

Working Class Creatives presents

Gatherings

Anthony Bennett, Marf Summers, Bethany Stead, Medb, Billy Axe Kin, Calum Craik,
Nuzhat Zara Fatima, Cath Shayler, Niamh Quigley, Celeste the hooker, Nick Smith,
Chloe Louise Lawrence, Eleanor Mclean, Rebecca Ryan, Erin Dickson, Renatha Hoga,
Faye Rita Robinson, Samantha Dick, Grace Clifford, Hannah Hill, Shaanthi Rajah,
Yasmine Brennan, Jacob Talkowski, Kat Outten, Kelly Wu,
Lania Narjee, Liam Jolly, Lu Williams.

4th - 17th of August 2023
SET Woolwich, Beresford St, London SE18 6BU



Press:
Dazed
GowithYamo



Gatherings is an exhibition in collaboration with SET Studios, showcasing the works of 28 artists across diverse disciplines. The exhibition opened with a private view on 3 August 2023 and was accessible by appointment until 17 August at SET Woolwich, SE18 6BU.

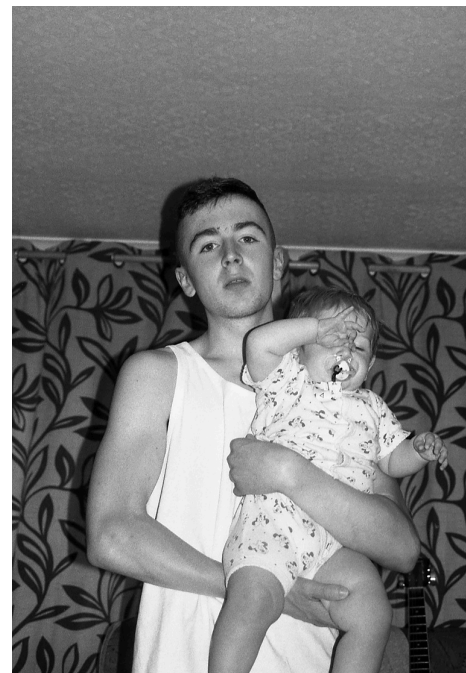
Gatherings brought together artists working in installation, sculpture, photography, video, and text, creating a space of collaborative belonging. The exhibition explored themes of intimacy, trust, and care within the making process, with muted tones and thoughtful contemplation reflected in the works. A structural rhythm emerged, balancing softness with a profound exploration of the world around us.

The foundations of the show were built from the studio residencies we hosted at SET (2021 - 2025) supporting 14 Working-Class Creatives, providing essential studio space in London. SET, a vibrant arts and community organisation, offers affordable workspaces and a dynamic arts program, making it the perfect partner for our residency initiatives.

It's always been common for artists to use disused spaces – “meanwhile” spaces. This building is an ex-council building; SET are the cheapest artist studios in London and have over 1000 creatives. Since we moved in, the landscape has changed drastically: a lot of high-rise flats, the Elizabeth line, a Marks & Spencer. It stands in stark difference to the original Woolwich high street: the exhibition space is mostly windows, and we didn't want to ignore the stark difference between the high-rise apartments on one side of the building and the old high street on the other.

The exhibition showcases the breadth of working-class voices, representing diversities, histories, places, and identities within the working-class experience. Overall, 'Gatherings' presents a collection of deeply personal, delicate, and powerful works.





Mebd

'Sawyer Bean & Bonnie'

'My Brother, The Father'

"The photographs are black and white 35mm images captured between 2017 and this year, all taken at my parents' house on a 70's council estate just outside Belfast. The most prevalent theme is young fatherhood and overcoming circumstances, as well as displaying the tenderness that my brother has for his daughters. The last set of photos taken most recently are the most whimsical for me after encouraging my nieces to dress up and style themselves for a photoshoot, I inadvertently ended up capturing some really magical images of them with my brother in my parents' garden that seem completely outside space and time; in another world."



“The henna in the photograph is done by me on my mother's hand for Eid e Ghadeer. Henna is traditionally used and practised as a working class art form by women in rural areas and villages- originally used to decorate hands with intricate designs that mimic gold jewellery that one couldn't afford - now considered fashion.

This gold inheritance, most often passed down from mothers to daughters, has been historically one of the only ways in which south Asian working class women could express some sort of financial autonomy. It's practised across South Asian cultures, in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Chokers, earrings, tikkas, anklets, bangles, waist chains, nose rings- south Asian women tend to have it all.

This photograph is of my mothers hands, in the photograph she is wearing ALL the gold she owns. With no bank account and no financial autonomy in her life, two gold rings and a few bangles is all she has. There are no savings accounts and if she were to ever leave her marriage this is all that she would have to survive on.”

Nuzhat Zara Fatima
‘Tasbih 4 Imam Ali’

Wellington held I my girlfriend:
 An only child with the many friends
 alone on a Sunday, collecting shells.
 A sparrow nest in the garden shed.
 A petting zoo in the house:
 - a rabbit
 - 2 cats
 - 1 dog
 - 1 rooster
 A valley roof and a distant bank.
 Can-ter, redundancy, childhood
 excitement, a variation of cages.
 Big family, Christmas, big
 Summer BBQs, a big catnip
 blocking the Sun.



Rebecca Ryan

'Wellington Ave'

In her practice, Rebecca uses the motif of the home to grapple with elements of her identity. Contextualised on a working-class background, Rebecca explores the housing instability she experienced growing up and its impact on her formation of memories, perspective on community and family, and its ties to her experience of grief. Rebecca's art at its core is deeply personal, however by focusing on universally felt themes (stability, community, and loss) she seeks to connect with those who are able to empathise in some capacity. Home(s) is a series of four textile works depicting the artist's houses between the ages of 3 and 23. The flags are designed with simple and distinguishable shapes and colours that symbolise aspects of the locations they represent. Accompanying each flag is a short text, that I imagine would be written out on A5 paper and framed alongside the work, detailing memories from life living at each house at a certain stage of the artist's youth. Together the textiles and textual accompaniments explore how place can become tethered to memory and ultimately one's self.



Lani Narjee
‘Mother Thread’

“I am interested in the relationship between memory, history, and the physical environment and have a multidisciplinary approach to my work that includes mark marking, ceramics, analogue photography and filmmaking. I am drawn to abstract and intuitive processes that reflect on the internal and external world by exploring the boundaries between the tangible, consciousness and the imaginary.”



TOOLbelt is an absurdist sculpture, which combines a strap-on harness with a tool belt. The work is autobiographical, exploring the artist's complex relationship to DIY, queerness, and paternal estrangement - it tells a story about escape, robustness, resourcefulness and do-it-yourself self-fashioning. It is also a love letter to a community- exploring very specific ideas around gendered sexualities. In particular, it looks at the identity of the working-class butch lesbian, and how for some what may be a sex "toy" is for others, a sex "tool", an extension of the body with a specific service/job in mind, over which she/they/he seek mastery. It thinks about the butch lesbian connection to the trades and manual occupations and how this kind of "handiness" speaks to the queer experience of DIYing our self-hoods and bodies in a society which doesn't cater to us. Whilst the work touches on serious themes, it does so in a tongue-in-cheek manner, speaking the camp, knowing the language of the working-class dyke, able to laugh at themselves.

Marf Summers
'TOOLbelt'



'I've gave me whole life to em' explores Hill's fathers life long experience as a steel worker and his recent change of position within the works. It focuses on the threat of redundancy he has experienced throughout his career working within the industry. The work was also inspired by the amount of time he and many others spent on the works dedicated to their craft. This also commemorates the group of men who seem to be slowly disappearing and how the industry and their identities will soon be abandoned and will remain a relic just like the furnaces and coke ovens which remain unfired and left for dead.

Hannah Hill

'I've gave me whole life to em'





MEMBERSHIP CARD
West End Club
Many Great, Buntingford

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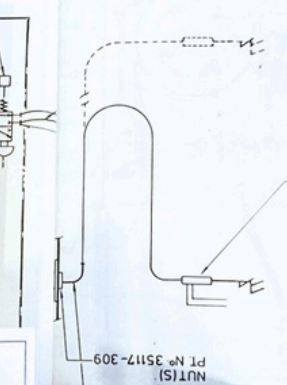
MEMBERSHIP CARD
West End Club
Many Great, Buntingford

MEMBERSHIP CARD
West End Club
Many Great, Buntingford

TYPICAL ONLY

TYPICAL ONLY

TEAM MEMBER, ACO.
DANGER
MAN WORKING
P.H.I.L.
1860



Positive Pressure



8

8 Close cylinder valve. Continue to hold handwheel and breathe normally. Check that the whistle sounds at the correct setting for the cylinder in use.



9

9 When pressure gauge shows zero, and the mask is pulled gently onto the face, hold breath for 10 seconds. Any leakage will be indicated by the mask moving away from the face. If a leak is detected, open cylinder valve, re-adjust facemask and head harness and repeat test.

If no leak is detected open cylinder valve fully.

ACO - STOP! THINK TEN GOLDEN RULES

Everyone in a leadership role will do the 3 non-negotiables each month: completing the audit via the relevant system and updating the visual management board in the DM room. Line managers spot-audit the quality.

- Positive Safety Conversation
- Task RA audit
- PGI

No changes happen without a complete Management Change process.

- Plant equipment
- Operating parameters
- Outside procedures
- Organisational

All shift-operating employees will review RPO procedures.

All ACO team members will be 'above the line'. Hazards will be identified, reported and safety addressed - do not walk by.

Everybody in the ACO team will take part in safety discussions.

- Scheduled safety meetings
- Daily Management
- Shift / work safety briefings

JOHN SMITH'S

DRAUG



Salt House - Key Points

Key Points
Access / egress to the Salt House plant is via the green safe route. There are also designated walkways within the plant.
Chemicals: Reacts: Interact with water. Using chemical type rubber gloves. Use eye and ear protection. Gas monitor and Radio of the intrinsically safe type.
Personal Danger Board and lock PPE and chemical suit. Washdown boots.
When working on the Salt House platform, hearing protection is a mandatory requirement signs are posted in this area.
Always ensure that the correct isolation procedure has been used prior to accessing any equipment. Be aware when working on pumps and lines that they may be energised.
Always lock off electrical equipment before working upon it.
Only authorised personnel are allowed to enter electrical Sub stations / panels, any locations within these must only be carried out by a qualified electrician.



Calum Craik
'Landlord'
Video

The idea of living labour and the effects of technology upon living labour and spaces of production are explored within the video work *Landlord*. The video traces overlapping histories of deindustrialization in the UK, the rise and fall of finance and technology as well as privatization of housing and land. The video documents various social movements which try to reclaim the commons such as rave and new age travelers. Narratives of conflicts around the right to public space guide us through the nonlinear video. The images are presented in two split panels creating a dialectic. Opposing forces of public and private, new and outmoded, sharp pixels vs light leaked and aged footage compete for the viewer's eye.



Samantha Dick
"A Nation of Homeowners"
Video

The video explores the rise and fall of social housing within the UK, particularly hi-rise living and the social stigma surrounding these types of communities. Through this work, I document the history and events that lead to these buildings and, ultimately, the housing crisis we know today.





“The work is 2 parts of 13 piece, it is casts of my dad's overalls that he gave me to when I started to learn to weld (he is a factory welder) it felt weird and uncomfortable learning my dads trade in art school, although it was a necessary skill for me to learn in order to make work, it felt performative compared to my dad's labour.

I often think popular culture is a lot more willing to accept a nice polished version of working class identity rather than face the emotional and physical toll of such environment and upbringings. When I started this project, I intended to cast the overalls and reassemble them as a standing figure, but during the long and intense process of casting, I realised that to fettle, weld and reassemble the parts to present a ‘finished object’ would completely remove the physical evidence of the time and labour that was the basis for the idea in the first place. It would do these rituals no justice, the work is never done. “

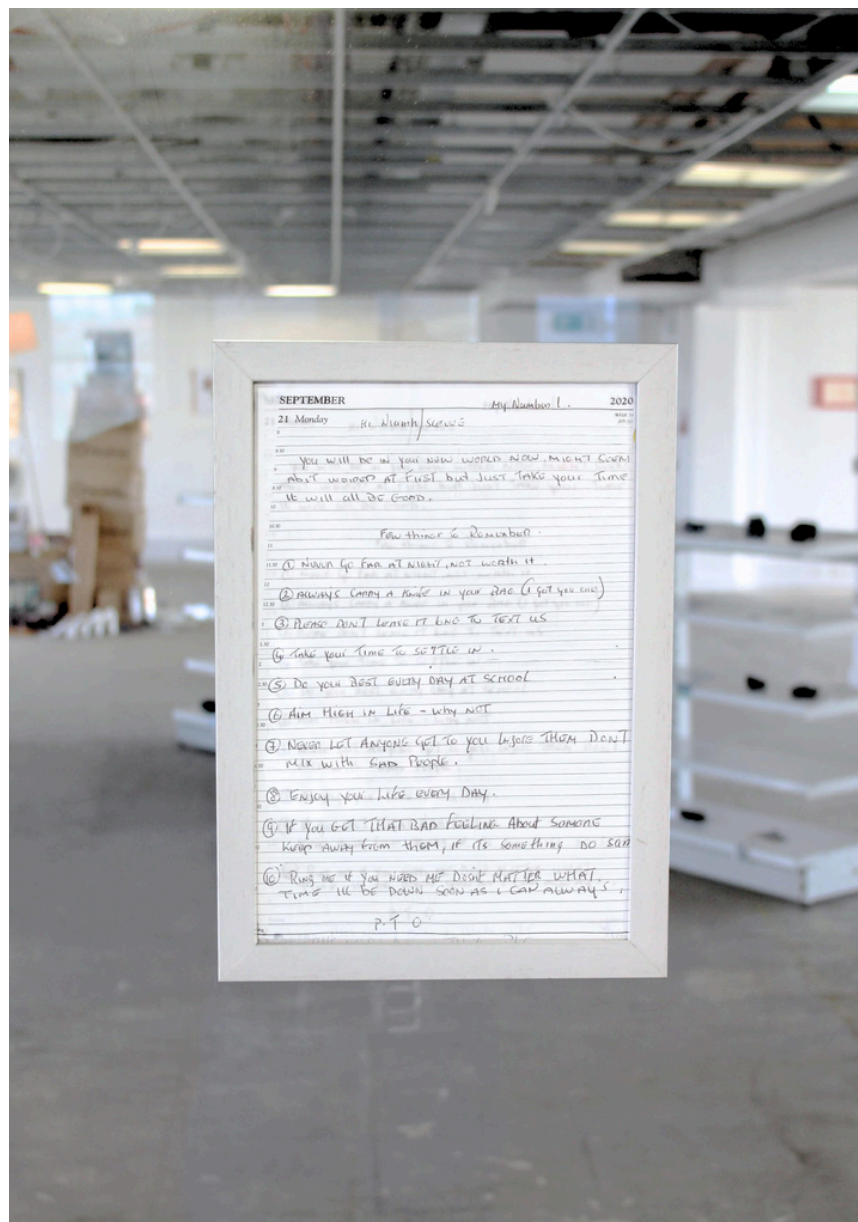
Grace Clifford

‘The meaning of hard work’

'My dad's letter' is a letter given to Niamh the day she moved to London.

"My practice is concerned with autobiographical storytelling that serves to address the complex intersection between "private " and "public "; specifically looking at this through the lens of social class. My practice incorporates evidence- based components such as personal letters and objects as a way of demanding that such testaments of love and commitment (that have been ever-present in my up-bringing) are rightfully entered into the artistic space. Through photographs, I visualise the working-class body and the space around it, as a way of challenging discourses that serve to exclude working-class existence from creative practices. My work is about the love, loss and commitment that I have witnessed growing up and is ultimately an ode to the strength of the working-class. I don't attempt to answer any questions but merely to present what I see and have seen throughout my whole life."

Niamh Quigley
'My dad's letter'







Yasmine Brennan
'Poitin, The Archive'



Yasmine Brennan

'My Albion'

"Equipped with devices they will present us with an alternative telling of England. People's new belongings of time aren't fully guaranteed or authentic, but they survive through the means of imagination."



Liam Jolly
'Carn be seen and not heard'



Carn be seen and not heard originates from a project based on the artists fascination with the Amen Break, an iconic drum part commonly known as the most sampled and remixed in musical history. Due to its unpretentious frequency of use, Jolly sees the Amen Break as a symbol of equality.

Redruth is one of the most deprived towns in Cornwall and holds significant personal meaning for Jolly as he was born and raised there, and continues to call it home. Despite numerous attempts to break free from its working- class constraints, he's always found himself drawn back within its grasp.

“Throughout lockdown, I came to the realisation that I’ve spent most of my life living in the shadow of Carn Brea (a former neolithic site overlooking Redruth) It’s become like an anchor, shaping my identity, and my complex relationship with the town... but it’s also a point of reference on the horizon, offering direction home when a little lost. I see a drum beat similarly, it holds everything together, providing a solid foundation, it symbolises the potential to explore and build upon new possibilities.

Liam Jolly

‘Carn be seen and not heard’



Kat Outten
'Body/Vessel'

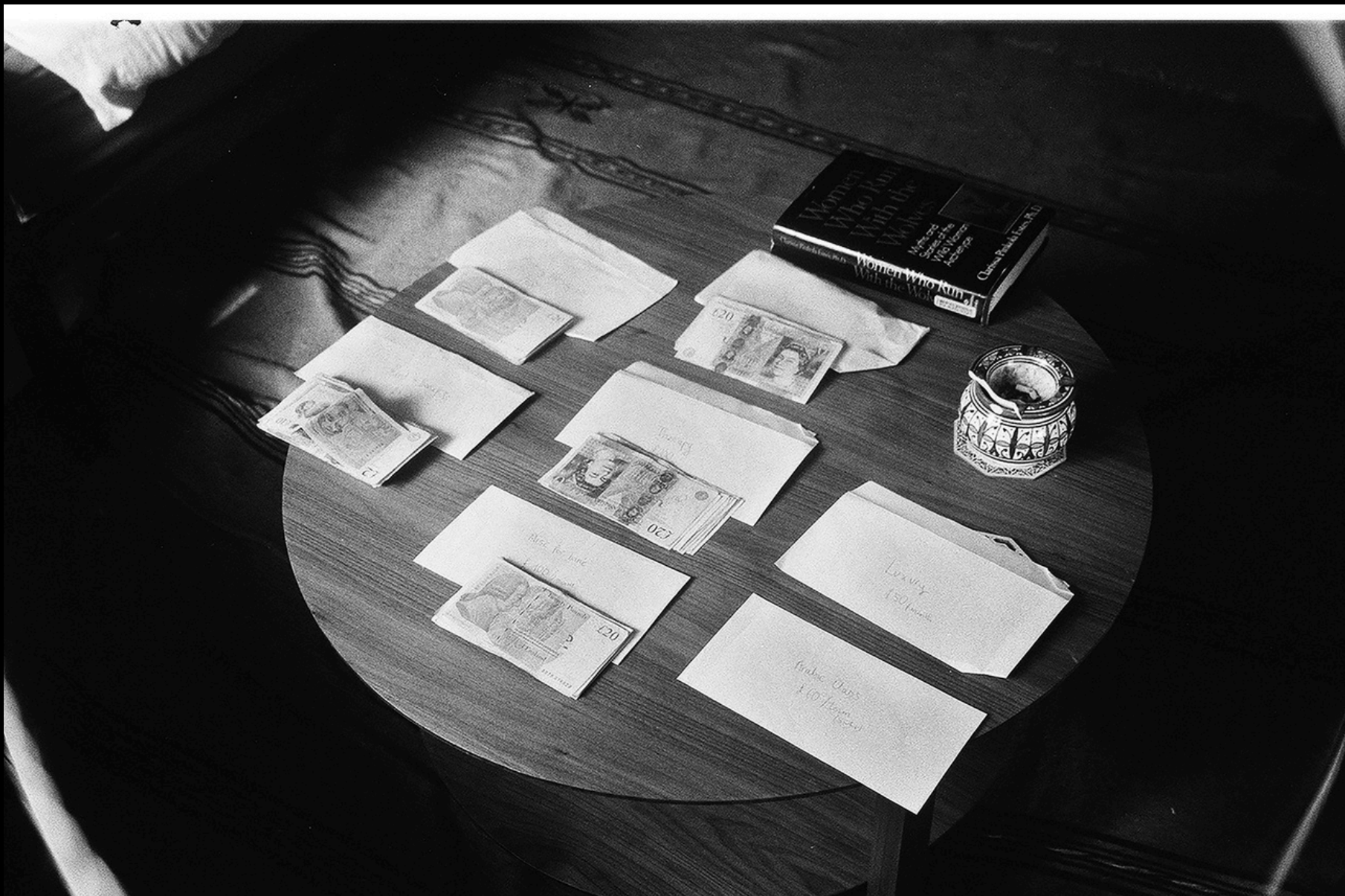
Body/Vessel explores a selection of fat body parts combined to form a pot. The making of the pot reflects the treatment of the artists' own body over their lifetime - sometimes gentle touches, often more aggressive handling of raw material combined to create the final form.



A snapshot in time: the body of a client and the money they give her.

"I gather my cash, crisp and clean, from my clients hand."

Celeste the Hooker
'CLIENT'



Celeste the Hooker
'MONEY'



"I am interested in discussing class as relating to place. The place that I am specifically interested in is my parents' one-bedroom council flat, where I live as well when I am not at university. My mother is a hoarder, so the space is rather miserable to be in. I am therefore looking to remove some stuff from the flat to help her deal with the situation, and I am wanting to just put this stuff down in the exhibition space without altering it too much. Essentially, I am clearing out some of her stuff and then calling this art. But I think that the best way to discuss themes such as housing instability, hoarding, immigration and more, is to show the reality of it without making glitzy adjustments."

Kelly Wu

'The State in which we are'



Kelly Wu
'Dad Piece'





“ Growing up in council flats and homes, I think about how impermanent the domestic setting can be. I think about all the failures presented and personified in my objects... how impermanent they are. Feelings of unease, being unsettled and unfulfilled. Sara Ahmed (Living A Feminist Life, 2017) spoke about understanding un-happiness “not as the failure to be happy... but a refusal, a claim, a protest, or even just some ordinary thing, a texture of life being lived.”

In recording textures of life, of the every day, of a peeling or of a drip - I re-stage domestic routines. Treated like drafts, I reproduce workaday images and objects through the processes of casting and printing; reworking the practices of feminised work, that of reproductive and emotional labour. I re-imagine domestic artefacts in soaps, turning them into characters that are metaphors for the mundane, the overlooked, and loss; pairing them with vulnerable slogans that speak up for the sentimental value of those things kept under fleeting roofs. Through subverting the surfaces of everyday life and using substances that will be diluted and washed away, these recorded moments are also paused in a dichotomy of the monotonous routine, and lacking the material ability to commit.”

Chlöe Louise Lawrence

‘Subtle symptoms of disrepair’



Lu Williams

'Mutts Silver 1976' 2023

'Magnet Painting' 2023

"I've been investigating the relationship between working class culture, betting, gambling and the sheer belief in the 'big win' coming. Like folklore, narratives of winning the lottery function as a fantastical escape of low socio economic areas resting on a neoliberal dream that has never served us. In these works I collect paraphernalia from my family and found objects from the streets of Southend in hopes (or hopelessness) of putting a visual language to a condition that is hard to describe in words. I would be interested in hosting fridge magnet making workshops relating to 'Magnet Painting 2023'."



Lu Williams
'Unlucky' 2023





"I seek to challenge the emotional values placed on items encountered in our daily lives, by incorporating them into my sculptural practice. In transforming objects that are not of significant 'worth' in monetary terms, but are valuable because of our relationships to them, I confront perceptions of how we aesthetically revalue everyday items. My practice is an expression of nostalgia, explored by creating playful sculptures that reference my childhood and Asian mixed-cultural identity as a 'third culture kid'. These elements of identity are sources of inspiration within multiple aspects of my practice, with challenges in my work rooted in how best to translate and communicate these into accessible physical formats.

Through a light-hearted interpretation of materials, I also endeavour to question the language expressed through sculpture, and the 'worth' of everyday items when weighted against nostalgic value. I seek the potential to transform the value of recognisable items by manipulating their functional features in search of aesthetic qualities. In pursuit of this, my artworks feature overlooked objects which have been converted into archival materials, such as bronze and silicone casts. For example, placement of household vegetables (bok choy) within the sculptures further hint at the work being grounded in my heritage, deepened by the implied permanence through the form of bronze casts. References to my cultural identity have been deliberately curated in an informal way to be approachable to viewers. This includes intentional showcasing of prosaic objects such as red-white-blue (RWB) bags - often referred to as 'laundry bags' - whose iconic pattern is recognised internationally. It is an integral material in my practice for its symbolism of migration and durability."

Shaanthi Rajah

‘晒乾 (Sun Dried)’



Faye Rita Robinson

Faye weaves dreams and lived experiences with the collective imagination of medieval mysticism and folklore of the past. Reflecting upon their dreamworld, which can be frightening, confusing and full of uncertainties and symbolism, Faye invites creatures and objects from her sleep into her daily life where intangible elements are presented as part of a unified narrative. By exploring the events of her life through the lens of historical folk allegory and phenomena, Faye works within a world that exists in a liminal place between imagination and reality, connecting past and present.



Renatha Hoga

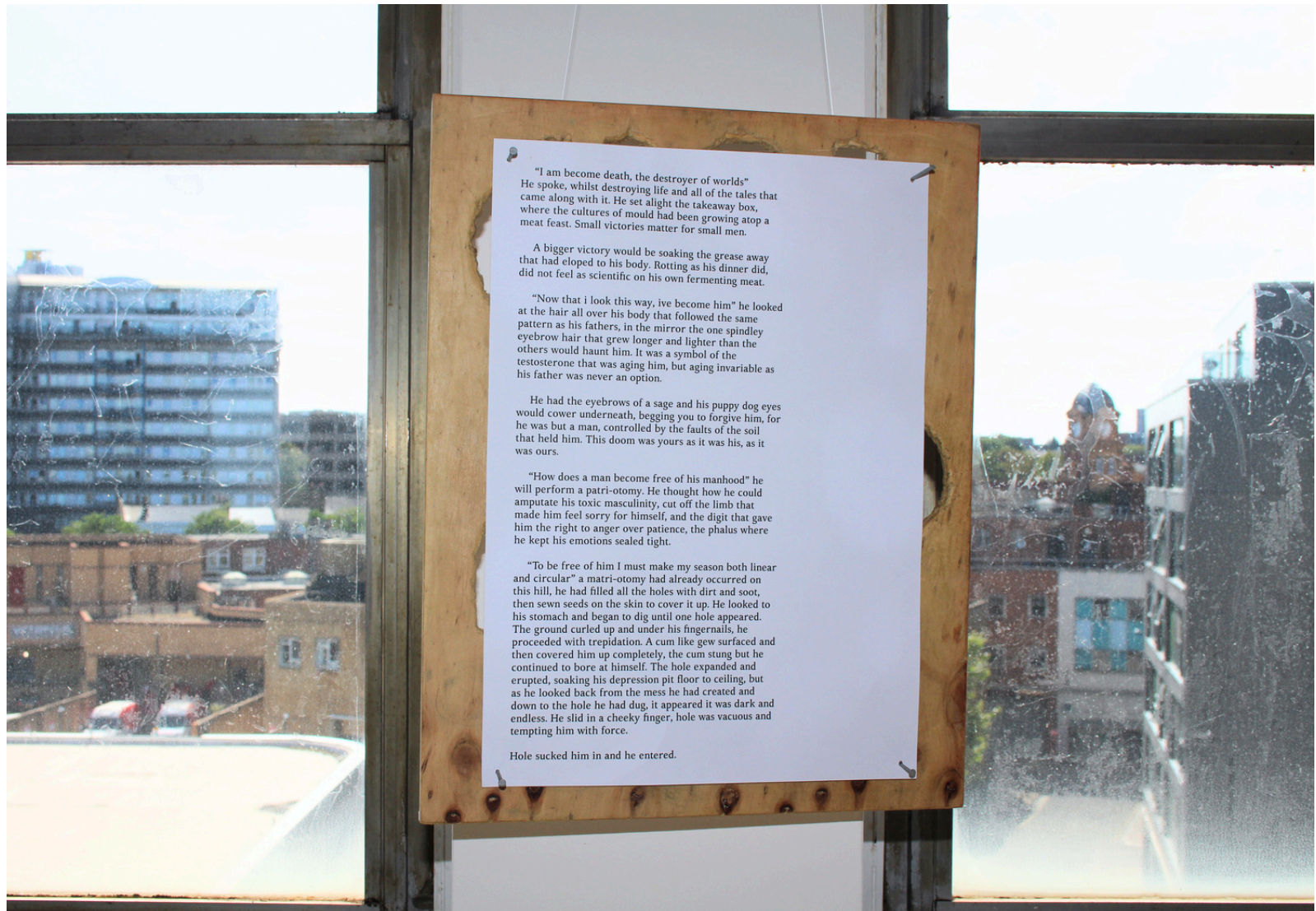
‘Caught In Motion - Sculpture 1’

“The project, Caught in Motion developed during my Working Class Creative Database (WCCD) Residency, explores the multi-functionality of made objects by exploring how garments and accessories can be exhibited on and off the body.”



Anthony Bennett
'Hillfoot Artemis'

"A Photomontage of a photograph taken at Hillfoot Steel Forge in Sheffield, montaged with my clay sculpture of Artemis."



Billy Axe Kin
'I am become'

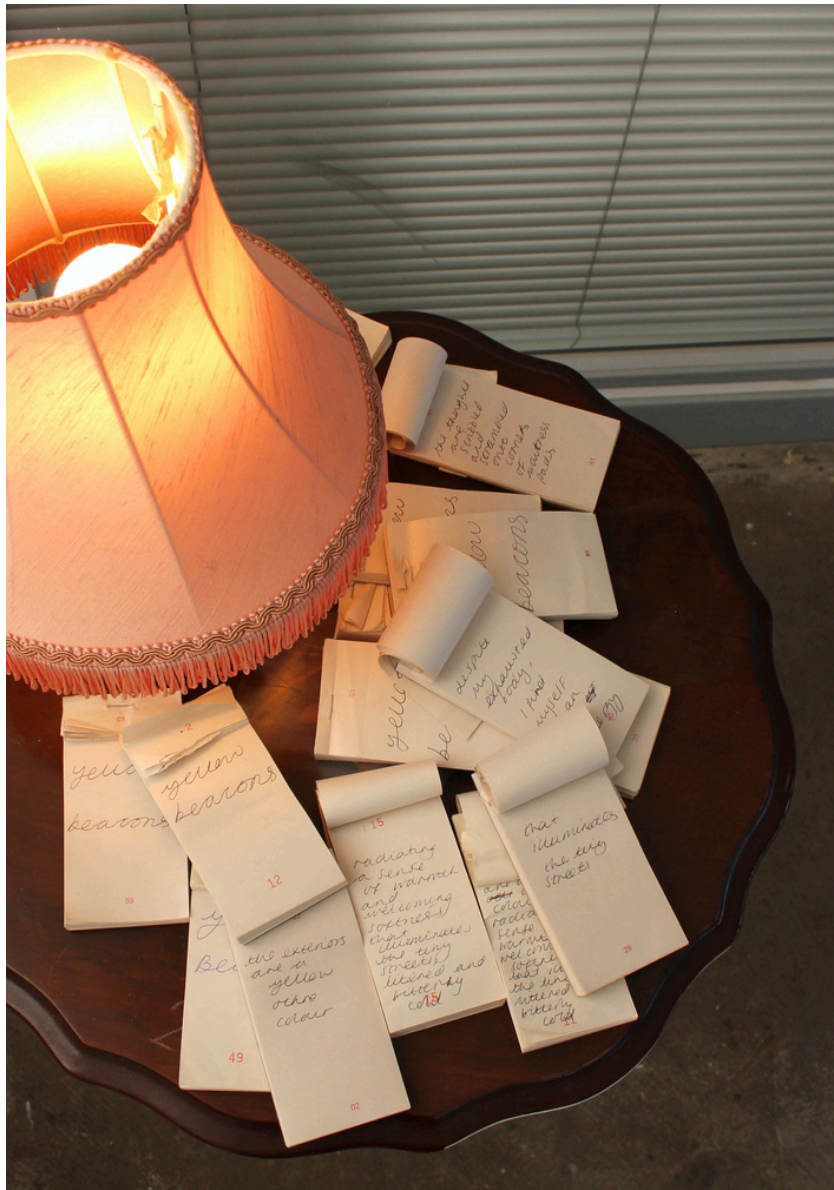
"The work explores themes of ancestral trauma, specifically focused on how I have started to resemble my dad, who was an abusive alcoholic, now I am taking testosterone. It's about working through the feeling of becoming your parents and finding how you are improving in ways they failed, and working through the shame of your ancestry when you are working class."



Jacob Talkowski

‘But It’s Too Deep To Cross + Let’s Go Back Home [Reaching]’

In this work, the themes of the show are addressed through embodiment of the working class COASTAL body specifically, an intersecting queerness from coming from the edge of the land, and the memory of how to navigate the ‘backwater’ areas as someone who both hated and loved what ‘home’ in this instance could be. They relate to the age of the internet through material, and slip towards ideas of escapism, masculinities, and attempting to latch onto something, anything, as time goes on.



Yellow Beacons is an installation with reference to a text from the artist's on going project, Lost in Translation - a monthly mailing list of creative writing. The text explores themes of friendships in the workplace, objects and sentimentality, and exhaustion. It has been repeatedly written onto waitress pads collected from the artist's workplace, it being an object materialised from the text.

Eleanor McLean
'Yellow Beacons'



"A sign to soil yourself explores traditional pub signs and their entrenched symbolism for the working, benefit class and marginalised bodies. Pub signs repeatedly reference stories, folklore, myths and historical figures, heavy laden with archetypes, symbolism and religious imagery. Public houses have acted as a sanctuary, regardless of religion, and safe space for common people, whilst simultaneously seen as places of barbarism, violence and assault.

I am interested in the dual meanings we give to these spaces and signs in our human lives, and their relationship to the performative nature of class. One side appliquéd with a snake-like shape wrapped around crossed gloves. The other side appliquéd with crossed green legs, intertwined with a brown phallic shape. The dual sides, represent the exterior of class expected in daily life; assertive, respectable, in control. And the other, a psychological interior of class, and our animal nature; wild, desperate, excreting."

Bethany Stead

'A sign to soil yourself'



Nick Smith

'Within Years: Liverpool'

Video

A short collaborative film with nil00, which takes into consideration many moments in time throughout Liverpool's history. The film draws parallels with the anti-lockdown protests in Liverpool, whereby minority groups in the working class, who for a long time have suffered under the government, take a disease or virus as a point of contention for their suspicion and paranoia, as if it newly proves the agenda behind their suffering.

These things seem to happen in cycles and this investigates how some of the explosive issues that have impacted Liverpool spiral through history into the contemporary moment. The film was created in response to my exhibition at output gallery being closed due to lockdown restrictions in Liverpool during November 2020."



Erin Dickinson

‘Pain in the Back of my Neck’

Video

As it is not yet protected by the Equality Act of 2010, a regional accent is a trigger for prejudice which is pervasive in Britain. It also acts as a proxy for bias including gender, ethnicity and social status. Whilst speakers of conventional received pronunciation (RP) may be perceived as elite and educated, others are alternatively pigeonholed as unintelligent and working-class. Though their dialect is considered one of the UK’s friendliest, Geordies face a risk of limited job prospects due to perceived incompetence. This stereotyping of Northern and other non-RP accents can have a negative effect on economic and social mobility.

Motivated by her own experience of professional discrimination, Erin Dickson’s *Pain in the Back of my Neck* examines bias towards the working-class accent. She attempts a process of ‘accent elimination’, guided by professional voice and accent coach Nic Redman*. By replacing her own Northern accent with the more acceptable Queen’s English, Dickson draws attention to the discomfort of conformity and the absurdity of learning to ‘speak proper’.



Cath Shayler
'Time Traveller'
Video

"A 1960's inspired Sci-Fi music video for dreampop artist Shoshy. Created during my residency with The Working Class Creatives Database. As she floats through the universe alone in her spaceship, Shoshy tells the tale of alien time travel, an intergalactic soul-mate and a dramatic escape from her own outer space engagement ball."

We worked with Think Big, Read Community Library who curated a shelf of books from the library selected in response to the themes from the show focusing on Collaborative belonging, Care, Intimacy and Class Struggle.

The response includes writing from:

Jarman - Delaney - CA Conrad - H. Gareth Gavin - Ivor Cutler - Bernadette Mayer - Scalpello - Lorde - Flatness - Nelson - (loads) more!

Think Big, Read Community Library is a lending-library in Peckham, South London. It houses a wide selection of books with a core collection of queer and trans literature, poetry and anti-capitalist and anti-carceral writing. It's also home to an archive of Ambit magazine.





Working Class Creatives
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