Introduction

Stages #4 focuses on the historic practice of dazzle painting, and on a series of commissions in which contemporary artists have been invited to paint UK vessels in response to this history. Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions and Tate Liverpool, and produced in collaboration with partners at Merseytravel and National Museums Liverpool, these projects commemorate the role of artists during the First World War, who painted over 4,000 naval and merchant vessels with radical camouflage designs. These were intended not to hide vessels from enemy submarines, but to make their appearance baffling, so that the enemy could not easily discern each vessel's type, speed or direction.

In 2014, Carlos Cruz-Diez used the hull of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's *Edmund Gardner* as the canvas for his *Induction Chromatique à Double Fréquence pour l'Edmund Gardner Ship / Liverpool. Paris*. In the same year, in London, Tobias Rehberger created a complex monochrome design for *HMS President 1918* on the Thames, one of only three surviving First World War ships. Most recently, Sir Peter Blake was commissioned to make *Everybody Razzle Dazzle*, a new design for the Mersey Ferry Snowdrop, which will remain dazzled while in active service, making regular commuter trips across the Mersey and up the Manchester Ship Canal until the end of 2016.

Stages #4 looks back on the three commissions while also investigating the origins of dazzle. Interviews with Sir Peter Blake and Carlos Cruz-Diez reveal the motivations and preoccupations that led to these artists' commissions, while Chris Wainwright remembers the processes that led to the completion of Tobias Rehberger's *Dazzle Ship London*. Looking back to dazzle's original context, Robert Hewison introduces the figure of Edward Wadsworth, the Vorticist artist who supervised the dazzle painting of over 2,000 ships in Liverpool. Annette Wickham uncovers the fascinating history of dazzle at the Royal Academy Schools, where a group of female art students made and tested dazzle designs.

The development of dazzle in the First World War was notable for the way it brought together people from divergent disciplines to work towards a common cause. As a concept, it emerged independently from equally diverse origins. The man typically credited with the invention of dazzle, Norman Wilkinson, was a marine painter who proposed the idea to the Admiralty after spending time in the naval reserve. Other figures have laid claim to the idea of dazzle – as Ben Whittaker reveals, a Liverpool art dealer, Archibald Phillips, claimed to have had the idea some two years earlier than Wilkinson. The Scottish zoologist John Graham Kerr also suggested the strategy of camouflaging ships to the Admiralty, and his work on animal camouflage is highlighted by Neil Johnston-Symington and Jeanne Robinson in a conversation around their display at Glasgow's Riverside Museum, where they brought together zoological specimens and maritime models.

Together, these contributions reveal the richness of dazzle's history and the individuals who contributed to its development. Whether looking at the contemporary commissions, or at the historic practice of dazzle, these accounts underline the huge creative potential to be found in bringing together different disciplines and bodies of knowledge.

Rosie Cooper, Head of Programmes, Liverpool Biennial
Lauren Barnes, Assistant Curator, Tate Liverpool