

The background of the entire image is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central, swirling pattern of deep blue and purple hues, which transitions into a lighter, golden-yellow color towards the edges. The overall effect is reminiscent of a kaleidoscope or a microscopic view of a complex material, with intricate, organic-looking lines and shapes. The text is overlaid on this background.

SH/FT presents

KALE/DOSCOPIC REALMS

For more information about the associated talks and events programme that accompanies this exhibition, please visit www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk / www.shift.jenniferlaurengallery.com

Should any of the works be of interest, please email Jennifer on: info@jenniferlaurengallery.com

#KaleidoscopicRealms



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Front cover detail: Nnena Kalu, *Drawing 72*, 2023,
Acrylic pen, graphite, and pen on paper, 90 × 170cm × 3 works.
Courtesy of the artist and ActionSpace

SHIFT PRESENTS KALE/DOSCOPIC REALMS

8 June – 3 November 2024

Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery

‘Kaleidoscopic Realms’ presents an installation of artworks by eight contemporary artists revealing a colourful insight into intuitive mark-making in its many forms, alongside films made about the artists and their practice. The featured artists have all travelled different paths to firmly ground themselves within their art practice, each with a distinctive style.

Unfettered explorations of repetition, pattern, detail, and culture weave their way into the artwork. A clear sense of storytelling and play often features, whilst others just ooze the pure joy of mark-making and material investigations. Ceramics, embroidery, pen drawings, and large-scale painted canvases invite closer viewing, whilst an impressive installation of bold, wrapped sculptures entices you with its strong presence.

Co-curated by Jennifer Gilbert of Jennifer Lauren Gallery and artist Christopher Samuel, ‘Kaleidoscopic Realms’ was born out of project SHIFT, from Jennifer, which exists to give recognition and to amplify the visibility, voices and works of UK-based neurodivergent and learning disabled visual artists within contemporary art. The project, and exhibition, are designed to challenge preconceived ideas, and to stimulate conversation and interaction.

Each of these artists work out of studios across the UK who tirelessly support not only these artists, but many other incredibly talented artists: Siddharth Gadiyar (Project Art Works), James Gladwell (Barrington Farm), Thompson Hall (ActionSpace), Richard Hunt (Shadowlight Artists), Nnena Kalu (ActionSpace), Cameron Morgan (Project Ability), Michelle Roberts (Project Art Works), and Leslie Thompson (Venture Arts).

SIDDHARTH GADIYAR

Project Art Works



Text by Angela Pell, Writer

Siddharth Gadiyar, *Untitled*, 2018, Acrylic and tape on paper, 296 × 244cm.
Courtesy of Project Art Works

There are not many artists whose work I have seen that have left such a lasting impression on me. I have known Sid for a long time now as my own son Johnny, attended the same school. Several years later, I was privileged to be present on the day that his work arrived at Phoenix Art Space, Brighton, ahead of his first solo exhibition. I can distinctly remember the moment that Sid's huge abstract pieces (which were rolled up) were laid out on the floor, and one by one opened, looked at and discussed. It was like watching beautiful, exotic, giant carpets being unravelled. I was swept away by the sheer size, colour, and captivating joy of each piece. I had a visceral reaction.

I had heard from his mother Susmitha, how art had allowed Sid to express himself and had provided a space for him to escape into. In one piece, Sid had painted, 'Siddharth love mummy' all over the painting. This was the first time ever that he had conveyed that message to her in words.

Understanding some of the numerous challenges Sid faces everyday - and that Sid isn't able to explain or tell us what any of this artwork means - adds a whole other layer to the magic of his paintings. They become even more mysterious. They have passed through the filter of 'Sid', who experiences life in such a different and largely unknown way to the majority of us.

Sid regularly attends Project Art Works, a supported studio in Hastings. The studio offers him access to a place where he can express himself freely - where he isn't constrained - and he in turn gifts us this incredibly inspiring work.

Andy Cooper, one of the artist team at Project Art Works says, "*Sid has a contagious energy and paints on a large scale every week. He will work quickly to cover paper and then likes to take his time and observe the way paint or water moves and flows. His work is bold in colour and thoughtfully instinctive in application. We often listen to music in the studio and lose our sense of time. We exchange whistles and playful noises. There is a drama to his painting process, and we often share a smile or a laugh when we know a good painting is on its way.*"

JAMES GLADWELL

Barrington Farm



Text by Dr. Isabella Rosner, Textile historian and curator

James Gladwell, *Foxes Looking Through The Grass*, 2021,
Embroidery on calico, 53 × 36cm. Courtesy the artist and Barrington Farm

James Gladwell doesn't use a hoop or frame to embroider. There is nothing between him and his fabric, which lays on a table. Watching him embroider almost looks like a virtuoso pianist delicately tapping a piano's keys or a dancer gracefully prancing from one foot to another. Gladwell's hands skip across white cotton and TA-DA! a stitch has appeared, almost as if by magic. It's not magic, but rather the tiny, practiced movements of a man who stitches as easily as he breathes. As his left hand holds the fabric, a needle in the right hand pierces the fabric horizontally. His left hand greets the needle after it pierces the fabric and then quickly passes the needle back to the right hand. Almost in the same moment the left hand pulls the thread taut. In what feels like an instant, a diagonal stitch adorns the cotton. And now, onto the next one, again and again. What emerges is a sea of cross stitches, the physical manifestations of the images that paint Gladwell's dreams.

Gladwell takes these images – a horned face, a smiling Medusa-esque figure, flowers in watering cans – directly from his subconscious to the page or even the cotton. Out of this mixture of fiction and reality comes an explosion of colour and shape that's reminiscent of the embroidery of Madge Gill and the textile designs of Sonia Delaunay.

Gladwell's white cotton is a blank slate upon which he embroiders everything from scenes of everyday life to fantastical creatures to everyday objects illustrated in thrilling technicolour. This blank slate is often un-ironed, the grid of folds and creases in an evocative dialogue with the gridded framework of cross stitches. Add to this conversation moments of tension in the fabric created by tight stitches and the viewer is not solely seeing but also listening in on a discussion between fabric and thread about having room to breathe and feeling constricted.

Gladwell's work is a many-layered thing – real life and the dream world, thread upon fabric, one stitch upon another, and colours in tandem. From this worldbuilding blossoms a brighter, more vivid, and more electrifying universe.

THOMPSON HALL

ActionSpace



**Text by Anthony Spira,
Director, MK Gallery**

Thompson Hall, *Living on a Breadline*, 2019, Acrylic on canvas,
100 × 70cm. Courtesy of the artist and ActionSpace

A Call to Arms

This series of graphic paintings by Thompson Hall home in on the stories that matter: pollution, poverty, isolation and injustice. They are inspired ‘by the inequalities of society and what is happening in the world around me’, the artist says. ‘Trying to tell people how this makes me feel’, Hall produces immediate and emotive responses to the most harrowing reports of current affairs. His painting is all the more powerful for wearing its heart squarely on its sleeve.

Painted in a direct, spontaneous style that underlines the seriousness of his message, Hall’s patterned compositions are depicted in a world of strong contrasts. Urgent messages are conveyed in thick black outlines over flat bands of vibrant colour. These paintings belong to the tradition of protest art, insistently pricking our conscience. They also evoke the language of textiles; Hall’s approach recalls the banners and posters of a social movement. Like trade union banners, whose messages they also share, Hall’s paintings often embellish a central, defining image with decorative, reinforcing features. A shorthand of symbols - luxury brands, recycling logos, bristling emojis - creates an emotional hotline. Sad face, angry face, blank face... repetitive forms heighten their content, gathering force and building their impact.

Floating in a sea of pastel ripples, ‘Isolation Nation’ shows dark, shadowy silhouettes set, ‘alone’ and ‘helpless’, against doors or windows. Like some grim capitalist board game, ‘Universal Credit Crisis’ is peppered with faces like counters or coins, penned in by a border of bank notes. ‘Living on a Breadline’ centres angry, anguished expressions around a makeshift food bank. In his paintings, Hall shines a bright light on these tragedies - 2.98 million people use food banks in the UK today, up from 60,000 in 2010* - depicting a powerful portrait of a state in decline. The artist, here, is an activist on a crusade against injustice; these paintings are a summons for help, an appeal for solidarity and a call to arms in the face of a cruel world.

* Figures from the Trussell Trust alone, 2023

RICHARD HUNT

Shadowlight Artists



Text by
Sara Lowes, Head of Communities,
Practice & Participation, Modern Art Oxford

Richard Hunt, *Sea World: Tropical of the Twist*, 2023, Acrylic paint and Sharpies on canvas, 60 × 50cm. Courtesy the artist and Shadowlight Artists

Self-taught, Richard works across a range of scales, creating paintings, installations and occasionally introducing improvisations in sound and image which speaks to a recurring interest with water, the beach and oceans, perhaps recalling earlier influences from the bays of Gibraltar, where Hunt grew up.

‘The Spray of the Boat’ (2023) comprises ‘underwaterly’ scenes in deep greens and blues, revealing seaweed-like silhouettes and glimpses of other aquatic species, highlighted with white fin-like curves and flicks. Other shapes resemble bodies, lost objects or remains. There is a fluidity and rhythm within Hunt’s composition introducing us to the playful parent child relationship in ‘The beach with the mummy and baby crab’ (2020) and the ‘Amazing Colour Dragon’ (2020) with geometric type shapes and decorative ‘klimt-esque’ patterns.

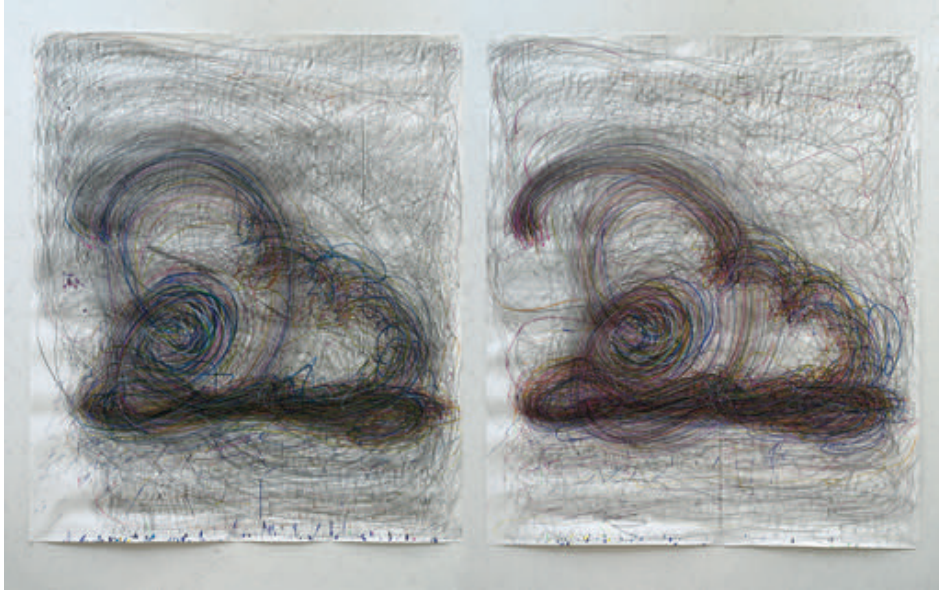
In the ‘Sea World of the Horse’ (2023) Richard provides another perspective between viewer, land, and sea. Four friendly figures bob between the horizon or boundary. An island in the distance, supported beneath the sea’s surface by one of Hunt’s mysterious figures. ‘Sea World: Tropical of the Twist’ (2023) invites a macro perspective to Hunt’s painterly approach, comparable with a richly embroidered, textile piece.

Artists’ perpetual interest with water has long provided a space in which to consider change, the unknown, and a fluid interpretation of time and place, in which today’s contemporary artists such as Caroline Caycedo’s study on human interaction with rivers ‘Be Dammed’ (2012) and Superflex’ ‘We Are All in the Same Boat’ (2018) call our attention to climate emergencies and the consequences of consumerist society. More importantly perhaps, water has offered a space for the consideration of the biotic community as a whole, moving beyond contemporary social boundaries, to a more hopeful future of harmonious possibilities.

In Hunt’s work, his interest in the sea brings forth a series of encounters with friendly yet unrecognisable figures. Evoking similar shapes to that of abstract British painter Paule Vézelay (1892-1984) who often included floating ‘quasi-biomorphic shapes’ with the aim of creating works which were ‘pleasing and happy’. Hunt’s paintings suggest a similar aim.

NNENA KALU

ActionSpace



**Text by Linsey Young,
TATE Curator of British Contemporary Art**

Nnena Kalu, *Drawing 45*, 2023, Acrylic pen, graphite, and pen on paper, 149.5 × 175cm × 2 works. Courtesy of the artist and ActionSpace

While Kalu's work has developed significantly over the past quarter of a century, colour, texture, and scale remain constant. Across the page and in space she uses circular, rhythmic mark making to build dense and layered works that take up space in the world and are unapologetically exuberant.

Working on paper Kalu's rhythmic drawings are always developed in pairs, on large sheets of paper that are adhered to the wall and worked on simultaneously. An artist who always stands and moves while making this mirroring or echoing of each drawing might reflect the artist's physical motion or the scale of her own body in relation to her canvas. In recent years the fluid, circular forms she draws have grown in scale, with central, dominant forms emerging as she works and re-works the page with marker pen, pencil, or ink. The repetitive nature of Kalu's drawings, bring to mind the work of Judith Bernstein (b.1942) whose monumental screw drawings, while consciously political in context and form, hold the more opaque rhythms and vibrations of her body.

In 2010 Kalu began to work in sculpture, retaining the interest in rhythmic forms and colour that are so characteristic of her work on paper. Using a considered library of everyday materials such as long strips of material, tape, paper, VHS tape or wool the circular forms of her drawings become 3D as she binds or wraps repeatedly around textile, paper, and cellophane centres. These central forms can be re-wrapped and altered many times over multiple installations to create fabulously unruly sculptures. These works are often site-specific, made as interventions directly responding to, or even growing out of the buildings where they have been commissioned. Across her practice there is a sense of an exploration of space and of world making, the shapes and textures suggesting some other realm that is being manifested through Kalu's touch, one might think of the rickety, joy filled works of Phyllida Barlow (1944-2023) or of the small-scale papier mâché works of Vincent Fectau (b.1969) whose carefully constructed and coloured sculptures contain objects known only to the artist.

While Kalu's materials are humble, her finished works are expressive, luxurious, and abundant.

CAMERON MORGAN

Project Ability



Text by Charlie Hammond, Artist

Cameron Morgan, *Watch the Birdy*, 2024, Ceramic and textile, 31 × 28 × 16cm. Courtesy the artist and Project Ability

I am lucky to occasionally work with Cameron Morgan. Since 2017 we have frequently made screen-prints together, a collaboration with an equal authorship, a conversation and friendship made concrete through direct working on a shared outcome.

Drawing and particularly line is key in Cameron's work, where cartooning may attempt to reduce an object to its simplest forms. Cameron's approach is similar, though often surprising. He will leave out the obvious, and accentuate parts over-looked, in doing so he is able to get to the essence of a subject. In his paintings, drawing is not only the starting point but one he returns to during the process with bright outlines, breathing life into the image.

Photography plays a vital role in Cameron's making. He has used cameras for years, an ever-present tool for collecting everyday imagery, his travel experiences and photos of friends and family. This is an ongoing project, his own archive of photography is something to behold, amounting to hundreds, maybe thousands of images organised into albums and filling Jacob's cream crackers boxes... "*the perfect size for photos.*"

For this new series of works he has turned his gaze back towards this familiar tool, looking at cameras in all their varied forms. We had begun to explore this in our screenprints and Cameron has now expanded and grown the subject through painting and drawing with his vibrant colour palette. Most recently he has been making ceramic cameras, combining his sculpting skills with beautifully embroidered camera straps. There are even brightly glazed pottery photographs and rolls of film, if only real cameras were this joyful!

Over the years I have enjoyed Cameron's wisdom, 'Q: What train are you getting today? A: I always just get the next one.' This sums up his approach; you can never miss a train if you are always going for the next one. Cameron's amazing output leaves me in awe, he is incredibly prolific, and it is with this focused concentration that the work develops, morphing in new and dynamic ways but always unmistakably Cameron's. We can all look forward to 'the next one.'

MICHELLE ROBERTS

Project Art Works



When first encountering the works of Michelle Roberts the visual feast in front of us draws us into a world that bridges our engagement with her imaginative reality, a reality we share. The titles provide a point of entry and are readily recognisable: films she's seen, usually musicals, such as 'Singing in the Rain', family holidays, 'Walking the Dogs', excursions to exhibitions and places, national events seen on television and so on. However, these realities are imaginatively transformed into images of intriguing complexity, both in their overall composition and in the ever-diminishing detail that fill the interlocking, abstract forms and characters that populate the paintings.

Michelle works slowly and methodically, typically drawing out the composition first which is improvised rather than planned and completed without hesitation or correction. The composition is then patiently coloured using artist quality felt pens which enable the control and detail she desires. The act of making the work is, of necessity, carried out at close quarters, it's immersive, her field of vision filled with the evolving image. The viewer is equally and of necessity, drawn into this immersive experience, brief glancing and moving on won't do. The works, by their very nature, reward slow looking, a process we are tending to lose touch with the more our attention span is impacted by the digital world.

This slow looking is especially rewarding when viewing Michelle's folding drawing books. Like the paintings they develop over a period of weeks but unlike them the images are produced sequentially. I don't know if each image influences its neighbour but it's tempting to imagine the possibility that a narrative is unfolding, if so it's a narrative without a story. The visual language is recognisably the same but pattern making becomes more pronounced. As with any enjoyable experience, take your time, and savour the delights in front of you.

Text by Tony Colley

Michelle Roberts, *Castles*, 2024, Pen on canvas, 122 × 92cm.

Courtesy of Project Art Works

LESLIE THOMPSON

Venture Arts



Text by Richard Phoenix, Artist and writer

Leslie Thompson, *The A-Team* (part of the *Many of the TV Screens Everywhere* series), 2023, Ink pen and pencil crayon on paper, 42 × 30cm.
Courtesy the artist and Venture Arts

Becoming Culture

Leslie and I first met when we did an event together at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester. Leslie and five other artists from Venture Arts, the studio he has worked in since 1997, were sharing their work and we were all talking about it. Leslie, wearing a bright pink shirt with a huge lion emblazoned across it, sat next to me quietly drawing throughout. He put down his sketchbook to dance when an opportunity arose to do so but then picked it back up immediately after the music finished. I'm drawn to people that resolutely do their own thing and I didn't know his work, so I was keen to see what he had been drawing. When he showed me, I was taken aback by the beautiful delicate lines I saw forming characters and scenes on the page.

I learnt that these lines eventually become bold, colourful and dense works which centre predominantly around a love for animals and people. Those close to him, family, old teachers, and those seen on TV, movies, comics or whose music he enjoys. In Leslie's badge pieces, 'Clipper Castle', 'Space 1999' and 'Tarzan Gordon Scott', an eclectic range of these "icons of the past" from TV, wrestling, music, and film are depicted in intricate, colourful drawings on the surface of badges. These are collected together on a mount, acting as a mini gallery wall which Leslie surrounds with text. The connection to Pop-Art is apparent, the way popular culture is a subject matter, but they make me think more of another avid collector (and badge fan) Peter Blake within that world. His expression of the self through love for popular culture rather than irony or cynicism rings truer to Leslie's work. The work becomes a celebration of the things and world that make him.

Leslie reflects but also builds these worlds. Like another contemporary of his, Hew Locke, Leslie has played with depictions of the Royal family. Through a Government Art Collection commissioned series, he depicts stars of TV and film as spectators to the King's Coronation. In one, the A-Team are surrounding a vintage TV watching the ceremony unfold. They're enjoying watching it together and like much of Leslie's work it's a world I'm excited by and happy that "*Best Artist Superstar drawer*" Leslie made exist. As facilitator James Pollitt puts it, "*it's not satirical, it's this idea of becoming part of culture.*"

About Jennifer Gilbert, Co-Curator

Jennifer Gilbert is a Manchester-based gallerist, freelance producer and curator, working with disabled, neurodivergent, self-taught and overlooked artists, and in the realms of arts and health. In 2017 she launched the Jennifer Lauren Gallery to internationally showcase these artists, having previously spent years managing a national arts charity for under-represented artists. Jennifer is passionate about showcasing the voices and artworks of these artists to wider audiences, allowing their true artistic language to shine. In 2020, Jennifer set up SHIFT to give recognition to and amplify the voices and works of learning disabled and neurodivergent artists and makers across the UK. She has curated exhibitions at Carl Freedman Gallery in Margate and Flowers Gallery in London; provided curatorial advisory to 'differently various' at the Barbican alongside brain injury survivors; co-collaborated on a solo show for an autistic ceramicist at James Cohan Gallery in New York; and is preparing to curate exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia and Tokyo in 2025.

www.jenniferlaurengallery.com / www.shift.jenniferlaurengallery.com

About Christopher Samuel, Co-Curator

Christopher Samuel is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice is rooted in identity and disability politics, often echoing the many facets of his own lived experience. His work tells stories, often raising awareness of his experiences as a black disabled artist, missing representation within archives, and shared narratives from others in similar circumstances. His work has featured at the Wellcome Collection and Attenborough Arts Centre, it sits within the Government Art Collection, and he is currently working on a commission with Birmingham Museums Trust. He also has a commission featured in the café space at Nottingham Castle during 'Kaleidoscopic Realms'.

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