

Press Release: 9 June 2016

2016 Bow Open Show announced. Anj Smith curates a powerful line-up exploring cross-cultural identity, gender and sexuality.

Preview Friday 17 June 6-9pm (coinciding with Bow Road Open Studios)

Exhibition open 18 June to 28 August 2016



Ryan Hodge *Ladies and Gentlemen* 2015, courtesy the artist

24 Bow Arts artists have been selected by guest curator Anj Smith for the 2016 Bow Open Show that will run at the Nunnery Gallery across the summer.

The exhibition is the only show in the Nunnery Gallery's programme to showcase exclusively Bow Arts artists, celebrating the innovation and creativity of the artists and makers working in the charity's creative workspaces.

This year's exhibition is no exception, selected by painter Anj Smith (Hauser & Wirth) who the *NY Times* describe as seeming "to have something small and vividly weird for every occasion". The loaded eccentricities of this year's selection unfold much like the details in Smith's quiet but powerful paintings – with media ranging from paint, collage and drawing to photography, interactive sculpture and performance.

Arresting visually, the works are also potent in meaning; Mette Sterre dresses her mother in the scales of the snake that tempted Eve as a feminist statement, digging at the Biblical narrative that shames women's body, while Emily Whitebread asks *What is England* in audio, searching with weighted words.

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Nitin Amin's *Selfhood Series* looks to his family history in seeking to re-perform and observe childhood memories from his hometown Mwanza in Tanzania, while Michael Achtman's photographic work visualises a blind woman's search for her family in the Western Isles of Scotland. *Suiker Piet* (Victoria Burgher) – delicate ceramic sugar shakers decorated with the open-mouthed faces of those enslaved in the sugar trade – references the Netherlands' use of slaves to produce sugar in colonial times and its ongoing legacy in the controversial tradition of Black Pete.



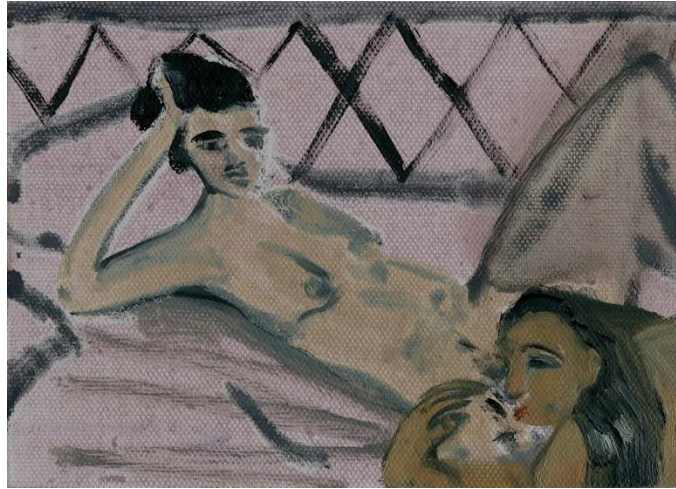
Felicity McCabe *Ayan and Dead Tree, Gargara IDP Camp, Somaliland 2015*, courtesy the artist

Sexuality and gender are also probing subjects in this year's Bow Open. Thick and expressive paint quietly presents female eroticism in Anna Ilsley's *Call me, Call me Any, Anytime*, while Ryan Hodge's *Ladies and Gentlemen* takes us through an investigative comic strip of gender identity: pencil drawn self-portraits illuminated with screams of bright pink hair and make-up. Faces swell and bristle with brush-strokes in Jaime Valtierra's *Not Always but Anytime* which, in his own words, "looks to explore sexuality against a background of polarising emotions such as failure, empowerment, repression, sublimation or abjection".

Sophie Hill, Gallery Director at the Nunnery Gallery, says:

"I think the work selected says a lot about the force and energy artists have, in enabling open and confronting comments on subjects such as gender and difficult history. There are probing and evocative questions in this exhibition, deliberately and simply put through the quality and power of art"

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Anna Ilsley *Call Me, Call Me Any, Anytime* 2015, courtesy the artist

With over 500 artists working in soon to be eleven different studio sites across London – new sites in Barking and Catford will open over the summer – Bow Arts hosts a vibrant community of artists and makers, the expressions and explorations of which are well represented in the diverse and often questioning works of this show.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the show presents so many different faces of the artists living and working in London; the much-loved Bow Arts, who reached their twentieth anniversary last year, have been fostering talent and supporting artists through affordable workspace and opportunities across London since 1995.

Inviting a guest curator to make the exhibition selection builds a unique and different view point each year; previous curators include Mark Wallinger and Bob and Roberta Smith with Skye Sherwin. Of her involvement, Anj Smith said:

"I'm delighted to assist Bow Arts with curating the 2016 Bow Open. It's impossible to overstate the importance of the organisation in supporting artists at such a sensitive point in developing their work".

Sophie Hill, Gallery Director, says:

"This year's Bow Open demonstrates the diverse and incredible talent of Bow Arts artists and I am incredibly proud to present this exhibition."

Exhibiting artists: Michael Achtman; Nitin Amin; Marta Bakst; Victoria Burgher; Lizzie Cannon; Jessica Jane Charleston; Matt Gee; Michael Gurhy; Rachel Haines; Denise Hickey; Ryan Hodge; Anna Ilsley; Matthew Krishanu; Felicity McCabe; Lauren Mele; Laura Napier; Ellie Nicholls; Marcus Orlandi; Mette Sterre; Rhys Thomas; Emily Tracy; Jaime Valtierra; Emily Whitebread; Emily Wolfe.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an events programme that includes an evening of performances in Bow Arts' courtyard for July's First Thursday; a talk from Nye Thompson, recently featured in *The Guardian* for *Backdoored*, her archive of unsecured webcam

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images; and the inaugural performance of *Desire Caught by the Tail*, a rarely produced play by Pablo Picasso, directed by Cradeaux Alexander, LUXE.

The opening of the exhibition coincides with this year's long-awaited Bow Road Open Studios, Bow Arts' biggest event of the year, which pulls in over 2,000 people to explore over 140 artist studios, accompanied by pop-up bars serving locally produced drinks (East London Liquor Company, Crate Brewery), street food, a local craft market and live music.

All work for sale.



Matt Gee *Chrome Sun* 2015 courtesy the artist

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Notes to editors

Exhibition: 2016 Bow Open Show

Dates: 18 June to 28 August 2016

Private view: Friday 17 June 2016, 6-9pm

Bow Road Open Studios: Friday 17 June, 6-9pm, Saturday 18 June 1-6pm

Address: Nunnery Gallery, 181 Bow Road, London E3 2SJ

Exhibition Opening Hours: Tues to Sunday, 10am – 5pm



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Admission: Free

Website: www.bowarts.org/nunnery

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 8980 7774

Travel: Bow Road Tube Station, Bow Church DLR

Bow Arts

Bow Arts Trust was established as an educational arts charity in 1995 and supports a community of over 400 artists with affordable, secure and creative workspaces. Bow Arts also runs the Nunnery Gallery, a contemporary art gallery which supports a diverse range of local, national and international exhibitions and events.

www.bowarts.org

Anj Smith

Born in 1978 in Kent, England, Anj Smith studied at Slade School of Fine Art and at Goldsmiths College in London. Smith's work has been exhibited at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, England; Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville TN; the Hudson Valley Centre for Contemporary Art, Peekskill NY; La Maison Rouge, Paris, France, and Me Collector's Room, Berlin, Germany, among other museums and galleries in Europe and the United States.

<http://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/49/anj-smith/biography/>