

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

EXHIBITION GUIDE
PROJECT SPACE

ANNA FC SMITH, TOM IRELAND,
FAYE CORAL JOHNSON &
MIKE REDMOND (MSR FCJ),
MEDIÉVAL HELPDESK
(LARA EGGLETON & DAVID
STEANS), FAYE SPENCER

ECSTATIC RITUALS

7 SEPTEMBER – 20 OCTOBER 2019

Through a combination of sculpture, archive film, painting and installation *Ecstatic Rituals* takes the tradition of Hull Fair as a starting point to explore public entertainment and ceremonial tradition. Reflecting on urban folklore as well as past and present notions of mass festivity. This exhibition considers Hull's medieval era when the fair was started, alongside wider notions of civic life and the function of spectacle. Drawing on a wide range of references from rave culture to Morris dancing, and medieval-era public punishment to political party conferences, the work on show invites us to reconsider our experience of public space and the ways we come together with others to celebrate, protest and commemorate.

Based on extensive research into the history of the port of Hull and Hull Fair **Anna FC Smith** has used the medieval pageant play as a sculptural format to develop a float referencing the items that would have been imported to and exported from Hull. Smith is interested in opening ceremonies, and how the ways people behave, look and congregate denote different states of being, as well as civic pride and multicultural identity.

Tom Ireland's work explores the position of British coastal towns in relation to pop-culture and economics, often making use of archive footage, with a critical eye on the conservative policy of managed decline that has affected places like Blackpool, Hull and Liverpool.

Meanwhile, collaborative duo **Mike S Redmond** and **Faye Coral Johnson** investigate the physical and spiritual experience of the fairground, producing a new triptych in their signature active and adaptive style, drawing inspiration from modern fun fair rides and the visual history of the Fruitmarket area.

Medieval helpdesk, a collaborative project between art writer **Lara Eggleton** and artist **David Steans**, sees the artists continue their ongoing research into how notions of 'The Dark Ages' feed into the contemporary British psyche. For *Ecstatic Rituals* they will focus on the idea of 'public entertainments', using object-making to explore and enact this long and dubious history.

Faye Spencer has hand-made a contemporary take on the 'Fool' and the 'Beast', the two mediator figures in traditional Morris dancing, which will produce a transformative threshold for the gallery, symbolically separating mundane, workaday reality from the subversive and explorative space within.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Anna FC Smith is a Wigan (UK) based multimedia artist. She studied Critical Fine Art Practice at the University of Brighton, graduating in 2007 and has exhibited internationally. Smith has a longstanding obsession with the overlooked in history, folk culture, and communal traditions. As a practitioner she locates herself between artist, historian and anthropologist, with historical and anthropological research forming the basis of much of her work. Through her practice Smith celebrates 'low culture' relating with concepts of the carnivalesque, bawdiness, irreverence and ambivalence. She explores the role of history and the archive and the links contemporary society has with its predecessors.

Tom Ireland is an artist and curator living and working in Blackpool, UK. Spanning a variety of media, Ireland's practice is centred around broad notions of space, distance and the things which fill it; he is interested in what these things are, both physically and ideologically, their interaction with one another and how they operate within the world to shape our individual and collective understanding.

Collaborative artists **Mike S Redmond** and **Faye Coral Johnson (MSR FCJ)** are the duo behind collections that dare to explore all manner of odd but enchanting circumstances. Themes of unbridled romance, mild-horror, biting humour and plain weird fantasy unfold. Two brains and two hands work as one, a process that loosens any pre-visions, leading down a path to the unknown, in a direction they could never foresee. Through an experimental exchange, somewhere between the chaos and harmony of melding visual ideas, MSR FCJ consciously push traditional concepts of craftsmanship in favour of personal styles of figuration. They challenge these classical methods in order to present an intensely personal view of the world around them.

Medieval helpdesk is an anachronistic curatorial project that reactivates perceptions, objects and rituals associated with the 'Dark Ages' within contemporary contexts. It comprises writer/editor Lara Eggleton, and artist David Steans, both based in Leeds.

Faye Spencer is an artist based at the Birley Studios, Preston and is a Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Central Lancashire. She is currently examining the function of fools and folly in contemporary society and social history through making and Morris dancing.

RESEARCH AND READING

The work in *Ecstatic Rituals* is inspired by research and locations around the UK. Here are some of the texts and places that the artists have been inspired by. (The initials after each listing show which artist they came from.)

TEXTS & FILMS

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, illustrated in this edition by Harry Clarke, originally published 1829, in this edition 1925 (FS)

William Willeford, *The Fool and His Sceptre: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and their Audience*, originally published 1969 (FS)

John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court*, originally published 1998 (FS)

Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*, originally published 1935 (FS)

Michael Foley, *Life Lessons from Bergson*, 2013 (FS)

MD Anderson, *Misericords: English Life in Medieval Woodcarving*, originally published 1954 (FS)

François Rabelais, *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel*, 16th Century (FS)

John Clarke and Chas Critcher, *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain*, originally published 1985. (AFCS)

Irene Richards, Joseph Acton Morris and Joshua Leonard Gayler, *A Sketch-Map Economic History of Britain*, 1962 (AFCS)

Lars Bisgaard, Lars Boje Mortensen and Tom Pettitt, *Guilds, Town and Cultural Transmission in the North, 1300 – 1500*, 2013 (AFCS)

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: a History of Collective Joy*, 2006 (LV)

Ed. Tom McDonough, *The Situationists and The City: A Reader*, 2010 (LV)

Vanessa Toulmin, *Hull Fair: fun for all, an illustrated history of Hull Fair in the 20th century*, 1999 (MSR FCJ)

Stephen Smith and Kevin Scrivens, *Hull Fair: an illustrated history*, 1991 (MSR FCJ)

Hull City Council Community Survey, *Hull Fair: a history of Hull fair, its origins and development, with personal recollections of recent times*, 1988 (MSR FCJ)

Sacha at Shaboo 2nd June 1990. Youtube (TI)

Thatcher Addresses Conservative Party. October 13 1989. C-SPAN. (TI)

Margaret Thatcher speech to Young Conservatives, 1989. Getty Images. (TI)

Patrick Kieller, *Robinson in Space*, 1997. (TI)

Tony Colston-Hayter: the acid house fraudster, Dorian Lynskey, The Guardian, 15 January 2014. (TI)

Acid house and the dawn of a rave new world Luke Bainbridge, The Guardian, 23 February 2014. (TI)

Gary Cross, John K. Walton, *The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century*, 2005 (TI).

Relocating Britishness, Edited by Stephen Counce, Susan Sydney-Smith, Ewa Mazierska, John K, Walton, Originally published in 2004 (TI)

Sasha-Shaboo-Blackpool-June 1990 (TI)

Andrew B.R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century*, 2017 (MH)

Louise D'Arcens, *Comic Medievalism: Laughing at the Middle Ages*, 2014 (MH)

Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present*, 2012 (MH)

LOCATIONS

Hull Fair (MSR FCJ)

Hull History Centre (MSR FCJ)

Misericords and gargoyles at Beverley Minster (LV)

The Mappa Mundi, Hereford Cathedral (FS)

Misericords, Bristol and Gloucester Cathedrals (FS)

Whitby Folk Week (FS)

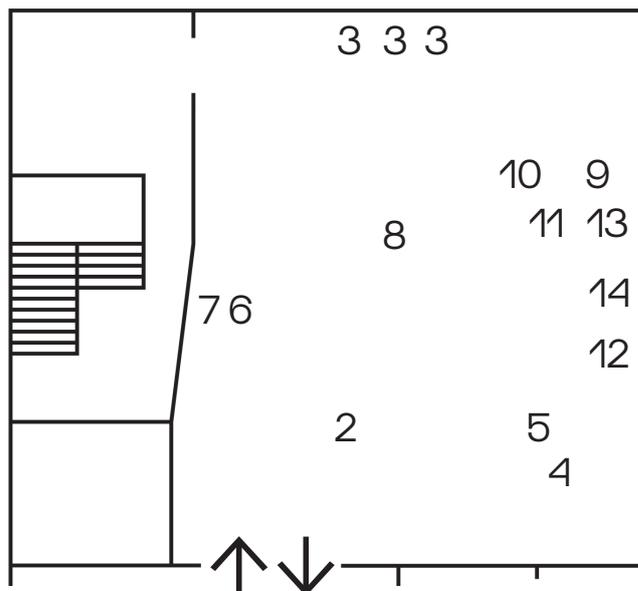
The Annual Unconvention of Fools and Beasts (FS)

AUDIO

The Folklore Podcast with Mark Norman (FS)

Things We Forgot To Remember. The Hanseatic League. BBC Radio 4 2009 (AFCS)

WORK DETAILS



1. Medieval Helpdesk (Lara Eggleton and David Steans)
Public Entertainment I, 2019
Cotton, Pleather, Suede, Aluminium, Fabric Paint, Pine, Steel
150 x 62cm

2. Medieval Helpdesk (Lara Eggleton and David Steans)
Public Entertainment II, 2019
Douglas Fir, Pine, Glue, Bras, Steel, Aluminium, Plastic
80 x 30 x 45cm

3. Mike S Redmond and Faye Coral Jones (MSR FCJ)
In the Startled Can Of The Night, 2019
Acrylic, Mixed Media on Wood Panels
100 x 76cm each

In The Startled Can Of The Night is a large-scale mixed media painting triptych displaying a hybrid of structure and figure. Characters fuse and morph into moving architectural structures and decorative aesthetics. The three pieces work side by side to emulate movement, a fleeting moment, a static blur.

4. Faye Spencer
Flatus (Fool), 2019
Nylon, taffeta, cotton, cardboard, papier-mache, glue, wall filler, emulsion, watercolour, ink, electric fan
85 x 305 cm

5. Faye Spencer
Bellows (Beast), 2019
Nylon, taffeta, cotton, cardboard, papier-mâché,
glue, wall filler, emulsion, watercolour, ink, electric
fan
85 x 305 cm

6. Faye Spencer
Meat Party Classic, 2016
Watercolour and ink on paper
59.4 x 84.1 cm

7. Faye Spencer
Meat Party Cool Original, 2016
Watercolour and ink on paper
59.4 x 84.1 cm

8. Anna FC Smith
Stuf Thi Ship With Vitayll (All This World About),
2019
Papier mache, ceramics, fabric and mixed media
124 x 82 x 165 cm

9. Tom Ireland
Sasha at Shaboo, Blackpool, 2nd June 1990,
2014/19
Found footage: originally taken from
[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=xgwCv9lyPug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgwCv9lyPug) (content removed)
Running Time: 1:53:13

10. Tom Ireland
*Margaret Thatcher Addresses the Conservative
Party Conference in Blackpool, 13 October 1989*
Found Footage
Running Time 13:19

11. Tom Ireland
*Margaret Thatcher Speech to Young
Conservatives*, 1988
Found Footage
Running Time: 10:00

12. Tom Ireland
*Blackpool Stands Between Us and Revolution &
The Triumph of Freedom*, 2014/19
Poster on 80 gsm day-glo paper
84.1 x 118.9 cm

13. Tom Ireland
The Triumph of Freedom, 2015/19
2 Posters on 80 gsm day-glo paper
42 x 59.4 cm (each)

14. Tom Ireland
Freedom to Party, 2019
Poster on 80 gsm day-glo paper
42 x 59.4 cm

RELATED EVENTS

ECSTATIC RITUALS CREATIVE SYMPOSIUM
Sat 5 October
12–5pm
Free, booking required

GALLERY SHOP

The following items are available to buy in the
gallery shop.

Michael Redmond
Rocks and Gravel, Bricks and Mortar, 2016
Publication commissioned as part of Cracked Eggs,
Risograph, Team Trident Press.
£10

David Steans
From the Lounge, 2018
Short story collection commissioned as part of
Deptford X.
£10

ABOUT US

Humber Street Gallery is an Absolutely Cultured project, bringing a vibrant, high-quality contemporary art space to Hull. The gallery's free programme of exhibitions is supported by a series of talks, performances, screenings and workshops.

Absolutely Cultured puts culture at the heart of Hull's ambition and aspirations, commissioning and producing a programme of events and projects which are ambitious, surprising and imaginative. In addition to the gallery and our broader cultural events, we continue to develop our world-class volunteer programme, to deliver initiatives to support the cultural sector and to offer access to creative learning opportunities.

GLOSSARY

Artistic language can at times be difficult to interpret and hard to define. Here are some definitions of terms that are relevant to this exhibition. We hope these will spark debate and help you to better understand the work.

TRIPTYCH: A set of three panels or compartments side by side, bearing pictures, carvings, or the like.

MISERICORD: A small projection on the underside of a hinged seat of a church stall, which, when the seat is lifted, gives support to a person standing in the stall. These are sometimes carved with symbolic or humorous scenes involving folklore.

OPENING TIMES

GALLERY & CAFÉ

Mon: 10:00 – 18:00 (Café only)

Tue – Sun: 10:00 – 18:00

First Thu of the Month: Until 20:00
(During Exhibitions)

CONTACT US

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