ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

Exhibition Tours
Daily, 1pm & Last Fridays, 7pm, Free
Join the SLG’s gallery assistants for an informal, drop-in tour of the current exhibitions.

ALSO ON AT THE SLG

An exhibition of working drawings and a film capturing the transformation of the SLG’s new permanent garden designed by Gabriel Orozco.
Until 8 January 2017
First Floor Galleries, Free

New permanent garden by Gabriel Orozco
Open every Saturday and Sunday, 11am–6pm, and by appointment.

ROMAN ONDAK:
THE SOURCE OF ART IS
IN THE LIFE OF A PEOPLE

29 SEP 2016 – 6 JAN 2017
MAIN GALLERY
ADMISSION FREE
EXHIBITION GUIDE

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southlondongallery.org/fans

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SLG
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For his first solo show in London for more than a decade, internationally acclaimed artist Roman Ondak presents an exhibition lasting one hundred days that brings together a new body of work exploring ideas around the passage of time and the intertwining of present and past. The exhibition title, The Source of Art is in the Life of a People, is taken from the inscription on the South London Gallery’s original nineteenth century marquetry floor designed by Walter Crane. Usually hidden from public view, Ondak has uncovered the floor to reveal it to the public for the first time in many years, harnessing the coincidence of past and present which underpins all the works within the show.

Symbolising a period of one hundred years, on each of the hundred days of the exhibition a pre-sawn disk is separated from the trunk of an oak tree to reveal the delineation in ink of one of its age-defining rings alongside a stamped text identifying a key historical event which occurred in that year. The artist’s inevitably subjective selection of events exposes the impossibility of an objective, unbiased history, as well as the impact of teaching on our understanding and interpretation of the past. Entitled Event Horizon, his central sculpture gradually evolves over the course of the show as the oak tree is incrementally transferred from floor to wall to create a notional calendar, setting the tone for other works in which the historic collides with the contemporary.

High up on the gallery walls, in Awesome Rules of Language illustrations from ‘Teaching the Language’, a 1960s children’s text book which Ondak found in a second-hand bookshop, are reproduced on a huge scale. The book outlines principles and practices inherent in the teaching of language, as well as instructions on social codes of behaviour. Here the illustrations have been daubed with drawings and comments by adolescents living locally to the SLG, invited by Ondak to express whatever they chose to in the public arena of the gallery space, thereby injecting the outdated text book with alternative nuance and meaning. Harking back to school days in a very different way, four blackboards salvaged from Ondak’s native Slovakia introduce a hint of autobiographical content variable into the show but equally symbolise the passing down of knowledge from one generation to the next. In Four Moon Phases, the bowl of a ladle is inserted into each of the boards, positioned in sequence to symbolise four phases of the moon in a further reference to the passage of time and the perpetual oscillation between past and present which inevitably informs everyone’s existence.

Roman Ondak’s work has been included in group exhibitions at institutions such as Tate Modern, London (2016, 2006); MALBA Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, United States (2013); Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany (2012); MoMA PS1, New York United States (2011); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2010, 2002); ICA, Boston, United States (2008); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany (2005), among others.

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