

## Press Release

### Haroon Mirza: |||

24 February – 8 April 2023  
67 Lisson Street, London

Opening: Thursday 23 February, 6 – 8pm

Haroon Mirza presents a solo exhibition of new works, entitled |||, forming a constellation of installations around the so-called ‘Holy’ or ‘Divine’ frequency of 111 Hz, which provides a sonic bathing experience that permeates the gallery spaces. Individual works incorporate light, moving image, sound and sculpture, while a living ecosystem deriving from one of Mirza’s solar-panel works ‘powers’ an ant colony and a fungus farm. This is his fifth solo show with the gallery and follows major museum and biennial presentations in 2022 such as the Lofoten International Art Festival in Norway and lille3000 in France, with a new commission also being unveiled during the first Islamic Art Biennale in Saudi Arabia that opens on 23 January.

In the main room at Lisson Gallery, Mirza presents a new video work in collaboration with filmmaker Helga Dóróthea Fannon, continuing his ongoing ‘modular operas’ – a malleable system of interconnected video and performance works – in which a tea ceremony is conducted using the active ingredient of the *amanita muscaria* mushroom. Also known as Fly Agaric, this deliriant strain of mushroom is associated with toxicity, dizziness and loss of coordination, rather than with the hallucinations of the psilocybin or magic mushroom. Its red-and-white, domed cap has a rich history and mythology, both in popular folklore associated with the poisonous toadstool that shrinks Alice in Wonderland and in its ritual usage by Saami and Siberian shamans, as a healing aid or a portal to another universe. Combining these themes of childhood make believe and mystic soothsaying, Mirza’s immersive installation intermixes vocals by soprano Sarah-Jane Lewis, a two-channel film featuring ingestion of the tea by a group of children (the artist’s included) on the night of Winter Solstice, alongside two tabla drums beating out a shamanic rhythm, representing another of the modular elements borrowed from previous bodies of work.

Sound acts as another connective thread, linking the entire show through the staging of an electro-acoustic ‘gong bath,’ for which Mirza has approximated the sonic frequency of 111 Hz using synthesizers and traditional instruments such as a Tibetan singing bowl and a bespoke harmonium from India known as a Shruti box. In addition to the meditative effect associated with vibrational group meditations, the 111 Hz frequency is said to have numerous therapeutic and healing effects, as noted in various medical studies. It also been discovered at prehistoric sites and ancient temples that once hosted spiritual events (for the Frieze Live programme in 2020, Mirza staged *MindFlip* during 111 hours of performance). This low, droning bass note continues in an LED floor work in the front gallery that flickers imperceptibly at the same frequency.

Upstairs, Mirza continues his series of *Solar Cell Circuit Compositions* that act as scripts to the film below, as well as another new work incorporating three glass chambers containing an ant colony and a fungal bed of organic matter for the leaf cutters to harvest themselves, while an array of halogen lamps provide heat and light to ensure the ecosystem’s survival and illuminate solar panels that activate sounds created by the ants’ movements. While our societies and social networks are meant to be horizontally structured, but are ultimately governed from the top down by the state, ants live and work in non-hierarchical colonies, with the queen as the solitary, benign figurehead. Rather than following her orders, ants are known to locate sustenance and organise mass movement using pheromone trails, much like the mycelial network that links plant life below the earth’s surface. These sentient paths have gone to influence optimisation algorithms, suggesting that the order found in the teeming chaos of natural systems may be driven by a heady combination of psychoactive substances and

superorganisms, connecting divine and spiritual impulses of a collective consciousness with the rational and progressive urges of the technologically-networked individual.

Visitors to the gallery will be given the opportunity to purchase Haroon Mirza's first NFT, *Solstice Star*, presented in collaboration with Sha Li and Greg Hilty at Lisson Gallery. This gif(t) merges physical art practices with digital interactions, appearing in two forms at the exhibition |||: as a vinyl QR code on the wall, where upon scanning it, a self-referential, augmented 3D sculpture is activated, and by recontextualizing the *Solstice Star* as tokens on the blockchain, becoming possible for anyone to own the GIF version of the artwork. This allows the artist to remain creatively engaged and continuously evolve with an emerging network, onboarding digital collectors and enabling them to become part of the artist's experimental project that unravels over time. The project will be gifted during the exhibition period with only gas costs (approximately \$10) required. It can also be redeemed at [solsticestar.xyz](https://solsticestar.xyz) and [verse.works](https://verse.works). No cryptocurrency wallet is necessary. After that, there will be no more.

## About the artist

Haroon Mirza has won international acclaim for installations that test the interplay and friction between sound and light waves and electric current. He devises complex sculptures, performances and interconnecting installations, such as *A Dyson Sphere for Schumann Resonances*, (2021-22) – an earthbound version of a hypothetical, off-world megastructure in which a sun-like central tungsten light powers a carapace of photovoltaic panels. An advocate of interference (in the sense of electro-acoustic or radio disruption), he creates situations that purposefully cross wires. He describes his role as a composer, manipulating electricity, a live, invisible and volatile phenomenon, to make it dance to a different tune, calling on instruments as varied as household electronics, vinyl and turntables, LEDs, furniture, video footage and existing artworks to behave differently. Processes are left exposed and sounds occupy space in an unruly way, testing codes of conduct and charging the atmosphere. Mirza asks us to reconsider the perceptual distinctions between noise, sound and music, and draws into question the categorisation of cultural forms. “All music is organised sound or organised noise,” he says. “So as long as you're organising acoustic material, it's just the perception and the context that defines it as music or noise or sound or just a nuisance” (2013).

Haroon Mirza was born in 1977 in London where he lives and works. He has a BA in Painting from Winchester School of Art, an MA in Design Critical Practice and Theory from Goldsmiths College (2006) and an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design (2007). Recent solo exhibitions have been held at CCA Kitakyushu, Kitakyushu, Japan (2020); John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, UK (2019); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019); Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China (2019); Ikon, Birmingham, UK (2018); Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA (2018); Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen, Denmark (2018); Zabudowicz Collection, London, UK (2017); LiFE, Saint-Nazaire, France (2017); Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada (2017); Pivô, São Paulo, Brazil (2016); Nam June Paik Center, Seoul, South Korea (2015); Matadero, Madrid, Spain (2015); Museum Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland (2015); Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (2014); Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, Poissy, France (2014); IMMA, Dublin, Ireland (2014); The Hepworth, Wakefield, UK (2013); MIMA, Middlesbrough, UK (2013); The New Museum, New York, NY, USA (2012); University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, USA (2012); Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2011) and A-Foundation, Liverpool, UK (2009). His work was included in the 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, China (2012) and the 54th Venice Biennale, Italy (2011), where he was awarded the Silver Lion. He was awarded the Northern Art Prize in 2011, the DAIWA Foundation Art Prize in 2012, the Zurich Art Prize in 2013, the Nam June Paik Prize in 2014, the Calder Art Prize in 2015 and the COLLIDE International Award in 2017 which included a two-month residency at CERN, Switzerland in 2018. In the same year, Mirza unveiled *Stone Circle*, a large-scale outdoor sculpture commissioned by Ballroom Marfa, Texas, which will remain in the landscape for five years. In 2021, Mirza's *The National Pavilion of Then and Now* (2011) was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai and Beijing, as well as a forthcoming gallery in Los Angeles, opening 15 April 2023. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Art & Language, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith and Roy Colmer. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean

Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky, Hugh Hayden, Van Hanos and Cheyney Thompson.

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