robin Megannity. Maintaining a continuous dialogue between conventional and modern day modes of representation, Megannity plays with the paradoxical potential of contemporary painting. Although the palette, references and seduction of his work engages with the tradition of painting, it also implies an indifference and disconnection to the traditions it is staged on. For Megannity that is the main crux in his work, the weight of culture and its associated problems whilst recognising the residual possibility for something tender and empathetic.

A consideration of the history of painting is also present in Parham Ghalamdar's work. Inspired by the concept of a realm within a picture plane, Ghalamdar uses his renditions of Piero della Francesca's *The Dream of Constantine* (1464) as foundational data for an AI tool. He considers paint a live medium, in constant negotiation with the past and present and an implement for exploration.

Across the work of all artists is a profound respect for their medium with the intention to manipulate and give new order. Nicola Ellis achieves this in the very environment she works within. *The Red Mist* (2022) is a recent visual manifestation of Ellis' relationship with Ritherdon & Co Ltd- a manufacturer of steel enclosures based in Darwen, Lancashire. Ellis collaborated with Ritherdon & Co Ltd and robotics specialist Digiotech as part of a Better Factory Knowledge Transfer Experiment, whereby she developed a framework for creating new powder coating finishes for Ritherdon products. Each example in this series shares a language with painting, made more so when recontextualised within a gallery environment. Ripped from the factory and turned anew, Ellis reappropriates the intended functions of product manufacturing and in doing so, her ability to push the boundaries of the existing qualities of objects or infrastructures.

This group of artists may approach their work with a similar line of questioning stimulated by their shared working environment, but the key is their differences. It is this exact disorder that they apply to their individual practices, a way to break down and build up the frameworks of their own respective crafts, claim their mediums and continue those conversations within and beyond the studio walls.

Nina Chua lives and works in Manchester. She studied at Manchester School of Art and completed her MA in Fine Art in 2011. In 2016 she was selected for the Liverpool Biennial

Associate Artist Programme. In 2020 her work was selected for the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize. Chua has exhibited nationally and internationally including: Nakata Museum, Hiroshima (2021); Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2023); Baltic 39 (2018), Newcastle; DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague (2018) and Workplace Gallery, Gateshead (2022). Her work is held in the collections of The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester; The Centre for Artist's Books at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee; and Simmons and Simmons Contemporary Art Collection.

Nicola Ellis lives and works in Manchester, UK. She has an ongoing collaboration with manufacturer Ritherdon & Co Ltd (UK) and Robotics specialist Digiotech (Estonia) as part of Better Factory Knowledge Transfer Experiment (K.T.E). Ellis has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally including a solo presentation at the National Festival of Marking, Blackburn (2022); Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2021); Atos Art of Manufacturing, Paris, Munich, Amsterdam, Milan, Vienna, Dallas, Liverpool and London (2022); Spazio35, Udine (2022), Workplace, London (2022); Palazzo Costanzi, Trieste (2021); Copperfield Gallery, London (2021).

Parham Ghalamdar was born in Tehran, Iran and currently lives and works in Manchester. He obtained his MA degree in painting from the Manchester School of Art in 2021. Recent solo exhibitions include HOME, Manchester (2023 and; Granada Foundation Galleries, Manchester (2022). Recent group and duo exhibitions include Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2023); The Whitaker Museum, Rosendale (2023); Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2022). Ghalamdar's work is held in the collections of the University Of Salford Art Collection, Government Art Collection and Touchstones Rochdale. Ghalamdar has been a recent recipient of UK New Artists bursary, DYCP Grant, and Innovative Grant.

Tommy Harrison was born in Stockport (UK). After teaching himself to paint in 2020, he received the Haworth Trust Painting Scholarship to study an MFA in painting at the Manchester School of Art. Solo exhibitions include Grimm Gallery, New York, USA (2023); Pipeline Contemporary, London, UK (2022). Harrison's work has been included in a number of international group exhibitions at Alice Amati, London, UK (2023); Chapelle de l'Humanité, Paris, FR (2022); Islington Mill, Salford, UK (2022); Elysium Gallery, Swansea, UK (2022) where he was shortlisted for the Beep International Painting Prize; Bankley Gallery, Manchester, UK (2022) and Holden Gallery, Manchester, UK (2022).

Richard Hughes lives and works in Manchester. Recent exhibitions include Generation + Display, London (2022); Night Time Story, Los Angeles (online exhibition, 2022); Air Gallery, Manchester (2021); Todmorden, Yorkshire (2021); Divisions of Labour, Worcester (2020); Guts Gallery, London (online exhibition, 2021).

Robin Megannity lives and works in Manchester, UK. He completed his MA at Manchester, School of Art in 2021. Megannity has exhibited nationally and internationally, selected solo and duo exhibitions include Xxijra Hii, London (current); Workplace, London (2023); Kristian Day Gallery, London (2021); Bunker Gallery, Manchester (2019). Selected Group exhibitions include Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2022); Museum Of Museums, Seattle (2021); San Mei Gallery, London (2021); The Contact Layer, curated by Ian Gonczarow, Stewart Hall, Montreal (2020); The Function Suite, curated by Brian Mountford, London (2020).

