



Fri 11 Apr – Fri 01 Aug 2025

## THE PROTAGONIST

Opening reception: Thu 10 Apr, 6–8pm

*“Happiness is not an emotion, nor a purely subjective experience. It is the arbitrary and transistor harmony that brings together objects and people in a relationship of physical and spiritual intimacy.”*

— Emanuele Coccia, *Philosophy of the Home: Domestic Space and Happiness*

*“A waterfall is always an attractive goal for an excursion.”*

— Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

*“We do what we like.”*

— Julia Muggenburg

On this 25th anniversary of the incorporation and trademarking of the Belmacz name comes *The Protagonist*, a refractive group show – the exhibitionary embodiment of what the composite word alludes to. (‘Bel’ from de Maupassant’s *Bel Ami*, ‘ma’ an abbreviation of the Latin *maximus*, and the letter combination of ‘cz’ found in Slavic languages).

This show is a response as well as a reference to the prior *The Conformist*, (co-curated with Paul Kindersley, 23 February – 16 April 2016). *The Protagonist* refractures glints from our past to the now: it is a space to live, perhaps also an agora. All material sensibilities are allowed in, all visitors are hosted, all options are open.

*The Protagonist* transforms over its three-month duration, creating transitioning scenes, tableaux and clashes, amplifying the voices of our co-collaborators, constructing reverberations. Like the facets and reflections of the talismans and gems produced in-house, this exhibition is layered, evocative and celebratory.

*Our protagonists are:* Carla Åhlander, Jonathan Baldock, Isaac Benigson, Tim Berresheim, Aaron Amar Bhamra, James Lee Byars, Toby Christian, Than Hussein Clark, Coco Crampton, Frederika Dalwood, Michela de Mattei, Dial Records, Magdalena Drwiega, Erté, Francesca Floran, Jean-Claude Freymond-Guth (SAALHOF 1123), Florian Genzken, John Giorno, Duncant Grant, Johanna Magdalena Guggenberger, Paul Housley, Steph Huang, Ja Jess, Paul Kindersley, Claudia Kugler, Alastair Kwan, David Lieske, Camilla Løw, Agata Madejska, Mira Mann, Mara dei Boschi, Andrea Marcellier, Hanna Mattes, Elisabeth Molin, Laura Ní Fhlaibhín, Lydia Ourahmane, Paint it Black, Simon Popper, Postcard Teas, Eleni Poulou, Morten Skrøder Lund, Ettore Sottsass, Joel Tomlin, Lina Viste Grønli, Charlott Weise, Gernot Wieland, Rain Wu, Abbas Zahedi, and many more to be announced.

**Carla Åhlander** (b.1966, Lund, Sweden) studied art history, performance and photography in Sweden, Italy and Denmark between 1985 and 1994. Carla lives and works in Berlin (Germany) where she teaches photography at Bard College Berlin and at the Berlin University of the Arts.

**Jonathan Baldock** (b.1980, Pembury, Kent, UK) studied Fine Art at the Winchester School of Arts (Southampton, UK) before completing his MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art (London, UK). He lives and works in London.

**Isaac Benigson** (b.2001, London, UK) studied Culture, Criticism, and Curation at Central Saint Martins (London), and has an MA in writing from the Royal College of Art (London). He lives and works in London.

**Tim Berresheim** (b.1975, Heinsberg, Germany) studied at the Braunschweig University of Art (Germany) and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Germany). Tim lives and works in Aachen (Germany).

**Aaron Amar Bhamra** (b.1992, Vienna, Austria) works at the Department of Expanded Museum Studies at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Together with Monika Georgieva, Aaron runs LAURENZ, an independent space in Vienna. He is based there full time.

**James Lee Byars** (b.1932, Detroit, Michigan, USA; d.1997 Cairo, Egypt) studied Art and Psychology at Wayne State University, Detroit, graduating in 1955. James lived and worked nomadically, moving between New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco in the States, Venice (Italy), Bern (Switzerland), the Swiss Alps in Europe, as well as a decade in Kyoto (Japan). His prime residency was Santa Fe (New Mexico, USA).

**Toby Christian** (b.1983, Boston, Lincolnshire, UK) studied at Wimbledon College of Art (London, UK), before completing his postgraduate training at the Royal Academy Schools (London) in 2012. Toby lives and works in London, where he is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins.

**Than Hussein Clark** (b.1981, Exeter, New Hampshire, UK) studied at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland, UK) and Goldsmiths, University of London (UK), before beginning an MA in Time Based Media in Hamburg (Germany) in 2012. Than lives and works between London and Hamburg.

**Coco Crampton** (b.1983, London, UK) studied at Norwich School of Art and Design (UK) before graduating from the Royal Academy Schools (London) in 2014. Coco lives and works in Devon (UK).

**Frederika Dalwood** (b.1996, London, UK) has a degree in Fine Art Intermedia from Edinburgh College of Art (Scotland, UK) and an MFA in Fine Art Media from the Slade School of Fine Art (London). Frederika lives and works in London.

**Michela de Mattei** (b.1984, Rome, Italy) studied Philosophy at Sapienza University of Rome. Michela lives and works in Milan (Italy).

**Dial Records** (f.1999, Hamburg, Germany) is a music label showcasing primarily post-minimalist dance music. It was founded by Peter M. Kersten, Paul Kominek and David Lieske.

**Magdalena Drwiega** (b.1971, Sanok, Poland) graduated from Wimbledon College of Art (London, UK) with both a BA and MA in Fine Art. Magdalena lives and works in London.

**Erté** (b. Romain de Tiroff, 1892, Saint Petersburg, Russia; d.1990, Paris, France) studied painting with Ilya Repin before moving to Paris in 1912, initially to study at the Académie Julian, but leaving after several months to pursue fashion design. He continued living and working in Paris for the duration of his lifetime.

**Francesca Floran** (b.1994, Milan, Italy) graduated in Visual Arts from Kingston University (London, UK) in 2020. She lives and works in Marseille (France).

**Jean-Claude Freymond-Guth, SAALHOF 1123** (b.1979, Basel, Switzerland) has an MA in Cultural Management from the University of Basel and an MFA in Fine Arts from Zurich University of the Arts (Switzerland). Jean-Claude began concept store and exhibition space SAALHOF 1123 in 2023, with locations in Alsace (France) and Basel. He lives and works between Alsace, Basel and Paris (France).

**Florian Genzken** (b.1994, Munich, Germany) has studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Austria), École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts Paris (France), and received his diploma from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 2024. Florian lives and works in Vienna.

**John Giorno** (b.1936, New York, USA; d.2019, New York, USA) graduated from Columbia University (New York) in 1958. John lived and worked in the Bowery neighbourhood of Lower Manhattan from 1962 until his death in 2019.

**Duncant Grant** (b.1885, Rothiemurcus, Invernes-shire, Scotland, UK; d.1978, Aldermaston, Berkshire, UK) attended Westminster School of Art (London, UK) in 1904, Académie de La Palette in Paris (France) in 1907, and returned to London in 1908 to study at the Slade School of Fine Art. From 1916 onwards he lived and worked from Charleston Farm, Sussex, UK.

**Johanna Magdalena Guggenberger** (b.1985, Vienna, Austria) studied Social and Cultural Anthropology, Arabic and Islamic studies in both Vienna and Pakistan before joining the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna to study under Pawel Althamer and Julian Goethe. Johanna continues to live and work in Vienna.

**Paul Housley** (b.1964, Stalybridge, Greater Manchester, UK) graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Sheffield City Polytechnic (UK) in 1986, later attaining an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art (London, UK) in 1995. Paul lives and works in London.

**Steph Huang** (b.1990, Taiwan) received her MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art (London, UK) in 2021. Steph lives and works in London.

**Ja Jess** (b.1998, Düsseldorf, Germany) received their MA in the class of Gregor Schneider at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 2023. Ja currently lives and works in Düsseldorf.

**Paul Kindersley** (b.1985, Cambridge, UK) graduated from Cambridge Regional College before studying Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts (London, UK). Paul lives and works in London.

**Claudia Kugler** (b.1969, Auerbach, Germany) studied graphic design at the Fachhochschule in Nuremberg (Germany), and received her MA in Fine Arts from the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg. Claudia lives and works in Berlin (Germany).

**Alastair Kwan** (b.1993, Leeds, UK) first studied law at Churchill College, University of Cambridge (UK) before enrolling at the Royal College of Art (London, UK) in 2018 receiving first a graduate diploma in Fine Art, and an MA in Sculpture in 2021. Alastair continues to live and work in London.

**David Lieske** (b.1979, Hamburg, Germany) lives and works in London (UK). Alongside Peter M. Kersten and Paul Kominek, he is a founder of music label Dial Records.

**Camilla Løw** (b.1976, Oslo, Norway) graduated with a BA in Fine Art from The Glasgow School of Art (Scotland, UK). Camilla lives and works in Oslo, where she is a Professor of Art and Craft at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

**Agata Madejska** (b.1979, Warsaw, Poland) graduated from Folkwang University of the Arts, (Essen, Germany) in 2007 and the Royal College of Art (London, UK) in 2010. Agata continues to live and work in London.

**Mira Mann** (b.1993, Frankfurt, Germany) graduated in 2021 with an MFA from Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Germany), in the class of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Mira lives and works in Düsseldorf.

**Mara dei Boschi** (f.2012, Turin, Italy) is an experimental research laboratory in the worlds of ice cream, chocolate and speciality coffee. Collaborating on custom designs with artists, designers and creators, it is the creation of Ricardo Ronchi and Edoardo Patrone.

**Andrea Marcellier** (b.1995, Paris, France) is a graduate of the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Germany). She is currently a resident at Villa Belleville in Paris, where she lives and works.

**Hanna Mattes** (b.1980, Munich, Germany) studied Fine Arts at Gerrit Rietveld Academy (Amsterdam, Netherlands) and Linguistics at Freie Universität Berlin (Germany). Hanna lives and works in Berlin and Amsterdam.

**Elisabeth Molin** (b.1985, Copenhagen, Denmark) studied Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts (London, UK) and has an MA in Fine Arts from Royal College of Art (London). She lives and works between London and Copenhagen.

**Laura Ni Fhlaibhín** (b.1986, Dublin, Ireland) studied Fine Art Painting and Visual Culture at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin before completing her MFA at Goldsmiths, University of London (UK) in 2019. Laura lives and works in London and Wexford (Ireland).

**Lydia Ourahmane** (b.1992, Saïda, Algeria) graduated with a degree in Fine Art from Goldsmiths, University of London (UK) in 2014. Lydia is based in Barcelona (Spain), London and Algiers (Algeria).

**Paint it Black** (f.2022, Turin, Italy) is an arts-based publishing house and book shop. It was founded by the siblings Margherita, Pietro and Lucia Rossi.

**Simon Popper** (b.1977, London, UK) studied Fine Art and Critical Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London and Slade School of Fine Art (London), graduating in 2000. He lives and works in London.

**Postcard Teas** (f.2000, London, UK) is a tea company situated in Mayfair who source their tea directly from small farmers. Founded by Tim D'Offay who attained his affinity for tea culture after living in Kyoto (Japan), Postcard Teas is the first tea company in the world to place the maker's name and location on their blends.

**Eleni Poulou** (b.1972, Altena, Germany) is a musician and radio host. She is one half of NOHE NOSHE alongside Petr Stef Kišur, and is part of the art collective Honey Suckle Company (Berlin, Germany). She lives and works in Berlin.

**Morten Skråder Lund** (b.1980, Vejle, Denmark) completed his MFA at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts under the supervision of Prof. Tumi Magnusson. Morten lives and works in Copenhagen (Denmark).

**Ettore Sottsass** (b.1917, Innsbruck, Austria; d.2007, Milan Italy) graduated in Architecture from the Turin Polytechnic (Italy) in 1939. He opened his own practice in Milan in 1945, living and working there until his death.

**Joel Tomlin** (b.1969, Sheffield, UK) studied painting at Chelsea College of Arts (London, UK). Joel continues to live and works in London.

**Lina Viste Grønli** (b.1976, Bergen, Norway) studied at Aarhus Art Academy (Denmark), and the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (Norway). Lina lives and works between Oslo and Somerville (Massachusetts, USA).

**Charlott Weise** (b.1991, Görlitz, Germany) was a participant at De Ateliers (Amsterdam, Netherlands), in 2016. Previously, she studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam), as well as studying under Prof. Christian Macketanz, at the Academy of Fine Arts Dresden (Germany), and the artist Heike Dittrich, in Bautzen (Germany). Charlott lives and works between Amsterdam and Görlitz.

**Gernot Wieland** (b.1968, Horn, Austria) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Austria) and the University of the Arts Berlin (Germany). Gernot lives and works in Berlin.

**Rain Wu** (b.1987, Tainan, Taiwan) studied at the Royal College of Art (London, UK) and University College London. She lives and works in London.

**Abbas Zahedi** (b.1984, London, UK) studied medicine at University College London, before completing his MA in Contemporary Photography: Practices and Philosophies at Central Saint Martins (London) in 2019. Abbas lives and works in London where he is an associate lecturer at the Royal College of Art.