

## Paradise Row

74a Newman Street  
London, W1T 3DB  
+44 (0) 20 7636 9355  
[www.paradiserow.com](http://www.paradiserow.com)

# SAM AUSTEN

## SUCH ANIMALS



10 April – 10 May 2014

THE BASEMENT

Text by  
Francesca Zedtwitz-Arnim

# SAM AUSTEN

## SUCH ANIMALS

Awake. The sofa is so damp, moisture is oozing on my skin. My naked calves, stretched out on the cushions, are slowly absorbing it. Groping about the rusty springs, I am trying to find a comfortable position. The sofa is almost completely drenched. It is raining through the ceiling. Are you cold? Possibilities are rolling around in my head like marbles in a porcelain tea cup, coming to no conclusion. I close my eyes.

*There you are, cycling in front of me. I follow you. You in your dapper little blue coat and your wavy chestnut hair flapping in the wind. We cycle over the bridge and the wind blows so strongly that your mane is suddenly lifted up. I can now see the soft fluffy hair around your neck, gently stroked by the wind. I cannot look at the streets anymore, I just follow your neckline for directions.*

I open my eyes. You are still sitting there in front of me on the floor with a cigarette lingering in the corner of your mouth. A glimpse towards the window. Outside light blue. I'm too tired to keep my eyes open, so I am gazing through this tiny slit. Gazing nowhere in particular. A gaze that comes from behind the eyes, from the centre of the head, collected but directionless. The wallpaper is curling up on the walls. The edges of the posters are undulated and curved. Dark cracks decorate the ceiling. Water is slowly seeping through from everywhere. Uncomfortable but soothing in a way. I close my eyes.

*I am in a city. A hot, desertlike city. The buildings are square and made from sand-coloured stone. The sort that keeps the indoors dark and cool. I look at the people passing by. They are wearing white tunics and robes, you know, Roman style. I look at the people and observe them for a while. Then I look at myself. And I am a lizard. A lizard*

*hanging from a branch of a date palm, upside down. Then all of a sudden I am in the jungle. Epic, eugenic vegetation and a humid climate. I am still a lizard and I stroll through the jungle, confident like a lion. I change my colour with every tree I pass.*

The clothes I'm wearing are quite soggy now but I really don't want to leave and I'm glad you are keeping me company. With every breath I inhale some of the clamminess that surrounds us and it's scratching down my throat. And consequently I exhale what I imagine to be the cause of my rumbling cough and my clicking joints. I close my eyes.

*I am a tree, looking at things from behind the bark. My bark is smooth and shiny, a lot of people have climbed up my limbs over the years. I try to move but I cannot, so I relax. Wind blows through my leaves and it tickles and I am laughing from inside the bark.*

I can't remember the beginning of the story, just sequences and combinations. But I guess it doesn't matter since the only thing we are doing here is burning time and squeezing out emotions. Crushed intensities of a fading memory. I close my eyes.

*I am lying. Horizontally. I am soil, a flower bed. Flowers and plants grow on me. Everything is damp and moist, just like this room, it's probably been raining. There is a whole other life going on in my body now, worms creep through me and I feel like I am slowly dissolving and losing texture, turning into soil.*

The water still drips through the ceiling. Like hot stones in a cold lake. It resonates with my headache. A splitting headache from which the future's made.