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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ian Whittlesea: In the beginning... is the first show at 1961 and the first solo exhibition of British artist Ian Whittlesea outside Europe. The title serves to introduce both gallery and artist.

Ian Whittlesea (b. 1967, UK) lives and works in London. His consistent engagement with the legacy of conceptual art, and with the ability of words to transform the physical and psychic state of the viewer, has taken text into the expanded field, while his publications have been described as 'instruction manuals for transcendental exercise'.

For *In the beginning...* Whittlesea has installed an apparently disparate group of works united by an economy of means and by his interest in esoteric exercise, breath control and written instructions. Dominating the space is a huge, fly-posted, image of a clenched fist. The image is taken from a series of photographs showing actor Ery Nzaramba demonstrating a group of 12 finger positions that, in a brief moment of mysticism at the heart of modernism, Swiss artist and colour theorist Johannes Itten taught his students at the Bauhaus. These 12 finger exercises are reproduced in contemporary books without instruction or explanation, their meaning and purpose too powerful to be written down, but Itten claimed that with the accompanying breathing exercises they would result in auto-illumination, the participant's body generating light from within visible to any onlooker.

This relationship between the body and breath, word and light informs the other works in the space. A group of silk-screened texts on paper are pinned directly to the wall. Their statements are equally applicable to an actor in a ritual exercise or a contemporary viewer of art in a gallery:
Stand still. Be quiet. | Close your eyes. Breath in. | Open your eyes. Breath out. | Slowly in. Slowly out.

The texts sit opposite and alongside a group of paintings on aluminium from Whittlesea's ongoing *White Cloud Forming* series. These relate to his book *Becoming Invisible*. The book describes how, by means of visualization and breathing exercises, the reader can combine the seven colours of the spectrum to create a glowing white cloud that renders anything contained within it invisible.

The *White Cloud Forming* paintings are, in part, an attempt to manifest this cloud of invisibility. Made using only sprayed pigment, without brushes or any physical contact with the support, they are simultaneously a representation of another's mystical state and entirely abstract records of the process of their own making. They have an ethereal presence that

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speaks of both their esoteric subject matter and their means of production. The veils of spectral colour, and the airborne and air-propelled method of application, parallel Whittlesea's on-going work with breath and breath control. The paintings draw on a complex group of antecedents, including Lawrence Weiner's early spray painted works, John Latham's One Second Drawings, colour field painting of the 1950s, Robert Irwin's luminous discs of the 1960s and representations of the ineffable made by spiritualists and occultists.

Finally, in the centre of the space, a thin thread hangs from the ceiling or like the Indian rope trick rises from a tangle of colour on the floor. Entitled **Spectral Concentration Device**, the cord has been dyed in the colours of the rainbow and seems to simultaneously draw colour from the air and give it back to the space around it, intensifying and locating the work beyond.

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Ian Whittlesea (b. 1967, UK) lives and works in London. He has been commissioned by the Whitechapel Gallery & Fatos Ustek to produce a major new work for London Art Nights 2017 and his book *The Egyptian Postures* will be launched at the LA Art Book Fair 2017. His recent solo exhibitions include *Breath is Life*, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool UK (2015), *Attaining Cosmic Consciousness*, Tenderbooks, London UK (2014) and *A Breathing Bulb*, Marlborough Contemporary, London UK (2014). Group exhibitions include *Now is forever lasting constant in the mind*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2016), *Exercises in Empathy*, Site, Sheffield UK (2015), *Resource*, Bluecoat, Liverpool UK (2015) and *Everything is About to Happen*, Artists Space, NY USA (2014).

He is represented by **Marlborough Contemporary, London** and **Uqbar Office, Amsterdam**.

Ian Whittlesea: In the Beginning opens on Tuesday 10 January and runs through Saturday 4 March 2017. The exhibition is open from 2-8pm on Fridays and Saturdays, and by appointment.

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