

REFOCUS: THE CASTLEGATE MIMA PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

Artist Gayle Chong Kwan unveils new commission



Gayle Chong Kwan, *Arripare (detail)*, 2013

The installation of a new landmark artwork in Stockton-on-Tees, by acclaimed artist Gayle Chong Kwan, launches REFOCUS the biennial Castlegate mima Photography Prize.

Gayle Chong Kwan's large scale photographic work, which is over 38 meters wide, will be officially unveiled on **18 October 2013**, and is sited at the prominent riverside location of Stockton-on-Tees' Castlegate shopping centre. This commission has come about through a collaboration between mima (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art); Lathe Investments Limited and Angelo, Gordon & Co, the owners of Castlegate shopping centre; and Stockton Borough Council.

Chong Kwan was invited to produce the inaugural commission by an esteemed panel of selectors: **Mark Sealy**, Director of Autograph; **Professor John Kippin**, Lecturer in Photography, Sunderland University; **Greg Hobson**, Senior Curator of Photography, National Media Museum, Bradford; **Kate Brindley**, Director, mima; **Reuben Kench**, Head of Culture & Leisure, Stockton Borough Council; and **Tim Cornford**, Asset Management Director, Lathe Investments Limited. The commission launches **REFOCUS: The Castlegate mima Photography Prize**, a new biennial prize for photography.

Chong Kwan comments: *'I am thrilled to be invited to be the first artist to exhibit as part of REFOCUS: The Castlegate mima Photography Prize, and delighted to have the opportunity to respond to such a fascinating and inspiring area, to create a work on such an ambitious scale and prominent site, and to bring photography beyond the gallery into the public realm.'*

Following a period of local historical research and engagement with local residents, Chong Kwan has created *Arripare*, a mythical island - an alternative version of Stockton and the surrounding areas - seemingly hovering between arrival and appearance or departure and disappearance. Combining complex multiple techniques of documentary photography, collage and sculptural construction, the island is rooted in the context and history of its location and the river which runs alongside it, and yet enveloped in mist, the island could be located in the past, present or future, sighted in the midst of a vast ocean or be hovering somewhere in the clouds.

This commission, and the ongoing Prize, aims to re-position photography as a medium which is able to work on multiple levels – as transitory, but also long-term, as something that is a democratic tool, but also an artform. The artwork, which will be on display over a two-year period, is intended to connect with Stockton residents and visitors through visual art, engaging people's curiosity, creating a talking point across generations, different cultures and demographics.

REFOCUS: The Castlegate mima Photography Prize launches concurrently with **The Social: Encountering Photography** (18 October - 16 November 2013) the first festival of international contemporary photography and lens-based media in north-east England, bringing together new commissions and UK premieres of work by John Kippin, Simon Roberts and Sarah Pickering, amongst many others.

For further details about Gayle Chong Kwan's commission and REFOCUS: The Castlegate mima Photography Prize please visit: www.castlegateshoppingcentre.com/refocus

A limited-edition print of Gayle Chong Kwan's artwork will be available.

- Ends -

***PLEASE NOTE: The image of the commission is embargoed until 18 October 2013**

PRESS/ LAUNCH EVENT

Date: Friday 18th October, 12 noon

Venue: Joe Rigatonis, Castlegate Quay, Cleveland, TS18 3BB

RSVP: isabel@parkerharris.co.uk / 01372 462 190

NOTES TO EDITORS

Biography:

Gayle Chong Kwan (born Edinburgh) is a London-based artist whose work has been exhibited and published internationally. Her work explores a contemporary archaeology of waste, remains, memory and the senses through photography, installation, video, sound, and public projects often as mise-en-scene landscapes and environments created from waste packaging, detritus, food remains, and documentary sources. Recent exhibitions include: *'The Golden Tide'*, Estuary, Museum of London, 2013; *'Wastescape'*, Southbank Centre, London, 2012; *'Memory Trace'*, The Wellcome Trust, London, 2012; New Forest Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale, 2011; *'The Obsidian Isle'*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, 2011; *'Memoryscape Moravia'*, Centro Cultural de Moravia, Medellin, Colombia, 2009; *'Tales from the New World'*, 10th Havana Biennial, Cuba, 2009; *'Utopia'*, Museu Berardo, Centro Cultural do Belem, Lisbon, 2009. Publications; *'The Grand Tour'*, 2009, *'The Obsidian Isle'*, 2011, *'Invisible Twinning'*, 2009. Awards include: The Royal Scottish Academy Award; Vauxhall Collective Photography Award, and International Fellow, Arts Council England. www.gaylechongkwan.com



The Artwork:

Chong Kwan's island takes its title from the origin of a word rooted in the sea - 'arrive' - from its vernacular Latin root 'arripere' meaning 'to touch the shore', and references Captain Cook's epic voyages on the Endeavour, the area's industrial and historical relationship with the sea, and its international connections. Chong Kwan developed *Arripere* through a period of engagement and research in historic Stockton, Thornaby and Billingham, the industrial landscapes of Seal Sands, newer developments such as Billingham and Ingleby Barwick, and other locations along the river.

The Commissioners:

mima is a leading contemporary art gallery based in Middlesbrough. Operating within a policy of 'accessible excellence' mima exhibits, commissions and collects world-class modern and contemporary art from 1900 to the present day. mima is a centre of excellence for drawing and contemporary approaches to craft and are partnered with Tate and The Drawing Centre, New York. mima's exhibitions over the past few years have included shows by artists Alex Katz, Carl Andre, Jannis Kounellis, Julian Stair, John Gerrard and Cyprien Gaillard. www.visitmima.com

Stockton Borough Council is taking the lead on overseeing the mima Castlegate Photography Prize & Commission. Stockton-on-Tees is an attractive market town in the Tees Valley with a lively cultural life, which includes the nationally acclaimed Stockton International Riverside Festival. The Tees Valley lies to the south of the North East region and includes Middlesbrough, Darlington, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland as well as the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The Borough is one of contrasts, a mix of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. With a wide range of regeneration projects currently taking place, the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees faces the greatest degree of physical change for a century. www.stockton.gov.uk

The owners of Castlegate Shopping Centre - owned in a joint venture partnership between Lathe Investments and Angelo, Gordon & Co. Lathe Investments, a specialist shopping centre asset manager, has been involved in Castlegate since 2005. Angelo, Gordon & Co is a large international investor who specialise in repositioning assets, and has over \$24 billion of assets under management. Castlegate Shopping Centre is a major feature on the High Street in Stockton town centre, built in the 1960s and is completing a programme of major refurbishment at a cost of some £5 million. Home to over sixty stores, it includes the historic indoor market hall offering fresh produce and local character. The rear of the building faces the River and has a prominent position, visible from the busy road alongside (the main thoroughfare through town). www.castlegateshoppingcentre.com

The Social: Encountering Photography

REFOCUS: The Castlegate mima Photography Prize launches concurrently with **The Social: Encountering Photography**, 18 October - 16 November 2013, the first festival of international contemporary photography and lens-based media in north-east England, bringing together new commissions and UK premieres, with iconic bodies of work from leading international practitioners in museums, galleries and found spaces across the region. www.thesocialnepn.co.uk



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