

Press release
July 2024



Jo McGonigal, *Pale Ground* (2023). Image Courtesy of Simon Pantling.

40 Years of the Future: Jo McGonigal x Frank Bowling

20 October 2024 – 2 February 2025

Housed in Castlefield Gallery's distinct architect-designed interior, this dynamic exhibition will bring together site-specific 'spatial paintings' by Jo McGonigal with Sir Frank Bowling's sculptures as well as large-scale paintings for which he is renowned.

Each artist's practice has a highly imaginative and unconventional engagement with pictorial and physical space. As an exhibition *40 Years of the Future: Jo McGonigal x Frank Bowling* will explore new ways of thinking about the relationship between painting, sculpture and architecture.

In his book *Frank Bowling: Sculpture* (2022), writer and curator Sam Cornish shares a story of Bowling receiving an invitation from Castlefield Gallery in the 1980s to exhibit his paintings alongside the work of a contemporary sculptor. As a response, Bowling provided the sculptures himself. This led to a solo exhibition of Bowling's paintings, works on paper and sculpture at the gallery in 1988. Bowling made a series of welded steel sculptures largely put together from the by-products of an

engineering firm next to his studio. Like his paintings, the sculptures have multiple influences, playfully mixing references from high modernism, classical African sculpture, cubism and Russian constructivism. Except for a tour of this work at the time, the public has rarely had access to Bowling's sculptures since.

Jo McGonigal x Frank Bowling will offer a unique opportunity to experience Bowling's sculptures. Encountering these pieces alongside his paintings will encourage exploration of the sculptural elements throughout his work. This includes the density of acrylic gel built up on their surfaces, his monolithic 'poured' paintings, and Bowling's particular use of the marouflage technique and objects he collages into his works.

McGonigal's paintings leave the constraints of the canvas behind, to interact directly with the environment in which her works are placed. McGonigal is interested in the interaction between painting and architecture as well as deconstructing the internal architecture of painting itself. Recent works involve applying layers of traditional gesso, normally used to prime canvases, directly on to the gallery walls before introducing lines of coloured chalk, piles of pigment geometric structures, textile and archaeological elements into formal abstract compositions. McGonigal combines these elements to enable a visual and sensory engagement with the tactile, spatial, durational and imaginative capacities of painting that activate the body as much as the eye.

Bowling's interest in geometry is evident from the use of grids, spirals and other shapes defining space in his paintings and sculptures. This is not only a visual device, but it also speaks to universal laws of nature and form. McGonigal's use of traditional materials such as gesso (prepared using animal glue and marble dust), gritstone and chalk introduces into the gallery space material that has been produced over long periods of geological or deep time. Gesso is the unseen substrate below the surface, presented here as the subterranean level of painting, which contains invisible natural sediments. McGonigal is physically taking painting apart and separating its surfaces to bring the viewer closer to painting's elemental relationship with the physical world.

As Castlefield Gallery celebrates 40 years it gives us great pleasure to present works featured in the 1988 exhibition (Frank Bowling, 10 June - 23 July 1988) alongside more recent works by Bowling and new works by McGonigal. This exhibition enables us to continue to develop conversations around how we understand the mediums and techniques of painting and sculpture, and to demonstrate how one practice can enrich and influence the other.

Exhibition public programme

- In Conversation: Ben Bowling and Jo McGonigal

Saturday 19 October

Join us for an opportunity to visit the exhibition and find out more about the thinking behind the work on show. Ben Bowling from Frank Bowling studio will be in conversation with Jo McGonigal chaired by Castlefield Gallery Curator, Matthew Pendergast.

- **New writing responding to the work of McGonigal and Bowling, by Griselda Pollock**, Professor emerita of Social & Critical Histories of Art at the University of Leeds.

Further events and information to be announced.

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For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact: Leslie Remonato at Castlefield Gallery on leslie@castlefieldgallery.co.uk or 0161 832 8034

More on Castlefield Gallery

We are a contemporary art gallery and artist development organisation. Established in 1984, we've led the way in artist development for 40 years. We provide creative and career development, exhibition opportunities and commissions for artists and independents. We work from our galleries in Manchester, off-site, online and in the public realm. We create long-lasting impacts in our city region, North West and beyond. Our national and international activities focus on artist exchange. Castlefield Gallery's public and participation programmes provoke new ways of thinking, bringing together artists, creatives, communities and audiences to explore the art and issues of our time. We believe when artists and communities come together they can help shape a better world.

We support more than 300 Castlefield Gallery Associates and a host of creatives through person-centred development programmes. Castlefield Gallery New Art Spaces provide affordable making and project space in the North West of England, including on the high street. We are a home for artists and creatives. We are advocates for what we believe in. We believe in the power of new art. We make new art happen.

Ryan Gander OBE RA is Castlefield Gallery's Artist Patron.

We are a registered charity, supported by Arts Council England and Manchester City Council.

Exhibition Title: 40 Years of the Future: Jo McGonigal x Frank Bowling

Exhibition dates: 20 October 2024 – 2 February 2025

Preview: Thursday 17 October 2024, 6-8pm

Slow Saturday Preview: Saturday 19 October 2024, 12noon – 5.30pm

Christmas closing: 23 December 2024 – 8 January 2025

Images available [HERE](#)

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Venue: Castlefield Gallery, 2 Hewitt Street, Manchester M15 4GB

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Web: castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Email: info@castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Opening Times: Wed to Sun 12noon – 5:30pm

This exhibition is generously supported by the Henry Moore Foundation and the University of Leeds.



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A special thank you to Ben Bowling, Frank Bowling, Griselda Pollock and Susi Sahmland.

Castlefield Gallery Funders and supporters:



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