

# ALICEBLACK

## 'Listen to the Hum'

**Private View:** Friday 6 September, 6-8pm

**Date:** Saturday 7 September – Friday 18 October 2019

**Gallery address:** 47 Berwick St (1st Fl), Soho, London W1F 8SQ

**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 11am-4pm & by appointment

ALICE BLACK will present '**Listen to the Hum**', a group exhibition featuring El Anatsui, Miriam Austin, Ivan Black, Simon Callery, Jodie Carey, Rachael Louise Bailey, Tristan Pigott, Nina Royle, Victor Seaward and Nicholas William Johnson. The exhibition will preview at the gallery's Soho, London space on **Friday 6 September (6-8pm)**. 'Listen to the Hum' is an artistic response to the ultimate conflict of our era - that between mankind and nature. A conflict which has been raging, until now virtually unchecked, across all the worlds land mass, deep in our oceans and high in the sky.

'Listen to the Hum' comes at a time when the available science tells us that there is little we do that is without environmental consequence and those same capacities of cognition that saw us exert our control and destroy must now be employed to restore and renew. In this context it is the role of art to do what science cannot – to help us reconnect with the natural world spiritually and instinctively. The artists spotlighted in 'Listen to the Hum' are forerunners in art forms which reflect our diverse and often contradictory attitudes to the natural world. Combining painting, sculpture, ceramic and installation, the exhibition represents a nexus point of ideas and disciplines relating to dominion and coexistence.

Over a career spanning 40 years, Ghanaian born **El Anatsui (b. 1944)** has established himself as a pioneer in the use of recycled materials. Fascinated by the potential of reuse and transformation his work draws connections between consumption, waste, and the environment. He says: "Art grows out of each particular situation, and I believe that artists are better off working with whatever their environment throws up". Anatsui is best known for his 'bottle-top installations' sourced from recycling stations and sewn together with copper wire to create metallic cloth-like wall sculptures. We will be presenting his 'Benchmarks' print series, a close collaboration with Factum Arte. These large-scale collages stem directly from Anatsui's metallic tapestries - the origin of the plates used is the many wooden boards which took the spikes and stress of puncturing the bottle tops used in the vast hangings.

**Miriam Austin's (b. 1984)** sculptural, performance and installation based practice explores the relationship between ritual, myth, ecological fragility and embodiment. Combining organic matter (plants, flowers, fish) with synthetic materials (wax, silicone, resin, jesmonite) Austin address ideas relating to the entanglement of privilege and oppression with the potential of preservation and regeneration.

**Ivan Black's (b. 1972)** work is a striking interaction between science, art and technology which create kinetic forms that mutate upon the introduction of energy. Drawing inspiration from iconic natural geometry Black's work reflects a fascination and kinship with the mathematical patterns found everywhere in nature e.g. waves, leaves, shells, and the human form. Tending towards the minimalist in design, his works reveal how order silently governs our seemingly disorderly world.

Award winning British painter **Simon Callery (b. 1960)** combines the elemental effects of landscape and weather with the spirit of the archaeologist to explore the margins of what can be understood as painting. Drawing on the visceral qualities of excavation sites, Callery constructs his paintings as physical encounters. Provoking a broad sensory experience, their three-dimensionality goes beyond painting as a static visual depiction, instead encouraging the viewer to navigate the work like we would the land.

**Jodie Carey's (b. 1981)** practice spans sculpture, installation, weaving and ceramics to explore our human urge to make an impression on our surroundings. Industrial materials such as plaster, steel and paint are combined with natural resources including earth and clay to reflect and mediate the physical world as a repository of material memory which silently registers the passage of time and reflects our human advancement. Referring to the soil as the skin of the earth, Carey's interest in it is born out of its essential relationship to life and simultaneously its ability to embody death.

In 2015 **Rachael Louise Bailey (b. 1975)** discovered an alien material littering the beach – black rubber lay inert along the shoreline, often tangled up in and camouflaged by native seaweed. Curious and concerned as to its origins, she traced it to local industrial oyster beds. Provoked to respond to this man-made pollution, Bailey has since collected over 7km of 'The Black Stuff'. Obsessively sorting, knotting and experimenting with the material, she has transformed it into a compelling body of environmentally charged work.

**Tristan Pigott (b. 1990)** is a London based artist who's work explores the intermingling of our lived realities with those experienced virtually and how these come to bear on contemporary image making. He is interested in the way the natural and the artificial coalesce to create new hierarchies of elevation, which permeate visual culture and our value systems. By representing the disembodiment and dematerialisation of the natural world as effected by digital technology, he highlights our shifting gaze and its constant traversal of new and varying perspectives between the screen and life.

**Nina Royle (b. 1986)** combines painting, creative writing and performance to weave poetic meditations on our human connection to the landscape. Royle's hand sculpted painted panels are individual expressions of landscape, weather, corporeality and time – they express a direct, material encounter with the physical world. The work can also be read as articulations of the constantly evolving painting process as akin to nature's own processes - fluid, fleeting and subject to change.

**Victor Seaward (b. 1988 Kuala Lumpur)** is a London based painting graduate from the Royal College of Art. Seaward is interested in the agency of objects, their material history, and how our visual cultures from throughout history interact. Seaward creates composite works which juxtapose raw, functional materials, such as concrete with high-tech industrial materials and objects of art-historical significance to expose the drive of different social and cultural groups to create meaning within the material world.

The richly layered work of Hawaii-born **Nicholas William Johnson (b. 1982)** looks to "nature's chaos" for its inspiration. Reconstituting and reclaiming the archaic and often argued obsolete genre of botanical painting, Johnson reveals the continued relevance of our natural world as a container of "whole sets of possible histories about humans and conceptual structures". Johnson's current interest is in the emerging science of plant sentience, the nonhuman turn in contemporary theory of systems and ecology, and these in connection with ethnobotanical accounts of ancient indigenous knowledge and mythologies.

As the stark reality of the plight of our planet is brought into ever sharper focus, the artists included in 'Listen to the Hum' explore the complexity of a relationship characterised by exploitation, veneration, love, dependency, awe and entitlement. At the core of the exhibition is the belief that in seeking to turn conflict into reconciliation, we must first reignite a 'wilder' way of thinking. One that sees us reconnect with Nature, not as an abstract 'other', but as a network of interconnected systems of which we are inextricably a part and upon which we completely depend.

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**Notes to Editors:**

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