PRESS RELEASE



We Refuse to be Scapegoats

Exhibition Dates: 24th June - 10th July 2021

Artist: Pam Skelton

Curator: Iliyana Nedkova

P21 Gallery is delighted to present *We Refuse to be Scapegoats* – the first UK solo exhibition in the last ten years by the established British artist of mixed Eastern European Jewish heritage Pam Skelton. The exhibition is curated by Iliyana Nedkova specifically for the gallery and will be open to the public between 24 June and 10 July 2021 in line with all public health regulations.

The exhibition represents the artist's findings from a long-term research deriving from her own family history, and in particular, the histories, memories and impact of the Jewish Shoah (Holocaust) and the Palestinian Nakba (meaning 'catastrophe' or 'disaster') on ensuing generations in diverse geopolitical contexts. This artistic interrogation draws from two sources. Firstly, the artist's own video and audio archive from her research trips to Poland in 1993 and 1996, Israel Palestine in 1995, and Scotland in 2016. Secondly, the online archives selected from Israeli and

Palestinian non-governmental organisations, human rights charities and media resources.

Taking the form of a multi-channel video and sound installation, the exhibition will create an immersive experience of cross-generational dialogues, as well as visual interactions across times and landscapes. It will connect, inform and engage with the issues explored in Skelton's moving image works which also feature a specially-commissioned soundscape by composer Wayne Brown.

Tall Walls Wall Us (2021), whose title is borrowed from a line in Louis McNeice's anti-war poem *Prayer before Birth* (1944), will offer a space for reflection on the continuing legacy of political violence. On the other hand, the single screen video projection *We Refuse to be Scapegoats* (2021) will paint a collective portrait of Palestinian, Israeli, Polish and German women living under occupation, alongside proponents of human rights, feminists and activists continuing the struggle against oppression.

The exhibition *We Refuse to be Scapegoats* is preceded by an online discussion group providing free research resources of footage and texts selected by the artist and curator over the six months in the run up to the exhibition opening. In addition, a publication of new writing by Caterina Albano, Iliyana Nedkova and Pam Skelton will accompany the exhibition.

Speaking of her inspiration and research the artist Pam Skelton said:
'I delve into my own conflicted psyche identifying with Holocaust survivors and the plight of the Palestinians who have lost their homes during what the Israelis call the 'War of Independence' and the Palestinians call Al Nakba. I discovered afresh footage I shot in 1990s in Poland of the Ashkenazi Jews homelands and the abandoned and ruined villages where they once lived. I integrated this footage with footage from Israel Palestine today which replicates the conditions of ghetto life, where the tables are turned in an inverse aberration of justice, where Israelis keep safe behind walls and Palestinians are incarcerated within them.'

'Most recently, during a demonstration in London in 2019, I was very moved when I heard the Palestinian youth activist Ahed Tamimi defiantly proclaim that she refused to be a victim, that she had reached the point of no longer being scared to speak out. Fear is the weapon that silences us. The fact is that we still live in an era of camps, detention centers and ghettos echoing what Louis McNeice declared in his 1944 anti-war poem Prayer Before Birth: 'tall walls wall us'. These are only some of the powerful words and voices of activists and artists I have included in my new works as part of the exhibition We Refuse to be Scapegoats.'

NOTES FOR EDITORS

We Refuse to be Scapegoats
The first UK solo exhibition in the last ten years by the established British artist of mixed Eastern European Jewish heritage Pam Skelton. *We Refuse to be Scapegoats* features new moving image works by Skelton, with a soundscape by composer Wayne Brown. The exhibition is preceded by a six month long online discussion group and accompanied by an online publication of new critical writing. *We Refuse to be Scapegoats* is curated by Iliyana Nedkova for P21 Gallery and runs 24 June – 10 July 2021. The solo exhibition is kindly supported by John Talbot, Caterina Albano, Wayne Brown, Dominik Czechowski, Tony Fletcher, Heather Kiernan, Jonathan Samuel aka SamProjects, Mare Tralla, and Yahya Zaloom.

PAM SKELTON
b. 1949, Harrogate, Yorkshire. Since 1992 lives and works in London
Artist, educator and researcher. Reader in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London until 2013 when she retired from that post. Exhibitions include *Dangerous Places:* Ponar, 1995; *The X Mark of Dora Newman,* 1994-2000; *Liquidators* (of Chernobyl), 1996-2000; *Burning*

Poems, 2005-2007; *Conspiracy Dwellings*, 2007-2010, *Archive of Exile,* 2011, and *Cartographies of Life and Death,* 2013. Critical writing and art works have most recently been published in *Feminist Art Activisms and Artivisms* (Valiz 2020); *Fotograf # 30 Eye in the Sky* (Prague 2017) and *N. Paradoxa International Feminist Art Journal* (Lessons from History Volume 34, 2014). Skelton has also co-edited two books – *Conspiracy Dwellings: Surveillance in Contemporary Art* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010) and *Private Views: Spaces and Gender in Contemporary Art from Britain and Estonia* (WAL/IB Tauris 2000).

https://pamskelton.org

ILIYANA NEDKOVA

b. 1968, Sofia, Bulgaria. Since 1996 lives and works in Liverpool and Edinburgh
Independent curator, researcher and producer exploring the relationships between public art, activism and creative practices. Current interests span peacebuilding and the arts, environmental humanities, artists' moving image culture, women artists, literature in translation and artists' residencies. Founding member of international curatorial collective CONJUNCTION. Recent curatorial projects include *Peace Cranes, Windows and Screens, Balkan Rhapsody, 3G: 3 Generations of Women Artists Perform, Channelling, Screen.dance and Transient Spaces*. Contributor to independent periodicals Edgework, MAP, n.paradoxa, Read More, a-n and Ubiquity. Holds a MPhil in Curating Contemporary Art from Liverpool John Moores University and a MLitt in English and American Studies, as well as in History and Theory of Culture from the University of Sofia.

https://illiyananedkova.wordpress.com

WAYNE BROWN

b. 1963, Wolverhampton, West Midlands. Since 1992 lives and works in Germany, USA, and England
Composer, music producer and sound engineer/designer working with major artists and studios artists in the music industry. Composed *Memory Rooms*, the soundscape that accompanied Pam Skelton's solo exhibition *Groundplans* (1989) at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Collaborations with artists also include projects with Frankie Valentine, D'Influence and Samy Deluxe for the album Schwarzweiss (Black & White, 2011). As a live sound engineer Brown has worked with Akua Naru, Frank Dellé, Patrice and Genetikk while touring across Germany, Russia and Japan. In 2016 toured to Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya and South Africa supported by the Goethe Institute, Germany. Returned to England in 2018 where he co-developed *Flexi-Deck*, an advanced automation software. Currently collaborating further with the *Flexi-Deck* team on other mainstream multimedia applications.
https://flexi-deck.com/

For all media enquiries please contact P21 Gallery: info@p21.org.uk, Tel. +44 20 7121 6190

Exhibition is supported by Arts Council England and HUB Collective

LOTTERY FUNDED
Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
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