

The Horniman Museum and Gardens' new arts space, The Studio, launches on 20 October 2018 with Serena Korda exhibition



(L-R) *The Jug Choir* by Serena Korda at Camden Arts Centre. Image credit: Hydar Dewachi. Serena Korda *Field Recordings, Kielder*. Image credit: Chris Egon Searle

The Horniman Museum and Gardens has announced today that The Studio, a new space for showcasing social arts practice, will open to the public on Saturday 20 October 2018. The inaugural exhibition, *The Lore of the Land*, is co-curated by artist Serena Korda as part of a Collective of eight local community members and a number of Horniman staff, and features an immersive, multi-sensory installation by Korda.

The scale and depth of the Collective's involvement in the show is an exciting and innovative new addition to the Horniman's ongoing work to open up the creation and curation of exhibitions and events to artists, scientists, researchers, community partners and visitors.

The Lore of the Land responds to the Horniman's world-class anthropology collection and explores our deep-rooted relationship with the natural world, centred around Korda's five large-scale ceramic works entitled 'Sensitive Chaos'. Each ceramic piece incorporates bulbous organic forms and plant matter and is accompanied by an individual scent, inspired by essential oils distilled from plants in the Horniman's 16-acre Gardens, and a site-specific soundscape based on recordings of the chemical processes occurring in plants and trees. The title is taken from Theodor Schwenk's book on water and flow research.

The exhibition is completed with a display of 100 objects from the Horniman's anthropology collection, curated by the Collective. The objects have been selected for the messages they carry about people's spiritual and cultural relationship with plants and water. They include a statue of Mami Wata – an African deity accompanied by her divining snake, zoomorphic Oudh figurines, a dowsing stick, natural water containers, and an array of pipes, scent and incense holders from across the world. Also among the highlights is a rare volume of Anna Atkins' mid-19th-century *Photographs of British Algae*, the first ever photographically-illustrated book.

The Lore of the Land aims to challenge an anthropocentric viewpoint and instead encourage greater respect for the natural world. Like much of her practice, Korda's new work for this exhibition is informed by animism, the attribution of a living soul to inanimate objects, plants and natural phenomena, and by examples of these beliefs and practices in cultures throughout the world. The exhibition also addresses the artist's understanding of the purported dichotomy between science and spirituality since the Enlightenment, and explores how the two can inform one another.

Korda's work 'Sensitive Chaos' draws on spiritual belief and scientific studies that imply that plants can be sentient. Research in the field of biophysics suggests that plants, trees and fungi have

sophisticated means of sensing what is around them, have intricate ways of communicating with their environment using electrical signalling, and can show altruism to one another. Korda drew inspiration from the work of scientists including the physiologist Dr Rupert Sheldrake who developed the theory of 'morphic resonance', which suggests that nature has inherent memory and telepathy-type connections, and the 19th-century Indian polymath Jagadish Chandra Bose who pioneered devices to measure electrical activity in plants over 100 years ago.

Serena Korda says, 'Through *The Lore of the Land* I have been privileged to explore the vast array of objects in the Horniman's collection that show how different cultures have all come to the same conclusion; plants are powerful. In thinking about their abilities to communicate with one another, feel and think we can begin to see how we fit into their world and in doing so understand they are inseparable from us.'

The Collective

- **Anna-Maria Amato** – an artist and curator of the SHARP Gallery in Brixton, which exhibits work by emerging artists, many of whom are mental health service users.
- **Joe Francis** – a songwriter from a musical background, whose involvement with patients at St Christopher's Hospice has revitalised his interest in all kinds of arts, especially pottery.
- **Judith Fernandes** – a service user of Three Cs which supports people with learning disabilities and/or mental health challenges, who also volunteers with the Horniman and Three Cs' allotment.
- **Julia Austin** – an active member of organisations campaigning for and working with disabled people, and a member of the Horniman's Access Advisory Group for a number of years.
- **Lu Firth** – a community worker with a particular interest in textiles, who runs arts and heritage projects with diverse audiences.
- **Michael Cox** – a keen photographer who regularly attends workshops at the Horniman as part of the Community Connections group for older people.
- **Nigel Looker** – a lifelong Forest Hill resident, who is a peer support volunteer with MIND and attends the Community Connections group at the Horniman.
- **Philip Baird** – an artist, musician and mental health service user, who is an Arts Ambassador for both Arts Network, a mental health arts organisation based in Lewisham, and the Dragon Café.

For The Studio's inaugural exhibition, Serena Korda was selected by the Collective from a shortlist compiled by the Horniman Museum's Critical Arts Group, consisting of: Rebecca Heald, an independent curator; Dr Christopher Wright, a visual anthropologist; Manick Govinda, Programme Director for SPACE; Sarah Cole, Senior Lecturer on the BA Fine Art at Central St Martins College of Art and Design; Dr Alison Rooke, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths; Tara Cranswick, Director V22 and Gina Buenfeld, Programme Curator at Camden Arts Centre.

Ends

For media enquiries relating to the The Studio please contact:

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Press Release
13 August 2018
For immediate release



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NOTES TO EDITORS

About The Studio

The Studio is a new arts space created as part of the the Horniman's wider anthropology redisplay project, which also includes the development of the World Gallery which opened in June 2018. The Studio is an adaptable exhibition and event space at the heart of the Horniman that, for the first time, creates a platform for revealing what happens when artists, communities and museums come together. Building on the Horniman's long-standing and excellent work in community engagement and its pioneering role as a participatory museum, The Studio will be home to the Horniman's social arts programme, showcasing works by community and professional artists and creators, inspired by the Horniman's collections. It will feature collaborative and co-curated exhibitions and events, which open up creation and curation to a creative network of artists, scientists, visitors and community partners, and which the Horniman is now able to share with the public.

The Studio is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's as part of its £3.3m funding for the Horniman's anthropology project, and by Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

In addition to £3.3m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Horniman's anthropology project is also supported by: Arts Council England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, The Wolfson Foundation, The Foyle Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Fidelity UK Foundation, Viridor Credits, The Pilgrim Trust, The Sackler Trust, The Andor Charitable Trust, The Goldsmiths' Company Charity, The Charles Hayward Foundation, and the John S Coates Charitable Trust.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk
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About Serena Korda

Serena Korda's work uses large-scale performances, sound and sculpture to reconsider aspects of communion and tradition in our lives to highlight ritual in the everyday, developed through encounters, conversations and the researching of abandoned histories. Korda's work examines the materiality of objects and sound to explore how resonance and animism bind us all together. Audiences are often encouraged to participate in Korda's process – creating collective experiences that focus on the forgotten and overlooked. Korda is currently working on a new commission for Trust New Art and Bluecoat that will open at National Trust property Speke Hall, Liverpool, in September. She was recently the Norma Lipman/BALTIC fellow in Ceramic Sculpture at Newcastle University 2016-2018. Her work has been exhibited at The High Line NYC, BALTIC, The Hepworth Wakefield, Glasgow International 2016, Camden Arts Centre, The Grundy, Wellcome Collection, Turner Contemporary and The Arnolfini.

The Horniman Museum and Gardens opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include natural history, music and an acclaimed aquarium. A new World Gallery of anthropology opened on 29 June 2018. Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. horniman.ac.uk

Press Release
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The Horniman Museum and Gardens is core-funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725. The Horniman Museum and Gardens also receives funding from Arts Council England as one of its National Portfolio Organisations.

Opening times and admission. The Horniman Museum is open daily 10.00am-5.30pm, except 24 - 26 December, when it is closed. The Gardens open at 7.15am Monday to Saturday and 8.00am on Sunday and Bank Holidays, and close at sunset. Entry to the Museum and Gardens is free but charges apply for the Aquarium, Butterfly House and some special exhibitions and events. Horniman Members go free – www.horniman.ac.uk/members.

Access. The Museum and the Gardens are both wheelchair and pushchair friendly with accessible toilets. Limited on-site parking is available for disabled visitors – call 020 8699 1872.

Travel. The Horniman is situated on the South Circular Road (A205) in Forest Hill, London. It can be reached easily by train to Forest Hill from Highbury and Islington, Whitechapel and Canada Water (on the London Overground line), London Bridge (15 minutes), London Victoria, Clapham Junction and East Croydon, and by local buses (176, 185, 197, 356, P4).

**Funding raised by
The National Lottery**

and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



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