

Related events

Exhibition Tours

Free, no need to book

Informal introductions to the exhibitions led by members of the Spike Island community.

Ellen Southern

Artist and Spike Island Associate

Saturday 18 July, 2pm

Ellen Southern leads a performative tour of the Reto Pulfer and Patrick Staff exhibitions.

Malin Ståhl

Co-director, Hollybush Gardens

Saturday 22 August, 2pm

Malin Ståhl shares her insight into Reto Pulfer's practice, recalling how she and Lisa Panting (Co-director, Hollybush Gardens) came across Pulfer's work and decided to represent him at the gallery.

Book for events online at www.spikeisland.org.uk, call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

Spike Island

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 [facebook.com/spikeisland](https://www.facebook.com/spikeisland)

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Visitor Information

Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm (during exhibitions only).

Admission to the gallery is free.

Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm

Saturday and Sunday, 12–5pm.

Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible building.

Raku Workshop

Sunday 13 September, 2–5pm

2–3pm: History of the technique

3–5pm: Practical session

£25/£20 concessions

All materials provided, booking essential

Book by Monday 7 September

Learn about the history of Raku, a sixteenth century Japanese technique, and give it a go yourself in this two-part afternoon workshop led by professional ceramicist Peter Bodenham.

Limited Edition

Reto Pulfer

Knochenwesen (Bone Beings), 2015

A limited edition of eight Raku ceramics—each unique and produced specifically for (and displayed in) *Gewässerzeiten*—is available for advance purchase at a special price of £200 (GBP).

Enquire at reception or call 0117 929 2266

The exhibition is supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and the Swiss Cultural Fund UK. With thanks to Hollybush Gardens, London.



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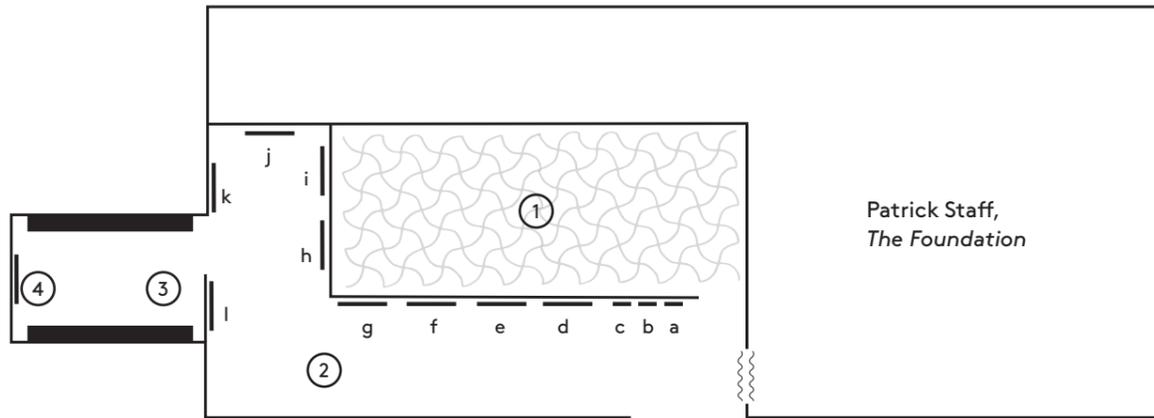
Exhibition Guide

Gewässerzeiten

Reto Pulfer

4 July to 20 September 2015

Spike Island



① *MMMS Reticulum Gewässerzeiten*, 2015
Mixed-media installation including:

Das Überleben mit MMMS Reticulum Gewässerzeiten (Survival with MMMS Reticulum Gewässerzeiten), 2015

Cotton ribbons, shoelaces, hemp rope, bell, tin can, dehydrated bread, silt, nettles

Ende-der-Welt-Kammer (End-of-the-World Chamber), 2013

Pencil on cotton, ribbon, rope

ZR Gina (Selbst-effiziente Stadt) (Self-efficient City), 2015

Ink and pencil on bed sheets, textile, shoelaces

Die Gewaltige Erleichterung (The Huge Relief), 2013

Ink on bed sheets, cotton ribbons

Knochenwesen (Bone Beings), 2015

Raku ceramics, shoelaces
Edition of 8

Instrumente (Instruments), 2008–09

Pencil on wood, metal, textile, guitar strings, organic materials
10 pieces

Solounterhalter Dehydrierte Landschaft (Solo Entertainer Dehydrated Landscape), 2013–15

Guitar soundtrack, mono, 81:39 minutes loop

Ginafius, 2015

Two-part live performance
10 minutes and 30 minutes

③ *Methoden und Spieletisch* (Methods and Games Table), 1988–2015

Installation of 44 artworks on two tables and one wall piece

SI = Spiel Index + Item number

② “Maps” series

a *Maps – Special Exhibition (Miniature Drawings of Eleven Maps)*, 2015

Pencil on paper, framed

b *Maps – Special Exhibition (Miniature Drawing of the Maps in Exhibition Spaces)*, 2015

Pencil on paper, framed

c *Maps – Special Exhibition (List of Seven Maps)*, 2009

Pencil on paper, framed

d *Hong Kong*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

e *Cairo*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

f *Taipei*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

g *Bern*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

h *Venice*, 2010

Pencil and watercolour on paper

i *Singapore*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

j *Ancient Abydos*, 2010

Pencil and watercolour on paper

k *Yogyakarta*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper

l *Iceland*, 2009

Pencil and watercolour on paper, framed

④ *Die Gleichmässige Verteilung der Sterne in der Milchstrasse* (The Even Distribution of Stars in the Milky Way), 2013

Ink on bed sheet

Self-taught artist Reto Pulfer uses painting, drawing, writing, music, found objects and everyday materials such as textiles, food or spices to create intuitive and complex synaesthetic environments, or ‘total artworks’, to be experienced by the visitors of his exhibitions. Taking the shape of immersive and site-specific installations or environments, his works express different *Zustände*, or mental and conceptual states.

Titled *Gewässerzeiten* (a German wordplay that translates roughly as ‘waters-times’), Pulfer’s project for Spike Island involves a giant net, silt sourced from the local river and watercolour drawings representing islands or territories surrounded by the sea. For his first solo exhibition in a British institution he has crafted a large-scale net (*reticulum* in Latin) from hemp rope, hand-dyed cotton ribbons and shoelaces, which has been hoisted like a giant sail in the main gallery at Spike Island. Acting as a kind of superstructure, it incorporates some of the artist’s earlier works made of bed sheets, which were sewn, zipped and tied together to form a shelter whose lining is adorned with drawings reminiscent of prehistoric cave paintings. Together with the tent-shaped *Ende-der-Welt-Kammer* (End-of-the-World Chamber), this setting – in which (in keeping with the rest of the exhibition) blue and yellow dominate – conveys the feeling of a temporary installation evocative of a makeshift campsite cobbled together by survivors of a shipwreck who have been washed up on a desert island. This impression is further corroborated by the objects scattered on the gallery floor and hanging from the net, which include a food can, a stainless steel tin containing dehydrated bread, crude ceramics, and hand-crafted musical instruments. Yet despite its post-apocalyptic overtones, the prevailing atmosphere of Pulfer’s installation is a peaceful and soothing one, comforted by the ambient soundtrack of looped guitar riffs and chords composed and played by the artist himself.

On the opening night Pulfer will make his work come to life by firing ceramics using the traditional sixteenth-century Japanese technique called Raku – a process which reflects his interest in working with chance operations, as it consists of removing the pottery from the kiln while it is still glowing hot and then subjecting it to a fast cooling process in sawdust, which results in

unpredictable crack patterns on the surface and intense colours. The ceramics produced on the night will be added to the net as part of the live performance.

Pulfer is also showing a series of large hand-drawn watercolour maps of places where he has lived or that he has travelled to: Bern (where he was born), Abydos (an ancient Egyptian city, centre of the Osiris cult), Hong Kong, Singapore, Yogyakarta, etc. Drawn from memory, they resemble treasure maps that defy perspective and proportion, subverting the viewer’s sense of orientation (his chart of Venice, for instance, inverts north and south – as though visitors to the Serenissima weren’t confused enough).

The third body of items in the exhibition consists of studio works that document Pulfer’s creative and work process while echoing his interest in language and writing (he is currently completing his second novel, *Gina*, a fictional account set partly in a desert and in an underground city in the future). Under the title *Methoden und Spieletisch* (Methods and Games Table) (1988–2015), he has gathered a collection of smaller works on two tables ranging from sketches and models for exhibitions to games used as decision-making tools and handwritten notes about semiotics, astronomy and other subjects. While several of these exhibits date back to the late eighties or early nineties – such as a series of small mock-ups for public art sculptures in defiance of financial and material boundaries or cardboard weapons and a shield made by Pulfer as a child – they seamlessly integrate, both aesthetically and conceptually, with the more recent work surrounding them. By putting his childhood drawings on an equal footing with current work sketches, the artist asks where artistic practice starts and what exactly should be considered art.

For his maps and textile environments, Pulfer relies on mnemonic techniques. Of vital importance before the invention of printing (see Frances Yates’s historic account *The Art of Memory*, 1966), most common memory techniques involve “impressing” places and images on the mind and associating them with ideas in order to improve recollections but also stimulate new ideas. In essence, Pulfer’s expansive installation at Spike Island could be seen as a giant mind chart that reflects the mnemonic process leading up to it.