

PRESS RELEASE***The Unlimited Dream Company II*****7 October – 16 December 2023****Aidan Duffy, Callum Eaton, Vilte Fuller, Rachel Hobkirk, Sandra Poulson, Scott Young**

"The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom."

— William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

*The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) defies the easy categorisation of novelist J.G. Ballard's more traditional science fiction - rejecting dystopian urbanism in favour of the constitution of a world driven by the fantastic and erotic. The protagonist, Blake (named for the 18<sup>th</sup> century English poet, William Blake), crashes into the narrative. Emerging from the remains of a flaming plane dashed to earth on the banks of Shepperton, Blake wrests himself free of his self-destructive skeleton - the literal and metaphorical wreckage of his life. The supernatural journey he embarks on is one of imagination - what life could be like when one chases utopia. Endowed with unlimited powers of creation, Blake fosters a new flourishing habitat of jungle vegetation, fathering exotic flora and fauna. Surrounding citizens soon abandon their day-to-day existence for the joy of the wayward - renouncing self-judgement and the incumbent shame upon which capitalism thrives.

Preoccupied by his pseudo-religious mission to redeem the people of Shepperton, for Blake, no behaviour is prohibited by moral, or social convention. Blake's ascension to power is defined by the recurrent affirmation that all deemed licentious in the human realm is but a metaphor for the virtues of the next. Blake is driven by urgent visions through various ecstatic culminations, servicing the credo that true freedom relies not on the suppression of the beastly in favour of nobility or ethics, but a wholehearted embrace of one's animalism. Hallucinations of apotheosis are driven by fantasies of sex, flight, and deviant imagination; for Blake, the erotic is inextricable from the taboo. Moved not by pleasure or affection but an embodied sensuality, the protagonist's character enfolds both the transcendent and the immanent. At once "above" the people of Shepperton - impenetrable, and matchless - he yet graciously enters into his creation, working and acting within the flowering, bustling world he has made. Oscillating between dream and reality, Ballard encapsulates Blake's journey in profoundly concrete language.

Speaking not only to the highs of this twisted and loquacious world but equally its critique of contemporary desire, *The Unlimited Dream Company II* brings together six visual storytellers - Aidan Duffy, Callum Eaton, Vilte Fuller, Rachel Hobkirk, Sandra Poulson, and Scott Young - cycling through notions of immanence, mythology, and speculative worlds, recognisable and not. Ballard's orgiastic romp is taken as a starting point - a route to thinking through the prioritisation of pleasure and adventure as an alternative mode of being and learning. Exalting the unexpected and uncanny as magical, and illuminating the beauty of the disregarded and unconventional, Blake's narrative is framed through the tension of opposition, ambiguity, subtle irony and disquieting inner thoughts. Building upon Ballard's poetic renderings of a potential reality, the exhibition presents a dream-world of symbolic images and ideas. Chimeric compositions, biomorphic forms, hyperrealist speculations and an impartial perversity come together in exploration of a world given over to impulse, inclination, intention, and desire.