

G A S W O R K S

Lauren Gault: C I T H R A
23 January – 22 March 2020



C I T H R A is the first solo exhibition in London by Glasgow-based artist Lauren Gault. Experimenting with unorthodox techniques and manufacturing processes, her work explores the often imperceptible changes that occur all around us, from microscopic events to geological time-scales, and confronts the ethical, political and emotional implications of human interactions with the environment.

In Gault's sculptures, materials as diverse as polished horn, blown glass, pumped air, light, water, synthetic polymers or agricultural milk powder are transformed through processes that involve pressure, tension and release. Her work evokes fleeting encounters between radically different materialities and opens up a space for objects to communicate and resonate with one another.

The exhibition follows on from Gault's residency at Gasworks during the spring of 2019, in which the artist researched the writings of Irish-born female explorer, inventor and self-educated scientist Martha Craig (born 1866), digging into the manuscripts and rare editions of her visionary lectures on physics.

A relative of the artist, Martha Craig published a forgotten science-fiction novel, *The Men of Mars* in 1907, under a mysterious pen name, 'Mithra'. This became the point of departure for Gault's exhibition, C I T H R A —its title an allusion to the Zoroastrian term for 'seed', 'species' and 'livestock'.

Intimately bound to the artist's rural upbringing in Northern Ireland, Gault's new body of work reflects on the changing shape of agriculture, considering the close interdependencies between wildness and domestication. In the main gallery, two leaping dog sculptures turn their backs to the viewer. A closer examination of the two reveal that one is approximately 20% smaller than the other, a size reduction that corresponds to the anatomical change experienced by canines as they shift from wild to domesticated species.

Behind these sculptures, a large-scale installation references Mithras, an ancient god most often depicted cutting a bull's throat and feeding its blood to a dog — an image evoked by Martha Craig's pen name, whose powerful symbolism reverberates across the exhibition.

Made from Lycra fabric, the translucent membrane of Gault's installation stretches over a series of unidentified objects that appear to emerge from inside a womb perforated by a bolus gun, a husbandry tool designed for the oral administration of slow-release mineral supplements to sheep and cattle.

An amber-tinged halo is projected onto the adjacent wall, resulting from a light intervention in which Gault fitted four spotlights with thin polished horn, one of the earliest technologies for the fabrication of lanterns. On the gallery floor, the artist has created a miniature dreamscape that suggests a world after devastation in which sinking cattle and architectural ruins drift in a wasteland of agricultural products.

In the second gallery, a cast hoof-print of an auroch, an extinct species of wild cattle, emerges from the wall. Above, a series of crystal-clear acrylic water tanks have been vacuum-formed into enigmatic shapes and refract the gallery's lighting, employing a mass-production technology to recreate a natural occurrence in the space.

An ambient soundscape developed with composer Richy Carey emanates from the gallery's ventilation system, inducing an eerie mood that weaves together the different components of C I T H R A. It features field recordings of human and animal interventions in the environment, including piezoelectric crystal ignitions, scrimshaws, bull growls and the movement of water.

Related Events

Wild Experiments: Rethinking environmentalism for the Anthropocene **Tuesday 11 February, 7pm**

Environmental geographer Jamie Lorimer gives a talk exploring the rise of re-wilding and examines its potential as a guide for 21st century environmentalism.

Triangular Thoughts: Lauren Gault on the writings of Martha Craig **Thursday 20 February, 7pm**

Lauren Gault presents a lecture on her relative Martha Craig, whose 1907 science-fiction novel, *The Men of Mars*, and her visionary ideas about physics have formed the basis for the exhibition.

C I T H R A: Compositions **Saturday 7 March, 12-6pm**

Composer Richy Carey, a long-term collaborator of Lauren Gault, transforms the gallery into an immersive audio installation. A series of phasing compositions, made from field recordings and conversations between the artists over five years, will build throughout the day.

Killed Objects: Michael Marshall and Lauren Gault in conversation **Thursday 19 March, 7pm**

Archaeologist Michael Marshall and Lauren Gault discuss the cult of Mithraism, focusing on examples of deliberately damaged objects found at the London Mithraeum.

Gasworks events are free to attend, no booking required. Please note that seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

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Gasworks Breakfast **Wednesday 14 March, 8:30-10am**

Join us for a tour of the exhibition with coffee, tea and pastries, all welcome!

Materials in the exhibition include: Lycra, metal, colostrum milk powder, bolus gun, bolus, bolus 'digested' in human stomach pH acid, Jesmonite, blown glass, solid glass, distilled water, horn, polished horn (Lanthorne), silica, eaten strawberries, acrylic, water, cast 3D scan of auroch hoof-print found on beach, agricultural lime capable of changing pH levels of soil, calcium chloride, sound.

C I T H R A is commissioned and produced by Gasworks. Lauren Gault is the fourth artist to take part in the Freelands Gasworks Partnership, a programme for emerging artists based outside of London. Made possible thanks to the Freelands Foundation, the programme combines a three-month residency with a solo exhibition at Gasworks. In late 2020, the exhibition will travel to The Tetley in Leeds. The previous participants in the programme were Jamie Crewe, Rachal Bradley and Libita Clayton.

Gasworks commissions are supported by Catherine Petitgas and Gasworks Exhibitions Supporters.

Acknowledgements

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Commissioning partners and exhibition supporters



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