



Stephen Turner, *Giudecca Egg* - ex Convento SS Cosma e Damiano, Giudecca, Venezia, 2019, donated and salvaged waste plastic from Giudecca and surrounding lagoon, 9.4m x 8.2m, temporary Installation, 16 April 2019

Natura Prima?

Stephen Turner

The Eggman, Riverine Communities: Venice and Thamesmead

Natura Prima?

11 May – 26 July 2019

Preview: 8, 9, 10 May 2019

Opening event: 18.00h – 20.00h Wednesday 8 May 2019

Istituzione Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa

Palazzetto Tito, Dorsoduro 2826 Venice

Exbury Egg & Artist Residency

20 May 2019 – 31 April 2020

Bow Arts

Lakeside Centre

Thamesmead

London SE2 9AN

Stephen Turner – AKA the Eggman – is delighted to announce the launch of his international project *Natura Prima?* with a major solo exhibition at Fondazione Bevilacqua la Massa during the 58th la Biennale di Venezia. As well as showcasing 17 years of work the exhibition launches residencies with two contrasting waterside communities – in Giudecca, Venice with Fondazione Bevilacqua La Massa and Thamesmead, London in partnership with Bow Arts. The project epitomises the themes that have run through Stephen's work ever since he lived for a year in the Exbury Egg: *what is our relationship with nature and what footprints do we leave behind?*

The *Natura Prima?* exhibition includes the celebrated projects *The Exbury Egg*, *Seafort*, *Materia Prima*, *Urban Fringe* and *Cella*, his 21st Century temple to the seashore. Turner's practice is concerned with the dialectic of transience and permanence, and the increasingly dissonant relationship between people and the rest of nature. Turner often spends long periods in unusual or abandoned places, noting the changes in the complex relationship between people and their environment. His projects are rooted in research, exploring these themes through a variety of methodologies and media including performance, drawing, painting, sculpture, video and site-specific responses.

Together with previous work, the exhibition will also document the initial findings of the residencies, during which Turner will work with two seemingly different waterside communities on low lying salt marshes. In Venice, Turner will spend time with people from Giudecca, one of the few remaining authentic Venetian communities who have felt the impact of tourism on their traditional way of life. In Thamesmead, south east London, Turner will work with different communities to explore the area's unique natural and architectural landscape, currently undergoing mass-redevelopment. At a time of rising sea levels caused by climate change, both Thamesmead and Venice share alertness to flooding. If Thamesmead has gained the name of the town on stilts, Venice has long held the record since its founding in the 5th Century AD. In unique ways both have pitted human invention and ingenuity against incursion by the sea to sustain the presence of people – amongst the older stones of Venice and the current redevelopment by Peabody of the brutalist concrete of 1960s Thamesmead.



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As the *Eggman*, the persona Turner has used through the original *Exbury Egg* project and subsequent residencies in Burnley, Portsmouth, Milton Keynes and Hastings, Turner will make connections, further evolving his persona as an interlocutor representing nature. He will encourage dialogue between different communities, addressing the need of many for a more holistic approach to life and wellbeing; in an age of anxiety where science, faith, politics and economics no longer provide the certainties of old, and we face troubled, unsustainable futures

Following the residency in Venice, Stephen Turner's Exbury Egg will be located on Thamesmead's Southmere Lake for a year, just outside Bow Arts' newly refurbished Lakeside Centre, to accompany his Thamesmead residency.

In Venice he will collaborate with artist Margherita Gramegna, originally from the Veneto, and in Thamesmead with selected artists living and working in east London.

Natura Prima? The Eggman, Riverine Communities: Venice and Thamesmead is presented in association with La Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, Italy; Bow Arts, London, England; 51ZERO, Kent, England and The Artists Agency, England and is financially supported by Bow Arts and public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England. See www.stephenturner.org.uk for further details on many of the projects included in the exhibition.

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Editors Notes

Stephen Turner has an established reputation as an artist who engages with places and people, embedding himself in each place to explore the relationships between communities and location, with a specific focus upon the environment and our impact upon it and the people who live there. His work has taken him around the world, practicing and exhibiting internationally across Canada, from Kyoto in Japan to Sturovo, Slovakia and Roeselare, Belgium to Edinburgh, Sunderland and London. www.stephenturner.org.uk

Since its birth in 1898, the **Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation** is not an exhibition place, but a flexible device for promoting contemporary art in Venice. In the two exhibition venues, in the twelve ateliers, in the two guest houses and in different outdoor spaces, the Foundation organizes group exhibitions of young artists and soloists of the protagonists of the international scene, the program of artist studies, meetings, conferences, often in collaboration with Italian and foreign universities and art centers. An intense succession of activities that always starts from the local fabric, does not respect rules and hierarchies of the art system, and always remains in dialogue with the world. Palazzetto Tito hosts the foundations offices as well as a particular exhibition environment. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Louise Bourgeois, Joseph Beuys, Milton Glaser, Shirin Neshat, Frida Kahlo, Sonia Delaunay, Maya Bajevic, Yoko Ono, William Kentridge, Jim Hodges are just some of the international artists to whom the Foundation has dedicated exhibitions starting from 1999, the year of the foundations hundredth anniversary. <https://www.comune.venezia.it/content/fondazionebevilacqua-la-masa>

Bow Arts mission is to support community renewal across London by delivering arts and creative services through our financially sustainable social enterprise model. Bow Arts was established in 1994 by Marcel Baettig with the kind support of Marc Schimmel, the owner of our Bow Road premises and a valued supporter of the arts. This first site, formed of two adjacent buildings, quickly established itself as a thriving artist studio supporting over 100 working artists. In 1995 the Trust became a registered arts and education charity, then by 1998, with the further support of Marc Schimmel and Arts Council England grant, the Nunnery Gallery was built, a contemporary art gallery housed at the heart of the Bow Road site. Bow Arts also established the award-winning, schools education programme. The education programme, now working with over 100 schools, offers employment and training opportunities for professional artists in these schools. The artists help young people access education, improve their attainment and learn valuable creative skills. Bow Arts currently manages 12 different Studio sites across London and is developing more. Bow Arts also operates a Low Cost Accommodation scheme throughout Bow which provides housing for practising artists who have an interest in community work. The workspace schemes support over 500 artists with affordable safe spaces to work and grow. <https://bowarts.org>

51zero, is a cultural exchange programme created by **Margherita Gramegna** focused on international collaboration, artistic production and exhibition of artist's moving image and contemporary art, contributing to the artistic landscape of Kent. 51zero partners with cultural organisations in the UK and overseas to create opportunities for expanded moving image practice and promote young emerging talent, delivering a biennial festival and touring programmes. <http://www.51zero.org>

Margherita Gramegna is an artist and filmmaker, and has exhibited in festivals in the UK and Europe (Cannes, Raindance, Loop) with a track record in leading award winning arts projects on international platforms.

The Artists Agency supports, advises and represents the interests of selected individual artists. theartistsagency offers continuing critical and practical support, advice and guidance on projects and career development, advocacy to promote individual artist's interests, marketing and PR as required and where agreed, speculative development of artist projects. www.theartistsagency.co.uk