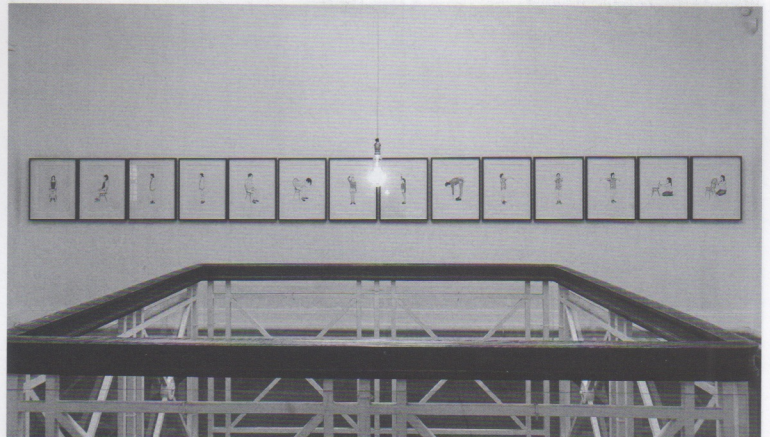




while the sculptural forms taking shape in his imagery are not meant to represent anything.

Blackpool's illuminations may have been switched off, but a special lightbulb is alive and breathing not far from the seafront, at the Grundy Art Gallery. **Ian Whittlesea's** 'Breath Is Life' sheds light on a half-forgotten movement called Mazdaznan, promoted by one Dr Otoman Zar-Adusht Ha'nish at the dawn of the 20th century. The monotheistic cult centred on concentration and the 'power of breath', and derived many of its ideas from the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism. It influenced Friedrich Nietzsche, HG Wells and JH Kellogg, as well as supplying Edison with the name Mazda for his best-selling lightbulb, one of which is suspended from the gallery's rotunda, gradually flaring up into full illumination and fading back to a dull glow day and night, for the entire duration of the exhibition. In the evening, or on an overcast day, the effect is no doubt more suggestive of breathing than on the cloudless sunny morning of my visit. But upstairs, inside the rotunda, are Whittlesea's drawings of foundation art students from Kingston University practising a series of Mazdaznan exercises designed to improve abilities including sight and concentration, hearing and intuition, smell and memory, taste and willpower. These 14 drawings are reproduced in the artist's fascinating republication of Ha'nish's book *Mazdaznan Health and Breath Culture*, first issued in 1902, giving instructions on how to perform the exercises and now containing appendices detailing, among other things, the use of the exercises by artist Johannes Itten at the Bauhaus prior to the banning of Mazdaznan by the Nazis. There are even some Mazdaznan songs included, with titles like 'Reincarnation' and 'Transmigration'.

If Mazdaznan zoomed in on breathing as key to understanding the soul's place in the universe, the **Boyle Family** have for many years zoomed in on certain points of the earth's surface as keys to understanding material existence. At Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal, their new show 'Contemporary Archaeology: The World Series Lazio Site' presents the latest findings of their continuing 'earth probe', which explores sites selected as far back as 1968 with the random throwing of a dart into a map of the world. It is astonishing to view *Studies of Animal Life*, *Lazio Site*, 2013, their electron microphotographs of insects from the Italian site, displayed in a grid pattern. The ant, wingless moth and



Florence Peake
Satin Boots, Fiery Horses 2014 video

Ian Whittlesea
'Breath is Life'
installation view

Boyle Family standing with their collage of electron microscope photographs of hairs at the British pavilion, Venice Biennale 1978



anonymous 'bug', observed at various magnifications, reveal details impossible for the naked eye to see (the bug even seems to be carrying its own bugs), and eventually resemble the complex surfaces the Boyles present in their wall-mounted mixed media, resin and fibreglass 6ft squares, notably *Study of the Lazio Site*, 2013. Containing burned sticks, stones and shells, the square is a study of an area containing olive groves, where leaves are regularly burned and earth mixes with ash. A film, *Human Social Study (Fondi)*, *Lazio Site*, 2013, captures the daily *passaggiata*, or afternoon walkabout, taken by the people from the nearest town. Seen from high up, in summer, pedestrians are filmed as they stroll slowly along a tree-lined street, while others sit on benches, quietly watching. Culturally, it is a ritual, but visually it resembles the cytograms and microphotographs used in *Physical Response Studies*, *Lazio Site*, 2013, in which skin, blood cells and cheek cells from Georgia and Sebastian Boyle and their mother Joan Hills are seen massively magnified. In an adjoining gallery are displayed a number of earlier 'squares', including *Study From the New Town Series with Concrete Gutter and Embedded Stones*, 1988, with its fascinating grains of dirt and tiny shards of broken glass, and *Study of Rusting Wire Cable, etc, and*

John Hansard Gallery

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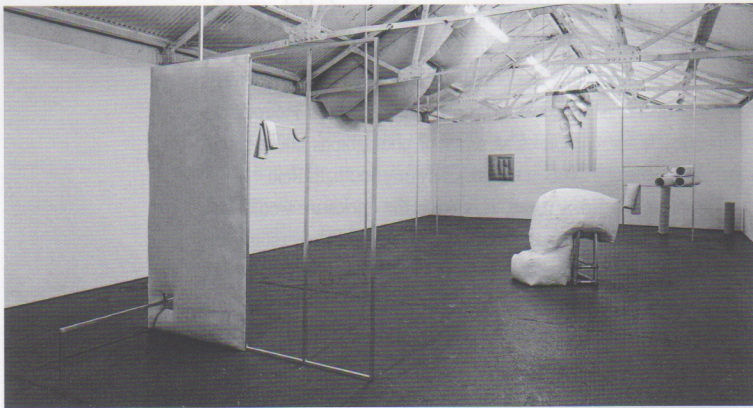
Supported by public funding from
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Uriel Orlow: Unmade Film

3 MARCH – 25 APRIL 2015

An Intervention

12 MAY – 27 JUNE 2015



Holly Hendry
'More and More,
More is More'
installation view

Joanna Piotrowska
XXXIII / Frowst 2014



association. However, presented here, Whelan has enlarged the image beyond recognition, cropped it to the proportions of Vitrine's window space and divided it into vertical strips for the large-format print process. The image has been totally degraded and stripped of its purpose, yet in the context of the Bermondsey Square window, it could well be an advert. Walking past this vibrant, glowing image, one might well assume that something is on offer, but were one to give the banner one's full attention (something advert on the street are vying for constantly) what would one assume is for sale?

In 'more and more, more is more', **Holly Hendry's** solo show at Peckham's Bosse & Baum, the audience is encouraged to think about their engagement with space on a domestic level. Hendry has constructed a sort of abstracted household within the gallery – wobbly-looking metal structures demarcate some partitions or walls, sculptural elements of wood and metal support large castings reminiscent of sofa cushions or futon mattresses. There are latex castings of what look like industrial ventilation pipes, and a large section of the exposed ceiling girders are being consumed by a throbbing, pulsating inflatable – the whole space is hinting at a sort of invited tactility but the materials are off. The cast sculptures are just imperfect enough that they don't actually resemble soft furnishings; you can tell that if you try and touch them they are likely to crumble under your fingers. The metal frameworks aren't quite convincing enough, there are holes in surfaces with superfluous strips of metal running through them, and unnecessary and inexplicable flourishing, semi-circular bends and dips. The exhibition takes its title from Rem Koolhaas's influential essay on 'Junkspace', wherein Koolhaas discusses the relationship between architecture, space and the human body, and at the exhibition's opening a series of choreographed

performances activated the works and contextualised some of the objects in relation to the space, yet the sculptures themselves hint at an ossification of domestic space, animating the gallery not with an influx of life but rather through a muffled kind of haunting. ■

NICK WARNER is a writer and curator based in London.

North-west Round-up

Harris Museum and Art Gallery • Grundy Art Gallery • Abbot Hall Art Gallery

In the early 1900s, Variety was the name applied to a style of entertainment previously known in Britain as Music Hall. Now showing at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery in Preston, **The Varieties** is a group exhibition co-curated by Harold Offeh and Clarissa Corfe, inspired by the career of local acrobat, clown, filmmaker and mayor, Will Onda. Posters, publicity material and scripts from Onda's career feature as a small part of the show, but the emphasis is on young artists who use performance as an investigative tool, even if they are not strictly speaking 'performance artists'. Offeh himself has created a series of what he calls 'skits', on video, including *Highbar*, 2015, a reference to Onda's daring performances on the triple high-bar, but 'pathetically re-enacted' by Offeh, who grabs hold of the cross-frame of a children's swing, dangles for a while and then jumps down. Another film sees Offeh in drag recreating a 'serpentine dance', a style popular in early silent films, utilising twirling gestures and swirling dresses.

Offeh's set of large, colour-lit platforms spelling out the word ONDA occupies the centre of the main gallery, around which Mark Bleakley has filmed his performance *Self Portrait (Drying Clothes)*, 2015, in which the artist, wearing only boxer shorts, picks up his damp garments while adopting sculptural poses, to the accompaniment of Ray Charles's song *Let's Go Get Stoned*. Nearby, Florence Peake's *Satin Boots, Fiery Horses*, 2014, is a film of the artist's hands manipulating wet clay into figures representing the characters in George Elliot's first novel, *Adam Bede*. Peake's fingers, with bizarrely pink false nails decorated in plastic flowers, get clotted in gloop as she tells the sad tale of love, pregnancy, imprisonment and religiously inspired marriage, enacted by the squidgy, almost formless clay characters. When eventually one of them dies, she simply squashes it. Another video work, Erkkka Nissinen's *The West Project*, 2010, filmed in Hong Kong, is a parable of the urban takeover of rural areas of China. Characters disguised as human feet are forced to run away by the grossly padded figure of the Finnish artist disguised as a corporate developer. Seconds later, his head is cut off and lies on the ground mouthing silently, while a heavily bandaged man looks on. The consciously homemade look of the costumes contrasts markedly with the beauty of the landscape.

'The Varieties' noticeably includes work by several painters with interests in playing to the crowd. Dave Mackintosh is a fast worker, apparently making 500 paintings a month. *You'll Never Learn*, 2011, brings together seven paintings in red paint on black card, mounted on a large oak construction reminiscent of a school climbing frame. The images, of figures, objects and landscapes, are arranged to suggest an eerie narrative. Sean Penlington's work, using paint, beeswax and electrical tape, acknowledges the carnivalesque. Blackpool artist Stuart Edmondson's paintings include *Seascape*, 2011, which incorporates a photograph of the sea, but in terms of colour they all echo the clash of grey against gaudier reds, blues and yellows so characteristic of Lancashire's famous seaside resort,