

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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## Press release

**Date:** Thursday 03 August 2017

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## Hayward Touring presents *Shonky: the Aesthetics of Awkwardness*, curated by artist John Walter

Opening at the MAC, Belfast, Friday 20 October 2017 - Sunday 14 January 2018, then touring throughout the UK.

Artist **John Walter** curates the new Hayward Touring exhibition *Shonky: The Aesthetics of Awkwardness*, opening at the MAC in Belfast before embarking on a national tour to Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) and Bury Art Museum and Sculpture Centre. The exhibition aims to explore the nature of visual awkwardness through the work of artists and architects **Arakawa and Gins; Cosima von Bonin; Niki de Saint Phalle; Benedict Drew; Justin Favela; Duggie Fields; Louise Fishman; Friedensreich Hundertwasser; Kate Lepper; Andrew Logan; Plastique Fantastique; Jacolby Satterwhite; Tim Spooner** and **John Walter**.

Shonky is a slang term meaning corrupt or bent, shoddy or unreliable, standing here for a particular type of visual aesthetic that is hand-made, deliberately clumsy and lo-fi, against the slick production values of much contemporary art. The exhibition proposes a more celebratory definition of 'shonkiness' and showing how it can be used for critical purposes in the visual arts to explore issues including gender, identity, beauty and the body. By drawing together artists and architects whose work has not previously been exhibited together or discussed within the same context, *Shonky* will allow for new ways of thinking that privilege shonkiness over other aesthetic forms that have dominated recent visual culture.

In a series of conceptual rooms, *Shonky* explores this aesthetic across a range of media including paintings, sculpture, video, architecture and performance. Works include **Andrew Logan's** maximalist mirrored sculptures of pop culture icons such as Divine, Molly Parkin and Fenella Fielding, a selection of paintings and lo-fi video work by pioneering artist and filmmaker **Duggie Fields**, and a series of small, totemic statues and works on paper by **Niki de Saint Phalle**. The exhibition also offers UK audiences a rare chance to see a selection of major works by American artist **Louise Fishman**, whose abstract works densely layer color and texture into large-scale paintings.

A series of photographs printed onto gauze depict the hotel and thermal baths of *Rogner Spa, Blumau, Styria* (1993–97), and the social housing block *Hundertwasserhaus* (1983–85) designed by Austrian artist and architect **Friedensreich Hundertwasser**. The images showcase the architect's characteristic use of brightly coloured facades, sloping roofs, unique windows and spontaneous vegetation. These are shown alongside the architectural model and drawings of *Inflexed Arcade House* by experimental architectural duo **Arakawa and Gins**, who believed that their unusually designed houses with features such as sloping floors, curiously shaped rooms and functionless doors could have life-extending effects on their residents.

**Tim Spooner** combines puppetry, magic and scientific demonstration into a large-scale 'performed sculpture' *The Voice of Nature* (2017), made up of interconnected fragile sculptures that appear to teeter on the edge of collapse. A selection of textile 'paintings' and large, soft sculptures by influential German artist **Cosima von Bonin** sit alongside Mexican-American artist **Justin Favela's** *Floor Nachos* (2017), a site-specific installation constructed of tissue paper and cardboard that explores cultural appropriation in his adopted home city of Las Vegas. **Kate Lepper's** *Emergency Canisters* and *Leaf Preservers* are reclaimed plastic sculptures that have a dual purpose of preserving and exhibiting organic matter such as dried leaves and grass clippings, that encourage the viewer to consider the relationship between humans and nature.

The exhibition also explores how shonkiness can be represented in the digital sphere in **Jacolby Satterwhite's** *The Country Ball* (1989–2012), which fuses drawing, performance and digital technology. Using his mother's drawings as a source material, Satterwhite builds a rich, computer-generated landscape that he combines with family video and his own live performance.

A newly commissioned performance by **Plastique Fantastique** will take place in each venue, drawing inspiration from the Tarot, experimental music making and the logic of the internet. **Benedict Drew's** new video installation *Dyspraxic Techno* (2017) will overload visitors with sounds and images to create a disorientating, over-stimulating experience. Curator **John Walter** will present a performative installation *The Shonky Bar* (2017). Designed in his distinctive maximalist aesthetic, the bar will explore Walter's regular theme of using hospitality, play and humour as a way to engage audiences in art.

*Shonky* is the fourth in Hayward Touring's series of Curatorial Open exhibitions. For *Shonky*, Hayward Touring have worked in partnership with the MAC, Belfast, DCA, Dundee and Bury Art Museum and Sculpture Centre to choose and develop the proposal, in a scheme that places collaboration at its heart, whilst aiming to nurture diverse curatorial talent and to expand the parameters of the contemporary curatorial landscape.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new illustrated catalogue, featuring an essay by **John Walter** and a contribution by **Zoë Strachan & Louise Welsh**.

**Curator John Walter** said: *"I've been using the word shonky for years, and whilst writing my doctoral thesis I realised that there was a critical value in the word. Understanding shonkiness helps to unlock a whole array of visual and cultural issues that may not otherwise be considered. It has been a privilege to have the time, resources and support of Hayward Touring as well as the stages of the touring venues and the catalogue to bring my vision of shonky into the world and give it a home."*

**Roger Malbert, Head of Hayward Touring** said: *"To invent a new category in art, or to discern a tendency not previously identified and give it a name, is a creative act that requires a certain nerve. As an artist whose own practice is founded on irreverence, humour and anarchistic sociability, John Walter is well qualified to discount the prevailing ethos of the art world. His 'maximalist' aesthetic loudly declares an alternative view. In putting forward a theory of art that is handmade without being well crafted, that defies good taste and orderliness, he touches on a common intuition, of the mismatch between the sleek polished ideals we are sold and our actual experience of a shoddy,*

*poorly-managed world. In defining this aesthetic as 'shonky' and convincing curators and artists to sign up to it, Walter demonstrates both his powers of persuasion and the truth of his insight."*

**Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator at the MAC,** said: *"The Hayward Touring Curatorial Open, continues to play a critical role in developing relationships not only between curators and selected artists, but between each of the touring venues. It has been a great pleasure to get to know John Walter and the team at Hayward Touring over this past year and to be introduced to new artists; some whose profile is growing and others who are rightly being repositioned in the public consciousness. Our involvement in this exhibition has also forged new links with colleagues at DCA and Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre. We are delighted to be the first venue on the tour and are confident that our visitors will be enthralled by the Shonky aesthetic."*

# ENDS #

**For further press information, images and interview requests please contact:**

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#### **Tour details**

The MAC, Belfast, 20 October 2017 - 14 January 2018

Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, 10 March – 27 May 2018

Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre, Bury, 23 June - 15 September 2018

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

##### **About Hayward Touring**

Hayward Touring organises contemporary art exhibitions that tour to galleries, museums and other publicly funded venues throughout Britain. In collaboration with artists, independent curators, writers and partner institutions, Hayward Touring develops imaginative exhibitions that are seen by up to half a million people in over 45 cities and towns each year.

##### **Hayward Touring Curatorial Open**

The aims of the Curatorial Open are to support UK-based curators in realising innovative contemporary art exhibitions, to introduce a new avenue of access into the Hayward Touring programme and to foster collaborative working with partner venues across the UK. The first Hayward Touring Curatorial Open exhibition, *Quiet Revolution* opened in 2009 and was curated by Chris Fite-Wassilak. The second series was *Ground Level* curated by Kit Hammonds in 2010. The third winner was artist and academic Sam Belinfante, who curated the critically acclaimed exhibition *Listening*.

##### **About Southbank Centre**

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as The National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information please visit [www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk). Southbank Centre is carrying out vital restoration work on the Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room to make the buildings fit for future generations to enjoy, more information can be found here: [letthelightin.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://letthelightin.southbankcentre.co.uk)

### **About John Walter**

John Walter lives and works in London. He is an artist and academic working across a diverse range of media that includes painting, video and installation. He studied at The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art at The University of Oxford, The Slade School of Fine Art UCL and recently completed a PhD in the Faculty of Architecture and The Built Environment at The University of Westminster. He was awarded the Sainsbury Scholarship at The British School at Rome in 2006 and was a participant at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2012. His work is held by a number of public collections including The Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Recent exhibitions include *The Zany Capsid* (Hardwick Gallery, Cheltenham 2017); *Essex Road III* (Tintype Gallery, London 2016); *Alien Sex Club* (Ambika P3 London 2015); *Courtship Disorder* (White Cubicle Toilet Gallery, London 2015); *Turn My Oyster Up* (Whitstable Biennale 2014). He is currently Resident Artist in Infection at UCL supported by a Wellcome Trust Large Arts Award for his collaboration with Professor Gregory Towers entitled CAPSID. *Stories from the Sewer*, his new commission for the Thames Tideway Tunnel is currently on display at Chambers Wharf.

### **About the MAC, Belfast**

The MAC is regarded as one of the leading art centres in the UK and Ireland. Across three dedicated gallery spaces we present between 6-8 exhibitions per year, profiling the very best contemporary Irish art practice within the context of a high profile, tightly curated international programme. Since opening in 2012 the MAC has welcomed over 1.5 million visitors to our award-winning building creating an essential shared cultural space for Belfast. The MAC's artistic programming was recognised in 2015 when it was a finalist in the Art Fund Museum of the Year. We are also a member of the Plus Tate network.

### **About Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee**

Dundee Contemporary Arts is a world class centre for the development and exhibition of contemporary art and culture, with two gallery spaces, two cinema screens, an open access print studio and an award-winning learning and engagement programme. Our exhibitions programme showcases the best of international contemporary art alongside outstanding work from Scottish artists, and is always free of charge. We firmly believe that art and culture change people's lives for the better, whether as artists, audiences or participants. With over 375,000 visits a year we act as a vital cultural and social hub for the people of Dundee, Scotland and beyond.

### **About Bury Art Museum and Sculpture Centre, Bury**

Bury Art Museum & Sculpture Centre showcases the best of international and local art, it is the perfect place to enjoy contemporary exhibitions and find out about the history of Bury. The museums programme is supported by a range of events and activities that encourage visitors to further explore and enjoy the shows and collections. Bury Art Museum & Sculpture values ideas, concepts and risky thinking, the museum explores these in its approach to the display and interpretation of both collections and exhibitions. Historic and contemporary works and objects are juxtaposed to provoke questions and present visual prompts that seek to inspire and challenge visitors to make their own connections and develop their own ideas. Exhibitions and the collections are shown in the context of a contemporary dialogue to develop object conversations.