

# EVENTS

01 Jul, 5–7pm      ALCHEMY PROJECT

An evening of performances from members of the Alchemy collective. As part of the collective's recent work, a selection of newly written songs and spoken word pieces have been devised by local 13–18 year-olds, with each responding to particular works in the exhibition.

06 Jul, 6–8.30pm      SPECULATIVE BODIES

An evening of performances and screenings which propose that the body is not a unified whole, or opposed to nature. Works included excavate myth and archive to enact speculative figures that reach through history, trouble categories of the 'human', and unseat normativity. The body here, is in movement, metamorphosis, and transformation. Contributions by Ufuoma Essi, Louis Newby & Laila Majid, Anna Perach, Clémentine Bedos, Verity Coward, Assia Ghendir, Holly Hunter.

13 Jul, 7–9pm      GASHTRAYS WORKSHOP

Join us for an evening of taboo-busting sex-ed and ceramics led by Gashtrays, a London based ceramics line celebrating the glorious curves, folds and flaps of real bodies. You'll get to make at least two air dry clay pieces, and will receive a box with all the tools and materials to finish your creations off at home! Tickets £7

18 Jul, 7–8:30pm      BOOK LAUNCH:  
ART MONSTERS

Join us for a book launch of *Art Monsters*, featuring a Q&A between writer Lauren Elkin and Juliet Jacques (writer and filmmaker).

23 Jul, 12–1pm      STAY AND PLAY

Open to all and free to attend, this stay and play session will see children taken on an interactive guided tour, exploring the body through sculpture and print making. They will then be provided with materials to create a moving collage, with examples of Frida Orupabo's work as their main reference point. Carers will also be offered a tour of the exhibition to explore aspects of embodiment.

For more information on upcoming events visit [goldsmithscca.art](http://goldsmithscca.art)

AUDIO GUIDE

Scan this QR code for a free audio guide for the exhibition produced by All Ears. [www.allears.art](http://www.allears.art)



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# EXHIBITION GUIDE

UNRULY BODIES

29 June–3 September 2023

With: Shadi Al-Atallah, Giulia Cenci, Miriam Cahn, Camille Henrot, Galli, Ebecho Muslimova, Frida Orupabo, Anna Perach, Paloma Proudfoot, and collectively Clémentine Bedos, Verity Coward, Assia Ghendir, Holly Hunter.

*'I am intrigued by unruly bodies – those that defy cultural expectations about how bodies, and marginalised bodies, in particular, should look, move, be in the world.'* [1]

*'I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself.'* [2]

Featuring thirteen women and non-binary artists, *Unruly Bodies* presents artworks that explore the experience of embodiment today. The exhibition includes work that presents the body as monstrous, abject, grotesque, and liminal. It asks why this kind of figuration has become ubiquitous in contemporary art, where rather than being a negative attribute, the unruly body is a site of resistance in which monstrosity is reclaimed as a subjectivity that disrupts normativity and contests power. Here, images are visceral, and intend to make an impact.

Whether through gesture, action, or abstraction, the bodies in the exhibition viscerally evidence the emotional turbulence produced by living under conditions of patriarchy, misogyny, racism and ableism. The exhibition follows philosopher Paul Preciado's idea of the body as a 'somatheque', or a living archive that records the disciplining forces it has been subject to. Against the smooth and unified surface of normativity, the unruly body leaks, breaks apart, and laughs.

Artists in the exhibition draw on traditions such as the grotesque, and abject, but shoot through these intersectional realities that expand and revise the terms. Historically held in a 'low' position, the unruly body is implicitly female, Black, crip, queer or 'other'. The adoption of the aesthetic of the monstrous claims space for lived experiences that do not fit neatly into acceptable social conventions, and for those that are held as less-than-human. The unruly body offers the possibility that the self is not fixed, but rather a complex web of interrelations in a constant state of flux.

FIRST FLOOR

1      Candida & Zak Gertler Gallery

In her newly commissioned ceramic relief, **Paloma Proudfoot** explores the role mannequins play in perpetuating myths of idealised beauty. Over the years she has accrued images of mannequins, which are falling apart, broken or repurposed in such a way that disrupts their usual glamour. Drawing on these collected photographs, the work presents a composition of window dummies, breaking away from their usual placid and immaculate appearance. Here they are animated and engaging in power play with each other, each imbued with their own agency. The formal inventiveness and detail of the work are both seductive and humorous, with ambiguous actions that can be read as sinister parlour game, or sisterly interaction. The artist has a background in textiles and pattern cutting – an approach to building forms that is tangible in these ceramics. Body and dress become indistinguishable from one another; a garment is unzipped to sinew below while threads attached to the skin surface unravel and restitch. Disrupting the ordinarily seamless and opaque surface of mannequins, each figure undresses from and speaks back to the idealized image that has bound them.

**Ebecho Muslimova's** drawings and paintings record the carnivalesque escapades of the artist's alter ego, Fatebe, who the artist describes as an amplified version of her own character and personality. Works on display move from the strict self-imposed parameters of black and white line drawing, to large-scale canvases in which Fatebe claims space on an increasingly outlandish scale. Graphic, impossible, and magnetic, she gleefully derails any polite ideas surrounding female behaviour. The painterly skill with which the figures are rendered runs counter to the absurdity of Fatebe's bodily contortions. Perpetually naked, Muslimova's character variously skates on thin ice, sheds her skin, and is trapped under the plastic of a delicatessen gift basket. Although eliciting laughter, the physical endurance and elasticity of Fatebe frankly reflects the regulations imposed on female bodies under patriarchy.

1 Roxane Gay, 'The Unruly Body, Unvanquished', in *Miriam Cahn*, Hatje Cantz, (2020).

2 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix; Performing Transgender Rage.' Susan Stryker. GLQ (1994)

## 2 Daskalopoulos Tank Gallery & Roden Courtyard Gallery

In her dystopic series *dry salvages* (2023), which includes a newly commissioned work in the courtyard gallery, **Giulia Cenci** uses found shower cabins as sculptural settings for fragmented figures, both human and animal. Here the body is housed in a tight space, at once contained, and engaged in a process of purification. Dried vines twist out of hanging bones. Both human and wolf faces are modelled from mannequins. Cenci often uses found objects in her work, and casts her aluminum sculptures from melted-down car scrap. The shower stalls still bear the traces of previous use, and the passage of bodies through them provokes a paradoxical sense of disgust and vulnerability. Staged in the tank that once supplied the Victorian bathhouse which houses the CCA, the works have a connection to water, or a lack of it – a stark image of collapse and entropy. Here the body is a fragment, in a system that can no longer support it, a reminder of our environmental interdependence.

## 3 Bridget Riley Gallery

**Camille Henrot** investigates the ambivalence and tensions of the mother and infant relationship. The figure of the mother profoundly muddles the dividing lines between interior and exterior, self and other, attachment and separation. Operating in a foggy, leaky realm, her ink drawings digest the psychological, social, and bodily impact of this role. In *Soon* ink washes evoke ultrasound imagery of a lurking internal threat. *Wet Job* presents a rare image of breast-pumping, the scarcity of which evidences a continuing inequality as to what is deemed a relevant enough category of experience to warrant visibility. The bronze *Mon Corps de Femme (My Woman's Body)*, renders an abstracted postpartum body, with breasts like knives.

**Miriam Cahn** paints in rapid response to both global events and private moments, viewing art as essential critical commentary on contemporary realities. Themes in her work have included women's rights, sexuality, war in Ukraine, and nature. Her canvases feature abstracted figures, whose interactions, gender, and identity are often open-ended and ambiguous, leaving completion to the viewer. Often hung in intense constellations, they are rawly confrontational. Works included here respond to war and the refugee crisis, which Cahn views as an indelible stain on Europe's collective conscience. A committed feminist, Cahn's works recognize that women and children are particularly at risk in times of conflict, and makes present the demonized and harassed, who have been dehumanized in conversations around controlling borders. Other works explore her own aging body, conveying the vulnerability of the flesh, a cage of the indomitable spirit.

## BASEMENT

### 4 Weston Gallery

Sociologist and artist, **Frida Orupabo** works in digital and physical collage, assembling personal photographs with early cinema stills, online marketplaces, digitized archives, and popular media. By searching through these currents of images from different eras and sources, Orupabo poetically dismantles one-dimensional readings of Black femininity. Here a watermarked figure turns away from the viewer, in indifference or as a protective gesture. Orupabo's figures are caught between the hypervisibility of the Black body, surveilled, policed, and taxonomized in white supremacist culture, and the power of making visible Black figures that exist in the gaps of the archive.

As one of the artists who emerged in the West Berlin art scene in the late 1970s during a time of political and cultural upheaval, **Galli** has rejected the minimalist aesthetics of conceptual art to explore corporeality. Galli's figures are open to interpretation but in their depictions of body parts and interacting figures strive for emotional impact. Do they evoke joy or horror, struggle, desire, sexuality or violence? Often headless, they undermine the mind / body split that has typified the western philosophic tradition. Possessing a worldview different from that of an able-bodied person, Galli proposes, through rupture and fragmentation, an exhilarating new grammar of the body in which gender, sexuality, and anatomy are unfixed and subject to extremes of emotion and encounter.

In these newly commissioned works Saudi-Arabian born **Shadi Al-Atallah** continues their exploration of the self through intense compositions of figures in extremis. Here the artist has concentrated on figures paired in ambiguous relationships that can be variously read as sexual ecstasy or violent confrontation. Al-Atallah's works on canvases on the floor of the studio, moving over them with their body. Creating these images is a form of catharsis (from the Greek word for 'cleansing' or 'purging'), enabling the artist to explore postures, emotions, and expressions that are beyond them in life. Bold acidic colours and gestured banal interiors of domestic spaces, speak of containment, and attempts to find liberation. These works also evidence grappling with grief as an experience that fundamentally transforms us, erupting the subconscious into the conscious, memory into the present.

**Anna Perach** explores the porous connections between personal and cultural myths, often with a focus on feminist narratives. Her works are wearable sculptures, created through a technique called tufting. Threading intricate flat patterns, Perach then cuts and assembles these together to create creatures that draw on folklore and mythology to create speculative narratives in which

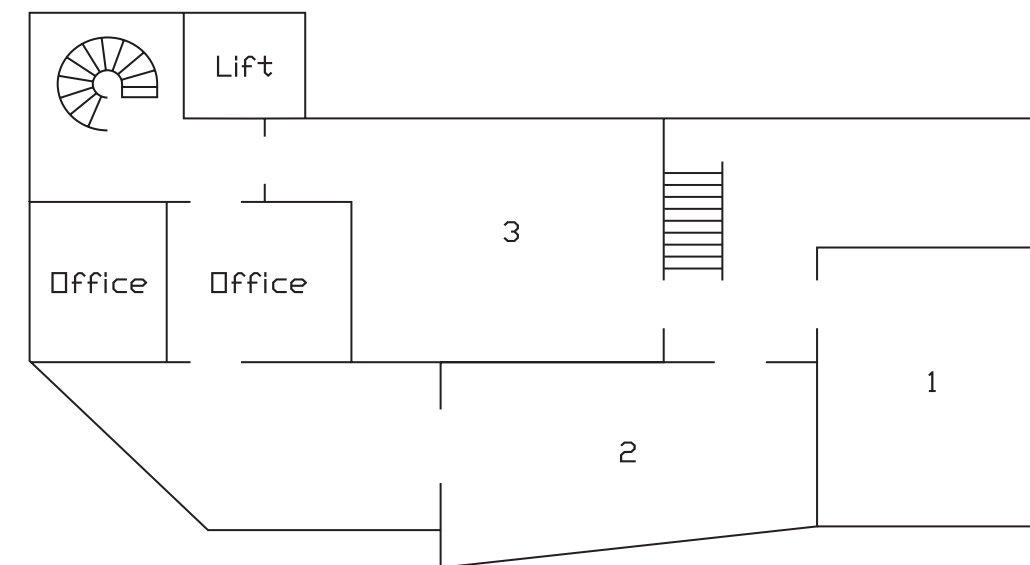
women are freed from societal constraints. Perach's figures here draw on ancient rock carvings found in the Judaeen desert in Israel, that depict scenes of hunting, animals, and abstract enigmatic shapes. From these, the artist has developed *The Warrior* and *The Wandering Pelvis*, two figures connected but interdependent, part perhaps of a female dominated tribe or ritual.

with film, prosthetics, text, sound, and performance, this shapeshifting project wrestles with the dogmatic and binary character of Greek mythology, dismantling its pervasive impact on contemporary ways of thinking. Collectively, they revisit the classical myth of Daphne, the tale of a nymph who is transformed into a laurel tree to escape being raped by the god Apollo. *Metamorph* reframes this narrative through a queer, transcultural, and more-than-human lens, realigning Daphne's bodily turmoil within a plethora of perspectives.

### 5 Basement

*Metamorph* is a long-term collaboration between **Clémentine Bedos**, **Holly Hunter**, **Verity Coward**, and **Assia Ghendir**. Working

### First Floor



### Basement

