

HALES GALLERY

Rachael Champion *Primary Producers*

11 June – 26 July 2014

Private View: Tuesday 10 June, 6-8.30 pm



Hales Gallery is delighted to announce *Primary Producers*, the gallery's first solo exhibition with artist Rachael Champion.

Primary Producers is an exploration through energy and architecture in the form of a site-specific installation integrated into the architecture of Hales Gallery. The installation presents a pebble dashed landmass, punctuated with cylindrical concavities containing both wild and specific strains of fresh water algae. Pebbledash, a controversial rendering ubiquitous in the British landscape, and algae, a strong candidate for renewable energy as biofuel, are signifiers of both progress and problem-solving. These materials, integrated together as an architectural sculpture, point at both optimistic yet fallible responses to the urgent needs of our society.

Primary Producers refers to algae and its characteristics as a basic life form, which, although having been used by humans for centuries, only recently became an important subject in sustainability. Rich in proteins and lipids, algae is seen as a "super-substance" with a wide range of uses – from its potential as a source of renewable energy, its ability to sequester carbon and its popularity as a health food trend (Spirulina). In *Primary Producers*, algae is placed alongside mundane pebbledash surfaces, inextricably associated in the UK with the very worst excesses of the home improvement industry. Pebbledash is often affiliated with "covering up" both bad brick work and historical detail and can be found all over Britain. At the height of roughcast rendering, homes would be 'dashed' in aggregates from the same quarry, giving humble architecture a sense of coherent continuity. Although being an omnipresent characteristic of the suburban, the quality of pebbledash reminds us of the raw natural materials that make up our built environment.

Champion's installation is an integration of two aspects of our society, architecture, and energy, both of which embody a sense of optimism and failure. The stones and organisms occupy the space very close to their original material form. Taken out of context and hybridized, the algae and pebbledash comment on our collective, ever-mounting, Anthropocene crises.

Rachael Champion (b. 1982, New York, USA) graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art from the Royal Academy Schools in 2010. Champion has been awarded the Arts Foundation Award for sculpture (2013) and the Red Mansion Art Prize (2010). In 2012 she was the Camden Arts Centre 'Artist in Residence'. In the summer of 2014 Champion will install a permanent installation on Sarvisalo, The Zabudowicz Collection's outpost in Finland. Champion lives and works in London.

Champion's work has been exhibited at a number of recognized international spaces including Modern Art Oxford (UK); Zabudowicz Collection, London (UK); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (US); Bold Tendencies Sculpture Project, London (UK); Enclave Projects, London (UK); Horatio Jr, London (UK). In 2013 Champion's ambitious, site specific work *Forced Landscape* was installed in Derbyshire as part of the Wirksworth Festival.

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