

STUDIO VOLTAIRE

Studio Voltaire announces a major new commission by artist Phyllida Barlow at Highgate Cemetery

24 July – 30 August 2021

Press preview: Tuesday 20 July 2021, 9.30am–12.30pm



untitled: stack; 2019, 2019 (detail) © Phyllida Barlow. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Damian Griffiths

Studio Voltaire has announced a major new site-specific sculpture commission by internationally celebrated artist Phyllida Barlow at Highgate Cemetery, London. The commission will be staged in the open-air courtyard of the West Cemetery, presenting a special opportunity to encounter ambitious new work by this leading artist within an extraordinary and historic site.

The large-scale commission, *act*, reaches up to five meters in height. A tower of fabric wrapped poles are enclosed within a commanding structure of sombre, concrete screed panels flecked with colourful paint. Knitted together, these bulwarks of material create an imposing, sepulchral form. However, their exposed supporting frameworks reveal stage-set properties, undermining any initial appearance of monumentality.

Barlow's structures of stacked, bound and balanced materials have an imposing physical presence and yet often appear at the edge of collapse. Her assemblages are formed of inexpensive industrial or everyday materials – cardboard, fabric, timber, polystyrene, plaster, scrim and cement – painted in vibrant colours, the seams of their construction at times left visible. Tensions in Barlow's work between transformation, entropy and precarity resonate strongly with the chosen site's character and surrounding monuments. Her commission is both a dramatic and contemplative response to the elaborate, melancholic funerary architecture of the cemetery, and will bring audiences into unexpected dialogues with a landmark site.

Barlow's work sits within a site of historic importance and is framed by the courtyard's impressive colonnade. Famed for its special atmosphere, the cemetery's sinuous paths wind up a steep, wooded hill and ivy-clad memorials, forming a secluded and evocative landscape. The West Cemetery is home to the most impressive architectural features of Highgate Cemetery, including the Egyptian Avenue, Circle of Lebanon and Terrace Catacombs.

In 2010, Studio Voltaire commissioned *BLUFF*, a significant exhibition of Barlow's work which played an important role in raising the artist's international profile. This new exhibition, a decade later, celebrates a pivotal commission within Studio Voltaire's history, and reflects their track record of supporting artists at key stages in their careers. Barlow is a renowned contemporary artist, whose work has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at Haus der Kunst, Munich (2021), The Royal Academy of Arts, London (2019), Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2015) and Tate Britain, London (2014). In 2017, she represented Britain at the Venice Biennale.

act was commissioned as part of Studio Voltaire *elsewhere*, a series of commissions taking place offsite whilst undertaking The Studio Voltaire Capital Project.

This commission is presented in partnership with Highgate Cemetery.

act is supported by Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Art Fund.



Supported using public funding by
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With special thanks to all those who purchased *pointer* (2020), a special fundraising edition in support of this commission.

Edition production was kindly supported by Hauser & Wirth.

Notes to editors

Press contacts

For all image and press requests please contact

Sam Talbot sam@sam-talbot.com / +447725184630

Mary Doherty mary@sam-talbot.com / +447716701499

Visitor information

West Cemetery Courtyard at Highgate Cemetery
Swain's Lane, London N6 6PJ

Press view: Tuesday 20 July 2021, 9.30am–12.30pm
Commission dates: 24 July–30 August 2021
Opening hours: Monday–Sunday, 10am–5pm

Visiting the exhibition:
Entrance to the Courtyard to view the exhibition is free.
Booking is not required.

Visiting Highgate Cemetery:
Access to the wider West Cemetery is ticketed and by timed entry or guided tour only.
Access to the East Cemetery is also ticketed.
Please visit highgatecemetery.org/visit for further information and to book.

About Phyllida Barlow

Phyllida Barlow DBE RA (born Newcastle upon Tyne, 1944) lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include *Phyllida Barlow frontier*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2021); *cul-de-sac*, The Royal Academy of Arts, London (2019); *Phyllida Barlow: prop*, High Line Art, New York; *Tenth Anniversary Commission*, Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh (2018); *Phyllida Barlow: folly*, La Biennale di Venezia, British Pavilion, Venice IT; *ARTIST ROOMS: Phyllida Barlow*, Turner Contemporary, Margate UK (2017); *tryst*, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas TX; *set*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2015); *Duveen Commission: Phyllida Barlow. dock*, Tate Britain, London (2014); *siege*, New Museum, New York (2012); *BLUFF*, Studio Voltaire, London (2010)

Recent group exhibitions include: *Another Energy. Power to Continue Challenging*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo JP; *Breaking the Mould: Sculpture by Women since 1945*, Arts Council Collection Touring Exhibition, (various locations) UK (2021); *the other side of the coin*, New Art Centre, Roche Court, Salisbury UK (2020); *Objects of Wonder. From Pedestal to Interaction*, ARoS, Aarhus DK; *Carl Plackman and His Circle*, Pangolin, London UK (2019); *Tissage, Tressage*, Foundation Villa Datriis, Isle sur la Sorgue FR; *Power to the People*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt DE (2018); *Versus Rodin: Bodies Across Space and Time*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia AU; *Constellations: Highlights from the Nation's Collection of Modern Art*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool UK (2017); *The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture*, Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield UK (2016); *New Rhythms*, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge UK (2015); *Yes, Naturally*, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands (2013); *A House of Leaves*, David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2012); *Sculptural Acts*, Haus der Kunst, Munich DE; *United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds UK (2011); *Nairy Baghramian and Phyllida Barlow*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2010).

About Studio Voltaire

Studio Voltaire is one of the UK's leading not-for-profit arts organisations. Its pioneering public programmes of exhibitions, participation projects, live events and offsite commissions have gained an international reputation.

The organisation has an outstanding track record of supporting artists at a pivotal stage in their careers, championing emerging and underrepresented practices and placing emphasis on risk-taking and experimentation. Many commissions are an artist's first solo exhibition in London or the UK.

Exhibiting artists have included Aaron Angell, Nairy Baghramian, Phyllida Barlow, Monster Chetwynd, Anne Collier, Nicole Eisenman, Sharon Hayes, Jamian Juliano-Villani, Nnena Kalu, Sanya Kantarovsky, Ella Kruglyanskaya, The Neo Naturists, Henrik Olesen, Paulina Olowaska, Elizabeth Price, Charlotte Prodger, Jo Spence, Cathy Wilkes and Rehana Zaman.

Studio Voltaire commissions a wide range of participatory and offsite projects working in collaboration with artists, local organisations, schools and community groups and provides a much-needed resource of affordable and accessible onsite artists' studios, supporting the development of diverse individual and collective practices, from recent graduates to internationally recognised practitioners.

Studio Voltaire is a registered charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

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