

# WE THE PEOPLE ARE THE WORK

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## Press Release

4 May 2017

### **We The People Are The Work 22 September - 18 November 2017**

*We The People Are The Work* is a major visual arts project in Plymouth that will explore ideas of power, protest and the public. The project will see five internationally acclaimed artists from the UK, Canada, France and Mexico journey to Plymouth to create new artworks, give talks and lead workshops, inspired by the city's rich heritage, its people, and their aspirations for the future. From recent world-wide events including Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, to the changes being experienced by communities in Plymouth on a more local scale, the exhibition will look at the shared experiences and differences that shape our society.

The exhibition for *We The People Are The Work* will take place from Friday 22 September - Saturday 18 November 2017 at five venues around the city: The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art, The Council House at Plymouth City Council, KARST, Peninsula Arts at the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Arts Centre.

Presented by Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group, *We The People Are The Work* is the first major commissioning project of Horizon, a collaborative two-year programme of contemporary visual art which will strengthen and build upon Plymouth's dynamic arts scene, promoting the city as an exciting contemporary art destination. Supported by Arts Council England's 'Ambition for Excellence' funding, the Horizon programme will develop four major arts events in the city, support a talent development programme for artists and visual art producers, and enable communities to commission artworks. Led by Plymouth Culture, Horizon is a partnership between Plymouth College of Art, the University of Plymouth, Plymouth Arts Centre, KARST, Plymouth City Council's Arts and Heritage Service and Visual Arts Plymouth.

Each of the five high profile contemporary artists invited to take part in *We The People Are The Work* have been paired with a specific venue that aligns with the artist's practice. Each artist will develop works that involve the public in some way - either in an aspect of their research, development, production or realisation.

The artists commissioned to take part include Claire Fontaine, a Paris based collective working in neon, video, sculpture, painting and text. Also taking part is British contemporary artist Peter Liversidge, whose recent exhibitions include Tate Modern and the Whitechapel Gallery. *We The People Are The Work* will be Mexican artist Antonio Vega Macotela's first major project in the UK, and he is also taking part in this year's Documenta. Ciara Phillips is a Canadian born artist who lives and works in Glasgow, and has just been announced as an artist in the Sydney Biennial. Penzance born artist Matt Stokes, who has exhibited at galleries all over the world, immerses himself in the social structures of the scene he is working with, which then result in films, installations and event-based works.

*We The People Are The Work* is curated by Simon Morrissey, who is internationally renowned for his distinctive approach of involving audiences in the development of permanent and temporary artworks. Morrissey is the director of Foreground, and he has curated exhibitions for leading galleries and agencies including The British Council; the Arnolfini in Bristol; Chapter in Cardiff and Hauser & Wirth Somerset amongst many others. As part of the project, Morrissey will lead a free walking tour between the five venues, and give lectures at Plymouth College of Art and the University of Plymouth.

Morrissey said, "*We The People Are The Work* explores the ways in which an increasing number of artists are interested in involving the public in the creation or realisation of artworks, the different ways they work with the public and why artists are drawn to work with ordinary people to bring artworks to life.

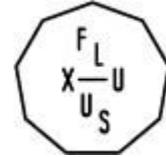
"The exhibition is primarily concerned with ideas of articulation and power – how do we as individuals, as the public, get our voices heard within or against the structures of power that govern our lives and claim to speak for us, the people? Plymouth is a city undergoing considerable change and is a fascinating landscape within which to explore these ideas in the current political climate. The artists in the exhibition will both work with people in Plymouth to develop the ideas for the exhibition and develop works where the participation of the public is essential to bringing the artists ideas to life. In this way the voices of the people of Plymouth will, in a very significant way, be the work."

*We The People Are The Work* will launch to coincide with Plymouth Art Weekender (22 - 24 September 2017), and will include events, talks and workshops, and film screenings, inviting communities to engage creatively as part of this cross-city project. The film programme will include a special screening of Colin Gregg and Hugh Stoddart's 1982 film *Remembrance*. Shot entirely on location in and around Plymouth, this British independent film featured large numbers of local people and young men in the Royal Navy as extras, alongside Timothy Spall and Gary Oldman in their first significant roles. Expanding out from the core venues, the project will also "infiltrate" the city's outdoor video screens, advertising sites and transport networks, creating opportunities for connection and engagement across the whole

of Plymouth.

With an inclusive approach to learning for all ages, *We The People Are The Work* will be embedded into existing activity at all five venues involved, including Plymouth College of Art's Saturday Arts Club for 9 to 11-year-olds, as well as adult masterclasses and contextual studies lectures at the college. Activities will also include Bringing In Baby exhibition tours and Creative Play sessions for under 5s at Plymouth Arts Centre, Plain Speaking gallery tours by Take A Part's Crazy Glue group which will be free to the public, and Student Gallery Nights run by students for students with wine, workshops and exclusive exhibition viewings.

# Foreground



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## NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information please contact Lauren Taverner Brown at Plymouth College of Art on 01752 203434 (EX:506) or email [ltavernerbrown@pca.ac.uk](mailto:ltavernerbrown@pca.ac.uk).

*We The People Are The Work* is presented by Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group, a partnership between The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art, KARST, Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth City Council's Arts and Heritage Service, and Peninsula Arts at the University of Plymouth.

Horizon is a collaborative two year programme of visual contemporary arts with an aim to provide a major 'step-change' in Plymouth's visual arts ecology. Horizon will be delivered by a partnership between KARST, Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth Culture, Plymouth City Council, the University of Plymouth and Visual Arts Plymouth. It is funded through Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence fund. Started in November 2016, the Horizon programme will develop four major arts events in the city, support a talent development programme for artists and visual arts producers, and will enable communities to commission visual artworks.

*We The People Are The Work* is curated by Simon Morrissey, Director of [Foreground](#). Based in the market town of Frome, Somerset, Foreground have developed a national reputation for delivering an ambitious program that spans commissioning new temporary and permanent artworks in the diverse social and physical structures of communities that has developed a distinctive approach to involving audiences in the development of commissions. Morrissey has developed an international reputation for his curatorial approach and curated exhibitions for leading galleries and agencies including The British Council; Arnolfini, Bristol; Chapter, Cardiff, and Hauser & Wirth Somerset amongst many others. Morrissey's national sector reputation is underscored by the fact he will judge the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Visual Arts in 2017, one of the most significant financial awards for artists based in the UK (<http://artists.phf.org.uk>).

Simon Morrissey is assisted on the development and production of the project by Plymouth-based freelance producer Vickie Fear. Previously Assistant Curator at Plymouth Arts Centre (2015-2017) Fear is also a founder member of the Plymouth art book fair [Counter](#) and was Chair of [Visual Arts Plymouth](#) in 2015 and 2016.

Plymouth-based design agency [Intercity](#) have been commissioned to design the visual identity of We The People Are the Work.

### ***We The People Are The Work - Venues***

1. [KARST](#)
2. [The Council House, Plymouth City Council](#)
3. [Peninsula Arts at the University of Plymouth](#)
4. [Plymouth Arts Centre](#)
5. [The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art](#)

### ***We The People Are The Work - Artists and associated venues***

#### **[Claire Fontaine](#) (France)**

#### **[KARST](#) with support from [Foreground and Fluxus](#)**

Claire Fontaine lives in Paris. Her “assistants” are Fulvia Carnevale and James Thornhill, an Italian-British artist duo. With a readymade name—taken from a popular brand of French stationery—Claire Fontaine also describes herself as a readymade artist who finds herself working within the context of a politically impotent contemporary society. As her assistants, Carnevale and Thornhill make her work, write her texts and perpetuate her existence as an activist artist. Working in neon, video, sculpture, painting and text, Fontaine’s work interrogates the impotence of art in the face of social and political issues and art’s difficult relationship with capitalism.

#### **[Antonio Vega Macotella](#) (Mexico)**

#### **[Peninsula Arts at the University of Plymouth](#)**

Antonio Macotella’s work is multidisciplinary, site-specific and often engages particular communities such as prison inmates, soldiers, miners, etc. It explores notions of labour, value and exchange, specifically with regards to currency as a system through which social relations are established and negotiated. He addresses alienation in economic systems and its social structures. Macotella uses art as a tool for shifting and resignifying the meaning of everyday life as well as re-contextualizing it. His work can be understood both as a concrete engagement or form of activism, where his pieces come to have a real impact on people’s lives as well as at a metaphorical level, in which the metaphor emerges as the result of an action that affects a community.

#### **[Peter Liversidge](#) (United Kingdom)**

#### **[The Council House, Plymouth City Council](#)**

No single category or definition can successfully describe Peter Liversidge’s diverse practice which includes work in almost every conceivable medium: drawing, film, performance, photography, installations, books and multiples. The subjects of his work can seem equally diverse but all begin at the artist’s kitchen table with Liversidge sitting alone writing proposals on an old manual typewriter – ideas for potential performances and artworks conceived of in response to different places. Some of these proposals are realised, many are not, but all are united by an underlying streak of dark, absurdist humour and a gently persistent questioning of the world around us.

#### **[Ciara Phillips](#) (Canada)**

#### **[Plymouth Arts Centre](#)**

Ciara Phillips works mainly in printmaking and her approach is expansive and experimental. Her interest lies in both the physical processes involved in printing and the capacity to explore, test and develop ideas through it. Printing requires time, space and sometimes collaboration with others, which for Phillips, distinguishes it from the directness of drawing an image straight onto a page. Printing has also been linked with political and social activism – a tool to call for action. Phillips brings all these connections into play in her art, whether she is working alone or with others.

#### **[Matt Stokes](#) (United Kingdom)**

#### **[The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art](#)**

Matt Stokes’ work is marked by the study of other people’s culture, by a form of anthropological enquiry that circulates around an interest in events or informal movements that bind people together. Stokes’ works begin with a research process that immerses him in the social structures of the scene he is working with, which then result in films, installations and event-based works. These works hold collaboration at the centre of both their structure

and philosophy, often being made directly with the people from the social group the work celebrates. His films and events can often produce moments of peculiar beauty through the juxtaposition of form and content and from, transporting the intensities of little-known underground scenes into new forms.

#### **SOCIAL**

We The People Are The Work will have associated accounts on social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

<https://www.facebook.com/WeThePeoplePlym/>

<https://www.instagram.com/wethepeopleplym/>

<https://twitter.com/wethepeopleplym>

#### **WEBSITE**

[www.wethepeoplearethe.work](http://www.wethepeoplearethe.work) (due to launch 22 May)

#### **KEY DATES**

Preview Event: Friday 22 September 2017

Exhibition dates: Friday 22 September - Saturday 18 November 2017 (N.b. Peninsula Arts at the University of Plymouth will be open from Saturday 16 September 2017)