

Press Release, 27 April 2023

## RORY PILGRIM NOMINATED FOR TURNER PRIZE FOR SERPENTINE CIVIC COMMISSION RAFTS



Serpentine welcomes the announcement that Rory Pilgrim has been nominated for the Turner Prize for their Serpentine Civic project **RAFTS**. Created over three years with residents of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, **RAFTS** was made for the exhibition **Radio Ballads** at Serpentine North (31 March - 29 May 2022) and Barking Town Hall (2-17 April 2022). **RAFTS: Live** performance took place on 26 November 2022, at Cadogan Hall.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, artist and composer Pilgrim developed **RAFTS** as the second chapter in a body of work exploring how the climate crisis relates to support structures in our everyday lives. The commission is narrated by the voices of eight residents of Barking and Dagenham from **Green Shoes Arts**, who each in their own way reflect on what the symbol of a raft means to them.



At the heart of *RAFTS* is a concert that interweaves stories, poetry and reflections around a seven-song oratorio that makes connections between work, mental health, home, recovery, and our environment. Further voices and people from near and far join the journey, including members of **Barking and Dagenham Youth Dance**, members of **Project Well Being** – a group for those experiencing homelessness in Idaho, USA – and solo singers **Declan Rowe John**, **Robyn Haddon** and **Kayden Fearon**.

Inspired by the original BBC **Radio Ballads** as vessels of time, *RAFTS* explores how we mark time and act to enable support and prevent harm in both the short- and long-term. Using tools of prophecy, reflection and creativity, the *RAFTS* film and performance takes us on a journey that contemplates which ‘rafts’ could be needed to navigate the future in times of change and uncertainty.

**Amal Khalaf, Civic Curator at Serpentine**, said: “Congratulations to Rory and all the incredible people who have been part of the *RAFTS* journey - from our friends at Green Shoes Arts and Barking and Dagenham Youth Dance to Project Well Being in Boise, Idaho. This project was produced with so much love, and carefully held and nurtured by Rory through moments of collectivity at a time when many felt isolated. For everyone involved, the hundreds of workshops and time spent together were ‘rafts’ for us, keeping us afloat and supporting us to navigate challenging times. Rarely does a work do what it has set out to do, but *RAFTS* shows us the possibilities of working in a truly collaborative way with compassion, trust and imagination whilst navigating a complex 21st Century. We are so excited that Rory’s work, which embeds listening and connection in every stage of its process, is honoured and celebrated as part of the Turner Prize.”

**Bettina Korek, CEO, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director at Serpentine**, said: “Congratulations to Rory Pilgrim on their Turner Prize nomination. We are so proud of the work the artists, communities and curators behind Radio Ballads have done together throughout the pandemic. *RAFTS* and Radio Ballads reflect our mission of making new connections between artists and society through listening, understanding and empathy. Thank you to the Borough of Barking and Dagenham for believing in artists, and how art can deepen our understanding of care and strengthen these bonds upon which we all depend.”



## Notes to Editors

### Rory Pilgrim

Rory Pilgrim was born in 1988 in Bristol. Pilgrim earned a BA in Fine Art at the Chelsea College of Art and Design, London in 2008, and completed a two-year programme at De Ateliers, Amsterdam in 2010. Pilgrim was selected as the winner of the 2013 Stichting CoCA Commission and was granted international residencies at Arts Initiative Tokyo in 2017 and Ming Studios, Boise, Idaho, USA in 2019. Pilgrim was awarded the Prix de Rome 2019. Rory Pilgrim is 35 and lives and works in Ee, The Netherlands and Isle of Portland UK.

Pilgrim is a multidisciplinary artist working across a wide range of media including song writing, composing music, films, texts, drawings, paintings and live performances. Centred on emancipatory concerns, Pilgrim aims to challenge the nature of how we come together, speak, listen and strive for social change through sharing and voicing personal experience. Strongly influenced by the origins of activist, feminist and socially engaged art, Pilgrim works with others through methods of dialogue, collaboration and workshops.

Solo exhibitions include: Hop to Hope, WAMX, Turku City Art Museum, Finland (2022), Where the tide takes us, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany (duo, 2021), The Undercurrent, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2020); Software Garden, Ming Studios, Boise, US (2019); The Resounding Bell, Between Bridges, Berlin (2019) and South London Gallery (2018).

Group exhibitions include: Radio Ballads, Serpentine, London (2022); 'I hold the table in my hands instead of the broken legs' - Trafó, Budapest, Hungary; Qualcosa nell'aria / Something in the air, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (2022); Maps of Disquiet, Chennai Photo Biennial, India (2021); MOVE 2020, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2020); The Law is a White Dog, TULCA Festival, Galway, Ireland (2020) and Manifesta 13, Marseilles, France (2020). Pilgrim has also made commissions, screenings and performances for MoMA, New York (2022), Glasgow Film Festival (2020), Images Festival, Toronto (2019) and Transmediale Festival, HKW, Berlin (2019) and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2018).



## Radio Ballads

*RAFTS* was originally commissioned as part of **Radio Ballads**, an exhibition and series of collaborative commissions, which explored stories about labour and who cares for whom, and in what way. Over a period of three years, artists Sonia Boyce, Helen Cammock, Rory Pilgrim, and Ilona Sagar collaborated with carers, social workers, organisers, and communities across London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Four films and bodies of research emerged from these long-term artistic processes.

Building on Serpentine's ongoing critical investigation of the role of artists in political and civic life, **Radio Ballads** asked how art practices can become part of systemic transformation. The project was also part of LBBD's **New Town Culture** programme: an initiative that aims to embed artists within core social care services and explores how artistic processes can reframe the work of social care.

**Radio Ballads** was commissioned and curated by Serpentine Civic Projects (Amal Khalaf, Elizabeth Graham and Layla Gatens), in partnership with New Town Culture, a Cultural Impact Award-winning project, part of London Borough of Culture, a Mayor of London initiative.

### Radio Ballads Project and Exhibition:

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/radio-ballads/>

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/radio-ballads-exhibition/>  
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### *RAFTS*

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/radio-ballads-rory-pilgrim-rafts/>

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/rafts-live/>

### *RAFTS*: Live Highlights video:

<https://youtu.be/XBJvRV9X8aw>

### REWORLDING - Relating Podcast featuring *RAFTS*

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/4vK55B3cpDh5AGI7procqE?go=1&sp\\_cid=828502aca7630f20158dc48e03178d3e&utm\\_source=embed\\_player\\_p&utm\\_medium=desktop&nd=1](https://open.spotify.com/episode/4vK55B3cpDh5AGI7procqE?go=1&sp_cid=828502aca7630f20158dc48e03178d3e&utm_source=embed_player_p&utm_medium=desktop&nd=1)



## **Serpentine Civic Projects**

Serpentine's Civic programme is grounded in the legacy of The Edgware Road Project's Centre for Possible Studies. The team carries out ongoing research into the role artistic processes can play in building regenerative relationships that challenge and undo oppression. Through long-term projects, the programme highlights practices that sit at the intersection of art, spatial politics and community practice, and support artists to work with people across London.

Over the past decade, the Civic Projects team has developed over 60 long-term collaborative commissions and collective imaginings that test and practice the possibilities of art's role in the complexities of social change. The projects commissioned demonstrate the transformative power of collaborations with communities, centre embodied ways of knowing and being, and create spaces for people to imagine alternative visions for the future and collectively move towards liberation.

Serpentine Civic Projects is Amal Khalaf, Elizabeth Graham and Layla Gatens.

**New Town Culture** is a pioneering programme of artistic and cultural activity taking place in adult and children's social care across the entire borough. This is a Cultural Impact Award winning project, part of London Borough of Culture, a Mayor of London initiative. New Town Culture responds to the incredible stories, knowledge and skills of the residents of Barking and Dagenham, delivering a programme of workshops, exhibitions, radio broadcasts, live performances and courses targeted at people using social care services in our borough. Working closely with social care professionals and artists, the project hopes to unlock the value of art and culture for all our communities. Its ambition is to support social workers and carers to try out new ways of working to enhance the brilliant work they already do.

## **Partners**

**Green Shoes Arts** exists to inspire local people to make positive changes through the arts. We are a passionate team of arts facilitators who work with people of all age groups from all communities living in Barking and Dagenham. Green Shoes



seeks to make arts accessible to all and promotes the many benefits that being involved in the arts can bring.

**Barking Dagenham Youth Dance** is one of London's leading providers of youth dance workshops, community arts events and career pathway activities, offering weekly dance and fitness sessions for hundreds of children and young people. BDYD also runs Bar-Ham Leaders, a youth action programme, that encourages teenagers to learn the skills to communicate their views and suggestions, with the aim to influence policy and government.

**Interfaith Sanctuary Shelter** serves people of all genders, races, religions, and sexual orientation, as well as families with children, by providing safe overnight emergency shelter and practical services to transition out of homelessness. **Project Well Being** offers us a safe place for acceptance, stability, and growth. Connection, support, and well being are our foundation.

**London Contemporary Orchestra** is a leading global orchestral group focused on playing, and developing new music and artistic output. Alongside working with well-known artists, LCO focus on developing a diverse next generation of players, conductors and composers by creating opportunities for them to work at the highest professional level. LCO has collaborated with a wide array of musicians, artists, creative figures, platforms, and venues, such as: Frank Ocean, Thom Yorke, NTS, Boiler Room, DAZED, Barbican, Southbank Centre, Roundhouse, Printworks, Tate Modern, and BBC Proms.

For more information, please contact:

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