

Press Release

16 November 2017 - 13 January 2018

The Unlimited Dream Company

**Richard J. Butler, Stevie Dix, Ollie Dook, Angelique Heidler,
Lewis Henderson, Ralph Hunter-Menzies, George Rouy, Rosie Grace Ward**

“You can lean against us, we’re quite real.”

Taking its cue from J. G. Ballard’s novel of the same name, *The Unlimited Dream Company* is an exhibition of eight artists, each of whom interrogates a seductive edge of contemporary life. Together their works produce a theatre of sorts, a stage on which converge forces complicated by the thin line that exists between their reality and artificial construction: fantasy, illusion and desire.

Written in 1979, Ballard’s novel follows the protagonist Blake as he explores an exotic universe of salacious orchids, raucous parrots and gesticulating film sets. Emerging from the ruins of an aeroplane crash in the suburb of Thames at Shepperton, Blake’s narrative becomes increasingly suspicious as a gaggle of peculiar characters fight for his attention. Before long Blake’s existence is little other than an anxious daydream - lost in this absurd world, unsure of the reality of his own identity.

The eight artists presented in the show mirror this lack of stabilising narrative. Vanishing tombstones, curious monkeys and bloodied scythes, the exhibition similarly turns our attention to the vexed nature of desire. Affects become a source of craving, colours a form of neuromarketing, the surreal little more than a brand. At times humorous and at others apocalyptic, the exhibition shares with the world of Ballard’s protagonist a fascination with the cabalistic nature of the popular unconscious.

After notions of pastiche and irony have worn thin and epistemological deadlocks have been cast under renewed scrutiny, it seems the worlds of images and matter so essential to these works have acquired a new, active vibrancy. These artists are not united by a common thematic score, nor by a mode of expression. Considered together their works do not represent any collective identity. Encountered together here they rather produce a wormhole, multi-headed and polyvocal. A jigsaw, profuse with the fractured dreams of a generation and emitting an unearthly vibration - shuddering from past to future, optimism to despair, connectivity to isolation.

Punctuating the dark pool of libido that swarmed under society’s belly, Ballard was able to reveal the repressed, the silenced - the desires that bubbled up and squirted through fissures in the social fabric. Now though, the repressed has come to be the admired, the scandalous a pious commodity. Replacing high-rises, hollywood motifs and autoerotica, is the viscous complexion of Seaworld’s whale instructor, the bloodied sheets of a disfigured Tweety, and the nostalgic smog of a misshapen swan... *The Unlimited Dream Company* is a world of anxiety and ecstasy. One captured trembling, snared between the two.

Co-organised with Charlie Mills and Ralph Hunter-Menzies