

SLG

PRESS RELEASE

ILONA SAGAR: CORRESPONDENCE O

First Floor Galleries. 13 December 2017– 25 February 2018
OPENING PREVIEW, TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER, 6.30-8.30PM



Still from *Correspondence O*, Ilona Sagar 2017.

In her first institutional solo show in the UK, **Ilona Sagar** presents *Correspondence O*, a new installation, exhibition and publication exploring the history of the radical Pioneer Health Centre in Peckham and its subsequent conversion into a gated community.

Sagar's two-channel moving image installation presents the complex, changing landscape of public health and the social shift towards a more egocentric, user-focused and technology-infused understanding of wellness. Following a female protagonist and group of young boys, the fragmented, non-linear narrative collapses past into present, melding architectural and human physicality with historical and experimental medical research, personal testimony and archival footage. The exhibition will also feature rarely seen material from The Peckham Experiment archives, including interview transcripts, publications, photographs, letters and other ephemera assembled by the artist.

In January 2018, a publication will be launched, expanding the ideas explored in the exhibition. Conceived as an arrangement of text drawn from Sagar's research, the publication presents original photographs and film stills, correspondence and the architectural plans for the Centre amongst other material. The book also includes commissioned essays by writer Owen Hatherley; Professor Paul Fletcher, Director of Studies in Medicine (pre-clinical) at the University of Cambridge; artist Ilona Sagar; Dr Felicity Thomas, Research Fellow on the Cultural Contexts of Health at the University of Exeter; and Dr Nina Wakeford, artist and Reader in Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Correspondence O is informed by extensive research within the archives of the Pioneer Health Centre held by the Wellcome Collection and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and contemporary medical research conducted by the Behavioural and Clinical Neuroscience Institute at the University of Cambridge. Embodying the original collaborative nature of the Experiment, Sagar has also worked closely with residents of the present day Centre on the production and development of the work.

The Pioneer Health Centre in South London was founded in 1926 in response to rising public concern over the health of working class people and an increasing interest in preventative social medicine and social experimentation. It culminated in the Peckham Experiment, a twenty-four year study founded on principles of self-organisation, local empowerment and social connection as fundamental to health. The Experiment took place in a new, purpose-built space comprising large, airy rooms with floor to ceiling windows which enabled biologists to observe members of the local community as they took part in physical exercise, games and clubs. The Centre closed in 1950 when its innovative approach conflicted with the ideals of the new National Health Service, though its influence continues to resonate.

In parallel to *Correspondence O*, the South London Gallery's young people's forum Art Assassins are exploring the history of the Peckham Experiment with the Pioneer Health Foundation, the Wellcome Collection's Library, the Science Gallery at King's College and community partners Peckham Vision and the Wilderness Wood, alongside a historian-in-residence, heritage experts and artists.

Correspondence O is co-commissioned and produced in partnership with *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Supported by a Wellcome Arts Award. Sound Partner: Bowers & Wilkins. With thanks to residents Tom Bell of Mowma Projects, James Hardy of Live Fit and Luke Frost of Heretic Studio for their contributions to the project.

Correspondence O will be presented at CCA: Centre for Contemporary Art for Glasgow International, 20 April – 7 May 2018.

For further information and high resolution images please contact: **Anna Jones, Head of Communications** on **020 7703 6120** or email **Anna.Jones@southlondongallery.org**
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NOTES TO EDITORS

South London Gallery, 65-67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH. Open | Tuesday – Sunday 11am – 6pm, except Wednesday and the last Friday of the month until 9pm. Closed Monday. Admission free. T. 020 7703 6120 E. mail@southlondongallery.org **www.southlondongallery.org**

About Ilona Sagar

Ilona Sagar lives and works in London. Using a diverse range of media spanning moving-image, text, performance and assemblage, she has formed a body of work that responds to the social and historical context found in the public and private spaces we inhabit. A significant aspect of her practice is the broad cross-disciplinary dialogue generated through collaboration with a range of art and scientific disciplines; including dance, architecture and neurology. She has a practice that explores the link between language, surface, technologies and the body through our increasingly mediated encounters in social, political and experiential space. Illusion and material [dis]honesty set the stage for works which seek to seduce, alluding to something familiar yet other.

Recent projects include: HereAfter residency White Building, SPACE Studios, London (2017); Solo Show, Pump House Gallery, (2016); solo show, Art Licks Weekend with DKUK and Ballad of Peckham Rye (2016); performance commission, The Performance Studio (2016); solo show with performances Tenderpixel, London UK (2015); solo show with performance, Vitrine Gallery, London UK (2015); Acadia Missa, Bátor Tábo Budapest (2015), STO Werkstatt in collaboration with Tomas Klassnik (2015); Art Rotterdam, Main Section, Rotterdam NL with Tenderpixel (2015). **www.ilonasagar.com**

About The Ballad of Peckham Rye

Taking its title and concept from Muriel Spark's 1960 novel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (TBOPR) uses the text as a starting point for working with artists to commission and produce new work that draws on, imagines or celebrates the distinctive architecture, geological monuments, histories and experiences of the area. Through major commissions and smaller projects TBOPR champion the work of emerging and underrepresented artists, often outside the context of traditional arts venues, to allow the creation of shared dialogues with the local community. Many of TBOPR's projects are an artists' first public solo commission in London. www.theballadofpeckhamrye.com

About Wellcome Collection

Wellcome Collection is a free museum and library for the incurably curious. Inspired by the medical objects and curiosities collected by Henry Wellcome, it connects science, medicine, life and art. Through its exhibitions, live programming, and digital and publishing activity, it makes thought provoking content which aims to challenge how we think and feel about health. The library is one of the world's finest for the study of the social and cultural contexts of health. It houses some 2.5million items including rare medieval manuscripts which relate to medicine and the body, such as vividly illustrated almanacs, scrolls and practitioners' manuals, as well as a growing collection of contemporary resources.

Wellcome Collection is part of Wellcome, a global charitable foundation that exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. Both politically and financially independent, we support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate. wellcomecollection.org

About the South London Gallery

The South London Gallery (SLG) is an internationally renowned public institution with an established reputation for its programme of contemporary art exhibitions, film and performance events, with integrated education projects for children, young people and adults. Over the past decade the exhibitions programme has featured solo shows by established international figures such as Katharina Grosse, Ellen Gallagher, Thomas Hirschhorn, Rashid Johnson, Gabriel Kuri, Rivane Neuenschwander, Roman Ondak, Amie Siegel, Erik van Lieshout and Lawrence Weiner, as well as those by younger and mid-career artists such as Alice Channer, Michael Dean, Thea Djordjadze, Ryan Gander and Oscar Murillo. Group shows bring together works by established and lesser-known British and international artists, whilst an ongoing residency programme provides opportunities for artists to develop a new body of work and exhibit at the SLG.

Over the next year the South London Gallery will be expanding into the former Peckham Road Fire Station and is currently fundraising to enable its renovation and transformation into a cultural centre which will be an annexe to the SLG's main site. The new gallery, archive and cultural centre will open to the public in 2018. The Grade II listed building, dating from 1867, was generously donated to the SLG in recognition of the pressing need to expand its programmes, impact and long term sustainability. The project has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of £1,650,000 thanks to National Lottery players. The £4m project has also received a substantial grant from the Mayor's London Regeneration Fund as well as funding from a number of trusts, foundations, individuals and commercial galleries to raise a total of £3.6m. The gallery is now embarking on the final stage of its fundraising campaign to secure the final £400,000 to cover restoration costs and establish a fund for the future running of the building.

www.southlondongallery.org

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