# THE COMRADES THEY WERE BRAVE

18 MAR—10 APR

CECILIA SJÖHOLM, DEBORAH TCHOUDJINOFF, GARTH GRATRIX, HATTY BUCHANAN, IAIN HALES, JILLIAN KNIPE, LAURA MORETON-GRIFFITHS

WE SALUTE YOU!

44 GRS Gallery
44 Great Russell Street
London, WC1B 3JL

www.44grs.com

17/3 Opening event 6 – 9 pm
18/3 – 10/4 Open daily 12 – 5 pm

Curated by Cecilia Sjoholm

Special thanks to:
Essay Chris Fite-Wassilak
Graphics Studio Berga
Guidance Harold Offeh
Guidance Morgan Quiantance
Guidance Ceri Hands
PR Alison Wright
Screen printing Bainbridge studio
Support by Rochelle School

# THE COMRADES THEY WERE BRAVE – WE SALUTE YOU!

*It was always something awkward, these moments when they were all sitting there waiting for what was to come – the anticipation was immense, but never comfortable. And then it happened, the adrenaline kick so strong and buzzing. It was strange though; the following day she had always forgotten who she had been.*

*C.S.*

**This exhibition presents work by a group of artists who all engage in defiance, a homage to Edith Garrud and the Suffragette Bodyguard Unit. The work is diverse in media, brought together by the artists' interest in figurative abstraction. The exhibition takes place at 44GRS gallery, the second floor of a historic townhouse in Bloomsbury, London. Throughout the duration of the exhibition each weekend will see a set of accompanying events such as talks, discussions, music, screenings and readings. It will be a festival for the valiant, the buoyant and the scamps.**

**The artists in this exhibition have been invited to take Edith and the Bodyguard Unit as a starting point, to explore the theme of fighting for something, the most fundamental of issues – permission to be who you are.**

**This work is about having courage when you are afraid, having the strength to object to something, and making a space for yourself and others. Stories of the collective or the individual wanting to transform the status quo are perpetual, they have a past, a present and a future. Do we choose to fight openly in public or are we escape artists operating as much as possible outside society? Do we use smokescreens and camouflage as a matter of survival? This exhibition explores questions such as, 'can I be my own bodyguard?', 'to what level are we willing to make sacrifices?', and 'what is my personal Modus Operandi?'**

**Through different media, material, colour and writings, the exhibition forms a narrative in itself, interrogating the relationship between interior and exterior space, the private and the public. The rooms of 44GRS are the book cover that hold the stories inside – a boundless place where we acknowledge active and passive resistance**

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

# EDITH GARRUD

**Edith Margaret Williams (1872 – 1971) was born in Bath. After marrying William Garrud she came to London in 1893 and together with her husband took over the running of a Jiujitsu martial arts school in Soho, when master Uyenishi Sadakazu returned to Japan in 1908. At the same time the suffragette movement became increasingly frustrated with a lack of progress in their campaign for women's right to vote and began utilising more militant tactics, not least as a response to increased physical abuse by the police and other opponents.**

**Edith trained the suffragettes in self-defence and set up The Bodyguard Unit – referred to in the press as 'The Amazons' or 'The Suffrajitsu' – a 30-strong female group dedicated to protecting Mrs Pankhurst and other leaders of the movement from arrest and assault. This included those released under the 1913 Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act, commonly referred to as the 'Cat and Mouse Act'.**

**"Members [of the bodyguard] had to be athletic and willing to face injury and arrest. She trained them in jujutsu at secret locations throughout London, and also taught them how to use wooden Indian clubs, which were concealed in their dresses and used as weapons against the truncheons of the police."** *Tony Wolf – Edith Garrud: The Suffragette Who Knew Jujutsu*

**Their approach was not purely combative, they also used decoys, disguise and other methods of escape. Rumour has it Edith tossed a policeman over her shoulder despite being only 4ft 11 ins tall. She died in 1971 at the age of 99.**


*Reference:*
*Image – Edith_Garrud_and_a_Policeman British Press, CC BY-SA 4.0*
*Women from Hackney's history, The Hackney Society, Hackney history, 2021 page 50-51*
*www.royalarmouries.org/stories/edith-garrud-the-west-country-superwoman-who-created-the-jujutsuffragettes/*
*www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/jun/25/edith-garrud-suffragette-martial-arts*
*www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34425615*
*www.layersoflondon.org/map/records/edith-garrud-suffragette-and-jiu-jitsu-specialist*

# CECILIA SJOHOLM

Cecilia is a Swedish artist based in London. She has worked extensively with the fabric of buildings, space and surface, having previously qualified as an architect. Central to her art practice is an ongoing exploration into stories. A female protagonist often examines banal and bizarre situations or the obscurities around her. Each story is linked with Cecilia's own relationships to memory, experience, tales, dreams, daydreams, frustration and aspiration. She uses recurring forms and colours as a personal symbolic language. Abstract configurations distil complex emotions and parallel universes that seem obtuse or impenetrable to herself and others. Materials such as fluorescent paint, matt emulsion, rubber or fabric are juxtaposed to relate concepts and states of being such as energy, fragility, containment, silence, reflection.

For this exhibition Cecilia has examined resistance and taking a stance in different states of mind, explored through abstract sculpture and writing. In text, texture, light and scale, the narratives of a tumultuous set of feelings and reactions play out – a story of determination but also questioning by the female actor.

Cecilia's work has been part of a number of exhibitions including *Lines & Curves* during the London Design Festival (2021), *MK Calling* MK Gallery (2020), *Threshold* at M2 Gallery (2019), *Genesis Light Magic* at St John in Bethnal Green (2018), *Creekside Open as selected by Alison Wilding* at APT Gallery (2017), *monoChroma* Crypt Gallery (2016) and *What is the Point?* at Mall Galleries (2015). She has previously curated *Scenograph*, a group show at Obiter St n, 2020. Cecilia is the curator of *The comrades they were brave – We salute you!*.

1977, Gothenburg, Sweden
www.ceciliasjoholm.com
@Cecilia_Sjoholm

*The thrill of a Vendetta*
2022
Fabric, eyelets and vinyl print
Approx. 240 × 120 × 60 cm

# DEBORAH TCHOUDJINOFF

Deborah Tchoudjinoff is a multidisciplinary London based French-Mongolian artist who works across technology and objects to explore alternative narratives. Her practice often draws on her own heritage, pulling from the past and into contemporary anthropogenic discourse. Her mixed media approach has seen the use of AR and VR combined with sculpture to explore world-building concepts and aesthetics.

For this exhibition Deborah Tchoudjinoff is constructing an ovoo. Each hand-made element of the sculpture is a contemplative act of resistance. Referencing Mongolian practices of delineating sacred spaces the ovoo revisits her past work but also plays in part to a larger text work called Amasia, a speculation on a far-future supercontinent told through different cities. Using mixed media such as digital and physical artefacts, Deborah will give material form to one of the cities – the City of Gold – to ponder a world where all land masses shift to create one continent no longer able to provide mined gold. Her work questions the role of borders and the immediate material, social, and political influences of the border's geographical context. The city is inspired by the places that Deborah has travelled through, while landmarks are given fictional Mongolian names. The City of Gold is one part in a continuation of a larger body of work within her practice – giving urgent attention to a lesser-known Mongol futurism in the context of anthropogenic change.

Deborah's work has been shown as part of *Five Heads* (Tavan Tolgoi) Art, *Anthropology, and Mongol Futurism* (2018) at Greengrassi gallery, the Victoria & Albert Museum (2019) as part of LDF, amongst other group exhibitions. She has collaborated with *Multimedia Anthropology Lab* at the Tate Exchange programme (2019) addressing concerns of power in virtual and physical spaces. Deborah holds an *MA in Design Interactions* from the Royal College of Art and is Lecturer in *Emerging Technology* at London College of Communication, UAL.

1985, Val-d'Oise, France
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@deboraht_ff

*Baigala 2*
2022
Still from 360
N/A

*Ovoo, City of Gold*
2022
Found paper, plaster, wire, fabric and rope
Approx. 140 × 100 × 100 cm

# GARTH GRATRIX

Gratrix makes work that explores the slipperness of queer lived experience. Hiding in plain sight, layers of visual and verbal modes of coding and communication exist. Influenced by ideas of queering minimalism and queer formalism, the artist combines his personal origins of growing up living and working in Blackpool alongside his research into the coast as queer peripheral power.

Accepting slipperiness is a means to also accept rules and regulations that may not apply as suitable contexts for queer bodies. Gratrix adopts his own self-imposed rule of 'nine inches apart together, away, repeat' within the scale and approach to his interventions. His rule proceeds an intimate line of questioning around manhood on a dating app, which invokes a process of performance anxiety, fears of measuring up or fitting in, and then how to work with such nonsense in a subversive and reinventory manner.

Nine inch blocks hold traces of the artist's knees. Florist's Oasis is used, a post war material that was produced from the 1950s, which holds multiple connotations of memorial, mourning and loss as well as spectacle and decorative touches in the home. The act of kneeling evokes varied readings - a political act of solidarity? a romantic proposal? a moment of frivolous oral pleasure? or perhaps all of these in the way relationships evolve over time.

Camp-us is a collection of nine silk hankies colour matched to found DIY colour specifications. The Hanky Code exists in queer history as a mode of communication through colour, material and placement on the body to signify sexual interests and desires safely.

Gratrix is the founding director of *Abingdon Studios,* Blackpool and has an international artistic and curatorial portfolio of solo, duo, and group exhibitions. He has artworks in permanent collections, such as Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster and Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool. Recent activity includes eight funded *In Collaboration With...* projects (2020-2021); *New Perspectives,* group show, Peter Scott Gallery (2021); *Shy Girl,* solo exhibition, Grundy Art Gallery (2020).

1984, Blackpool, UK
www.garthgratrix.com
@garth.gratrix

*Pursuit of Happiness*
2022 (onging)
Nine inch Oasis floristry block and emulsion
20.5 × 6.5 × 10.5 cm (each)

*No Boundaries (Camp-us)*
2021 (ongoing)
Photographic print
Dimensions variable

# HATTY BUCHANAN

Fuelled by a love of fashion, form and material, Hatty draws on personal narratives to explore the complex nature of identity and power dynamics of relationships through work that exists between abstraction and figuration. Aged fourteen and a natural loner seeking an escape, Hatty immersed herself in London's underground culture of the 1980s and beyond, where she observed the unspooling stories of a host of unconventional characters. Her aesthetic involves a particular type of tactility and use of common items, often those related to clothing. Her work is also soaked with art-historical references and a theatrical playfulness, creating a tension between formal authority and nonconformist energy.

Blurring boundaries between painting and sculpture as well as craft and fine art forms, Hatty Buchanan's Alter Egos draw on a mash-up of fashion, familial, artistic, historical and theatrical references to summon a multitude of characters typical of her playful approach. Mobilising behaviours and processes particular to the material dispositions of cloth – textiles bend, fold, fray, caress, are cut, stitched and made into new objects – Hatty crafts assemblages exploring the frictions within undoing and remaking. Whilst these works appear to be abstract, they are titled after popular women's names of the 1920s and 30s. Irene, Dorothea and Maud connect the work to an era of social change, with new rights and shifting roles for women.

Hatty's work includes textile-based, typewriter collages, and table-top sculptures. She has a studio practice in Leicester and is Director of *Rochelle workspaces* in Shoreditch, London, and *Camp & Furnace Ltd*, Liverpool. Her work is held in several private collections, including *Maureen Paley Private Collection*. Recent exhibitions include *Selected guest artist*, Intersectional Feminist Art Collective (InFems) Group Show, Leicester Contemporary, 2021 and the *Royal Academy Summer Show*, London, 2020.

1967, London, UK
www.hattybuchanan.co.uk
@hattybuchanan

*Irene (Alter Egos series)*
2022
Oil paint on linen, synthetic fur and polyester thread
55 × 66 cm (107 cm inc threads)

*Maud (Alter Egos series)*
2022
Oil paint on linen, synthetic fur and polyester thread
49 × 67 cm (117 cm inc threads)

# IAIN HALES

Concerns over texture, material and colour are central to Iain Hales' sculptural practice. His works are almost entirely produced by hand, with an exemplary quality of execution. Research towards colour came into his work in 2009, leading to an increased interest in painting and the fundamental question 'what would a painting made by a sculptor look like?' In his continual attempt to collapse the space between painting and sculpture, Iain explores the slippage between object and image, three-dimension and flatness, form and surface. He has come to find this slippage analogous to the code-switching that many minorities find themselves having to perform to fit prescribed societal norms.

Iain is especially interested in the way our perception of a given colour is influenced by its proximity to other colours and the material in which that colour lies. He exploits the semiotic associations of materials and colour to communicate meaning, very often juxtaposing materials typically used in furnishing interiors with more esoteric artists' materials, he is interested in finding unexpected equivalences between these things.

Iain has made a new wall-based sculpture inspired by Edith Garrud and the Bodyguard Unit's use of the martial art Jiu Jitsu. Roughly translating as 'yielding-art', Jiu Jitsu's core philosophy is to manipulate an opponent's superior force against them, rather than confronting it with one's own (inferior) force. The work's colour-pallet is a derivation of the colours used in UK's Suffragette movement's insignia - purple, white and green.

Iain Hales completed his *MFA in Sculpture* at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2009. He was the 2013/14 recipient of the *Mark Tanner Sculpture Award* and is a member of the Royal Society of Sculptors. He has exhibited widely, including group shows at APT Gallery in London, Two Queens in Leicester and Baltic 39 in Newcastle, and has made several solo exhibitions in London. Most recently his work was included in *The Hidden Horizontal: The Cornice in Art and Architecture* at the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zurich, Switzerland.

1977, London, UK
www.iainhales.com
@iainhales

*Koshi Nage*
2022
Jesmonite, MDF, ceramic tiles, grout and aluminium
165 × 120 × 35cm

# JILLIAN KNIPE

Jillian Knipe's studio works bring stillness to the fractured process of perception, which is constantly in flux. Stretching from stories and landscape, to philosophy and biology, her research is largely driven by her complicated familial history. It is directed towards both historical and contemporary ideas of origins, lineage and place, as well as the mind / body connections between these. She often plays on the idealistic, singular strategies of Modernism, to both assert and undermine those same principles: confusing background with foreground through the use of colour, patterning and minute detail, all the while insisting on the complications of persistent memory. These artistic enquiries extend to art writing and Art Fictions podcast discussions, as a way of exploring the complex fluidity of imagery.

For this exhibition, Jillian Knipe has begun a new series of works, using Medusa as an initial muse. She has been rethinking the myth as one of survival and power from trauma. Along the way, Jillian has discovered variations of the snake-haired woman in Hindu and African mythology, and is developing a sense of channelling the elements of these stories in her work.

Jillian Knipe is an Australian artist based in London who shifted from commercial art direction to artist in 2017. She has exhibited internationally, including participating in a three person exhibition in Art Basel Miami. This year her work will be shown in exhibitions in London, Oxford and New York.

1968, Melbourne, Australia
www.jillianknipe.com
@jillianknipestudio
@artfictionspodcast

*Leaving to Join the Wounded*
2022
Acrylic paint, inks and glitter on canvas
180 × 80 cm

# LAURA MORETON-GRIFFITHS

*Gas Hood worries. Gas Hood worries about weaponised air and the 21st century use of chemical warfare. Seeing patterns, Gas Hood also worries about aesthetic modernity's attacks against faith, hope and love. With stealth it creeps up on us, filling our lungs with mind-altering effect. Raise the alarm and resist the permanent war against the good in nature.*

**Tender, funny, political, soulful, conflicting, and sad. Laura Moreton-Griffiths presents new works made for this exhibition: Gas Hood resists across moving image, photography, poetry, and live performance, and a limited-edition pin-up poster. Collectively titled Beautiful Breath.**

**Story telling for positive change, Laura Moreton-Griffiths works through performance, drawing, painting, film, installation, sculpture, print and text. Her stories are about conflict and control, blend fact and fiction, personal biography and overlooked events from history with current affairs.**

**Recent exhibitions include** *META Alarm*, **Bermondsey Project Space (2022),** *End of the Line*, **The Big Draw (2022),** *Blink*, **Safehouse 1, Peckham (2022),** *tactileBosch*, **Cardiff (2021),** *DOOResidency*, **Amsterdam (2021),** *Everything Forever*, **an online exhibition in collaboration with Silicon Valet, Montez Press Radio NY, Off Site Project and New Critique (2021),** *Apple Blossom Sky*, **published by New Critique (2021),** *302_Direct* **in collaboration with this is tomorrow, Montez Press Radio NY, Low_Res_Camera_Roll and '& Inevitable bedding within circulated by the ICA, London (2020).**

**Laura's studies include** *MA in Contemporary Art Practice*, **Royal College of Art (2021),** *Drawing Intensive Scholarship Programme*, **The Royal Drawing School (2019),** *Turps Correspondence Course* **(2016–2019) and** *BA Painting* **at Camberwell College of Art (2005–2008).**

**1967, Nuneaton, UK**
**www.lauramoretongriffiths.com**
**@lauramoretongriffiths**

*L'air, Légère, Leg Air, La Guerre, Grrr!,*
**2022**
**Still from film**

*Beautiful Breath Gas Hood Pin-Up (Sandals)* **and**
*Beautiful Breath Gas Hood Pin-Up (Black shoes red rose)*
**2022**
**Photographic print**
**59 × 42 cm**

# BRACE

18 March, 2110

It is a search for evidence. A sweep for precedents, for It is a search for evidence. A sweep for precedents, for assurances after recent events that this isn't just a subset of insanity, or jealousy for the gallops sitting about in their own expansive housing, lolling about in the open spaces of their linked-off subsquares.

J checks into the darkness of an hourly rental pod and flicks on his retinal screen. J wants to try, again, to check that there were points of some kind of relay with this existence. That survival meant not just being held in this state but could move forward, break... almost thinking the words break through, but J isn't sure there's any other side.

Searching the past is a tricked endeavour. The only sources of unsubsidised data are on the private video feeds, and the only ones showing untagged ancient imagery do their best to be unsearchable. Luckily J has some stitch of what it is to look for as he swipes and swipes and swipes down the feeds, leaping across from one to the next based on who likes or comments. A few prop out the double-spaced triple fireji sign that self-appointed archivists have been using lately. Wading through the small bursts of retinal tweak tutorials and angular neon dances, J keeps an eye out for old news footage, so wobbly and rough that it couldn't possibly be prepped out like it is these days; or those hazy burnt-out images in blurred browns and pale yellows, hasty snaps retaken of hardcopy photographs. Even combing through the time fetishists and nostalgists, it's easy enough to gloss over the ancient war imagery, familiar as it is being continually rebroadcast and reupped, as if the old wars were continually taking place again.

One account J scans through is a just a grey grid of closeups on oldtimes neckties and elaborate hats with long drooping plumes, from animals J has to assume must have been real at some point, each a hidden sign whose meaning has been lost. Another loops a story in miniature of rights promoters of the gone millennium lining a stage with flowers, using the plants to hide the barbed wire underneath to keep the police at bay. A bot maps out the past few feeds and tries out a pitch that unrolls across his lids: *Looking for gifts for that special someone? Custom flower ties!* J bats it aside and keeps looking. Some point hours in, J stumbles across one of the fragments sought:

March 1, 1912

A woman strolls down a busy street, bound immediately on all sides by throngs of people who all seem to be wearing black. The road is lined with retailers, all displaying their wares set behind high glossy transparent sheets. It might be evening.

The clocktower nearby gives a bell for half past the hour. Immediately, the woman turns to her left, producing a hammer from the folds of her dress. She takes a few confident strides towards a store, its inside filled with chains, necklaces, earrings. The hammer's metal head arcs over her towards the reflective surface and it buckles inwards, an oversized gap appearing around the hammer as large chunks of the thin, brittle membrane shave off in gyres around it. Other parts shatter and fall as, finally, the whole front then folds resignedly in on itself.

Small shards join the jewellery in glinting off the evening as the woman stands back and stares proudly at her work, dropping the hammer on the ground. Its handle is inscribed: 'BETTER BROKEN WINDOWS THAN BROKEN PROMISES'. She maintains a faraway gaze into the irregular hole left behind as police grab her by the arms and pull her away.

It's something only seen in lost century videos anymore; J could watch old glass break all day long. Over a hundred in-person retailers across a city centre hit that same evening: ones selling cloth, hats, decorative metals, their front windows smashed with stones, hammers, whatever would break the surface. J feels a wry smile at the words *universal suffrage*, mulling for a beat on the sad journey each word had taken in the two hundred years since this incident.

J slides this subset aside, away from the feeds that secret away the fragments left of the gone millennium, to those who gather the more ret-ready scraps from the start of this one. These are mostly fashion feeds, scouring incidental vid footage for retro accessory tips, but J is looking for a different kind of choreography. One user has cropped together images of the time to focus on a form of common headwear, a sort of woven dome worn over the head like a puffed-up skull cap. Another collates proof of the handheld era, when devices hadn't fully migrated and so were simply held all day long in the palm: pixxed out images of one clunky rectangle held in a tense hand grip after another. Too easy, J thinks, to laugh at what your great-grandvids did for kicks. J knows it's close when one feed is a reel of buildings on fire. A local spam net overlays a vid circling a burning warehouse with flashing text: *...VOTES FOR VOTES FOR VOTES FOR...* The word appears in negative afterimage when J blinks, waving them off. Then, at the end of one clip, there it is:

8 August, 2011

Someone strolls down a busy street, their head covered by a hood, bound immediately on all sides by throngs of people who all seem to be wearing grey or black. The road is lined with retailers, all displaying their wares set behind high glossy transparent sheets. It is evening.

Holding a long plank of some form of metal, the person turns to the left and strides towards one of the retailers, pink letters lighting up the building spell out 'HIS MASTERS VOICE'. Hefting the metal over their shoulder, it is curled quickly into the façade. A small cloudy spider's web of cracks appear, as encouragement to pull back and swing again and again in quick succession. The web grows sideways and up, until the thick glass begins to dent and chip like rock, as if a begrudging erosion. A small, jagged gap appears, and gloved hands pry and pull the shattered glass like a heavy drape until it curls outwards to the ground in a folded lump.

Feet flood into the opening, arms grabbing at and cradling the numerous oblong containers held in the window. Soon its display shelves are empty. Abandoned, the large opening frames a poster of a solemn-faced archer, ROBIN HOOD, intently pointing a bow and arrow out towards the teeming back and forth taking place outside.

It felt giddy, sickening; J had heard rumours about such incidents, held close to one hundred years from each other. Having seen some sliver, some alignment with the present, was almost just as unbelievable. Like, what do you even do with such knowledge? A dancing bottle anime, a cloth sticking from its top on fire, shuffles across his ret screen doing a jerky side move. He replays the incidents on his ret one after the other. Each moment a vastly different relationship to accessing what's on offer, to wanting to be seen doing as such; but in the shared action there feels a larger puncture. J starts to thinks of the interactions with the windows as a form of inversed graffiti, inscribing on the surface with such an oversized drive, with such unspoken desires, that it cannot hold what needs to be said. The wanting of something beyond grasp, wanting to shift the smooth surface of regimented habit.

And here, after yesterday, is a faint trail. J wouldn't call it a history, but a scrapped together mirror of some kind. The surface was mutable, restless, diffuse but still present. Searching out a scalpel pen in the dark of the pod, J's eyes closed, fizzing with a jumbled afterburn of shattered neckties and flaming flowers, ready and dancing.

*Chris Fite-Wassilak*

# PROGRAMME

## 17 MAR.

6 – 9 pm
Exhibition opening event

## 19 MAR.

12.30 – 2 pm
*The Artists in Dialogue* led by Morgan Quaintance

2.30 – 5 pm
*The British soul scene as resistance through music*
DJ session by Adam Buchanan

## 26 MAR.

12.30 – 1.30 pm
*Art fiction in conversation with Juliet Jacques*
with Jillian Knipe

2.30 – 5 pm
*Transgressions through Disco,*
DJ session

## 02 APR.

12.30 – 2 pm
*Bloomsbury – Outsider Insider*
Alex Arestis in conversation with guests

3 – 4.30 pm
*Museum of Youth Culture*
talk about youth resistance

## 09 APR.

12.30 – 5 pm
*A festival of the valiant and the scamps:*

*Taking action* The laboratory of insurrectional imagination with Laura Moreton-Griffiths

*The Shoe Shop* performance by Creating Ground and Rachel Griffiths

*Poetry* and other readings

*Radical Choir* with Isa Suarez and friends

*Gas Hood Adventures Raise the Alarm*
performance by Laura Moreton-Griffiths