

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Alex Hull, "How Mark Leckey's new group show explores British coastal towns," *DAZED*. October 10, 2023

DAZED

How Mark Leckey's new group show explores British coastal towns



Mark Leckey, *DAZZLEDDARK*, 2023, (production still). Commissioned by Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK. Courtesy Cabinet, London, Galerie Buchholz Berlin/Cologne/New York and Gladstone Gallery, New York . © Mark Leckey

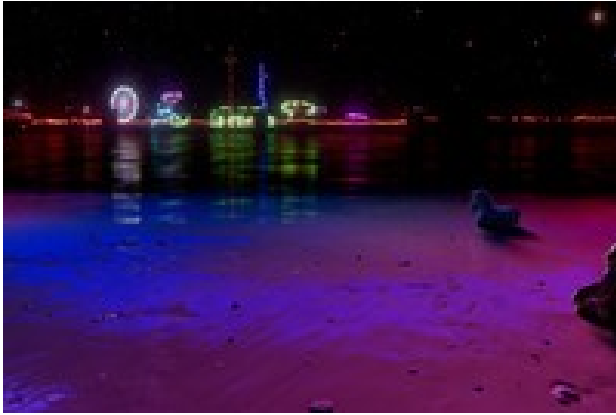
ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - FEATURE

In The Offing at the Turner Contemporary in Margate juxtaposes nostalgia for the British seaside and fears of a future in the throes of climate catastrophe

10th October 2023

Text Alex Hull

"It's hard to be optimistic at the moment," says [Mark Leckey](#), reflecting on the new group show [In The Offing](#), which opened this weekend at [Turner Contemporary](#) in Margate. "To look at the horizon is quite anxiety-inducing."



Hailing from from Ellesmere Port, on the opposite side of the River Mersey to Liverpool, Leckey's work bridges technology and pop culture to explore memory, nostalgia and class. Inspired by Margate's iconic seafront, the exhibition takes its name from the maritime term for when a ship becomes visible on the horizon as it approaches land; it reflects the show's themes of coastal towns and Leckey's invitation to the commissioned artists to meditate on what the future looks like to them.

Leckey approached the curation of the exhibition as a magazine editorial, assigning himself the role of Turner Contemporary's guest editor. This allows the exhibition to function like his monthly radio show on NTS, which he treats like a sound collage.

Split into two rooms across the first floor of the gallery, the exhibition opens with a white-walled gallery space dedicated to figurative paintings by [Alessandro Raho](#), a Bahamas-born painter who studied and exhibited with the YBAs in the 90s. Some images evoke the magic of the funfair: Mickey Mouse in wizard garb presents a board game promising itself to be a 'deluxe box of tricks'; a white surrounded by palm trees, overlooking a sea; the sky is painted in deep purples, pinks and blues, creating an ominous feeling; a storm is coming.

The show continues in a dark space laid out in a labrinthyne design, displaying video works and light and sound installations playing on an endless loop. A monolithic metal mural greets you as you enter. It depicts a pool of water reflecting the seafront's lights at night and is created by [Darren Horton](#), a local airbrush artist who creates custom paintwork for cars and motorbikes; its vast shiny surface glimmers with the changing lights, like a phone screen or a mirror. Sounds of motorbikes, arcades, and waves crashing pull you around the corners of the exhibition space.



Mark Leckey, *DAZZLEDDARK*, 2023, (production still). Commissioned by Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK. Courtesy Cabinet, London, Galerie Buchholz Berlin/Cologne/New York and Gladstone Gallery, New York. © Mark Leckey

Leckey's new video, which he describes as "somewhere between dread and joy", examines the intersection of cuteness and horror. A plush toy pony and unicorn are on Margate sands at night, marveling at a gold balloon star. "Do you want to go faster?" they ask, in cute, high-pitched voices. The video whirls, inducing feelings of nausea in the viewer. The next morning comes and the comedown hits: the two plushies lie inert and dirty on the grey beach.

Although there is an inherent nostalgia to the British seaside, which is reflected in Margate's Dreamland, the works investigate the strange experience of living in the present moment (just look at whose Sim jerks around in a dilapidated hotel room as the world burns outside. The only image on the hotel wall shows the skeleton of an abandoned pier, a relic of the past, and a harbinger of a lost future.

Having just lived through the hottest September on record, for Leckey, looking out at the sea cannot be disentangled from the climate crisis. "It's always been between the bright lights of the amusement park, and going to the edge of the sea at night, and looking out into the abyss," he says. "Now, that kind of anxiety, that sense of being at the seaside and recognising the fairground behind you, with all its promise of pleasure and joy, is actually a threat to that sea. A fairground ride melts glaciers. How do you hold onto those ideas of pleasure that are so corrosive and destructive?"

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EXHIBITION

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