

For immediate release

'Of Natural Magic'
**Ghanaian artist mirrors pace of climate change with slow
photographic process exploring East Riding waterways**

Exhibition - 21st September - 23rd November 2019.
Beverley Art Gallery, Champney Rd, Beverley HU17 8HE



Image: Nii Obodai, No. 52 (Tophill Low), 2019. Courtesy of Invisible Dust

Ghanaian artist photographer Nii Obodai has been working in residence in the East Riding of Yorkshire with art and environment organisation Invisible Dust. The residency culminates in a new exhibition at Beverley Art Gallery, titled 'Of Natural Magic', which explores the waterways of the region and the people that they conjoin and influence.

This new body of work questions the extremes to which we have pushed our environment and uses photographs, sound and installation to represent the landscapes that connect and intersect

the lives and ecology of the region. Obodai explored reservoirs, rivers, streams, canals and the sea, in particular the Gypsey Race, Spurn Point, Tophill Low and Pocklington Canal.

Obodai uses traditional photography techniques to create his work and has been capturing the landscapes of the East Riding using a large format, 8x10 Deardorff camera, along with salt and black and white darkroom processing. Choosing to work in this way, Obodai makes a connection with his practice and the pace of climate breakdown; the gradual movement of environmental change reflects the slowness of his technique.

Nii Obodai says: *“The photographic process I have chosen to work with is related to the environment. It’s about slowing down. But it’s also about using an ecological footprint that allows me to be a more responsible photographer.”*

His practice also draws on 19th-century photography that was developed in the UK, by the likes of William Henry Fox Talbot and Julia Margaret Cameron, whose work often bridged ideas of science, nature and art. The exhibition title ‘Of Natural Magic’ is a quote taken from Fox Talbot, in response to his discoveries around capturing an image.

Obodai’s photographs encourage the viewer to consider the changing nature of our waterways. Now sites of scientific interest, in terms of their biodiversity, both Pocklington Canal and Tophill Low Nature Reserve are human-made structures. Working in these locations, Obodai encountered first hand the effect of human impact on the environment as well as learning from the people who dedicate their time to protect and preserve it.

Spending time with the conservationist volunteers at Tophill Low Nature Reserve which is managed by Yorkshire Water, allowed Obodai to connect with the landscape and wealth of biodiversity at the site. Their knowledge and diverse approaches to the topic have fed into Nii’s own thought process and the development of his work. Although dominated by a human-made reservoir, Tophill Low is a haven for wildlife lovers and more importantly, the wildlife itself. The nature reserve provides facilities that allow visitors to observe the animals and plants whilst supporting the development of the sites rich biodiversity.

Richard Hampshire, Tophill Low Site Warden said:

“We’re incredibly lucky to have achieved a balance between the wildlife that resides at Yorkshire Water’s Tophill Low and our visitors who come to see and learn about what wonderful plants and animals we have thriving here.

The team of volunteers at the nature reserve are dedicated to maintaining that balance whilst all the while considering the effects of climate change on wildlife, people and land use in East Yorkshire and how we prepare and find sustainable options for the future. We have been thrilled to have had the opportunity to work with Nii and can’t wait to see the results.”

'Of Natural Magic' is part of 'Surroundings' a three year project produced by the Humber Museums Partnership in partnership with Invisible Dust. Launched in 2017 - the year of Hull City of Culture - the programme includes international public art commissions with an environmental theme, a young curator's project, residencies and exhibitions. Each year has a different but interrelating theme - food, migration and landscape respectively.

Dorcas Taylor, Curator, Invisible Dust said:

"As an international artist and considering his photographic practice, Nii has provided a completely different lens to the climate debate and environmental landscape of the East Riding. His exhibition at Beverley Art Gallery will reinforce this as well as bring the interconnecting stories of the regions people and waterways to life, and hopefully get the audience to think more about the water sources that they come into contact with."

- ENDS -

MEDIA CONTACT

For more details, or to request images or interviews, please contact Emma Hallam, Marketing Manager at Invisible Dust on press@invisibledust.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

#OfNaturalMagic

Twitter: [@Invisible_Dust](https://twitter.com/Invisible_Dust)

Instagram: [@invisible_dust](https://www.instagram.com/invisible_dust)

Facebook: [/InvisibleDust](https://www.facebook.com/InvisibleDust)

Website: www.invisibledust.com

FILM

Learn about artist photographer Nii Obodai, his practice and his upcoming exhibition, 'Of Natural Magic' <https://vimeo.com/349001192>

ADDITIONAL QUOTE

"It is a great privilege for Beverley Art Gallery to have worked with Nii Obodai who is such an internationally renowned artist. I am very impressed with the way Nii's photographs reflect with great sensitivity the natural beauty of the East Riding and how well Nii connected to our local communities. We are very lucky to have the opportunity to exhibit Nii's work as part of our Humber Museums Partnership collaboration with Invisible Dust, bringing international contemporary art to Beverley."

- Helena Cox, Curator - Beverley Art Gallery

NOTES TO EDITORS

Invisible Dust

Invisible Dust works with leading artists and scientists to produce ambitious contemporary artworks exploring our environment. Founded in 2009 by Director and Curator Alice Sharp, our mission is to create powerful art and engagement programmes that spark meaningful international conversations on pressing environmental issues. Our scientist advisors include from Oxford University, Manchester University and King's College, London amongst many others. Our artists include Turner Prize winners Elizabeth Price and Jeremy Deller. In 2017 our Hull UK City of Culture exhibition 'Offshore: Artists Explore the Sea' included artists Tacita Dean, John Akomfrah, Martin Parr, author China Miéville and Mariele Neudecker at Ferens Art Gallery and Hull Maritime Museum and drew a live audience of 400,000. We have attracted over 2 million people to our projects and 3.2 million online through regular coverage in national and international media with our national and international programmes - including The Under Her Eye, Women and Climate Change conference and festival in 2018 which featured author Margaret Atwood and brought to the table activists, scientists, technologists, and leaders including Christiana Figueres and Caroline Lucas.

www.invisibledust.com

Beverley Art Gallery and Treasure House / East Riding Council

Beverley Art Gallery is a local authority run gallery in East Riding of Yorkshire, located at the Treasure House in Beverley. The gallery has a lively programme of temporary exhibitions, displayed in the elegant extension from the 1920s. These range from contemporary and multimedia exhibitions to traditional displays, celebrating local, national and international artists. Beverley Art Gallery's permanent collection is displayed in the beautifully restored Edwardian space, which housed the original gallery founded by Edward Champney in 1910. The collection consists of mainly Victorian, Edwardian and modern art, with main focus on celebrating the local artists Fred and Mary Elwell. The Elwells are great examples of Edwardian painting with their impact reaching far beyond Beverley.

https://www.eastridingmuseums.co.uk/find-a-museum/?entry=treasure_museum_gallery

Humber Museums Partnership

The Humber Museums Partnership (HMP) consists of the museum services of Hull, North Lincolnshire and the East Riding. It was formed in 2014 to develop collaborative working for the purpose of delivering better services to the public. The three museum services of HMP hold extensive collections of art, archaeology, social history, rural history, maritime history and world cultures. They work together to promote the heritage of the Humber region and the wider world. Humber Museums Partnership was awarded £547,400 through an Arts Council Ambition for Excellence for 'Surroundings'.

www.humbermuseums.com

About 'Surroundings'

'Surroundings' is produced by the Humber Museums Partnership (HMP), Hull, East Riding and North Lincolnshire in partnership with Invisible Dust. Launched in 2017 – the year of Hull City of Culture – 'Surroundings' includes international public art commissions with an environmental theme, a young curator's project, residencies and exhibitions. Each year has a different but interrelating theme – Food, Migration and Landscape respectively. It is funded by Arts Council England through Ambitions for Excellence and Wellcome Trust Sustaining Excellence.

Wellcome Trust

Wellcome exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. We're a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. We support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations, and spark debate.

www.wellcome.ac.uk

Arts Council England

Arts Council England champion, develop and invest in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives, we support activities across the arts, museums and libraries, from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.

www.artscouncil.org.uk