


## Art Agency, Partners

Art Agency, Partners is a bespoke art advisory firm founded in 2014, and built upon decades of combined experience, to provide counsel to many of the world's leading art collectors and institutions on collection assessment and development, estate planning, and innovative approaches to museum giving and growth.

## Towering Achievements



Mark Wallinger, *Ecce Homo* (1999) at St. Paul's Cathedral until 22 May 2017 © Mark Wallinger. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo credit: Graham Lacdao/St. Paul's Cathedral

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Published 25 April 2017 in [Must See](#)

### Mark Wallinger—*Ecce Homo* (1999)

Mark Wallinger's statue of Jesus Christ, *Ecce Homo*, was the first work to be commissioned for the [Fourth Plinth](#) in London's Trafalgar Square and was in place for six months at the dawn of the millennium. Producing a convincing sculpture of Christ is a tall order—there have not been many since Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1498-99)—but Wallinger managed the near-impossible feat of winning favor from all quarters: the devout and the agnostic, aesthetic traditionalists and advocates of the avant garde.

Now, 18 years later, this beardless Christ, who is cast in white marbleized resin and is based on the body of one of Wallinger's studio technicians (who fortuitously turned out to be the son of a clergyman), has found a new, and arguably even more appropriate home on the steps of London's St Paul's Cathedral ([until 22 May](#)).

*Ecce Homo* depicts the moment when Christ, already beaten, bound and crowned with thorns, is presented by Pontius Pilate to be judged by the hostile crowd which will condemn him to death. As the English title, *Behold the Man*, suggests, Wallinger's sculpture depicts a very human and modern Christ: life-sized, eyes closed with his shaved head bowed while accepting his grim fate. His crown is not of thorns but of gilded barbed wire.

In Trafalgar Square the sculpture was **marooned precariously** at the edge of an outsized plinth originally intended for a giant equestrian statue. Here it is equally vulnerable, placed at the top of a processional flight of steps and dwarfed by the giant pillars that frame the cathedral's main entrance. But this time he is among the people, rather than high up, and unprotected by barriers.

It is significant that *Ecce Homo* has been installed at St Paul's in collaboration with the human rights charity Amnesty International. Wallinger's Christ is a powerful and timely reminder for us to respect other people's beliefs—whether we agree with them or not.

## Mat Collishaw—*Albion* (2017)



Mat Collishaw, *Albion* (2017). Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern. Photo credit: Peter Mallet

Mat Collishaw has consistently represented the darker side of the **YBA generation**. In an exhibition of his new works at **Blain Southern** in London, he conjures up spectacular but unholy clashes of nature and culture, combining the language of art history with recent technologies to explore the disquieting underbelly of our obsession with beauty and display ("**Mat Collishaw: The Centrifugal Soul**" until 27 May).

*Albion*, which fills the centre of a gallery, is a ghostly projection of an enormous oak tree in a strange state of motion that casts a mirror image across the floor. This spectral image is a laser scan of the **Major Oak**, a 1,000-year-old tree in Nottingham's Sherwood Forest which, according to legend, provided shelter for Robin Hood and his Merry Men. The most famous tree in Britain is now hollow to the core and has been propped up by an elaborate series of crutches, chains and supports for more than a century. Collishaw's rotating, monochromatic depiction of this once-mighty oak shows it to be now fragile and crippled.

Of course, there is no proof that Robin Hood even existed and this symbol of a fictitious Merrie Olde England—propped up and forced to live beyond its natural lifespan by people hungry for myths—is especially potent in the context of Brexit Britain. Collishaw drives the point home by titling the work with the oldest known name for the British Isles, which was used by classical writers before being nostalgically resurrected by William Blake and the romantic poets.

Collishaw's dramatic and deathly image of this knackered tree suggests both that it should be allowed to rest, finally, in peace and yet also stands in defiant testament to the power of the human imagination. For the allegorically minded, the takeaway might be the contemporary relevance of Robin Hood's maxim of taking from the rich to give to the poor.

### Rachel Kneebone—*399 Days* (2012-13)



Installation view of Rachel Kneebone, *399 Days* (2012-13) © Rachel Kneebone. Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Porcelain is more often associated with teacups than monumental sculpture, but for *399 Days* Rachel Kneebone has created an extraordinary porcelain tower that stands five metres high: an intricately wrought sculpture seething with limbs, plants and fabric. The contemporary work more than holds its own in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries at the [Victoria & Albert Museum](#) where it is on show (until 14 January 2018).

Kneebone often makes disconcertingly bodily sculpture that references her wide reading and deep knowledge of art history, while pushing porcelain into subversive new places. She excels herself here with an arresting, bamboozling work. The title chronicles the number of days it took to hand-make the piece, which erupts with detail from every angle. The dominant imagery is of legs, but these are restless limbs which sometimes dangle en masse as though in a dismal charnel house; entwine elsewhere as though in an orgy; cavort and kick in others.

The overwhelming sense is one of flux. The intense formal repetition of the sculpted minutiae creates a swarming whole that appears to be hovering between evolution and dissolution. The sculpture is built up in sections, which means that

architectural details peep through—here a cornice; there an architrave—before being subsumed in another swirl of boiling flesh. It's as if [Trajan's column](#) has formed an unholy alliance with Dante's Inferno.



Rachel Kneebone, *399 Days* (2012-13) © Rachel Kneebone. Photo credit: Louisa Buck