

## PRESS RELEASE

**John Russell**

*DOGGO*

July 25 - September 5, 2018

Bridget Donahue presents *DOGGO*, a solo exhibition with artist, writer and performer, John Russell. On Wednesday July 25th, the exhibition's opening reception will coincide with a performance by Head Gallery and a publication launch presented in conjunction with Song Cycle.

From the performance:

“First of all I'd like to talk about a news story I read the other week. About a professional athlete in Canada ... a runner. And they used to go training in the forests near their house. Quite remote forests. And in fact, they got killed by a cougar. And the interesting thing is ... when the authorities were investigating the incident ... they discovered that the cougar had been tracking them for weeks. Every time she'd gone out for a run it had been tracking her route. They could tell this by examining the cougar's tracks. And I thought this was interesting and when I told this to someone and they told me another story where someone had a pet boa constrictor and had told a friend how when they lay down in front of the fire at night the boa would come and lay beside them and how cute this was. But the friend said 'No this isn't cute, its measuring you. That's what they do ... measure you up'. And we all understand this. Being measured up. Being sized up. Being fitted up”.

As you enter the gallery, to the right, the five letters *D-O-G-G-O* (Jesmonite and car filler, acrylic paint, 2018) are stuck like egg sacks to multi-coloured branches, jammed between ceiling and floor. To the right of these, *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* (Jesmonite, acrylic paint, 2018) skirts the floor. “The gull sees farthest who flies highest,” writes Richard Bach in 1970 but this seagull flies low, as a symbol of anti-transcendence and the *equality of different knowledges and ignorances*. Stretching away from this point, the reverse of the large vinyl print *Trees*, 2018, back-lit by green neon, presents the image of an enchanted forest, or motorway verge, in the style of Samuel Palmer, from which forms shrouded in leaves emerge and disappear. In front of this, a black sofa is positioned to facilitate the viewing of the film *DOGGO* (2018) a 50-minute fairy tale, set in a city like London, about a dog and an insect who search for someone who has gone missing from an 'Age Centre'. The culture is recognizable in most respects, although moving towards a 'resolved' post-religious condition (maybe some kind of Communism). All the characters are joyful as consistent with these transformed social relations. It is not proposed that this 'happiness' is misguided, enforced, naïve or ironic. As well as this, it may be that people are now communicating telepathically and so use holograms to indicate when they are 'talking' to differentiate from the jumble of other thoughts. To the right of the screen is the painting *Woman*, (oil on canvas, 2018) which depicts a figure emerging from a brightly coloured mass of tentacles and branches. Further along on the same wall *Blackberry* (acrylic transfer on fibreglass) presents the image of a mutated blackberry and possibly hybrid frogs spawn. This brings us into the area demarcated by the second large, back-lit print (*Road*, 2018). A vermilion and red flowerhead is left stranded and screaming on the motorway as cars move off. On the wall facing this image are two busts (*Doggo* and *Insect*, Jesmonite and acrylic paint, 2018) depicting the main characters from the film. Insect's head has fingers emerging from its mouth. Finally on the wall at right angles is *Fly* (acrylic transfer on fibreglass, 2018) depicting a double headed fly.

“This truly is the best of all possible worlds”.

**John Russell** (b.1963, lives and works in London, UK) studied History of Art at Goldsmith's College of Art and fine art at Slade School of Art and Saint Martin's School of Art. He was a co-founder of the artists' group BANK, of which he was a member for ten years participating in over fifty exhibitions and events, as well as several publications. Since leaving BANK in January 2000, Russell has worked both independently and collaboratively in producing exhibitions, curatorial projects, and publications as artworks including the collectively written trilogy *Frozen Tears*, a crossbreed between best-seller and horror series comprised of texts by Art & Language, Ulrike Meinhof, Lucie McKenzie, Fabienne Audéoud and others. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at venues including Kunsthall Zürich, Zürich (2017); High Art, Paris (2017); and in group exhibitions at Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2018); Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris (2018); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2017); Artists Space, New York (2014); The New Art Gallery Walsall, UK (2013); ICA, London (2011); Focal Point Gallery, Southend, UK (2011); The Grey Area, Brighton, UK (2011); Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria (2011); Tate Britain, London (2010); and Tate St Ives, Cornwall, UK (2009).