

## Press Release

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### **Blow Up**

Painting, Photography  
and Reality

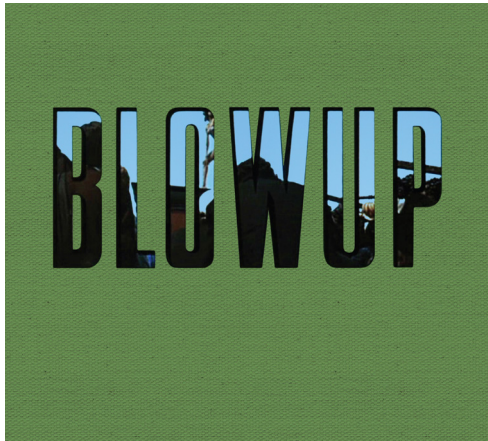
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1 July–22 August 2015

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Private view:

Tuesday 30 June, 5–8pm



For further details and images  
please contact:

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‘I always mistrust everything which I see, which an image shows me, because I imagine what is behind it. And what is beyond an image cannot be known.’

— Michelangelo Antonioni

Parafin is pleased to announce the first group show in its exhibition programme. *Blow Up* will feature a group of leading and emerging painters including Hannah Brown, Mark Fairnington, Hynek Martinec, Justin Mortimer, Issa Salliander, Jonathan Wateridge, Uwe Wittwer and Clare Woods. The exhibition will explore connections between contemporary painting and photography.

At the heart of Michelangelo Antonioni’s iconic swinging London film *Blow Up* (1966) is a disquieting meditation on photography, photographic images, truth and reality. The central character in the film, Thomas, a fashion photographer played by David Hemmings, takes candid shots of two lovers in a London park and then later, having developed the images, comes to believe that he has unwittingly photographed a crime. Successive enlargements of the images reveal what seems to be a body lying in the grass and a figure in the trees with a gun. Returning to the scene the photographer finds the body. But the next day the body has vanished, along with the supposed photographic evidence.

In 1970 Antonioni described his work as: ‘... like digging, it’s archaeological research among the arid materials of our times ...’ He could have been describing the landscape of contemporary painting.

Antonioni’s film here offers a framework for exploring aspects of that landscape, in particular the way many painters use existing images (photographs, digital files, other paintings) as source material. The way in which Antonioni’s protagonist mines the photographs he has taken, successively enlarging and thereby revealing previously hidden meanings, is analogous to the ways in which some painters work now. The information (meaning) hidden in the photographs is revealed by a process of excavation and mediation. In the studio, pre-existing images are deconstructed, reconstructed, fragmented, collaged, and finally rendered in paint, and this process reveals new possibilities — new images, new meanings — hidden within them. At the same time other approaches offer echoes of Antonioni’s preoccupation with artificiality and reality (for example his willingness to paint the grass of a park a particular shade of green to render it more ‘real’). An overt theatricality of construction reveals a fundamental untrustworthiness or unreliability which nonetheless might perhaps be more ‘true’.

The artists in the exhibition all work with paint and engage with pre-existing images. Some have made new work in direct response to Antonioni’s film while other works suggest echoes and thematic connections to the original film.

## Biographies

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### **Hannah Brown** (British, born 1977)

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Hannah Brown's paintings of the English landscape seem to depict idyllic and Edenic scenes. In fact that are fictions. Working from her own photographs Brown redacts any sign of human intervention — fences, gates, pylons and overhead wires — to create the fiction of untouched nature. Her intimate and Old Masterish oil paintings therefore work within and against the landscape tradition and its legacy. Brown is also fascinated by parks and for this exhibition she has made new work focused on the park that dominates the narrative of the film *Blow Up*; the space where the supposed crime appears to take place.

Hannah Brown was born in Salisbury, Wiltshire and lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Winter Girls*, Milton Keynes Arts Centre (2015), *Not Just Yet*, Cross Gallery, Dublin (2015), *The Unseen Landscape*, Payne Shurvell (2012) and *Hannah Brown*, Gimpel Fils (2009). Brown was shortlisted for John Moores Painting Prize in 2012 and for the Jerwood's Artist's platform in 2007.

### **Mark Fairnington** (British, born 1957)

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Mark Fairnington creates intensely detailed and realistic paintings of natural specimens — insects, birds and animals are often on a huge or minute scale combining meticulous surface detail with a sensuous precision. This process is reminiscent of illustrated zoological books and the 19th century enthusiasm for the study and possession of the natural world, which becomes in turn an exploration and articulation of the changing relationships between the human condition and the world we inhabit.

Fairnington has worked with the Imperial War Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Horniman Museum and Gardens and the Wellcome Collection. Fairnington's most recent solo exhibition *Unnatural History* was a retrospective at the Mannheimer Kunstverein (2012) and Galerie Peter Zimmermann (2014).

## Biographies (cont.)

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### **Hynek Martinec** (Czech, born 1980)

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Hynek Martinec meditates on time and spirituality in his photo-realistic paintings. Martinec's finely rendered paintings take their composition from devotional paintings and the traditional vanitas, drawing from a committed knowledge of the European tradition of painting. Motifs and subjects used in his work contrast the traditional signifiers of mortality such as dead animals, skulls, candles and empty bottles, with contemporary references such as Damien Hirst's notorious diamond skull displayed on a tablet computer, a digital radio, party balloons and cotton buds. In many of the paintings the subjects are distorted by shaving foam, a fluid and mutable substance that also evokes both vanity and impermanence. At the heart of Martinec's work is his engagement with photography and questions of reality in the image.

Hynek Martinec exhibited in the John Moores Painting Prize at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, as part of the Liverpool Biennial 2014. In October 2015 he will have a solo exhibition at the prestigious Vaclav Spala Gallery in Prague. Martinec was included in *Beyond Reality: British Painting Today* at the Galerie Rudolfinium, Prague (2012) and the Prague Biennial (2009). He was included in the BP Portrait Prize exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, London in 2007, 2009 and 2013, winning the Young Artist award in 2007. Martinec's work is in private and public collections including the National Gallery, Prague and the British Museum, London.

### **Justin Mortimer** (British, born 1970)

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British artist Justin Mortimer explores the margins of society and the fringes of social structures, reflecting upon a figurative world in a state of 21st century disorder and pushing the boundaries of figuration and landscape. He creates tension in his work by withholding information through his painting techniques to create ambiguous scenes of hedonism, cataclysmic events and systematic oppression.

Justin Mortimer graduated from the Slade School of Art in 1992 and lives and works in London. He has won several prestigious awards including the EAST Award (2004), NatWest Art Prize (1996) and the BP National Portrait Award (1991). Recent exhibitions include *Kult*, Parafin (2015), *Sevastapol*, Future Perfect, Singapore (2015), Djanogly Art Gallery (2015), Haunch of Venison, London (2012) and Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2011). His work is in numerous private and public collections including the National Portrait Gallery, London, National Portrait Gallery, Canada, Royal Society for the Arts, Bank of America, NatWest Bank and the Flash Art Museum of Contemporary Art in Trevi, Italy.

## Biographies (cont.)

### **Issa Salliander** (Swedish, born 1984)

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Issa Salliander creates gestural oil paintings that meditate on notions of good and evil and the humour and absurdity surrounding this dichotomy. She explores human perception and its dependence on social and cultural factors, drawing in particular from popular culture including the classic rock music of the 20th century, as well as European masters and abstract expressionism.

Issa Salliander was born in 1984 in Stockholm, Sweden and now lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include LisaBird Contemporary, Vienna (2013) and OSL Contemporary, Oslo (2011). Group exhibitions, include *Faces* at Leo Gallery, Shanghai (2010), *Location 1.5*, Cullen Art Services, Zurich (2010) and Kandlhofer Art Collective, Vienna (2010), *Location 1*, Cullen Art Services, London (2009).

### **Jonathan Wateridge** (British, born 1972)

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Jonathan Wateridge creates vast, highly staged scenes of humanity, ranging from post apocalyptic disasters to poolside parties and anonymous interiors. His works are closely linked to the cinematic visuals most associated with the film tradition of Hollywood, but appear as epic tableaux of human civilization. Wateridge's process entails the building and photographing of elaborate sets in the studio. Thus the ambiguity in his work hinges between supposed reality and recorded construct, in turn proposing new ideas about cultural construct and national identity.

Jonathan Wateridge was born in Zambia in 1972 and attended the Glasgow School of Art. He lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include *Monument*, Wilkinson, London (2015), *Inter + Vista*, L+M Arts, Los Angeles (2013), *Mitteland*, All Visual Arts, London (2011) and *Another Place*, All Visual Arts, London, (2010). Important recent group exhibitions include: *Beyond Reality: British Painting Today*, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2012) *The World Belongs to You*, Pinault Foundation, Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2011) and *Newspeak: British Art Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London and Tour, (2010).

## Biographies (cont.)

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### **Uwe Wittwer** (Swiss, born 1954)

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Uwe Wittwer's extensive body of work includes paintings, watercolours and ink-jet prints. Throughout his work, Wittwer is concerned with the authenticity and truth of the image, the multiple meanings of viewpoint, and the role of the artist as a voyeur. His works are composed with deliberate ambiguity. Seemingly beautiful his images often, on closer inspection, reveal a latent horror under their first appearance. Wittwer's monumental work *Black Sun (after Antonioni)* is a key work for *Blow Up*. The work is based on a series of stills from the film, selected according to a system rather than according to aesthetic. Taken en masse the images explore the potential ambiguity and meaning within a specific set of images but also offer the potential for alternative readings and narratives within Antonioni's film.

Uwe Wittwer lives and works in Zürich. Recent solo exhibitions include Galerie Judin, Berlin (2014), Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal (2013), Lullin + Ferrari, Zurich (2013) and VOID, Derry (2012). Wittwer's work is included in many public and institutional collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht, Kunsthaus Zürich, Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen, the Kunstmuseum Bern, the UBS Art Collection, David Roberts Art Foundation, London and the Caldic Collection.

### **Clare Woods** (British, born 1972)

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Clare Woods is best known for monumental paintings presenting psychologically charged depictions of the English and Welsh landscape. Using her own photographs, often taken at night, in desolate and hidden areas, these images are then transcribed to create emotionally charged and chaotic paintings. Gnarled branches and emaciated vegetation appears almost abstracted on dark backgrounds, which are imbued with a sense of horror and anticipation. In recent work Woods has begun to explore the possibilities of using other source material, including archive photographs and historic works of art.

Clare Woods was born in Southampton in 1972 and lives and works in London and Herefordshire. In 2012 Woods was commissioned by the Contemporary Art Society to produce a major permanent work for the Olympic Park, London in 2012. Recent exhibitions include *A Tree A Rock A Coud*, Oriol Davies Gallery, Newtown (2014), *The Dark Matter*, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton (2012), *The Unquiet Head*, The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield (2011), and *Deaf Man's House*, The Chisenhale Gallery, London (2006). Her work is in many important international collections including Arken Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, Arts Council Collection, Hayward Gallery, London, British Council, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, and Southampton City Art Gallery.

## Editor's Notes

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## Michelangelo Antonioni quotes

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'We know that under the revealed image there is another one which is more faithful to reality, and under this one there is yet another, and again another under this last one, down to the true image of that absolute, mysterious reality that no one will ever see. Or perhaps, not until the decomposition of every image, of every reality.'

'I'm really questioning the nature of reality.'

'I always mistrust everything which I see, which an image shows me, because I imagine what is behind it. And what is beyond an image cannot be known.'

## Editor's Notes

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## Parafin

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Parafin was launched in September 2014 by former Haunch of Venison London directors Ben Tufnell and Matt Watkins, and the founder of London gallery Master Piper, Nicholas Rhodes.

Located at 18 Woodstock Street, just off New Bond Street, Parafin represents a broad selection of contemporary artists from emerging names to established international figures.

## Gallery artists

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Nathan Coley

Nancy Holt

Enrique Martínez Celaya

Katie Paterson

Michelle Stuart

Uwe Wittwer

Tim Head

Hynek Martinec

Justin Mortimer

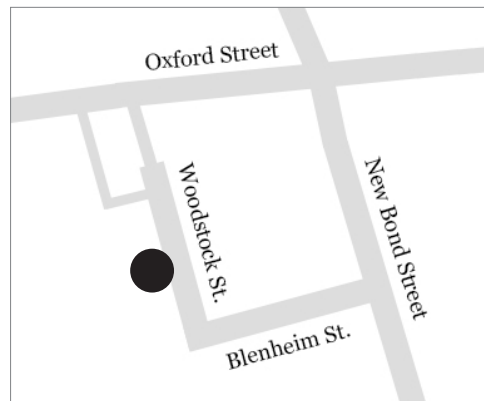
Hiraki Sawa

Hugo Wilson

## Woodstock Street, Mayfair

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Woodstock Street is located on the northern edge of Mayfair, London, between New Bond Street (via Blenheim Street) and Oxford Street. Parafin is situated near to the historic tiled Art Deco façade of auction house Bonhams.



## Opening Hours

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Tuesday–Friday, 10–6

Saturday, 12–5

Or by appointment