

**Press Release****Private View 26 September 6.30 - 9 pm****27 September - 27 October**

James Capper

*WAYS TO MAKE A SHIP WALK*

Hannah Barry Gallery

**4 - 7 October**

James Capper

*TREADPADS*

Frieze Sculpture

Regent's Park, London

We are excited to present to the public twelve new large drawings made by James Capper as he fabricates the first *WALKING BOAT* sculpture *MUDSKIPPER* which will be shown and launched in London in the spring of 2019. Included in our exhibition will be a full scale plan of *MUDSKIPPER*, a fully mobile sculpture some 9.2 metres in length.

The ingenuity of biological lifeforms has long inspired advances in human technology. Indeed, the contemporary world of engineering and mechanics continues to look to the organic world to solve complex challenges. James Capper's ambitious, multi-scale *WALKING BOAT* sculptures - researched, drawn and developed over the last 10 years - are embedded within this narrative: the reciprocal dialogue between biomechanics and the human, the organic and the technical.

As early as the year 231, Chinese army commanders had modelled an "artificial cow" for the efficient transportation of food to faraway troops. Fast-forward to 2018, we have designed soft-robotic pneumatic systems with the exact anatomy of a living octopus, designed to reach difficult surgical zones or to overcome complicated obstacles in search-and-rescue missions. The history of evolution is echoed in James Capper's frequent aesthetic and conceptual reference to the organic or biological, pitched alongside an interest in technology, innovation and the systems of heavy industry. His unique sculptural language evolves along different modular chains he terms 'Divisions', a network of interrelated sculpture families each grouped according to specialised application. *WALKING BOAT* sculptures are part of the *Offshore Division*, designated for use on and off water.

The colonisation of land by aquatic lifeforms has a long evolutionary history. Beginning some two billion years ago, multiple genealogies chart species-formation as each made the macro-ecological jump onto the earth and an uninhabitable world flourished with life. Protected by a newly formed ozone layer, early invertebrates and amphibians bravely leapt into the dark terrene, and their newly encountered ecosystem soon demanded a chassis capable of symmetric, mechanised movement.

James Capper has developed a wide variety of sculpture components which are attachment parts for his large mobile works but can be shown and viewed autonomously. In the *Offshore Division* these are called *TREADPADS*, disc-shaped feet which permit a full-scale sculpture to be fully mobile. *TREADPAD* diameter depends on the size and weight of the larger sculpture it carries, and the shapes patterning the surface of the pad - diamond, convex, frustum - are determined by the terrain on which it is active - rock, sand, shingle: all James Capper's works are sculpture and sculptural tools in - or ready for - action. Two pairs of different scale *TREADPAD* sculptures are being shown as part of Frieze Sculpture 2018, and are on display in Regent's Park.

Drawing is an important part of James Capper's practice. He makes large numbers of drawings of all kinds - from concept drawings (defining, developing and outlining new ideas and concepts for sculpture), technical drawings (line or filled-in drawings used to work out how the sculpture moves) to presentation drawings (spectacular, often large-scale coloured drawings showing the sculpture in its complete form) and in-action drawings (complex drawings showing the sculpture in movement across space and time). Through this, every realised sculpture accumulates a large number of drawings from conception to completion, and in the case of *WALKING BOAT*, a wide variety of drawings have been made to inform the sculptural process - dating as far back as 2008.

Removing himself from the utilitarian lexicon of professional engineering and the deterministic narratives of evolutionary biology, Capper's functioning works stand as an aesthetic representation of the complex character and reciprocal relationships between technology, organism and craft. Recalling the eccentric personas of Werner Herzog's Fitzcarraldo or Wes Anderson's Steve Zissou, James Capper's vision for his *WALKING BOAT* sculptures confronts the precarity of humanity's technological desire, articulating the mutual cooperation of mechanical and organic lives. Where engineering seeks solutions, the risk of the artist engages with its potential failure. The futility of the machine, crossed with a timeless artistic desire.

**Friday 19 October, 7 pm**

[\*The Art of Engineering\*](#)

James Capper at the Science Museum

with Katy Barrett, Curator of Art Collections for the Science Museum

**Thursday 1 November, 8.30pm**

*Serpentine Cinema: On Earth, Structure and Sadness*

including *Blue Frame* by James Capper and Alex George

part of Serpentine Cinema Autumn/Winter season

**James Capper** (b. 1987, London) studied at Chelsea College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. Solo presentations of his work include *RIPPER TEETH IN ACTION* at Modern Art Oxford (2011), *DIVISIONS* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2013), *SIX STEP* at Rio dell'Orso with ALMA ZEVI for the Venice Biennale (2015), *PROTOTYPES* at CGP London (2016), *ATLAS A SPOLETO! / TELESTEP A SPOLETO!*, Anna Mahler Association project for the Mahler & LeWitt Studios & Festival dei Due Mondi, Spoleto, Italy (2016), *SCULPTURE & HYDRAULICS* at The Edge Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts, University of Bath (2017) and *JAMES CAPPER* at Bathurst Art Gallery, New South Wales, Australia (2017). The youngest ever artist to be awarded the prestigious Jack Goldhill Prize for Sculpture from the Royal Academy of Arts, London, he has major sculpture projects in 2018 including: *AEROCAB* with 3-D Foundation in Verbier, Switzerland, *Blue Frame* with Forth Arts in Sydney, Australia, and *MUDSKIPPER*, *WALKING WORKBOAT* in London. *WAYS TO MAKE MOBILE SCULPTURE*, a comprehensive publication of drawings, was published by Albion in 2017, alongside an exhibition of drawings and sculpture at Albion Barn, Little Milton, Oxfordshire.