

**HAVE WE
STARTED
YET?**

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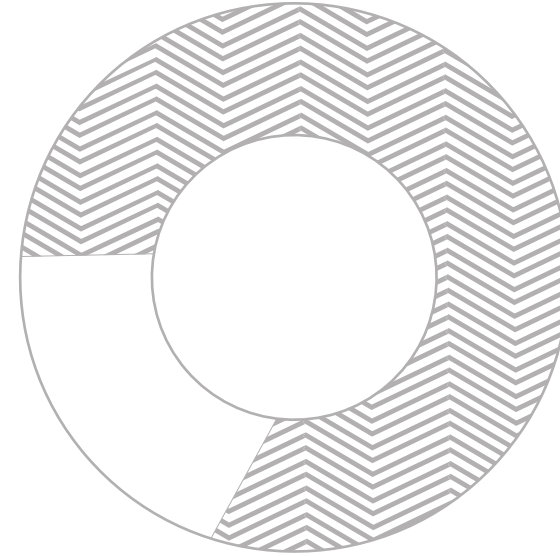
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HAVE WE STARTED YET?



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LOUISE HOBSON

JUST GO, THEY'LL MOVE

If you're used to driving country lanes in North Wales, you'll know that if there's a sheep in the road, you need to keep moving fast. If you slow down, the sheep will just stay there. The tourists, lacking the local knowledge, slow down. They come to a stop, stuck behind a sheep. The locals however, they go faster, they know the sheep will move and it does. Just go, they'll move.

This anecdote was shared during a conversation we had over breakfast. The words 'Just go, they'll move' felt like a call to action, one which encouraged me to think about the idea of locals vs tourists, and also, driver vs sheep, in the context of contemporary art practice. The local is the art world professional - they know the ropes, they know how to make things happen and how to tackle barriers in their way. That said, the art world professional is also the sheep. They're the ones in the way of the tourists, the early career practitioners.

The sheep in the road is like someone saying 'we did that 10 years ago and it didn't work', or 'this is what is relevant for our gallery', but it's not what you need to see, or 'this is what a successful artist practice looks like', and that isn't what you're interested in at all. So, to the tourists, those of us navigating an early career practice, I'd say: if you encounter practice you don't value, pursue practice you value,

if the projects you're looking for aren't happening, be the person to initiate them, if the ways of working together aren't in place, develop new ways.

When the architecture collective Assemble won the 2015 Turner Prize for its *Granby Four Streets Project*, some in the art world declared the Turner Prize dead, with the conversation dominated by the question, 'but is it art?'. Assemble don't really do gallery shows. Their art ignores the art market. For me, Assemble's work has purpose. It's both useful and inspiring, demonstrating how artists can work creatively in a wider social space. What it's not doing is following a familiar artistic career pattern. Assemble don't actually refer to themselves as artists, and they're not interested in the discussion of whether they are or aren't. What they are interested in is doing good projects, and sometimes, doing good projects is about doing really good plumbing.

Assemble was started by a group of friends, a collection of people who felt the need to do something different. Assemble started as a hobby, something they discussed for nearly a year at the pub and each other's homes. One summer, they each took holiday time from their jobs and worked together on their first project: the conversion of a disused petrol station into a temporary cinema. There was no imperative,

no commission, but a will to try something collectively.

Friendship is one of the most fundamental support structures in practice. Collective action and the act of working within friendship, like that of Assemble, stands apart from an art world which continues to revolve around the individual artist, the author. It also stands apart from the continuing commercialisation of art schools, which worryingly persist with a market driven idea of art. In working with our peers, collaborators or friends, we can collectively work towards change. Collaboration is of course unpredictable, precarious and fragile, but in working together, we multiply our potential.

I'm currently reading *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, a collection of essays by economist E. F. Schumacher, first published in 1973. 'Small is Beautiful' was, and still is, a landmark statement against 'bigger is better' industrialism, championing the need to go back to human scale, human needs and human relationships. I refer to 'Small is Beautiful', as I find it useful to reference when thinking about the act of graduating and also this publication from the graduating year of Photo Art. *Have We Started Yet?* is an interesting title. It speaks of uncertainty, and a questioning of where you are and where you're heading. When can you

call yourself a photographer, an artist, a creative professional, when do you move from 'tourist' to 'local'? What does recognition look like? Who gives it? Why does it matter?

When I first came across the work of artist Rosalie Schweiker, I read about a collaborative project called *Why do it at the Tate if you could do it in your living room?*, which brings me back around to this idea of 'Small is Beautiful'. The friendships and collaborative conversations that begin at University can, if we invest in them, lead to practical collaborations, and support us in sustaining or developing practice. Whilst we do each need to articulate for ourselves what we as practitioners provide and need, I'd suggest starting small. Maybe even aiming to 'make it' with small too. A collective gesture like sharing breakfast, temporarily turning a disused petrol station into a cinema, or curating an exhibition in your living room, is just as valuable as a show at Tate, perhaps even more so.

Small can be ambitious but achievable with our own collective hands. Small can be local but connect with an international conversation. Small is to keep going, to find our own way of doing things. Just go, they'll move.

REBEKAH PRENTICE

DIGGING HOLES

It came to light in a recent conversation that a huge majority of problems artists have are those they make for themselves. It was only really mentioned in passing – it wasn't cruel, or critical, and was said as a frank truth from artist to artist. The conversation moved on, but I found myself somewhat knocked for six upon hearing this – mostly because of a sudden, dawning realisation of the statement's truthfulness, but also as I experienced a kind of awe at my own previous obliviousness to the fact. In the time since this conversation, I've latched on to this statement, rolling it over in my mind, witnessing in my own and other's lives how it applies to virtually every decision that I make – I watch in quiet amazement as every frustration I encounter with my art can be traced back, in a movie-flashback-style rewind, to the exact point where the whole chain-reaction process was started by none other than myself.

Thinking about how all of my art problems are self-inflicted has been somehow simultaneously soothing and infuriating: in a way it's comforting to know that I have some semblance of control over my own fate, but aggravating to realise that I apparently have no sense of self-preservation and would rather repeatedly shoot myself in the foot when it comes to making art than to, for once, do something the easy way. But, as is often the case, the most comforting part of struggle is the subsequent realisation that you are not suffering alone, and after some contemplation, I've come to approximate that a solid 85% of the artists that I know seem to also be actively making their lives more difficult

at every turn. And frankly, the degree to which we seem to always settle on the idea that will cause us the most frustration is amazing: we decide to make work about controversial topics that invite criticism, we insist on fabricating works in ways that are too fragile, too big, too expensive to be in any way practical, we force ourselves to endure extremes, embarrassment, exposure, vulnerability, we try to make visual work about unseen, intangible concepts – and all for nothing but for our art.

Watching as I and my peers continuously inconvenience ourselves has resulted in a lot of consideration about why on earth we do so – especially why on earth we continue to do so even after we've realised that we are in full control of our situation, that every time we find art hard we have nobody to blame but ourselves. I've thought much about the values and shortcomings of art, about why I insist on making things that are hard, but all thoughts have pointed to the same two conclusions. Knowing that all artists' problems are self-inflicted must either mean that we all unconsciously love to suffer or that we must be gaining something that validates our struggle.

Why else would you continue to make things that are hard when you could just simply stop, rather than forcing yourself to square up to any of the things that are really making your life difficult? If we, as creators, weren't so concerned with everything being exactly as we wanted it, or meaning exactly what we wanted it to mean – which is where the majority of problems we have to face arise – making art would be so much easier.

But then, arguably, reaching our goals (or stumbling blindly upon them, as is often the case) would also be significantly less satisfying, and significantly less important to everyone involved – not to mention that the art would probably be nowhere near as engaging.

So, to make art, it's probably better for things not to go smoothly. That's not to say that all artists must be tortured souls in order to make anything worthwhile, far from it, but art problems aren't just an inconvenient by-product of making a fantastic piece of art. In fact, more than the problems being created by the art, it is the art that comes out of the problems. By confronting difficulties with the intention of making something out of them, you set yourself up against hurdles that you're going to force yourself to get over. They're important in a lot of ways. But what is the most important, I would hope for the majority, is that from the hardships of our own self-inflicted problems, conversations arise, people collaborate, communicate, and find ways to connect to each other. Art is a pool of continuously rehashed references, reworked and reinterpreted by different conversations, by different people. Art is every reaction to every problem manifesting itself in different forms, and none of it would ever exist if artists didn't get stuck, if artists didn't turn to each other for help, if artists weren't so generous as to invest their time in helping others collect their thoughts and watch new art come into the world. For virtually everyone I know, their favourite part about art – both about making art and consuming art – is talking to other

people and engaging with other people. And whilst it stands to be true in my experience that art is very personal, that artists are often exceptionally possessive over their work when it comes to making decisions, everyone is willing to ask for help. The value of art lies in the conversation that occurs before, during, and after its inception: in people helping other people out of the holes they have dug for themselves.

Perhaps the only difference between people who make art and people who don't is that people who don't make art have realised that they can avoid the problems of an artist by simply not being one. Maybe when non-artists say that making art is easy, they mean that something surely can't *actually* be hard if it's hard by choice, that artist's lives would be easy if only they would stop generating unnecessary problems for themselves. They see that artist's lives would be significantly less difficult if they stopped making art, which I guess is something that a large majority of artists would not contest – myself included. However, ultimately our gains must outweigh our losses. Maybe, from the perspective of someone who hasn't experienced the gain that comes from the struggle, the hardship could never seem to be worth it. But in spite of it being so infuriatingly difficult, what art also is, both in the act of making and the act of looking, is incredibly informative. From art I have learned so much. I wouldn't take any of the struggle back.

RACHEL LUCAS

REASONS THAT ART IS IMPORTANT/ REASONS THAT I AM NOT USELESS

We've all seen the portrayal of the artist in the media: the snooty, moustache growing, beret wearing, paintbrush wielding man, with his nose in the air and his head in the clouds. He's a bit stupid – a bit in the way, a bit self-important, *very useless*. This, of course, is just a silly cliché of the artist. *Obviously* we're not all men with moustaches and we don't all paint. But the opinion of our uselessness is one that an artist will certainly come across in their everyday lives. Artists are rather quite used to being assumed unintelligent or unacquainted with the world, even self-obsessed. Seen in the media, in government and council cuts, in family members who don't understand what it is we could possibly be learning at university, there is such adversity to art. This adversity is one that today's graduates have to face as they head out into the 'real world', but being an art student, it is certainly adversity we've had practice facing already.

While talking to someone close to me recently, I made a passing comment that art was as important as science. They laughed and reminded me that science saves lives and

actually contributes to the world. They picked up their phone and started messaging their friends, who all laughed at me too: *how on earth was art comparable to science? How the hell was art of any importance?* Given that art's contributions to society and usefulness in the world are so often overlooked, their reaction was far from unusual, but neither was mine – I stood my ground. No matter who laughs at me, I will continue to, because I *know* that art is important. When it comes right down to it, there is no real debate about the value and capability of art; perhaps this piece of writing is my way of continuing to prove it. The world has just forgotten about what art has truly done. It has forgotten what art truly *is*.

Firstly, the intertwined history of science and art must be remembered. The 19th century saw the invention and proliferation of the uses of the camera, which revolutionised both research and medical procedure. Now an everyday function in scientific practice, advances in medicine, surgery, diagnosis and prevention would not have been possible without the camera. And who made the

camera but the *artist*.

Art has also done immeasurable amounts for history. History is remembered, discovered, and taught by looking at paintings as primary sources, while the photograph is used as evidence of events. We would know little without this kind of documentation, nor would the world be as we know it today without art's ability to shape history. Simple drawings can have social influence and political impact, able to rally masses towards revolutions and wars – just take WWI's *Your Country Needs You* poster as an example of art that persuaded thousands to recruit.

And where would the depth and breadth of our culture(s) be without it? Art in culture is hidden away in the clothes you wear, the billboards and advertisements you are so bombarded by, the packaging on your food products, the patterns that grace your sofa cushions, the holiday cards you sent last year, the TV show you binge watched last week, the *hilarious* memes you post on your Facebook feed... All of this stuff is created by (or inspired by) artists. Everything you see around you has been affected by

art and will continue to be.

Similarly, and most importantly, art has always been on the front line of political and social debate, perhaps now more than ever, with political artists like Ai Weiwei having the influence to affect real change. His art, which affronts the Chinese Government by investigating and commentating on its corruptions and cover ups, has had him beaten, arrested, and imprisoned a number of times. He, *an artist*, continues to be one of the world's most influential activists. I dare you to try to say the works he makes, one of which exposed the Chinese government's cover up of 5,335 school children's deaths after a substandard building collapsed during an earthquake, was unimportant or self-obsessed. He uses art to communicate something that is not heard; that is what most artists do, and that is just another reason why art is *vital*.

The core of its importance can be seen recently in the publishing of photographs of Aylan Kurdi, a young toddler who washed up on the Turkish coast in September 2015, a victim of the Syrian conflict and a refugee. The

influence these photographs had on the public changed opinion and political policy in the crisis, and, six months later, he is still remembered and discussed within the media. This kind of influence was seen previously in 1972 during the Vietnam War, when the photographs of *Napalm Girl*, Phan Thi Kim Phúc, were published. The iconic image of the screaming girl running, on fire, down a road, her clothes burnt off, shocked the world. It is subsequently considered a factor that ended the Vietnam War. Of course, it can be said that the photographs of Kim Phúc and Aylan Kurdi are not art – this is an argument that I still have with myself, and one which deserves a whole other conversation, but regardless – the artists who took those photographs used the camera in a way to make people see the world differently, creating new narratives out of the image. While initially taken for the intention of photojournalism, it is the art context and artists who supply the visual sophistication to the image so that it may have a more meaningful future, so that it may be remembered for more than just a photojournalistic

picture. The kinds of abilities to change views and possibilities (and to so deeply understand how to do so) are particular to the artist, and absolutely essential to the world.

To deny art its importance is to deny the world its magnanimous history, its extensive cultures, your societal and political freedom, even your own character, and I would hope reading this enlightens to the power of art at least a little – perhaps it will explain why I chose an art degree to those who do not understand it. I do not know why art is considered so dull now, and I don't know why the artist has come to be considered so stupid, so selfish, so unimportant... But at the very least, when it comes to my final moments as an art student here, I would like the people in my life, and in the lives of my fellow smart, caring, important classmates, to know that we are really trying to do something with our lives. We are trying to do something in the world – something important, something that will matter.

I urge you: do not underestimate art. Do not underestimate the artist. And do not underestimate us.

Louise Hobson graduated from the University of South Wales in 2012 with a BA Hons in Documentary Photography. Based in Cardiff, Louise is an independent creative practitioner, working across and between the roles of curator, producer and artist. She approaches the exhibition/event/project as a space constructed over time through a cumulative process of collaboration – a layering of conversations, ideas and actions.

Recent curatorial projects include: Catherine Biocca, Cornelia Baltes, Rosalie Schweiker at Mission Gallery (March/April 2016); the Jane Phillips Award Curatorial Residency (2015/2016); Yellow Back Books: a temporary artist book bookshop in collaboration with Becca Thomas and Samuel Hasler (November 2015); Venice Breakfast Club, a weekly communal breakfast for invigilators of the 2015 Venice Biennale; and *do what you can: exercise x* in collaboration with Jess Mathews, an exhibition and event, which brought together a group artists to form a temporary gallery on unfinished foundations (August 2015).

Considerable thanks to everyone who has supported this project, especially Louise Hobson, Oliver Norcott, Ian Mountjoy and all at Taylor Brothers, David Drake and all at Ffotogallery, and The University of South Wales.

JAMES MOORE

HEADSPACE



Sometimes, a person's mind can be their own worst enemy.

Trapped inside their own head, there is no escape from fear and worry. It is as if life is a constant threat. Its connection to depression, then, is no coincidence.

Fear, worry, self-doubt, helplessness, all fit in the centre of this emotional Venn diagram. What helps us overcome this is the desire to express, to act, to create, and to pour our emotion into our passions.

People often tell us to talk about how we are feeling. That it will make it better somehow.

Two extremes of emotion, the line between screams of ecstatic happiness and wails of turmoil is an incredibly fine one – vocally, expressively, and emotionally. Of course, no one wants really to hear about the latter – it's much simpler to talk about love.

But to talk about fear, worry, self-doubt, and helplessness?

Would this envelope more people in a wider circle of respect and love? Or would it be a stepping stone toward chaos and catastrophe?



AMY HARRIS

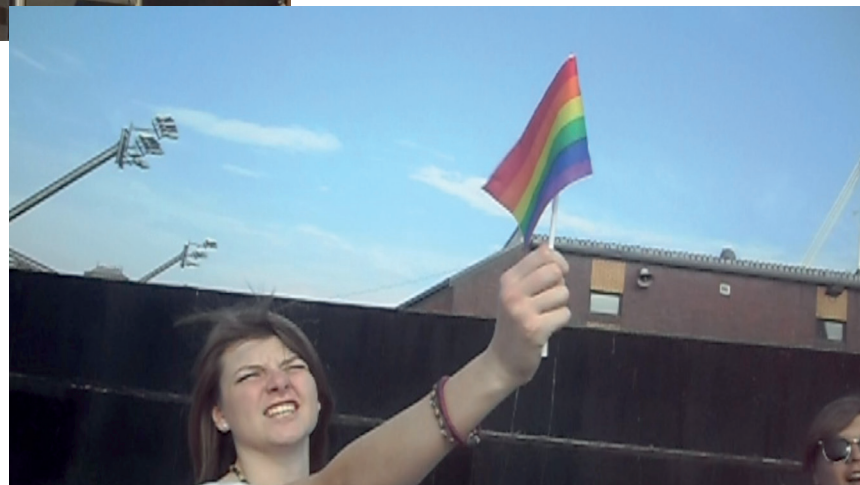
THIS IS WHAT IT'S REALLY ABOUT

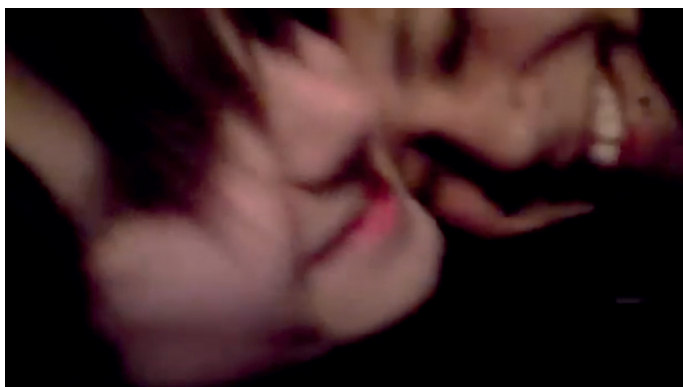
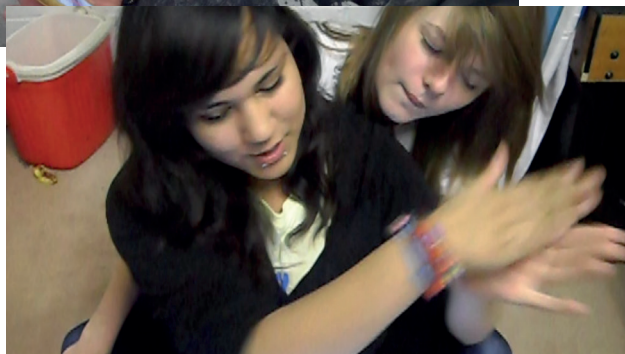
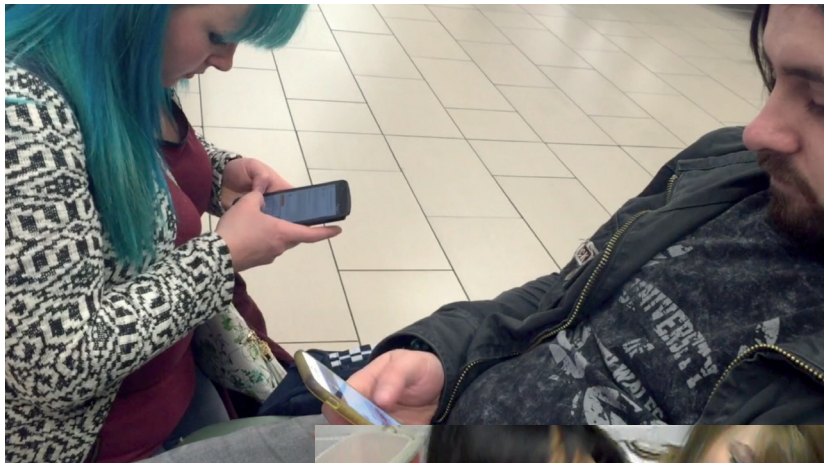
"When the snows fall and the white winds blow, the lone wolf dies but the pack survives."

George R.R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*

I want to keep them all immortalised in plain sight forever. My chosen family. Bonded through time, adventure and misunderstanding. There is a strength holding us together, more powerful than chance or fate or misfortune. I'm in the mist of a never-ending attempt to prove that it tangibly exists. I hope I never succeed. The fear of falling apart; it burns like fire.

But luckily I still have the photographs.





AFTER SKIN AND BONES...

MACARENA COSTAN



Our memories are what make us after skin and bone - they are more the core to our identity than our spine.

But instead of a faithful record, this life narrative consists instead of constructions and reconstructions that we are constantly resurrecting in new external frames of reference. They inevitably fall short of the ideal - even of the real - as the sense of the 'original reality' increasingly recedes.

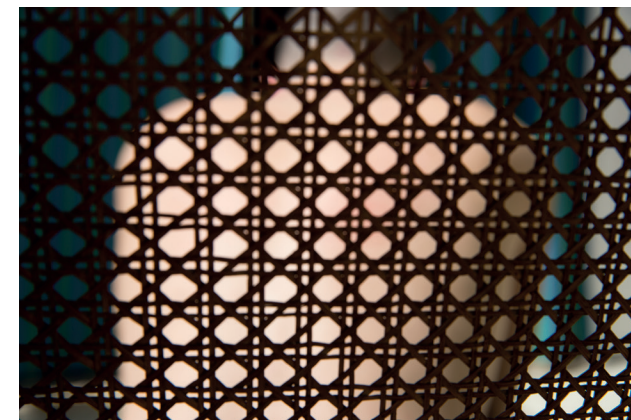
A trip back to a family home in a small village in Spain caused me to realize just how much my own memories differed from reality. My interaction with this place changed while new thoughts and new perceptions came to the fore. The impossibility of translating a full sense of what this place and these sensations have meant to me parallel similar frustrations in the act of photography itself.







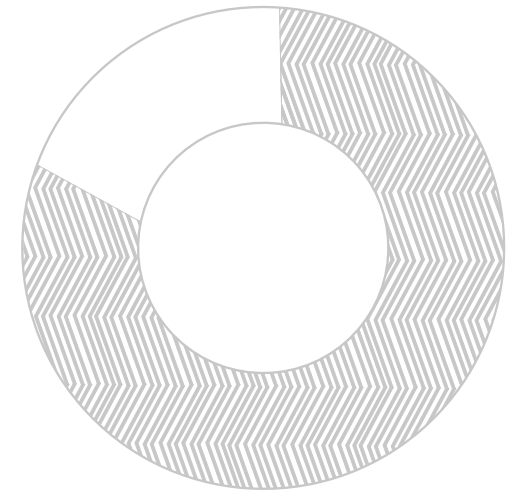






RACHEL LUCAS

EVIDENT



We forget they are real. The photographs we see every day cannot truly express the suffering faced. It is easier not to think of them, to pretend that none of this is happening. But in doing so we forget that a refugee is more than a word. We forget that Syria is a real part of this world. We forget that they are human. 'E V I D E N T' asks you to truly take the time to focus on their humanity. It asks you to remember: they exist.

A woman walks with her baby in front of a large crowd. Separated by a short fence made up of spirals of barbed wire, she looks on in horror. Like her, the people she looks upon are dressed in dirty, dusty clothes. Some have dirty faces. Some crouch on the ground to rest, while others stretch their arms out for help from those who have corralled them behind the fence. The woman appears to be searching the crowd, perhaps for family or just for a face that she might recognise, but the crowd looks endless. While she looks, she does her best to comfort her baby. She cradles him close to her chest and touches his face. She clutches a baby bottle too, but it's empty, so the baby sucks on his mother's fingers instead.

Several people lie on the ground under bright street lights, sharing a thin blanket illustrated with red poppies. A train passes by in the city behind them. They are covered to their heads by the blanket, but their lower bodies stick out; a pile of jean covered legs and trainers. They could have covered themselves over so that they could sleep away from the harsh street light, but they could also be dead, covered over out of respect. It's dauntingly unclear.

A man swims in from the ocean, reaching the rocks of its shore. Close to reaching the dry land, he uses his hands and elbows to pull himself forward across the tough rocks. The tide is coming in and splashing over him, but he does all he can to reach the man that stands only a few feet from him, reaching out a hand to help him. He knows that he will not die in the ocean now. That relief is clear on his face.

Two young girls hug two women, one much older than the other. The older woman, sat on a bench, smiles widely as the youngest girl climbs up onto her lap and hugs her neck tightly. Stood, the other woman reaches down and hugs the older child. It looks as if they may be a family – three generations of women – reunited after a day out apart from one another, if not for the way they all hold each other so tightly. The women grasp the girls’ heads protectively and preciously in their hands. The girls hug the women back with uncomfortable force.

A small boy lies on pieces of a flattened cardboard box in the middle of a large concrete tiled floor. He is obviously distressed, his legs and arms flailing as he rolls onto his side and off of the cardboard. He pays no attention to the tourists in their crisp holiday outfits and white summer shoes as they walk past him.

A young father and his son crouch in front of a line of barbed wire and heavily armed police forces. The boy is gaping at the weapons the police have, crying and screaming. The weapons make the already small boy look tiny. One of his hands clutches at the watch his father wears, the other grasps at his knuckles in desperation to hold onto him. The father screams too, pulling his son in close to his chest. Both look as terrified as the other.

BRODIE PHILLIPS

72 DAYS



When a traumatic event happens within a community, perceptions change. The dynamics of normality are challenged and adapt to fit around this new found truth.

When I was 11, growing up in a small village in the Welsh Valleys, there were stories of a girl buried in the forest not far from where I lived. When I was young they just seemed like old folks tales to keep children from playing within the forests. The dynamics of my childhood soon changed; curfews were put in place and I had to keep in contact with my parents through phone conversation while I was out.

The more time that passed, the more I learnt of the truth. After discovering the full truth of what had happened within the forest, I wanted to spend time learning about the traumatic event that had been such a big story in my childhood.

In September 2002 a 15 year old girl went missing. 72 days later her body was found buried within the forest, after her step-dad has killed her and hidden her body. He took her phone and continued to message and phone her mother, as if she was still alive. He later confessed, revealing the location of her body.

The history of the place and the stories of the past have made the place feel uneasy for a young female to be alone in. For 72 days, I went to where she had been buried, capturing an image for every day that her body was hidden there.

Although time still passes, it is as if the landscape has stood still in time; with every day, week or year that passes the place never changes, as if time has stood still, and can no longer pass freely, remaining within a purgatory of memories and compelling secrets.



CONOR ELLIOTT

BABBLE









Once an artwork is made available to the public it is open to interpretation which sometimes can vary hugely from the original intention/s. Some works of art are so obscure and impenetrable that they become elitist, as only the artist and the self-appointed 'darlings' of the art world and its critics purport to understand it. They bathe in this false glory and labour under the delusion that they are somehow above the common man. Art should surely engage in order to communicate and in turn to provoke communication about the work and/or the questions that it raises.

By undermining a well-known genre of art, this work sets out to ask questions about the viewers' preconceived ideas of art - about what they are seeing and their interpretation of it. It asks: just because something is presented in a familiar art setting, is it art? There is a subversion here too which comes from a personal need to challenge preconceptions and ask questions of the viewer through mischief and humour.

The construction of some of the objects is influenced by subversive elements of Dada and Marcel Duchamp, in particular, who used his constructions/sculptures to ask questions of the staleness of the art world in the beginning of the 20th century. Here, recognisable objects and tools are changed - they are either rendered useless or they are presented to show themselves as something different. But the objects are actually nonsense, presented in the almost universally recognisable style of 17th century Dutch still lifes or *Vanitas* paintings, referencing and playfully subverting some of the symbols that are associated with the genre.

With the viewer being made aware that they are being presented with elements of nonsense and, to a degree, being set up, is there any point in them analysing the work and placing a sense of artistic merit to it? Perhaps they will interpret what they will... and perhaps more than what is necessary. Of course there is also the possibility of just laughing.

“Nothing produces laughter more than a surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that which one sees.”

Blaise Pascal

EMMA DALY

WE'RE GOING TO THE DEAD ZOO



The Natural History Museum in Dublin is something of a relic. It is situated in the heart of Dublin city, surrounded by government buildings and more modern museums and galleries. Opened to the public in 1857, it houses over 10,000 exhibits and the large variety of wildlife specimens on display has resulted in the museum being known locally as “The Dead Zoo”. It has changed very little since Victorian times. Seemingly proud of the fact that it is a “museum of a museum”, the building and what it contains reflects this. Many of the exhibits on display date back to the nineteenth century, with skins that are marked and faded, showing their age.

The nineteenth century was a time when Ireland was still under British rule. Evidence of colonialism can be seen – bullet holes in the skins, a Bengal tiger that was donated by King George V in 1913, and the number of exhibits of animals that are now extinct due to hunting and other human intervention. The museum is in a cabinet style, with glass cases nestled close together, and animals from all over the world

featured together in a small area. Unlike the more modern museums not far from the Dead Zoo that use both English and Irish to title their exhibits, this museum has very little Irish – a language almost completely wiped out due to British colonialism.

The Irish that is spoken today by the majority is not unlike these photographs. It is an image of an image. The animals in the museum were already frozen, unanimated and removed from their culture. While this museum is supposed to educate, it merely shows a snapshot – behind glass cases that are impenetrable, not unlike the modern experience of learning Irish in a mostly English speaking country. Considered a dead language by many, attempts to revive Irish are thwarted by the incomprehensible way it is taught in schools. The language has been placed inside a glass case and can’t be touched – all that remains is a very superficial understanding removed from its culture, and a distorted reflection of what it should be.









SOPHIE PORTER

POSTCARDS OF BESSIE

Memories are translucent, impalpable - but when photographed they become tangible recollections, able to be shared and stored. But what happens when translucency and tangibility are combined?

Bessie was born on the 24th September 1895, growing up in the small fishing town of Folkestone where she lived the duration of her life in a three-story house on Garden Road with her parents, four brothers and five sisters. Working in a grocery store on Foord Road in her 20's with her husband Arthur, Bessie lived a contented life as a soldier's wife and later a mother to her only child, Ray. She enjoyed a drink or two and a packet of 'extra strong mints' and was a very family orientated woman. After Arthur died in 1935 from a tropical disease caught whilst serving in Egypt, Bessie continued to work as a cashier in a small Co-op on Grace Hill, where she stayed until retirement. Her retired years consisted of regular family gatherings, playing cards with her grandchildren and bags full of extra strong mints, which she bought by the 1/4 lb, until passing away on the 30th November 1978 at the age of 83.

Sophie was born on the 31st August 1994 growing up in the small town of Folkestone where she lived her childhood and adolescent years with her parents and two brothers, in a three-story house on Garden Road. Growing up with two brothers, Sophie lived a seemingly 'tom-boyish'

life wearing countless hand-me-downs and refusing to wear dresses. Every Sunday, dinner was served at the table where everybody began with a prayer and ended with a joke. Sophie told the same joke every week. Leaving home at 18 and relocating to Wales for university, Sophie studies Photographic Art at the University of South Wales. Whilst she is completing her studies she currently works as a travel money advisor at Sainsbury's, where she plans to stay until she begins a career. Her interests lay within animal welfare and photography, two key components of her career aspirations. She hates 'extra strong mints'. Sophie plans to fully reside in Wales after university and begin her adult life as a graduate and artist.

The narrative that *Postcards from Bessie* portrays is a stream of memories that become comparable in looks and in lifestyle surrounding these two females.

When given limited information, what we are invited to ponder are the continuities and discontinuities between these two personal lives, which overlap in terms of place but never time.





EMMALEEN MILLER

CYCLES OF SEASONS





I have descended from the Mayan Indians, where we believe that when the time comes for our ancestors to pass over to the other side, they leave behind the cultural knowledge and the lessons of what they have learnt throughout the time they had been with us. We refer to this as a rebirth. As the sacred knowledge and memories that get transferred down to a new generation, a new cycle begins - a circle, the shape without beginning or end.

These images were created during a period of emotional

turbulence following the loss of my grandparents, and the subsequent feeling of considerable disconnection from my Mayan heritage. They refer to elements of my Grandfather's memory, when he used to work on the ships as a young man. The ocean's crisp breeze brushes across the delicate material that caresses the tree branch. It is reminiscent of the times he told great stories of his travels. This sculpture represents a dedication to his life and memory.



JASMINE BELL

WHEN DEVELOPER AND FIX MEET



In the darkroom, I am continuously trying to break away from the confined set rules of exposure and proper conventional developing techniques. I challenge the definition of the medium and question the flatness and ubiquity of the conventions of photography. This work also discusses the fight and closure of the darkroom and courses at Caerleon, as well as the wider disappearance of alternative chemistry based processes and darkrooms.

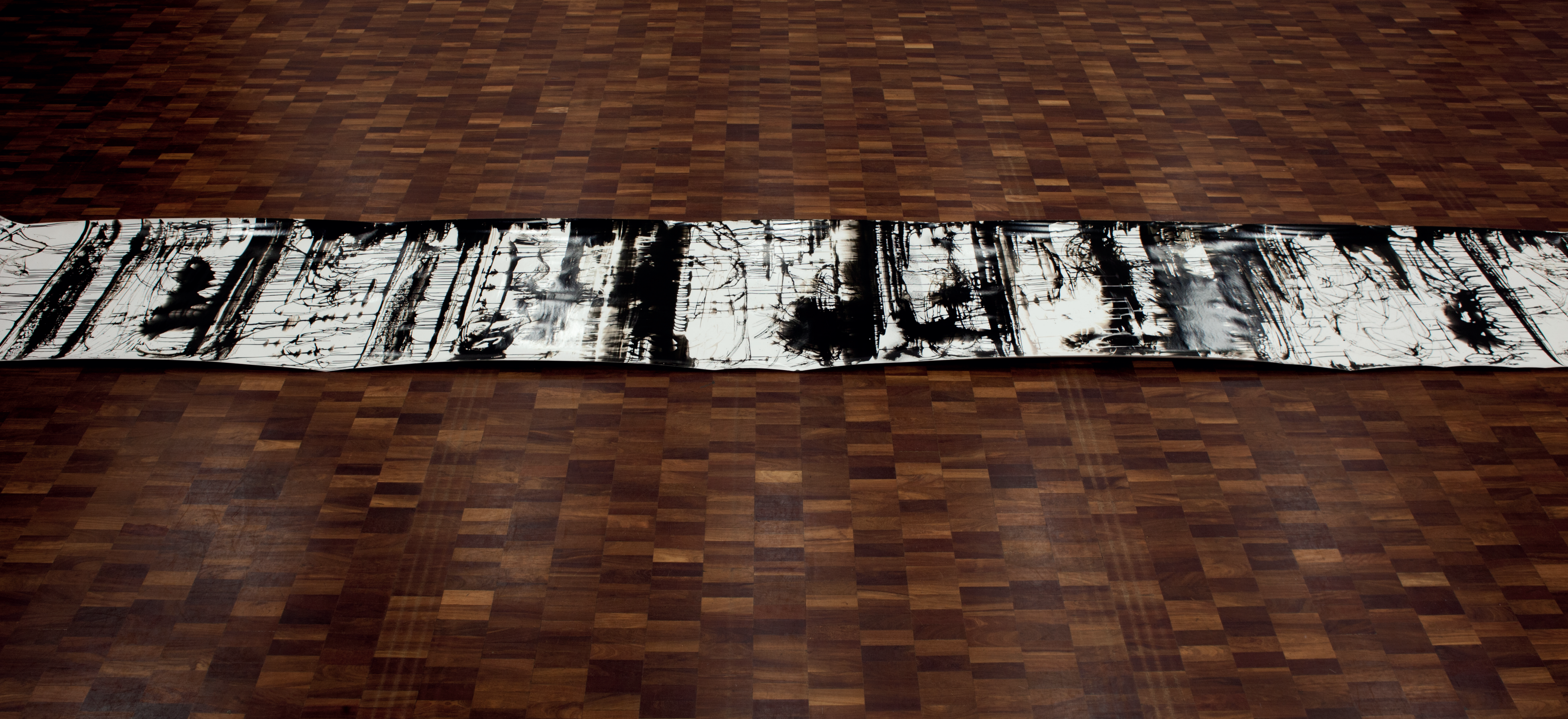
I have stripped down the photographic process to its most simplistic form by removing the distractions of equipment and technology. I work without a camera and only use the basic tools needed to develop a photograph in the darkroom. I experiment with developer, fix and water at various concentrations and temperatures, where I drip, paint, and pour them onto the photographic paper and watch as the chemicals react.

Each piece of work has no image; it is only a record of what has happened. They are sheets of photographic paper and the marks that emerge are a representation of the three dimensionality of the paper and a document of the chemical reaction. Within them I reveal the tactile quality of the medium and emphasise my hands-on approach to

production. The work is physical and I am present everywhere within it.

Even though I am attempting to mock and break the traditional rules of photography, I still have to negotiate the control over these rules as I deal with the restrictions of institutions, other practitioners, and the photographic paper. The imperfections of my work are an opposite to the traditional photographic images that you would expect to come out of a well-used and renowned darkroom. However, my ambitious photographs push the limits of chance and control within the darkroom: my lack of control in the progression of the process increases as the works become more monumental in scale. The limitations of my body (my height, the length of my arms), and the physical requirements for making the work means that the private performance in the darkroom becomes collaborative, needing the help of my peers. The unique photographs also reveal the uncertainty of the process as I question my ability to recreate the marks made. There is an imprecision in how the paper is confronted with the chemicals, how long it sits in the bath, and how it is fixed. The photographs ultimately rely more on chance than precision.









MEG NICHOLLS

4 MONTHS





This work poses as an indication of how two people who have been in a relationship for 4 months dress and look right before sex, questioning their individual ideals of a perfect sex life. To create a discourse which explores exhibitionism, myself and my boyfriend display ourselves to discuss openly the sexual nature of my generation. The work is separated into two halves, each exploring the different ways the couple prepare for sex. One side presents myself and my burlesque approach to dressing up as my 'ideal' for sex, paired with the other side of my relationship where my partner has more of a reserved approach.

Robert Mapplethorpe has been the main focus of my research for this piece of work; taking inspiration from how he often puts himself as the focus of the exhibitionism in his work. There is always a thread,

mostly very prominent, of sex and sexuality in both his work and his personal life.

The work is in black and white, removing it from generic fashion images we see in glossy magazines. The fact that the images are pieced together with visible segments is a comment on piecing together a relationship, which partners with the way that the images are life size to add to the exhibitionism of my work, forcing the viewer to confront the issues discussed within the work. The differing in sizes of the images talks about the power play of sex between the couple, at different times during sex the distribution of power will shift - but there are only two sets of two images; the portrayal of power is equal. I am not putting one partner as a higher power than the other in this relationship.



NATASHA LOWE-SELLERS

OSCILLATING LANDSCAPE



She's definitely very embarrassed by the fact that she's naked in the cold.

Someone else has entered the frame, much more appropriately dressed.

A nude female figure in a dramatic mountain landscape presents herself to the male photographer, who then presents his work to the male spectator. This is a framework that has been used throughout art history in both paintings and photography. Man looks at woman through man's eyes.

The work presents the viewer with audio and a single visual of an empty landscape. The audio provides description of a pre-existing scene that has previously taken place in this landscape, describing interaction between a male and female. The removal of the figures from the visual challenges and confuses the embedded roles of the art world, and questions the relationship between men and women.

**Is she being
photographed?
I don't know.
Or maybe
somebody's
taking pictures?
I'm not sure.**

Ooh, right. Somebody else is coming into the frame now. He's got a red coat on, he's got clothes on. Passing her some snacks.

Oce. Mae o'n edrych fel rhywle mountainous. Oh, oce. *Chwerthin*. Ma' hogan noeth newydd ddod i fewn i'r ffram a mae hi'n mynd at carreg i sefyll arna fo. Mae'n lyb iawn. A ma' hi'n neud gwallt hi rwan. Mae'n pointio ar y camera neu rhywbeth.

Looks like she's taking responsibility of rolling the film along, to the next frame, for another shot. And now she's changing her position, she's standing sideways, kneeling sideways, closer to the camera. Still cold and shaking from the rain and the wind.



... Tiene las manos apoyadas sobre las rocas, se vuelve a observar como tiene frío, ella está situada de perfil, pero con el torso mirando hacia camera, se pone recta, mueve el pelo, parece estar mojado...

It's quite a long-winded process for a couple of pictures I see. And very cold, and wet!

Somebody's walking into the frame. She's naked. She looks cold. Right, she's facing the camera. She's ordering the cameraman about. Shaking her hands. Jumping up and down. Having a little wiggle.

PHILLIP KENWORTHY

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?





I believe that people should not be judged for what they believe in, whether they are Muslim, Jew, Catholic, Jedi, or Whovian. It is possible to find many similarities between Jesus Christ and Doctor Who. Any movie hero involved in the struggle to defeat evil through good will tend to have followers that believe in them. Therefore, such heroes offer a great way to teach people who do not believe in a specific religion about morality. Ever since hearing about the Church of Jedi I became interested in seeing whether it is possible to link any other movies or TV series to organised religion. As a fan of Doctor Who, it is appropriate for me to find some similarities between this long running series and religion. What most inspires me to create this piece of work is the fact that

Doctor Who teaches all the lessons of religion without actually being directly religious.

I undertook this particular piece of work because all through my life there have been religious references. For example, my father is a Christian, my mother is a spiritualist and I went to a Catholic primary school. I believe that people should not be judged on who or what they believe in because a lot of religions believe in the same thing. My research has identified how Doctor Who has become a religion.

This work brings together those with different backgrounds and different religious views. They have then been carefully managed in that they express their views without revealing too much of which side they believe in, whether it is they are devoted to Doctor Who or Jesus Christ.

REBEKAH PRENTICE

FINISHED STATES



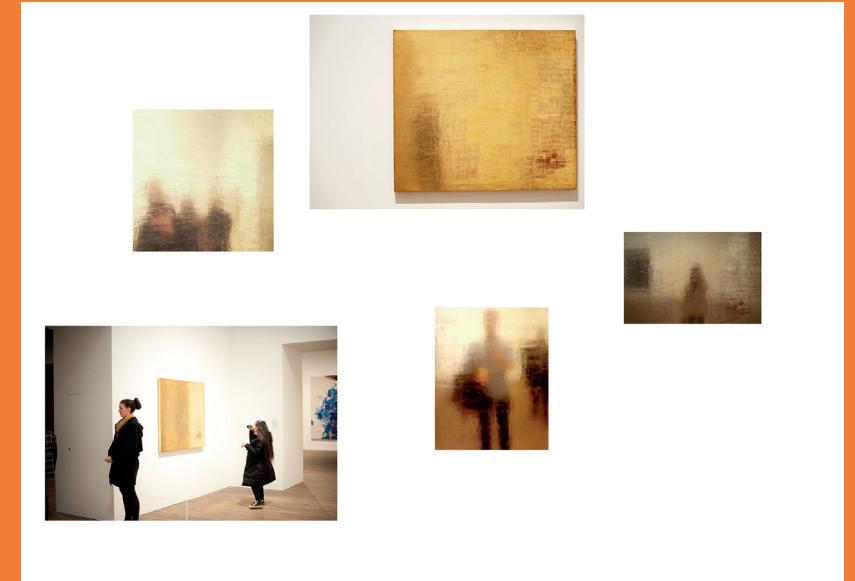
The impression that art allows its external viewers to have itself is carefully constructed. Art is presented often as something pristine, emerging into the gallery fully formed and perfect – there is no sign of struggle, no sense of time committed, nothing to make obvious the labour of love that most artworks are; they are presented as the product of an immaculate conception.

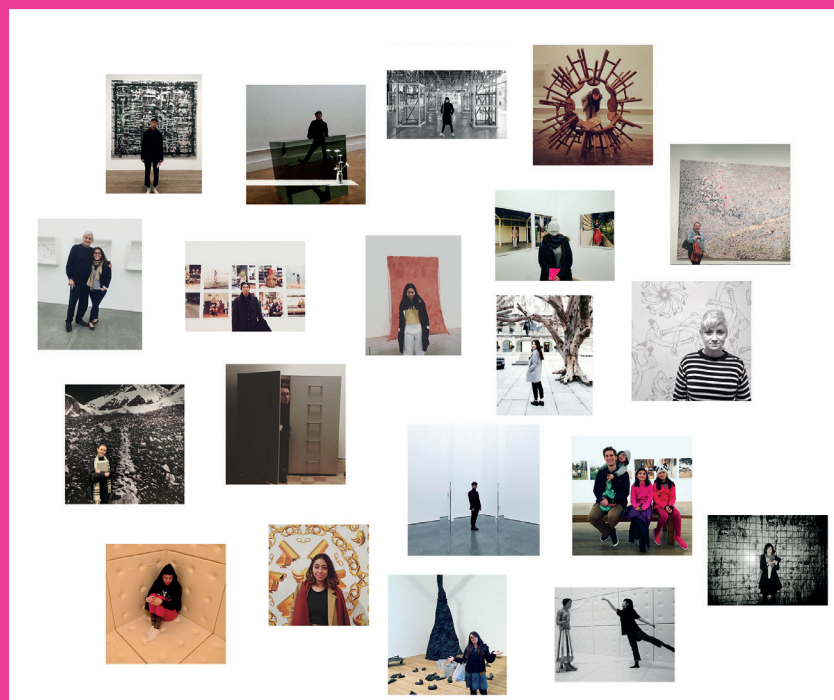
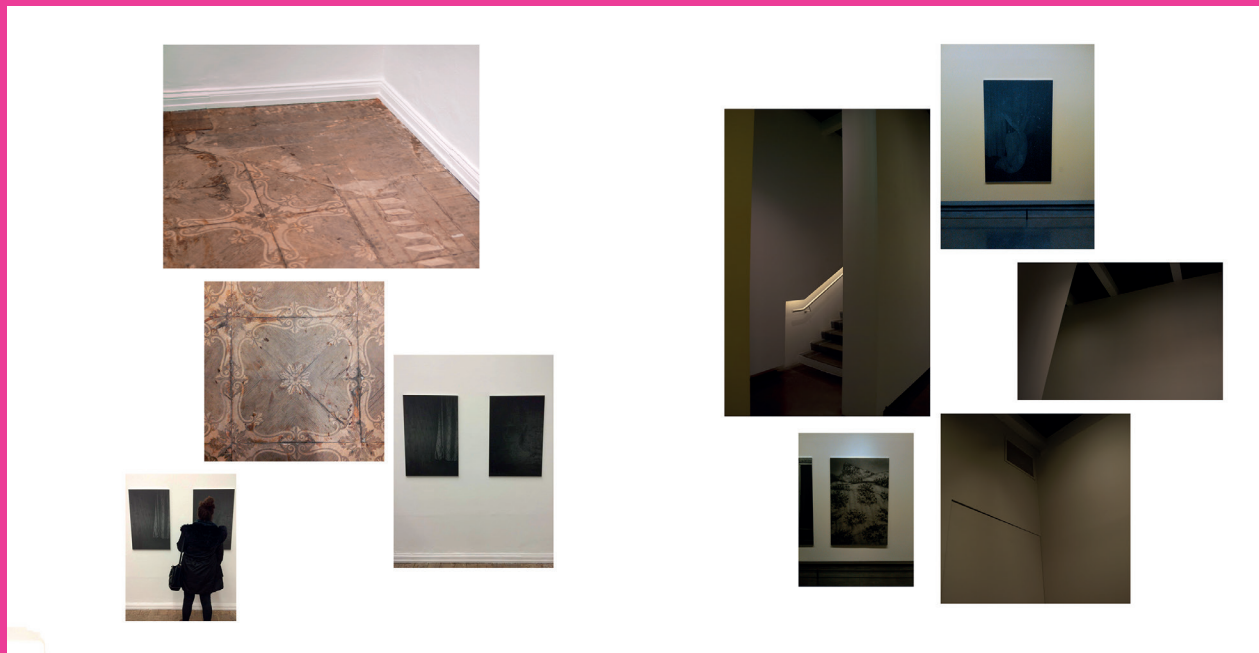
Representational images of galleries and artworks do nothing to contradict this facade, and showcase works from singular or minimal viewpoints, commissioned by artists or galleries to demonstrate to the outside world their works in their beautiful, formally composed perfection. The exhibitions and works are immortalised – suspended in time, faultless, constant, and unchanging.

This carefully guarded impression of art, however, denies the majority of the time in which art exists. This perfect, controlled front is dishonest by omission, refuting the vast multiplicity of the works being shown. What exists in a gallery is merely one incarnation of the work; it's a brief period of exposure in one form of many that the works have

existed in through their long, but mostly invisible lifespan. Artworks are changeable: their meaning is dependent on who is viewing them, on the context that that viewer has of the works, on the environment and space that they are existing in at the time of being viewed, on the company and conversations that each viewer is a part of when seeing the artworks. And that's only when viewing those works in their 'finished' gallery state. That form of work is itself the product many layers of testing, of conceptual working and re-working, of visual re-strategisation, and much, much, time, conversation and effort.

Arguably, no one form of any of these artworks is more correct than another – they merely do different things, and are different incarnations of the same beast, all mounting to a seemingly finished culmination of all thoughts that came before it. But just as the artworks began before they got into the gallery, once they get there they also then do not simply *stop*. The interactions between works, between works and the space, between works and the audience are also important, and as such the time in which the art is





exposed within an exhibition setting is also just another facet of the work.

Documenting these interactions via photographic representations of gallery spaces is another way in which artworks exist in multiple forms. This work displays installations of various works within the show at various stages of their life – it integrates the original artworks, with which viewers will have a primary experience, and installation images, with which viewers will be simultaneously allowed a secondary experience of each work and a primary experience of something new entirely.

The inclusion of images taken by an external presence continues the removal of the concept of a 'correct' view or experience of art, and offers subsequent viewers with an ever more diverse, ever expansive map of different people's experiences. The act of photographing an artwork or show as a consumer rather than a producer of material continues the constant evolution and expansion of artworks' lives – allowing them another form of existence particular to each viewer. These self-made installation images exist only out of visual appreciation and a want to remember one's experience and to

capture it photographically. It could be argued that images coming from people who are at an art exhibition for the purpose of *experiencing* it rather than to *photograph* it will generate a more honest, visceral, and potentially more 'true' representation of the experience at hand. An artist has control over the incarnations of their art only up to the point where it is exposed to others – after such a point, experiences of the work and every form it will take on are created by the viewer.

It cannot be ignored that ultimately, every secondary version of an experience is exactly that: something secondary. To acknowledge that all modes of representation exist as a separate entity – not a copy, but as an entirely original experience, perhaps every type of representation stands to hold greater value. Accepting this idea, the 'inadequacy' of all modes of representation instead becomes a marker of the experience existing in a new form, different from any experiences you may have had. With many different types and formats of representation existing – although the variety, depth of consideration, and diversity of

methods will vary greatly between experiences – perhaps the best way to view representation is in all its different forms, be they made as art, or documentation, or a combination of the two; all things can be seen to be supplementary of one another, combining and layering different styles of interpretation from one or many people. This layering of experiences will always be something separate to the original experience, but would potentially offer a greater knowledge and more varied understanding of the work. The act of representing and acknowledging art in as many of its existing forms as possible will always go beyond the capabilities of the installation photograph. It will also transcend being a simple documentation, and can arguably only exist in the form of a secondary body of art.

Finished States is a manifestation of these ideas, presenting itself in multiple forms: within this publication, *Finished States* exists as a collection of works making visible the changeable perceived states of artworks and gallery spaces that exist outside of *HAVE WE STARTED YET?*, discussing the aforementioned topics on

a wide scale. Within the gallery space, however, *Finished States* depends on the artworks and space around it. It attempts to present an audience with information about the artwork's lifespan and its previous incarnations – information that the artworks on show would otherwise stand removed from – whilst also playing on the idea of the exhibition itself being a growing extension of the artworks. These artworks exist differently in different spaces; this space exists differently when inhabited by different artworks. This artwork will be a constant presence within the exhibition, continually adding to and expanding upon the original materials, incorporating imagery captured by myself and others in an attempt to bring all forms in which the artworks have existed into the same space, allowing every form equal value and validation, and solidifying the concept of the exhibition's fluctuating existence, and turning it into something that has no 'finished' state.



