

# Rory Pilgrim

## The Undercurrent

7.2.-19.4.2020

Press preview and talk: Thursday, 6. February, 10 am

Opening: Thursday, 6. February, 2019, 7 pm

Press release

Badischer Kunstverein is pleased to present the solo exhibition *The Undercurrent* by the artist Rory Pilgrim from February 7 until April 19, 2020. The title of the exhibition comes from the central 50 minute film that was recently awarded with the Prix de Rome and is now shown for the first time in Germany. The film demonstrates Pilgrim's exceptional capacity to integrate narratives that highlight urgent contemporary issues with music and elements of cinematographic style to form a unified Gesamtkunstwerk. The exhibition will also include a hand-painted series of posters which visualize lyrics composed by Pilgrim as well as photographs, drawings and paintings. The posters are based on the artist's long-term collaboration with the traditional hand poster maker David Andrews.

Rory Pilgrim works in a wide range of media including songwriting, composing music, film, music video, text, drawing and live performances. Centred on emancipatory concerns, Pilgrim aims to challenge the nature of how we come together, speak, listen and strive for social change through sharing and voicing personal experience. Strongly influenced by the origins of activist, feminist and socially engaged art, Pilgrim engages with others through different methods of dialogue, collaboration and workshops. In an age of increasing technological interaction, Rory's practice creates connections between activism, spirituality, music and how we form community locally and globally from both beyond and behind our screens.

As a powerful statement about the era of climate crisis, *The Undercurrent* asks how people are coping with this overwhelmingly global issue on intimate and personal levels. Filmed in Boise, Idaho in the US, the film was produced in collaboration with ten young climate activists from Boise and small towns in the surrounding area, all of whom responded to an online open call. While social change emerges as the pivotal theme, the activists also explore the impact of this environmental crisis on daily and family life, on religious identity, on friendships, on the struggle for gender equality, and on the essential human need for a sense belonging. Also explored in the film are the issues of home, security, and shelter, with members of the Boise homeless community speaking about their experiences.

The soundtrack is an original orchestral score composed by Pilgrim and singers in Boise, and music is used continuously throughout to examine the emotional resources at our disposal for articulating crisis. An attempt to foster dialogue with people in Boise, the film represents the first chapter of a larger body of work which addresses the kind of concerted action that is needed to deal with the climate crisis. Far from simply recording or documenting loss, the medium of film is used here as an instrument for preventing it. In these globally uncertain times, *The Undercurrent* asks: What is it that allows us to feel as though we belong somewhere – is it a home, a country, or each other?

For the exhibition at Badischer Kunstverein, Rory Pilgrim will present a special event of songs and contributions both live and online from the collaborators of *The Undercurrent*. Furthering the

films depiction and experience of a group of youth climate activists in Boise, Idaho, the program will be a moment to bring together their far away voices and localize these with youth activists in Karlsruhe and their methods of dealing with the climate crisis. The event will be interwoven with songs by 14 year old singer Declan Rowe John and the artist and singer Ezra Hampikian from Boise as a unique debut performance of the music from *The Undercurrent* in Germany. In the context of the exhibition, a publication will be published in the vinyl-series of Badischer Kunstverein.

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**Rory Pilgrim** (\*1988, Bristol, UK) lives and works in Rotterdam and Isle of Portland. Shows include: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL (2019); Between Bridges, Berlin, DE (2019); South London Gallery, London, UK (2018); andriesse eyck galerie, Amsterdam, NL (2018); Rowing Gallery, London UK (2017); Plymouth Art Centre, Plymouth, UK (2017); Flat Time House, London, UK (2016); Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK (2016); sic! Raum für Kunst, Luzern, CH (2014); Rongwrong, Amsterdam, NL (2014); Kunsthuis SYB, Beetsterzwaag, NL (2011). In 2019, Pilgrim was the winner of the Prix de Rome.