

Francis Upritchard: *Wetwang Slack*

The Curve, Barbican Centre

27 September 2018 – 6 January 2019

Media View: Wednesday 26 September, 10am – 1pm

Free Admission

#FrancisUpritchard

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England. With additional support from Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and the Henry Moore Foundation.

This autumn, marking the 30th Curve commission at the Barbican, New Zealand born and London-based artist **Francis Upritchard** has created a new, site-specific installation. Drawing from figurative sculpture, craft traditions and design, blended with references from literature and history, Upritchard pushes these practices into new directions, bringing them together to create a striking and original visual language of her own. **Francis Upritchard: *Wetwang Slack* opens in The Curve on Thursday 27 September 2018.**

Playing with scale, colour and texture, Upritchard is populating The Curve with a spectrum of different materials, vibrant figures and eclectic objects. The exhibition begins with brightly coloured polymer clay sculptures in various poses, bedecked in hand-made garments supported by plinths, leading to a series of bespoke metal and glass shelves suspended from the ceiling, displaying smaller-scale felt hats. As the exhibition unfolds the colour slowly weakens from the sculptures concluding with large figures made from balata, a wild rubber harvested in Brazil. These are inspired by the Parthenon Reliefs; creatures from science fiction novels; and the Japanese folklore characters of Ashinaga-tenaga (Long Legs and Long Arms), who extol the virtues of harmonious working relationships, coalescing into a melting pot of traditions where no dominant culture persists.

Francis Upritchard said: *"I'm envisaging an exhibition which works with the brutalist Barbican architecture with stone, wood, glass and metal – brutal but rational with my delicate, strange and sometimes colourful works atop. I've been thinking about The Curve as offering a kind of rainbow-light spectrum that plays with distortion and scale."*

Upritchard's works are characterised by a sense of curiosity and exploration of the human form, from medieval knights to meditating futuristic hippies, these tantalising figures are hand-modelled in polymer clay, their skins painted in a range of monochromatic colours or distinct gridded patterns. Traversing cultures and time periods, her figures resist easy categorisation, allowing for multiple readings. Hand-woven blankets, tie-dyed silks and bespoke garments often decorate these deftly made sculptures which are frequently combined with found objects. Upritchard also regularly creates sculptural installations of utilitarian objects from vases, plates, lamps or urns often imbued with anthropomorphic forms and carefully arranged into mysterious domestic environments. More recently, she has experimented with both form and material, creating a group of dinosaurs out of *papier-mâché* and extracts from wild rubber trees in Brazil.

Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican, said: *"It is with great pleasure that we are welcoming Francis Upritchard to devise a new installation. Our 30th commission, Upritchard is the latest in an exciting lineage of contemporary artists, such as Tomas Saraceno, Random International, Richard Mosse, Yto Barrada, and many more, who have exhibited in our unique space. I am especially excited to see an installation of figurative sculpture and have no doubt that Upritchard's cast of remarkable characters will occupy The Curve space in an entirely magical way, demonstrating her imaginative approach and sensitivity to materials."*

Previous works include Upritchard's installation, *Traveller's Collection* (2003), in which she created a tomb-like cabinet of curiosities, influenced by both Ancient Egypt and Maori cultures. Her installation *Rainwob I & II* (2007) similarly saw Upritchard drawing inspiration from different historical periods, whereby her small, handmade, colourful figures were based on 15th century wooden sculptures as well as 1970s photographs of revellers at Glastonbury Festival. Upritchard represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale in 2009 with her installation *Save Yourself*, here she created an imaginary landscape of figures and structures, placed on recycled wooden table tops. More recently, a survey of the last two decades of her work entitled *Jealous Saboteurs* was presented at the Monash

University Museum, Melbourne, Australia; Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand and Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand in 2016–17.

Francis Upritchard was born in 1976 in New Plymouth, New Zealand and lives and works in London. After studying Fine Art at Ilam School of Art, Christchurch, she moved to London in 1998 where she co-founded the Bart Wells Institute, an artist run gallery, with artist Luke Gottelier. In 2006 Upritchard won New Zealand's prestigious Walters Prize, and has had major solo exhibitions at Vienna Secession in 2009, Nottingham Contemporary in 2012, Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center in 2012, Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art in 2013, and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles in 2014. In 2009, she represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale. Her work is in international collections including Tate, London; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Paisley Museum, Scotland; Saatchi Gallery, London; Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki; Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetu; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane. She is represented by Kate MacGarry, London; Anton Kern Gallery, New York; and Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland.

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Notes to Editors

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Press images available online from the Barbican Newsroom

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Barbican Newsroom

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Public Information

The Curve, Barbican, London

Public information: 0845 120 7550 / www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery

Free admission

The Curve opening times:

Saturday – Wednesday 11am–8pm

Thursday & Friday 11am–9pm

Bank Holidays 12pm–8pm

Closed 24, 25 and 26 December

The Curve

The Curve is the Barbican's free exhibition space that wraps around the back of the Concert Hall. Since its launch in 2006, it has established itself as one of London's most important galleries for newly commissioned installations. The distinctive architecture of the space presents artists with a singular opportunity to realise their most ambitious ideas. Francis Upritchard is the 30th artist to be commissioned in the series, which to date has included artists from more than 18 different countries, many exhibiting in London for the first time. Past artists include Tomas Saraceno (Argentina); Richard Wilson (Britain); Jeppe Hein (Denmark); Marjetica Potrč (Slovenia); Shirana Shahbazi (Switzerland/Iran); Hans Schabus (Austria); Huang Yong Ping (France/China); Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Canada/Mexico); Peter Coffin (USA); Clemens von Wedemeyer (Germany); Robert Kusmirowski

(Poland); Céleste Boursier-Mougenot (France); John Bock (Germany); Damián Ortega (Mexico); Cory Arcangel (USA); Junya Ishigami (Japan); Song Dong (China); Random International (Britain); Geoffrey Farmer (Canada); Ayşe Erkmen (Germany/Turkey); United Visual Artists (Britain); Walead Beshty (USA/Britain); Roman Signer (Switzerland); Eddie Peake (Britain); Imran Qureshi (Pakistan); Bedwyr Williams (Wales); Richard Mosse (Ireland); John Akomfrah (Britain); and most recently Yto Barrada (Morocco).

Exhibition

The exhibition has been commissioned by the Barbican, London using public funding by Arts Council England, with the support of Creative New Zealand, Toi Aotearoa and the Henry Moore Foundation.

Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde will be on show in Barbican Art Gallery from Wed 10 Oct – Sun 27 Jan 2019 (Media view: Tue 9 Oct 2018, 10am – 1pm).

For more information, please visit: www.barbican.org.uk/ModernCouplesNews

Also coinciding with Francis Upritchard: *Wetwang Slack* is the sixth of the changing foyer displays *The Hull of a Large Ship* (18 May – Nov 2018) which explores the architecture of the Barbican Arts Centre through original drawings with contributions by five architecture practices.

Events

Francis Upritchard Artist Talk and Book Launch

Thu 8 Nov, 7pm, Frobisher Auditorium 2

Francis Upritchard discusses her fascination with art, design and craft with artist Brian Griffiths.

Tickets £10.

Wetwang Slack Family Day

Sun 2 Dec, 11am – 4pm, Level G

A free event organised by Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning, *Wetwang Slack Family Day* will draw inspiration from Francis Upritchard's playful sculptures and handmade works. The day will focus on creative play with workshops across Barbican's public spaces that link to both *Wetwang Slack* and *Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde*. There will be a variety of hands-on workshops and creative activities, including storytelling in The Curve by Vanessa Woolf (London Dreamtime).

To find out more about specific events as they are confirmed, check the website for full listings:

www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery

Book

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication, including a newly commissioned essay by writers Tessa Laird and Gwyn Porter, and an interview with the artist by exhibition curator Leila Hasham. The book is the eighth in a publication series by Barbican Art Gallery that focuses on The Curve exhibition programme.

£12.

Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow; The Curve is one of the few galleries in London devoted to the commissioning of new work. Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Entrance to The Curve is free. Through Young Barbican we offer £5 tickets to 14–25 year olds for our paid exhibitions, children under 14 are free.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue Entertainment](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). International Associates are [Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam](#), [New York Philharmonic](#), [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#), [Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig](#) and [Jazz at Lincoln Center](#).

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