



art
exchange

BREATH- ING

Breathing the Light creates a platform for artists whose work responds to the condition of our times.

It takes as its starting point the home – a place of refuge where we nurture relationships, feed souls and whose shelter we return to at the end of the day. During the pandemic this role altered. As keyworkers left their homes each morning, we were told to stay inside – our walls becoming porous to work, study and new digital lives. Easily punctured by the real world, navigating the politics of out there alongside our internal fragilities became part of our new hybrid reality. The artists in this show explore these realignments, utilising creativity as an act of resistance as they pause to look afresh at the world around us.

This exhibition showcases work by some of the most exciting artists working in the UK today, including Larry Achiampong, Emma Hart, Daniel & Clara, Joy Labinjo, Urara Tsuchiya, Barbara Walker and Caroline Walker.

It has been inspired by the vision and fierce optimism of Ben Okri's anthology *A Fire in My Head: Poems for the Dawn* which includes *Breathing the Light*.

THE

LIGHT



JOY LABINJO

Lives and works in London

Joy Labinjo began the paintings on show as lockdown was punctured by mass protests surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement that surged around the world. Bringing to the foreground issues always present in her work, she asks us to consider notions of race, social justice, being and belonging.

Her large-scale figurative paintings depict intimate scenes of everyday life based on found images, family photographs and archival material. At the heart of her practice is fascination with storytelling and people's lives, as she investigates identity, political voice, power, Blackness, history, community and family. These explorations echo her experience of having multiple identities – growing up Black, British and Nigerian in the 90s and 00s.

Recent exhibitions include The Armoury, New York (2021); Royal Academy (2020); Frieze London (2020); Tiwani Contemporary (2020); The Breeder, Athens (2020); Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2019); Bloc Projects, Sheffield, UK (2019) and Tiwani Contemporary, London, UK, (2018).

Joy Labinjo

Enough is Enough, 2020
Oil on Canvas
Courtesy of the artist and
Tiwani Contemporary, London

Don't Cry, Don't Beg, 2020
Oil on Canvas
Courtesy of the artist and
Dani Chakour



DANIEL & CLARA

Live and work in Essex

Daniel & Clara were suddenly propelled into a new life in the countryside during lockdown – the rupture made palpable in their 1-minute films shared daily on Instagram. Responding to the psychological impact of the pandemic and physical restrictions of lockdown, *On the Island* depicts Daniel & Clara in the landscape of Mersea Island, Essex where they have lived since March 2020.

Daniel & Clara work across moving image, photography and installation, as they investigate how we imbue places with meaning – and how in turn, landscape and the environment impact our shared imagination and state of mind.

Recent exhibitions include Focal Point Gallery, Southend (2021); Norwich Castle Museum & Galleries (2021) the Grand Palais, Paris (2020); HKW, Berlin (2020); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (2019); Whitechapel, London (2019); BFI, London (2018) and numerous film festivals. In 2019 they launched Moving Image Artists (MIA) and in 2021 were awarded the Slow Film Festival moving image commission.

Daniel & Clara

On the Island, 2020 – 21
82 mins HD Video
Courtesy of the artists



URARA TSUCHIYA

Lives and works in Glasgow

During lockdown when Urara Tsuchiya barely left her home, everyday items lying around her flat became the focus of her attention as she made bras, knickers, toothbrushes and cleaning products out of clay. The thinking space that lockdown provided also allowed her imagination a free rein, with her sculptures of multiple nude figures existing in a Dionysian zone as she creates a fantastical world that exposes the spontaneous and sensational aspects of life for all to see.

With almost disturbing ease, Urara Tsuchiya challenges the viewer to negotiate their own physical and emotional boundaries as she explores the disconcertion that can be found between the display of personal and social worlds in a gallery setting.

Recent exhibitions include 'Glasgow International' (2021); 'Homeplace', V.O. Curations, London (2021); 'Homebound', ADA, Rome, Italy (2021); Frieze Art Fair London (2019); 'Urara Tsuchiya', Trade Gallery, Nottingham (2017); 'Room Service', Union Pacific, London (2016) and numerous residencies around the world.

Urara Tsuchiya

Untitled (bra), 2020
Glazed earthenware

Untitled (knickers)
Porcelain, paper and clay

Untitled (male thong), 2020
Glazed earthenware

Going down on a tree, 2020
Glazed earthenware

Courtesy of the artist and
Union Pacific, London



CAROLINE WALKER

Lives and works in London

During these uncertain times Caroline Walker continued painting, turning her attention to subjects close to home. She was drawn towards the women in her local community who kept working during lockdown – distilling those brief moments of human contact with them into her thoughtful and acutely observed paintings.

Caroline Walker reveals the diverse social, cultural and economic experiences of women living in contemporary society. Drawing on her own photographic source material, Walker provides a unique window into the everyday lives of women. Blurring the boundary between objectivity and lived experience, she highlights often overlooked jobs performed by women and the psychologically charged spaces they inhabit.

Recent exhibitions include 'Window's, KM21, The Hague (2021); 'Women's Work', Midlands Art Centre (2021); the 'British Art Show 9' (2021); 'Nearby', GRIM, New York (2021); 'Janet', Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh (2020) and 'Home', Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, touring to Art Exchange, Colchester (2018).

Caroline Walker

Bathroom sink cleaning, 2020
Oil on board
Courtesy of the artist and Grimm Gallery

Raabs IV, 2020
Oil on board
Courtesy of the artist and Zagury Collection

Alem II, 2020
Oil on board
Courtesy of the artist and Grimm Gallery



EMMA HART

Lives and works in London

Emma Hart finds respite from the intensity of family life by focusing on hands and the new emphasis on the transfer of infection, where previously there had been touch and the comforting of others. Her ceramics show us that a simple thumbs up can help get you through the day.

She makes work that actively implicates us in acts of visual confrontation, making us play out the ups and downs of human relationships alongside her. Her ceramics are often marked by an anarchic aesthetic that upends and disrupts the viewing process, capturing the confusion and stress of everyday experience.

Recent exhibitions include 'Be Some Body', The Sunday Painter, London (2020); 'Banger', Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2018); 'Mama Mia!' Whitechapel Gallery, London and Collezione Maramotti, Italy (2017); 'Commercial Breakz', Frieze Art Fair, London (2017) and 'Spread' at Art Exchange and Grand Union (2015). In 2016 she won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women.

Emma Hart

Thumbs Up, 2020
Bunch of Fives, 2020
The Two Finger Ashtray, 2020
Finger on the Button, 2020
Head in Hand, 2020
Cover your Eyes, 2020
Glazed earthenware

Good Emma, Bad Emma, 2020-21
White earthenware with orange engobe

Courtesy of the artist



BARBARA WALKER

Lives and works in Birmingham

Barbara Walker reminds us of the contribution of NHS workers by focusing on a single individual, a nurse called Rosemary. We can derive strength from her as she steadfastly returns our gaze. Surrounded by a foreboding dark background in one drawing, in another a few lightly sketched lines also remind us of Rosemary's vulnerability.

Barbara Walker's work is informed by the social, political and cultural realities that affect her life and the lives of those around her. Growing up in Birmingham, her experiences have shaped a practice concerned with issues of class and power, gender, race, representation and belonging. Her work makes visible the lives of others as they challenge us to look again at the world around us.

Her recent shows include 'Life Between Islands' Tate (upcoming 2021); Summer Show, Royal Academy, (2019); 'Place, Space and Who', Turner Contemporary (2019); 'Protest and Remembrance', Alan Cristea Gallery (2019); 'Vanishing Point' at Jerwood Gallery (2018) and the 'Diaspora Pavilion', 57th Venice Biennale (2017).

Barbara Walker

Rosemary, IV, V and VI, 2020
Graphite on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Cristea Roberts Gallery, London



LARRY ACHIAMPONG

Lives and works in London

Reliquary II is a meditation on a period of separation between the artist and his family during lockdown. Speaking directly to his kids through a letter written at night when all other demands subside, Achiampong reminds them to hold onto what's important in life as they navigate a path through life in a politically charged UK.

Achiampong's work examines his communal and personal heritage – in particular, the intersection between pop culture and the postcolonial position, as he crate-digs the vaults of history. These investigations examine constructions of 'the self', offering multiple perspectives that reveal entrenched socio-political contradictions in society.

Recent exhibitions include Liverpool Biennial (2021), Frieze, London (2020), 'A Lament for Power', Art Exchange, Colchester; 'When the Sky Falls', John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (2020); 'Get Up Stand Up Now', Somerset House, London (2019); 'The Grid', Seventeen and Copperfield, London (2019) the 'Diaspora Pavilion', Venice Biennale (2017) and 'Finding Fanon', Tate Modern (2016).

Larry Achiampong
Reliquary II, 2020
12 mins, 4K video
Courtesy of the Artist and
Copperfield, London

TALKS & EVENTS

Admission free to all our activities and exhibitions.

www.artexchange.org.uk

LAUNCH

Thurs 7 October, 5.30 – 8.00 pm
Art Exchange

Come and join us in celebrating the opening of *Breathing the Light!*

LUNCHTIME TALK

Wednesday 20 October, 1 – 1:40 pm
Art Exchange

Explore the themes and ideas raised in *Breathing the Light* with Art Exchange's team.

ARTISTS' TALK

Daniel & Clara
Sat 30 October, 2.00 – 4.00 pm
Art Exchange

Join Daniel & Clara for a talk and followed by a walk around Wivenhoe Park. Then back to the gallery for tea, coffee and cake!

CURATOR'S TOUR

Live on Instagram
Thursday 4 November, 6.00 – 7.00 pm
Online

Join curator Jess Twyman for an Instagram Live online tour of *Breathing the Light*.

ARTISTS' TALK

Larry Achiampong and Joy Labinjo
Weds 10 November, 6.00 – 7.00 pm
Online

Artists Joy Labinjo and Larry Anchiampong expand on the ideas, motivations and inspiration behind their work.

GET CREATIVE WITH CLAY

Wed 17 Nov, 6.00 – 8.00 pm
Art Exchange

Taking inspiration from the ceramics on show, join artist Iris Gunnarsdottir for an evening of playing with clay.