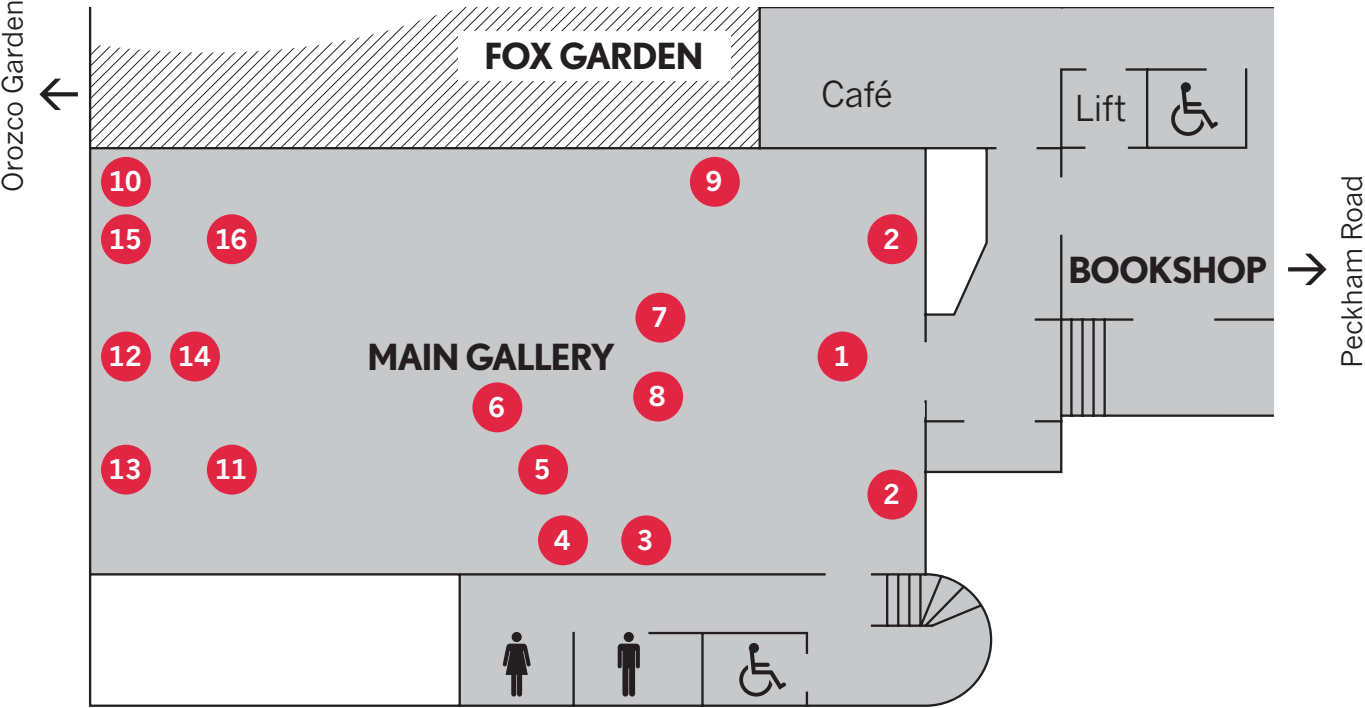


LIST OF WORKS AND FLOORPLAN

- First room**
Clockwise from entrance:
- 1. *Pittu Pithu Pitōō*, 2022
Fiberglass, resin
 - 2. *Sheba*, 2022
Vinyl stickers
 - 3. *Portrait in a Landscape (The Yorkshire Rose (Front Elevation))*, 2022
Oil on canvas
 - 4. *Portrait in a Landscape (The Yorkshire Rose (Side Elevation))*, 2022
Oil on canvas
 - 5. *What you Make of it (Trace)*, 2022
Tin bath, oars, pulley, rope
 - 6. *Higher Purchase*, 2022
Wooden doors, reflective foil, engraved name tags
 - 7. *Walls in the Head*, 2022
Cloth, wood, metal, acrylic
 - 8. *Iceberg*, 2022
Perspex, wood
 - 9. *Knight (Rats)*, 2022
Wool felt, lycra, soft toys

- Second room**
Clockwise from entrance:
- 10. *Arc of a Diver*, 2022
Bronze, bucket, rope
 - 11. *Inheritance Tracks, (Odds and Evens)*, 2022
Cardboard cutout, stairlift mechanism, soft toy, cement
 - 12. *Drift (Duck and Move)*, 2022
Vinyl sticker
 - 13. *Portrait in a Landscape (black and yellow)*, 2022
Oil on canvas
 - 14. *Johnnys*, 2022
Neon light
 - 15. *Portrait in a Landscape (black and green)*, 2022
Oil on canvas
 - 16. *I am a Rainbow*, 2022
Plastic shipping containers



ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

Simeon Barclay in conversation with Morgan Quaintance
Wed 26 Oct, 6:30–7:30pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
Join artists Simeon Barclay and Morgan Quaintance for a live conversation at the SLG. Together they will discuss Barclay's current solo exhibition *In the Name of the Father*, along with the shared themes and ideas that run through both their practices.

Simeon Barclay in conversation with Ajamu X
Wed 16 Nov, 6:30–7:30pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
Artist, archive curator and radical sex activist, Ajamu X (aka Master Aaab) will be in conversation with artist Simeon Barclay. Using words, sound and images, Ajamu and Barclay will explore the influence of their hometown of Huddersfield on their trajectories as artists.

Visit the SLG website to book your tickets:
www.southlondongallery.org/whats-on/events/

Exhibition generously supported by Suling C Mead and Workplace.

With special thanks to our Production Sponsor: Omni Colour.
OMNI

📷 Photography
Please share your photographs of the exhibition with us
🐦 @SLG_artupdates
📷 @southlondongallery

SLG

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WHAT'S ON AT THE FIRE STATION

Also on at the SLG
Rene Matić: upon this rock
23 Sep – 27 Nov 2022
Fire Station, Free
upon this rock is a solo exhibition by British artist Rene Matić (b. 1997). It continues their long-term interrogation of 'Britishness', exploring how the nation's past manifests in its present. The exhibition also addresses themes of subculture, faith and family.

SIMEON BARCLAY:
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

23 SEP – 27 NOV 2022
MAIN GALLERY
ADMISSION FREE

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Cover photo by Simeon Barclay, 2022

SLG

INTRODUCTION

This major solo exhibition by Simeon Barclay features an installation of new works in the Main Gallery. Known for his multimedia practice which incorporates sculpture, collage, neon, and moving image, Simeon Barclay explores the ways we navigate and perform identity based on cultural memory. His art is particularly engaged with aspects of aesthetics, and he often creates interventions in the architecture of gallery spaces through colour, light, and the use of industrial materials. His influences range from folk tales, fashion, and club culture, through to concepts of masculinity and the history of art.

In the Name of the Father brings together a new body of works that extends Barclay’s enquiry into questions of legacy, identity, and masculinity, through the lens of the father-son relationship. Works in various media weave together multiple references to the personal, the social and the geographical as an attempt to understand and negotiate one’s relationship to place.

Photo by Simeon Barclay, 2020



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Simeon Barclay (b. 1975, Huddersfield, UK) received his BA from Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds in 2010 and an MFA from Goldsmiths College, London in 2014. Barclay is a member of the Arts Council Acquisition Committee since 2021 and a member of the advisory committee for the Freelands Foundation since 2018, and in 2020 he was selected to be included in the British Art Show 9.

He has exhibited both nationally and internationally including at Southbank Centre, Tate Britain, South London Gallery, Cubitt Gallery, Jerwood Space, London; Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Workplace Foundation, Gateshead; Holden Gallery, Manchester; The Tetley, Leeds; Liverpool Biennial, The Bluecoat, Liverpool; Arcadia Missa, New York; Galerie Lisa Kandhofer, Vienna; Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels and W139, Amsterdam. His work is in the Arts Council Collection, London; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Manchester Art Gallery and Whitworth Art Gallery collection, Manchester.

CONVERSATION

Simeon Barclay and Margot Heller, Director of the South London Gallery, in conversation, 8 August 2022

Margot Heller: The first thing visitors to your South London Gallery exhibition are confronted by is a huge fake rock obstructing access to the rest of the show. The view is then obscured again by a wall of locked office doors. Only one of them is open and leads to the last area in the exhibition where a neon sign, *Johnnys*, refers to the name of a former nightclub in Huddersfield that you remember having been hard to get into as a youth. These are just some of many references in this exhibition, and your practice more generally, to barriers and the relative inaccessibility of culture.

Simeon Barclay: Yes, and I suppose it’s about being on the other side, about being on the periphery, and that being a source of agitation as well as being a way of seeing the world. It comes directly out of my own complicated relationship with architecture and the way that certain buildings, through their own distinct language, have communicated and acted as a proxy for knowledge and power. This anxiety drives all my installations. I see architectural interventions as a means to create my own landscapes through which I try to make the viewer consider the subtle or sometimes forcible ways that the fabric of a building or objects can determine their experience in space. I want them to get a sense of that negotiation with barriers, whether they be structural, psychological or both.

MH: Ideas around barriers and the impact of institutional power structures are also very present in the work titled *Walls in the Head*. The puppet on the mobile is based on the character called Carling who became ‘the Daddy’ in a brutal detention centre for young people in the 1979 film, *Scum*.

SB: Yes, I’m interested in the arms of ‘state’ and the way in which various institutions – whether they’re borstals or the school system or policing – exist with the aim of helping you but they are all ‘Daddies’ in a way. They represent systems of control in which the personal is squeezed out. These systems are like a mobile in that they are about the rational, and achieving balance, but often they aren’t sufficiently funded or equipped to deal with the idiosyncrasies of subjectivity, which leads to alienation. In puppets more generally I also see a combination of a need for support with a perilous condition of helplessness.

MH: The other puppet on the mobile was of you, but it’s been cut off and encased in a tinted Perspex cube as part of the sculpture, *Iceberg*. The cube is a play on minimalist sculpture as well as being one of a series of containers, between a chicken coop and dog kennel. Is one implication of this work that your perspective has been influenced and, in some ways, restricted by an art world context?

SB: I’ve always been interested in the idea of conflating the differences between Pop and Minimalism, and the idea of bringing content into these empty containers. Visibility and invisibility, the lens of looking, profiling, optics, and perception are what I’m interested in here, as well as self-reflection and helplessness. In a way the puppet has all this complexity tied up within it, and I really love that. It is both a representation and a composite of the shared histories and knowledge that have come into its making, both conceptually and in its crafting as an object. This is further pushed by the viewer and what they contribute through their own relationship with what they are looking at.

MH: So could the transition of the Simeon Barclay puppet from the mobile to the Perspex cube symbolise the idea of escaping from one institution only to become consumed by another?

SB: That’s right: out of the frying pan and into the fire, as they say.

MH: In relation to you being an artist and the exposure involved in having a solo show in a public gallery, which is of course another form of institution?

SB: Yes, and the irony doesn’t escape me that the show is programmed to run through the month of October, with both the art fair and Black History Month bringing about a sense of hypervisibility and awareness. Again, it’s down to optics, commodity: everybody’s got a week, a history ...a month now. In my field, this exhibiting opportunity represents an arena for starting a conversation of some kind. I always say that for years I was mute...or on mute: voices like mine weren’t allowed space in the discourse. Recent institutional shifts, as well as providing great opportunities, can leave you feeling vulnerable, like something larger is at play.

MH: You’ve partly expressed those feelings of exposure and vulnerability by choosing to dress the puppet of you in a Donald Duck outfit based on one worn by Elton John in 1980. There’s obviously a pointed humour and absurdity to that, and the show overall includes various plays on words – cocks, chickens, top dogs, johnnies etc – but this choice of outfit also comes from your interest in clothing and fashion, doesn’t it?

SB: I wanted to find an outfit that somebody like Carling in *Scum* would hate, but would also play into the history of vaudeville and English variety performance which was a staple of TV when I was growing up. I like the way an exuberant fashion sense is a form of hiding and staying out of sight whilst at the same time reinventing or living beyond yourself. It’s a way of rejecting dogmas and constraints, of being hyper-visible and invisible at the same time.

MH: The grey felt suits in the show could be seen as the opposite of that gregariousness, given their traditional associations with conformity and their uniform-like, neutralising effect in some work contexts. But at the same time, they project certain messages, as well as masking the true identity of the wearer.

SB: Yes, very much so. Suits are associated with authority, as well as being a type of container.... like a kind of armour. They are constructed out of wool felt: I was thinking topographically about where I live and my relationship to the place. The landscape can be both welcoming and foreboding, but also has the right natural resources for the many processes that go into making wool. This heavy wool fabric is reminiscent of the cheap rolls my father used to make our suits as young boys.

MH: There are also huge rat tails coming out of the trouser legs, partly in a reference to Margaret Thatcher’s 1978 speech in the lead up to her election the following year, in which she talked about people “being rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture”.

SB: I’m interested in how hard people find it to overcome fear and deeply engrained negative perceptions. People are scared of rats, seeing them as the scourge of the earth: they get bad press, when actually they are incredibly intelligent creatures. Rats for me are a way of regenerating that divisive rhetoric, a kind of cypher that has allowed various waves of migrants to contest and unravel a very mythical idea of Britishness.

MH: There are also references to your own fears in the show, such as that of your childhood next door neighbour’s Alsatian dog, and the fear of learning to swim, both of which feed into long-established stereotypes that reinforce power structures. The bronze arm bands in the show keep the tin bath boat afloat in dream-like suspension, but their function to keep something afloat is at odds with their capacity to weigh something down. They seem to symbolise an unsolvable contradiction.

SB: I get frustrated by the way history is framed and reproduced: it’s all linear. Migrants and their journeys have been made monolithic, sucked dry of humanity, love, imagination, pretension, humour, and the ability to lust and fear. Like dreaming, to float on water takes trust, a leap of faith. Arm bands are usually a means of assistance but here they are deceptive. Again, this is about illusions and the psychological impact when received histories and trusted structures fail to match expectations. I try to see the personal as porous, drawing on its ambiguity and incoherence as a means to undermine and recuperate history.

MH: There’s a surreal, dream-like quality to the installation overall, but everything within it is anchored in your own biography and the experience of growing up in Huddersfield. Childhood daydreaming about your father’s original journey to the UK, the Yorkshire Dales landscape, the mills and factory chimneys, and your work as a machinist before you left to study art, all contributed to the thinking behind the towering sculpture, *I am a Rainbow*, for example.

SB: Yes, there was a whole economy in families sending these blue plastic barrels to the Caribbean filled with English food. There was often a prestige attached to it (especially the Royal Warrant brands) but ultimately it still worked out cheaper than buying products in Carriacou, where my father is from. As a child I was often threatened with being locked in one of the barrels which frightened me but also, in an imaginative leap, allowed me to reach this mythical place my parents called ‘home’. Globalisation has probably made this practice of transportation obsolete now, and the same symptoms have rendered the mills of the North outmoded and ripe for conversion into apartments. What does remain are chimneys, these totems that decoratively litter the northern landscape.

MH: The work is also inspired by the artist Constantin Brancusi’s famous *Infinity Column*, 1938, which is one of several art historical touch points in the show. Others include references to Joseph Beuys’ *Felt Suit*, 1970, and Robert Mapplethorpe’s *Man in Polyester Suit*, 1980, for example. You mesh these with imagery, styles and characters drawn from popular culture, such as Darth Vader from the film *Star Wars* or the puppetry of the TV series *Thunderbirds*, but does it matter to you whether or not people understand these references? Some visitors will pick up on all of these nuances, but most will inevitably hone in on those that have resonance with their own cultural knowledge and backgrounds.

SB: For me it was about learning to value the wide range of references I have accumulated...to value my language. As much as there are influences from traditional art history, the mash up of popular TV and film was particularly important to me as a way of embodying other realities. Whether it was the overblown theatrics and props of TV light entertainment, or the spectacle of the local carnival set against the backdrop of 19th century architecture in local stone, or the excitement of going to the fairground or the nightclub at night, as you were slowly swallowed up by the illumination and noise, these experiences all feed in. It’s like you say, it’s all about levels of understanding. I wouldn’t expect everybody to get everything, and I like the idea of miscommunication in conversation. Regional dialects - an argot or a Patois -can be a space for dissent, regenerative reinterpretation, or a place where new levels of understanding can begin to exist.