

PRESS RELEASE

pumphousegallery



## **The First Humans: new exhibition**

*Sculpture, painting, film & video, works on paper by Caroline Achaintre, Salvatore Arancio, Vidya Gastaldon, Andy Harper, Ben Rivers and Jack Strange. Curated by Angela Kingston*

22nd January – 29th March 2015

Preview Wednesday 21 January 6.30 – 8.30pm

[Pump House Gallery](#) is going prehistoric. Set in the middle of Battersea Park, where humans once hunted woolly mammoths on frozen boglands, the gallery will be filled with primitive-looking artefacts and primeval geology. But in fact, everything has been newly made by artists.

Many art works in [The First Humans](#) are spoof or tongue-in-cheek; others make reference to sci-fi, sending prehistory hurtling into the future.

**Vidya Gastaldon's** drawings suggest primeval dawnings, spawnings and New Age events. A silvery sculpture by **Salvatore Arancio**, called 'ah ah', resembles a rock-form yet looks like a human appendage, of the kind worshipped by stone-age people. In 'What do you want more of?' by **Jack Strange**, cardboard rectangles with gemstone 'eyes' suggest a huddle of primitive humans seemingly as obsessed with consumerism as we are now. **Caroline Achaintre's** 'Zibra', a wool hanging, has zebra-like markings that hint at our African origins, while calling to mind today's craft hobbyists. **Ben Rivers'** video, 'The Creation As We Saw It', recounts the creation myths of one of the longest established villages on earth, where straw huts exist alongside mobile phones. **Andy Harper's** installation 'The Threefold Law' is brilliantly coloured and ferociously patterned: hovering over everything like a tribal god.

Long ago, we could look north from Battersea, across the Thames towards the great ice cap. Visitors to *The First Humans* are invited to wonder whether these artists might be expressing the fantasy of humankind starting over again. Or whether they have an apocalyptic sense of ourselves as destructive and tragic, as very possibly the last humans.

*The First Humans* is curated by Angela Kingston and organised by the Pump House Gallery. It will tour to Plymouth Arts Centre in late 2015 and Crate/Limbo in Margate in 2016.

## NOTES TO EDITOR

Caroline **Achaintre** (b. France, 1969). Raised in Germany, Achaintre trained as a blacksmith before travelling to London with a DAAD scholarship to study at Chelsea School of Art & Design and Goldsmiths College, London, where she continues to live. Solo exhibitions include the *Present / Future* Illy Prize at Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy, 2014, and currently at Tate Britain, London, UK until June 2015 as part of the BP Contemporary Spotlight programme. Her work is in the following collections: FRAC, Aquitaine, France, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and Southampton City Art Gallery.

**Salvatore Arancio** (b. Catania, 1974) lives and works in London. Recent shows include; *The Hidden*, Ensapc Ygrec, France (2014); *Curiosity: Art & the Pleasure of Knowing*, Hayward touring show, UK (2013-14); *Cyclorama*, Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Mexico (2013); *Alternating Layers of Contrasting Resistance*, Rowing, London (2013); *The Little Man of the Forest with the Big Hat*, Federica Schiavo Gallery, Rome, Italy (2013). He is currently a ceramic fellow at Camden Arts Centre, London.

**Vidya Gastaldon** (b. Besançon, France, 1974). She lives and works in Geneva. Recent exhibitions: *L'illusion des lumières*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2014); *I'm in Love with the New World*, Art:Concept (2013); *Tu es Monstrueux et je t'aime beaucoup*, MAMCO, Geneva (2012); *Les étincelles de Meret. Les surréalismes dans l'art contemporain suisse*, Kunst Museum, Bern (2012). Her work is in the following collections: Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; Jenisch Museum, Vevey, Switzerland; Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Collection Région Piémont, Turin; MAMCO, Geneva; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

**Andy Harper's** (b. 1971) practice is predominantly a studio based painting practice but he regularly sites his painting on sculptural or architectural surfaces. For the Aspex Gallery (Portsmouth 2010) and Latitude Festival (Suffolk 2012) he painted on large perspex globes, illuminated from inside. He has also painted on the fabric of buildings and for the 2013 *Merge Festival* on the Southbank, London, he painted a series of fly-posters on the side of a boarded up building in London Bridge. Andy Harper works with galleries in Seoul, Berlin and New York.

**Ben Rivers** (b. Somerset, 1972) graduated from Falmouth School of Art in 1993. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Fable*, Temporary Gallery Cologne, 2014; *Things*, Kate MacGarry Gallery, London, 2014; *Ah, Liberty!* Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 2013; *Slow Action*, Hepworth Wakefield, 2012; *Sack Barrow*, Hamburg Kunsthalle, 2012 and Hayward Gallery, London, 2011; *Slow Action*, Matt's Gallery, London and Gallery TPW, Toronto, 2011. He is the recipient of awards including: FIPRESCI International Critics Prize, 68th Venice Film Festival for his first feature film *Two Years At Sea*; the inaugural Robert Gardner Film Award, 2013; Baloise Art Prize, Art Basel 42, for *Sack Barrow*; Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists, 2010. He is represented by Kate MacGarry Gallery.

**Jack Strange** (b. Brighton, 1984) lives and works in London. He received a BFA from London's Slade School of Fine Art in 2007. His exhibitions include *Within Seconds*, at the former Arthouse at the Jones Center in Texas (2011), Sammlung FIEDE – Schlachthaus in Aschaffenburg, Germany (2013), Guimarães 2012 CEC, Asa Factory, Portugal (2012), V22 Workspace, London (2012), Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2011), Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2011), Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery (2010), and the Royal Society of British Sculptors in London (2010).

Freelance curator **Angela Kingston's** recent exhibitions include: the 22-artist *3am: wonder, paranoia and the restless night*, commissioned by the Bluecoat, Liverpool, and toured to Chapter, Cardiff, The Exchange, Penzance, and Ferens Art Gallery, Hull (2013-14); and *Underwater*, commissioned by Towner, Eastbourne, and toured to Spacex, Exeter, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, the Bluecoat, Liverpool, and Tullie House, Carlisle (2010-11).

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Opening Times: *The First Humans*: Wed – Sun 11am – 4pm