

DELUGE



# UTOPOS

# Callum Monteith | Alex Tedlie-Stursberg

## Curated by Andrea Valentine-Lewis

SEPTEMBER 11 TO OCTOBER 10, 2020

*If this is paradise I wish I had a lawnmower* – Talking Heads, 1988

The title for this exhibition is taken from the Greek term, *Ou-topos*; *Ou* (not) and *Topos* (a place). The term Utopos holds two other meanings: the first being “the good place” and the second “the place that cannot be.” In the Talking Heads song “Nothing but Flowers,” David Byrne’s lyrics follow a similar path by embodying this shared meaning of Utopos, where yes, the grass really is greener on the other side of the fence, but, upon reflection, neither greens –nor grass for that matter—are all they were cracked up to be. Be careful what you wish for. You might get it and regret it.

The notion of a Utopia, a perfect community or civilization designed for perfection and autonomy can only, in essence, exist in the imagination or conceptually. It is by humankind’s very existence that renders the reality of this endeavour impossible. Yet, it is a concept that is constantly strived for, as is evident within the current socio-political climate, and with trends of populism, nationalism and retrenchment. The paradox is that while striving for this idealistic model of a Utopia, humans actually move closer to that of the antonym of this condition in Dystopia—a community or society that is undesirable or frightening.

*There was a factory  
Now there are mountains and rivers  
You got it, you got it.*

*There was a shopping mall  
Now it’s all covered with flowers  
You’ve got it, you’ve got it.*

*If this is paradise I wish I had a lawnmower*

For this exhibition, Callum Monteith and Alex Tedlie-Stursberg will present a new body of work that considers the contradictory nature of the term Utopos. Through the development of their shared research interests including the relationship between humans and nature, explorations into artificiality, manicuring of environments and abstracted or absurd artistic gestures, Monteith and Stursberg challenge the conditions of Utopia. Their research has advanced through an open and wide-ranging dialogue between the artists that looks to many topics for inspiration, including pop-culture, sociological/philosophical studies, art history and fictional narratives.

**Callum Monteith** lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland, where he works in painting, photography and printmaking. Monteith’s practice interweaves notions of nature, philosophy and aesthetics with a particular interest in how we construct our ideas of self through fictions of alternative places or imagined landscapes. Recent exhibitions include solo exhibitions *Shelf Show #3* at Cockburn Street, Edinburgh, *PARADISAL* at The Briggait, Glasgow and *PLANT ROOM*, a group exhibition at Hanson Street Project Space, also in Glasgow (2019).

**Alex Tedlie-Stursberg** lives and works in Vancouver, BC, where he is a multidisciplinary artist with a key focus on sculpture and installation. His work has been exhibited in numerous galleries across North America and Europe; recent exhibitions include *MASS RESIDUE* with Field Contemporary and *SUPER, NATURAL*, a group exhibition at Unit 17, Vancouver (2019), *Holy Wave* as part of Glasgow International, Scotland and *Everything Flows* with Burrard Art Foundation, Vancouver (2018). Stursberg is currently employed as a Sessional Instructor at Langara College Visual Arts Program. He is currently developing public artworks for Ballard Fine Art in Vancouver.

**Andrea Valentine-Lewis** lives and works Vancouver, BC, where she is an independent curator, a freelance writer and a teaching assistant for SFU’s

School for the Contemporary Arts. She is a recent graduate with an MA from the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University where her research was funded with a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

[UTOPOS Essay](#) by Andrea Valentine-Lewis

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