

Press Release

The Spirit of Utopia

4 July – 5 September 2013

Galleries 1, 8, Victor Petitgas Gallery (Gallery 9), Outset Project Gallery (Gallery 5) & 176/Zabludowicz Collection Project Gallery (Gallery 6)

Ten leading international artists and collectives speculate on alternative futures for society, the economy and the environment in the Whitechapel Gallery's summer exhibition, *The Spirit of Utopia*.

Including new commissions and works by artists, architects and designers Yto Barrada; Theaster Gates; Ha Za Vu Zu; Peter Liversidge; Ostengruppe; Claire Pentecost; Pedro Reyes; Superflex; Time/Bank and Wayward Plants, the exhibition features a series of installations and events which propose playful, proactive and creatively pragmatic models for social change.

The exhibition opens with Mexican artist Pedro Reyes' *Sanatorium* (2013), an installation evoking a temporary clinic offering participatory 'therapies', mixing art and psychology. Visitors are able to take part in a range of self-discovery sessions created by the artist. Exploring teaching, skill and craft, US artist Theaster Gates' installation *Soul Manufacturing Corporation* (2011-ongoing) has a skilled potter training an apprentice to make bricks and throw clay on a wheel in a working pottery studio in the gallery space, producing utilitarian pots that will be displayed as they are created.

The exhibition continues with *Improbable Botany* (2013), a series of experimental greenhouses by the London landscape practice Wayward Plants which proposes new possibilities in food production - from futuristic seed gardens to sending plants to space. Our relationship to the environment is also explored by US artist Claire Pentecost who draws connections between the health of local soil from urban farms to the health of the human body.

A platform for alternative economies is presented through an installation by Time/Bank. Founded by artists Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle, Time/Bank is an international project which creates micro-economies based on the exchange of time and skills. Their display including film, posters and the Time/Bank archive is complemented by a series of lectures by prominent theorists and academics who will utilise the archive for the duration of the show. The Danish collective Superflex promote self-organisation and counter-economic strategies. Their film *The Financial Crisis* (2009) sees a hypnotist addressing the financial meltdown of 2008.

French-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada's installation explores the relationship between personal histories and bureaucracy by examining

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her experience as an artist within the historic context of colonial power. Playfully presented through a newly commissioned poster series titled *Say Don't Say*, the posters use terms which subversively react to bureaucratic demands.

Other highlights from the exhibition include British artist Peter Liversidge's series of written proposals, resulting in ongoing performances and events staged throughout the duration of the show, such as the creation of a fictitious exhibition archive and a public comedy night in the Gallery. Turkish collective Ha Za Vu Zu will create a new film work on the history of the world, involving visitors taking part in a live performance, while Russian design lab Ostengruppe have created specifically commissioned posters for the exhibition.

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition is supported by the Whitechapel Gallery Future Fund with additional support from the Danish Arts Council Committee for International Visual Arts, Embassy of Mexico in the United Kingdom, Embassy of the United States in the United Kingdom, Outset Contemporary Art Fund and SAHA, Istanbul.
- *The Spirit of Utopia* has been conceived jointly by Director Iwona Blazwick; Curators Daniel F. Herrmann, Kirsty Ogg and Nayia Yiakoumaki and Head of Education and Public Programmes Sofia Victorino. With assistance by Habda Rashid.
- *The Spirit of Utopia* is accompanied by an online catalogue.
- Theaster Gates, Pedro Reyes and Peter Liversidge have created limited editions for the Whitechapel Gallery to accompany the exhibition.

Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays, 11am – 9pm.
Admission free. Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Nearest London Underground Station: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR. T + 44 (0) 20 7522 7888
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