

## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Disruptors: Fractured Images and Migrant Wordl***

*A century of word-image experiment shaped by migration, exile, and belonging.*



Hormazd Narielwalla, *Bands of Pride*, 2017.  
Ben Uri Collection

**Now open** to 4 September 2026

**Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, St. John's Wood, London,**

108A Boundary Rd NW8 0RH

Open Wednesday to Friday, 10 am to 5.30 pm. Admission free

***Disruptors: Fractured Images and Migrant Wordl*** is a collaborative exhibition bringing together works from the Ben Uri and William Allen Collections with additional loans from artists and private collections, featuring more than 50 works and previously unseen archival material. It traces more than a century of experimentation in word-image relations, from early twentieth-century historical avant-garde practice to post-war developments in concrete poetry and conceptual art. Spanning collage, painting, sculpture, book-art, textiles, photography, typography, mixed media and archival material, the exhibition brings together artists who disrupt the boundary between reading and viewing.

Disruption here operates on two levels. It begins as a creative force within the historical avant-gardes and the paths that followed, as artists move words across surfaces and unsettle the conventions of syntax and image-making. It also speaks to lives shaped by movement, from the forced journeys of those fleeing Nazism, to post-war migration, to second-generation artists navigating between cultures, and to the ongoing question of belonging and resettlement. 'Wordl', coined in the spirit of the avant-garde's restless reshaping of language, fuses 'word' and 'world'. It evokes arrival in the UK by different routes, the acquisition of new languages, and the forging of new relationships between word and image, while reshaping the British art world.

Beginning with the émigré artist Kurt Schwitters and his pioneering collages, the exhibition traces successive waves of migration and the questions they raise. It moves through artists displaced by the Second World War, including Alfred Lomnitz, Hugo Dachinger, Gustav Metzger and Shmuel Dresner. A later generation, among them Henri Chopin, Astrid Furnival, Hansjörg Mayer, John Sharkey, Li Yuan-chia, Susan Hiller and Verdi Yahooda, arrived in the UK in the post-war period. Ian Hamilton Finlay and Dom Sylvester Houédard complicate any stable sense of Britishness, while David Medalla, José María Cruxent and Martha Hellion speak to the countercultural energies of the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, Tam Joseph, Hormazd Narielwalla, Astra Papachristodoulou and Osman Yousefzada bring questions of identity and migration into the present.

***Disruptors*** is curated by Dr. Ana-Maria Milčić, Senior Research Officer at the Ben Uri Research Unit and Postdoctoral Researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. 'The life stories of the artists on view,' the curator says, 'invite us to consider what it means to belong in the UK. Their works range from cryptic visual languages to a playful use of text, engaging questions of movement, migration, exile, nostalgia, identity, and the making of meaning.'

William Allen has specialised in word-and-image material for over 30 years, working with concrete and visual poetry, artists' books, documents and ephemera, European and South American avant-gardes, and artists including Ian Hamilton Finlay, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Li Yuan-chia and Gustav Metzger.

#### **Notes to editors**

Picture credit

Hormazd Narielwalla

***Bands of Pride***, 2017

Mixed media

Ben Uri Collection

© Hormazd Narielwalla

Image courtesy of the artist. Reproduced with permission for all purposes related to the exhibition ***Disruptors: Fractured Images and Migrant Wordl***

For more information and image contact: [admin@benuri.org](mailto:admin@benuri.org)

For further information on the width and depth of Ben Uri's impact please see [benuri.org](http://benuri.org), [buru.org.uk](http://buru.org.uk), [diaspora-artists.net](http://diaspora-artists.net) and [benuricollection.org](http://benuricollection.org)

