

# NOVEL

22 NOVEMBER – 11 DECEMBER  
UPSTAIRS

NOVEL (Alun Rowlands and Matt Williams) is an editorial and curatorial project, publishing artists writing and texts that oscillate between modes of fiction and poetry. NOVEL acts in-between the potential performance of a script, and the indeterminate transcript of the event. The journal hosts a cacophony of voices that coalesce around writing as a core material for a number of artists exploring language and the speculative force of fiction.

NOVEL will be in residence at Bergen Kunsthall from 22 November to 11 December and will during this period host events, readings, screenings and the dispersion of a new publication. Curated with artworks that become the locus for reading and the fictioning of a scenario, NOVEL asks us to think of writing as something distinct from information, as at least one realm of cultural production that is exempt from the encompassing obligation to communicate.

#### NEW ISSUE OF NOVEL JOURNAL: NOVEL UPSTAIRS

With contributions by Ed Atkins, Lutz Bacher, Hannah Black, Elaine Cameron-Weir, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, James Hoff, Lisa Holzer, Travis Jeppesen, Lynn Hershmann Leeson, Zoe Leonard, Stuart Middleton, Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, Richard Sides, Cally Spooner, Studio for Propositional Cinema, Martine Syms, Gili Tal, Oscar Tuazon, Peter Wächtler, Steven Warwick & Nora Khan and Canary Wharf.

#### RELATED EVENTS:

##### Launch of NOVEL Upstairs Thursday 24 November at 8pm

Join us for the launch of the latest issue with screenings and talks by the curators and editors.

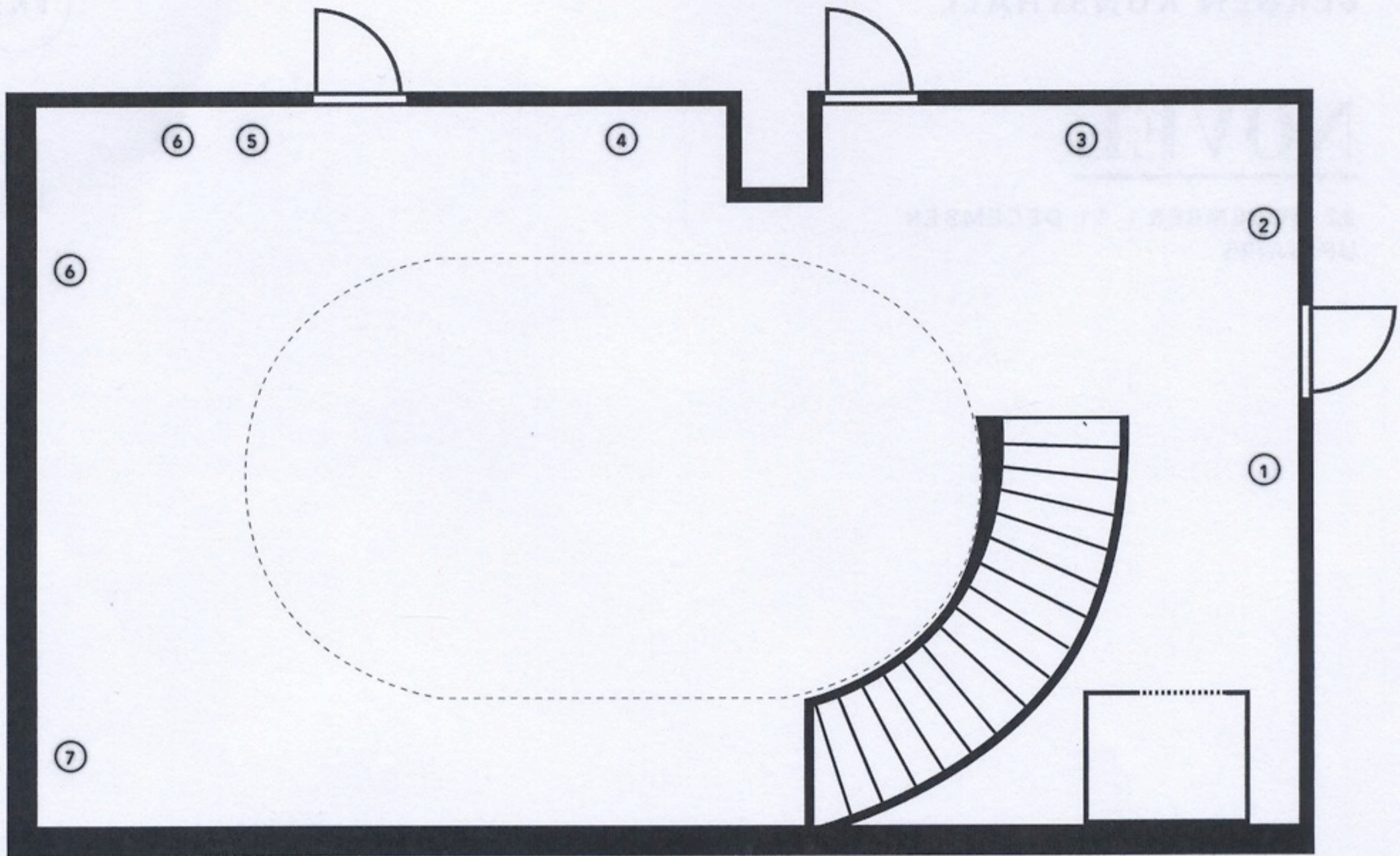
#### Platform & NOVEL:

##### On Reading Saturday 10 December, 3pm - 02.30am Please sign up: [rsvp@kunsthall.no](mailto:rsvp@kunsthall.no) Limited seating.

A one-day event focusing on the act of reading in contemporary art. Free entrance. Coffee and food will be served. Stay all day!

With lectures, readings, performances, film and music by Hannah Gregory, Aveek Sen, Moyra Davey, Travis Jeppesen, Elaine Cameron, Karolin Meunier, Sidsel Meineche Hansen, Studio for Propositional Cinema and Steven Warwick/Heatsick. Presented by Bergen Kunsthall in collaboration with NOVEL.

## Upstairs



- 1 Alastair MacKinven, i / no man, 2008
- 2 Mark Leckey, Untitled (Sodium Lights), 2014
- 3 Hannah Black, Jaki Liebezzeit During A Power Cut Circa 1970, 2012
- 4 NOVEL Upstairs on Screen, please refer to video programme notes.
- 5 Ed Atkins, Long Live the Terminally Ill, 2012
- 6 NOVEL Archive (issues 1- 3), mixed media, 2016
- 7 Mark Leckey, Untitled (Sodium Lights), 2014

**B.S Johnson**

***Paradigm* (1970)**

**10:00 min film**

This experimental film explores one of writer and filmmaker B.S. Johnson's recurring obsessions - that the older you get, the less you have to say and the more difficulty you have in saying it. William Hoyland stars as a nameless protagonist, who speaks to the camera in a fabricated language and, through the course of the film, transforms from young and verbose, to old and inarticulate.

**Nicole Miller**

***The Alphabet* (2007)**

**02:38 min screen capture**

Miller's use of the screencast as political gesture figures a textual image. On screen we see Miller retrieving several videos from her browser. She presents clips of Bill Cosby, James Earl Jones, Richard Pryor, Lou Rawls and Jackie Robinson reciting the alphabet on the television show *Sesame Street*. The men in the video use different forms of expression—comedy, drama, soul and sport—to transform the alphabet. Richard Pryor performs a comedic alphabet while Jackie Robinson recites the letters. James Earl Jones slowly pushes through the letters as Bill Cosby talks to himself about "Things that make you go HMMMM." The desktop is a unique site, introspective and outward facing, where conception, production, and distribution can simultaneously occur.

**Chen Zhou**

***My Loving Artist - Yu Honglei* (2012)**

**04:20 min Film transferred to DVD**

Chen's subject is his friend and fellow artist Yu Honglei. Yu is presented in a tender video as a somewhat melancholy young man leafing through photos of himself as vaunted youth. He is thinking about Jeff Koons. As the artist repeats the text, the subject is not him anymore, but a friend who saw the show. And there is a transition between the subject, the artist, his friend and Koons. The subject does not think by himself, borrowing from others, coming back to face the camera to declare his fondness for the work. Koons represents not only an artist but an icon from western culture to be appropriated, where image becomes exchangeable as a subject to the point of dilution.

**Bernadette Corporation**

***Hell Frozen Over* (2000)**

**19:22 min video**

Bernadette Corporation describe this work as "a fashion film about the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé and the color white." *Hell Frozen Over* employs a range of strategies to approach the idea of nothingness, emptiness, and vacuity, with an eye to how these notions relate to contemporary mass-cultural entertainment. Positioning documentary film on a fashion shoot with footage of semiologist Sylvère Lotringer giving an impromptu lecture on Mallarmé on a frozen lake, *Hell Frozen Over* maintains an ambiguous stance from which to both critique and celebrate the power of surface. With: Sylvère Lotringer, Bianca (New York Models), Arielle (Next). Voice-overs: Liz Bougatsos, Colin DeLand. Hair: Rick Radone. Make-up: Yuko Mizuno. Clothes: Viktor & Rolf, Andre Walker, Seth Shapiro. Music: Ben Williams, The Beatles, Kippenberger, Mozart, Cat Stevens, Schubert.

**Stephen Sutcliffe**

***Writer in Residence* (2010)**

**03:00 min HD video**

*Writer in Residence* take the form of a TV-style interview and continues Sutcliffe's interest in collage as a means to undermine certainty. Sutcliffe poses the melancholic hallucination that is Adrian Leverkühn's meeting with the Devil in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) wrought with self-doubt and interior monologue, as presented by Colin Wilson in his novel *The Outsider* (1956) - a philosophical standpoint that was developed through Wilson's own critique of Leverkühn's meeting with the Devil. This neurotic experience of artistic production, often felt but rarely admitted, figures the uneasy relationship between established and emergent voices that feed Sutcliffe's interest in class and auto-didacticism.

**Dora Garcia**

***The Joyceian Society* (2013)**

**53:00 min video**

A group of people have been reading a book together for thirty years. They have been reading it again and again, with each journey from the first to the last page taking eleven years. Once they reach the last word, a very enigmatic "the," they begin again with the first word, "riverrun." The text appears inexhaustible, its interpretation endless, the inconclusive nature of the reading exciting.

**Steve Reinke**

***Anal Masturbation and Object Loss* (2002)**

**05:54 min video**

Reinke envisions an art institute where you don't have to make anything and with a library full of books glued together. The image is a shot of Reinke glue sticking the pages of a book together. He voices his fantasy about a library where all the books have been sealed shut: all the information remains, but no one has to bother reading. Reinke pounces on the moment when the presence of two items in a list creates a levelling of unlikely objects. In the video Reinke explains that his new art school will limit discourse to three subjects: classical rhetoric, theosophy and Martin Heidegger – and Heidegger 'not as a philosophic system but as a series of provocative compound words'. Following on from this move from philosophy to words, the voiceover then considers the relation between meaning and physical space occupied – for example, by glued-together books or the projection of a video in a gallery – while also speculating on Heideggerian desire for a precision of meaning ('I would like anal masturbation to refer only to anal masturbation') so drastic that ideas turn from sculptures to objects to placeholders ('Object Loss').

**Ed Atkins**

***Death Mask II: The Scent* (2010)**

**08:19 min video HD**

Atkins' screenplays shrug off narrative development in favour of vivid and dense descriptive passages that escape the fantasy of literature and enter material existence. The screen play *Death Mask II* offers a 'partial exegesis' for some of the images within the film, focusing on descriptions of the durian fruit, infamous for its disgusting and indescribable smell reminiscent of a rotting corpse. The corpse, as articulated through French theorist Maurice Blanchot's descriptions of cadavers as representations of living beings, is a recurrent theme in Atkins's films, and one in which he finds affinities with the increasingly 'realistic' imagery produced by high definition digital technology.

**Cerith Wyn Evans**

***Degrees of Blindness* (1988)**

**18:58 min video**

A short experimental film directed by Cerith Wyn Evans, featuring Tilda Swinton and Leigh Bowery. Inspired by a William Blake poem, the film queries our perception of vision from the reading of a braille map by a blind child to the newest forms of visual representation; *Degrees of Blindness* questions what it is to be looked at and to be seen.

**Oliver Payne & Nick Relph**

***Comma, Pregnant Pause* (2004)**

**27:00 min video transferred to DVD**

A comma indicates a pause or break between parts of a sentence; in spoken communication, a pregnant pause is one that is full of meaning - significant - suggestive. This video features mobile phones, in whose text messages commas are seldom used. There are often, however, pregnant pauses during the wait for a reply. The ubiquitous mobile phone logo from Carphone Warehouse, and their faces covered by 'Scream' masks referencing Hollywood horror and Munch. The two protagonists' conversation is indicated by two different text alerts - '1,2,3,4' and a musical sound - guitar or harp - whilst each text message appears as a series of subtitles. The conversations are fractured and messages stray like Beat poetry, where 'the newest thing is now wearing the word'.

**Arash Nassiri**

***Darwin Darwah* (2016)**

**12:24 min video HD**

*Darwin Darwah* is named after a taxi driver's expression comparing Darwin's theory to the Arabic word *Darwah* (meaning « a mess »). During a journey through Paris catacombs, a voice over tells us stories about hidden underground cities and their connection to civilizations. While hearing these stories, artefacts appear as fossils on the tunnels walls. The voiceover speculates that Egyptians built Paris, alien life forms rendered dinosaurs extinct and put humans in their place. The taxi driver's theories are beliefs popularized by online conspiracy videos. Conspiracy theories linked to the apparition and propagation of media and the stories we tell ourselves. *Darwin Darwah* uses 3D scans of historical museum collections from the Louvre's Egyptian antiques, Museum of Palaeontology and Museum of Space Exploration. Each chronological part of the voice over is shown through a historical collection displaced in the Paris catacombs. An anti institutional story of humanity emerges through historical objects of the institutions cast in military night vision technology, recalling UFO and ghost hunters footage.