



# Katrina Palmer: The Coffin Jump Media Release



## **NEW CO-COMMISSION BY KATRINA PALMER TO BE UNVEILED AT YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK From Saturday 16 June 2018**

This summer, a new work by UK contemporary artist Katrina Palmer will be unveiled at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Co-commissioned by 14-18 NOW, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary, and YSP, *The Coffin Jump* takes as a point of departure the role of an extraordinary group of women in the First World War. Combining sculpture, soundtrack and performance, *The Coffin Jump* symbolises the new freedoms afforded to women in the war, with specific reference to the all-female First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY).

Founded in 1907, Captain Edward Baker's conception of the FANY was of women on horseback riding to the rescue of fallen men in the battlefield. Although the FANY ultimately drove motored ambulances, their role was and continues to be as powerfully independent and transformative as this original vision.

At YSP, visitors will see an intervention in the historic deer park, comprising an inscribed fence above a trench. This negative horizon, a line that cuts across the landscape and descends into a shallow depression, resonates with the trench as a site of mortality but also new beginnings as the woman on horseback cheats death.

In spite of the nurses' courage, the British Army initially refused to be associated with the liberated women of the FANY. So instead they supported the French and Belgian armies, running hospitals and driving ambulances. Palmer makes reference to their battle against prejudice through words drawn from sources including the 1918 diaries of FANY member Muriel Thompson.

*The Coffin Jump*  
(artist impression).  
Courtesy the artist,  
14-18 NOW and YSP



Hand-painted on the horse jump, phrases such as 'woman saves man' and 'nothing special happened' highlight the everyday heroism of women during the First World War, capturing the sense that the FANYs were doing their job and getting on with what had to be done in a practical manner. In other words, women's courageousness and selflessness is not exceptional, rather it is taken in their stride.

The work will occasionally be activated by a horse and local rider who will gallop across the Park and make the jump. A symbol of independent mobility and action, capturing the emergence of female emancipation, the galloping horse also echoes the death of Emily Davison who famously stepped in front of the King George V's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

Today, as the Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps, the FANY deploys multi-faceted rapid response teams to support civil and military authorities in times of crisis. They are the longest established uniformed 'military' voluntary organisation for women in the world and the only all-women unit left in the UK.

Most recently, FANYs were deployed following the terrorist attacks in Manchester, Westminster and London Bridge, and the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. FANY volunteers provided 1,835 hours of support over a period of just over three months, assisting a wide range of organisations including the City of London Police.

In her work, Palmer uses writing as a form of sculpture in which the object is elaborated through spatialised narratives and evoked in the reader's or listener's imagination. Palmer places sculpture in writing through published stories, live readings, audio recordings and constructed environments. In *The Necropolitan Line* at Henry Moore Institute (2015), texts were delivered through a system of tannoy speakers and specially formulated newspapers. These stories evoked the displacement of bodies via London Necropolis Railway and the Cross Bones prostitutes' graveyard in London Bridge, where women have been excluded from the narrative of recognition through the absence of memorial.

*The Coffin Jump* is co-commissioned by 14-18 NOW and YSP, made possible with Art Fund support. Special thanks to Sir David Verey, The Henry Moore Foundation and The Clothworkers' Company. With additional support from Melanie Gee, Larissa Joy and thanks to Midge & Simon Palley, Nicholas & Jane Ferguson and Tony McCallum.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About Katrina Palmer

Katrina Palmer lives and works in London, and teaches Fine Art at Central Saint Martins. Forthcoming projects include *The Time-Travelling Circus: The Recent Return of Pablo Fanque and the Electrolier*, at Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, 23 February–21 April 2018 and *Kim?* Riga, Latvia, December 2018. Recent solo exhibitions include *The three stories are flattened* (Void, Derry, UK, 2016); *The Necropolitan Line* (Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2015); *End Matter*, an Artangel commission combining an audio installation on Portland, Dorset, UK, with a published book and a radio broadcast (Book Works, BBC Radio 4, 2015); and *Reality Flickers* (MOT International, London, UK, 2014). Other exhibitions include *The Weight of Data* (Tate Britain, London, UK, 2015); *MirrorCity* (Hayward Gallery, London, UK, 2014); *Dr Sinclair's Drawer* (Flat Time House, London, UK, 2014); *From Morn 'Til Midnight* (Supportico Lopez, Berlin, Germany, 2013); and *Katrina Palmer Presents* (Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, UK, 2011). Palmer's publications include *The Fabricator's Tale* (Book Works, London 2014) and *The Dark Object* (Book Works, London 2010). Her writing is also represented in *Artists Writing, 2000–2015* (Paper Monument Publishing, New York 2016), *The Object: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Whitechapel Gallery/MIT 2014), and *Modern British Sculpture* (Royal Academy of Art, London 2011).

### 14-18 NOW

14-18 NOW is a programme of extraordinary arts experiences connecting people with the First World War, as part of the UK's official centenary commemorations. It commissions new work by leading contemporary artists across all art forms; the programme has included over 200 artists from 35 countries, with commissions taking place in 160 locations across the UK. Over 30 million people have experienced a project so far, including 7.5 million children and young people. 16.7 million people took part in *LIGHTS OUT* in 2014, and 63% of the population were aware of Jeremy Deller's 2016 work *We're here because we're here*. The UK tour of the iconic poppy sculptures by artist Paul Cummins and designer Tom Piper have been seen by over 3.5 million people to date. 14-18 NOW has won many awards for its work, including the National Lottery Heritage Award 2017, a Museums Heritage Award and the Chairman's Award at The Drum Social Buzz Awards 2016. It is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and by additional fundraising.

### First World War Centenary Partnership Programme

14-18 NOW is a member of the First World War Centenary Partnership and an independent programme hosted within Imperial War Museums. The First World War Centenary Partnership was established by IWM (Imperial War Museums) in 2010 and to date has over 2,500 members from across 45 countries. The Partnership is presenting a collective programme of activities and events to mark the centenary, developed at grass roots levels. This diverse and far-reaching programme has been developed to reflect how people want to remember, commemorate and debate the conflict in their own communities, in a way that is meaningful for them. 1914.org is the official website for the First World War Centenary Partnership. Throughout the centenary new events and activities will be added each week to the events calendar, produced in partnership with Culture 24.

### About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2017. As an independent art gallery, accredited museum and accredited charity (number 1067908), YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG, United Kingdom / +44 (0)1924 832631 / ysp.org.uk

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