

FRESTONIAN GALLERY

THE CITY & THE CITY & CITY

CHARLES AVERY | DANA LIXENBERG | KAREN RUSSO

CURATED BY TOM MORTON

Opening Day: Wednesday 16th September, 12-9pm | Exhibition 17th September – 31st October 2020

Frestonian Gallery is delighted to present *The City & The City & The City* – a show of work by three leading international artists, which brings together three distinct visions of the urban.

Spanning 22 years, the Dutch photographer **Dana Lixenberg's** series *Imperial Courts* (1993-2015) documents a Black and Latinx community in a public housing project in Watts, Los Angeles, an underserved corner of the city that remains near invisible to LA's wealthier citizens. In large format, black and white photographs, she chronicles the passage of time, from new births, to technological change, to the ineluctable process of ageing. At once sociological data, and a quietly powerful critique of ongoing inequality and injustice, these works also confront us with particular human beings, each of whom inhabits the frame with dignity, choosing what they give to Lixenberg's lens, and (perhaps even more crucially) what they hold back.

The Scottish artist **Charles Avery** presents a suite of drawings and objects detailing life in the imagined city of Onomatopoeia, capital of a nameless island. The panoramic drawing *Untitled (City Wall market scene)* (2020) depicts a teeming market place in the shadow of Onomatopoeia's towering ramparts, which is both a site of economic activity and – in the spirit of the ancient Athenian agora – intellectual exchange. In the centre of the gallery space, a sculptural diorama, suggestive of a café table beneath a spreading tree, brings Onomatopoeia into our own reality, where this fictional metropolis feels at once strange and strangely familiar.

In a film, a series of charcoal drawings, and a grid of photographs, the London-based Israeli artist **Karen Russo** explores 'Tet-Stadt', an unrealised plan for a Neo-Egyptian civic paradise to be built outside Hannover, commissioned by the German biscuit manufacturer Bahlsen in 1917. Part historical fantasy, part sci-fi fever dream, this utopian city anticipated darker visions of the urban, not least those of Adolph Hitler's favourite architect, Albert Speer. Colliding the dream world of Tet-Stadt with imagery from Nazi film propaganda, Russo's work performs a kind of archaeology of cultural fragments, illuminating how notions of civilization and cultural genealogy seek to find concrete expression in the built environment.

Curated by Tom Morton, *The City & The City & The City* borrows (and extends) the title of the British writer China Miéville's celebrated novel *The City & The City* (2009), a police procedural set in two separate fictional Eastern European cities, Beszel and Ul Qoma, which occupy the same physical territory, while having markedly different languages, cultures, and systems of belief. The exhibition, then, might in a sense be conceived of as a conurbation or megalopolis, whose constituent 'cities' each have their own complex civic identity, while sharing (sometimes surprising) correspondences and overlaps with not only their near neighbours, but with many other cities, real and imagined, from across human history.

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NOTES ON THE ARTISTS & CURATOR

Charles Avery (b. 1973) lives and works in London and on the Island of Mull (UK). Recent solo exhibitions include: *The Tail of the One-Armed Snake*, GRIMM, Amsterdam; *The Gates of Onomatopoeia*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh; *These Waters*, GRIMM, New York, NY; *Study #15*, David Roberts Art Foundation, London; *The People and Things of Onomatopoeia: Part 2*, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London; *What's the Matter with Idealism?*, GEM, Museum for Contemporary Art, The Hague; *Fig-2 2/50 Charles Avery*, ICA Studio, London. Recent exhibitions include the 16th Istanbul Biennale titled *The Seventh Continent*, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud; the Royal Academy of Arts, London; *NOW* at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; and *GLASSTRESS*, Palazzo Franchetti, 57th Biennale di Venezia, Venice. Avery's work can be found in the collections of Tate, London; Arts Council England Collection, London; Kunstmuseum, The Hague; Edinburgh City Art Centre Collection, Edinburgh; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; and David Roberts Art Foundation, London, amongst others.

Dana Lixenberg (b.1964) is an internationally recognised and exhibited artist living and working in Amsterdam (NL). She studied photography at the London College of Printing from 1984 to 1986, and at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam from 1987 until 1989. Her work is collected widely and has been exhibited at institutions such as Aperture Foundation, New York; Mai Manó Ház, Budapest; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Centre Photographique, Rouen; MMK, Frankfurt; The Photographers' Gallery, London; Busan Biennale, Busan; Huis Marseille, Amsterdam; LACP, Los Angeles; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Karen Russo (b. 1974) is an Israeli-born artist living and working in London (UK). She has exhibited in such venues as the Barbican, Hayward Gallery Project Space, London; V&A Museum, London; Tate Modern, London; 176, London; Delfina, London; Paradise Row Gallery, London; Busan Biennial, Busan; Montevideo, Amsterdam; Grosse Kunstschau Museum, Haus der Kulturen Der Welt: HKW and Krefeld Museum, Berlin; Arquebuse, Geneva; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Center for Contemporary Art, Tel-Aviv and Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, Tel-Aviv. She has been awarded grants and awards from, among other institutions: The Elephant Trust; Arts Council England; Outset Contemporary Art Fund; the Ministry of Culture, Israel; British Council; Jerusalem Film Festival and the Tel-Aviv Museum.

Tom Morton is a curator, writer, and Contributing Editor of *frieze* magazine, based in Rochester, UK. His major shows include *Äppärät* at the Ballroom Marfa (2015); *British British Polish Polish: Art from Europe's Edges in the Long '90s and Today*, CSW Ujazdowski Castle (2013, co-curated with Marek Goździewski); and *British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet*, Hayward Gallery and touring (2010-11, co-curated with Lisa Le Feuvre). His most recent curatorial project was *Lodger*, a series of six solo shows by emerging artists at Blain | Southern London.