

I C A N

S T I L L

(S T I L L)

Squires Annexe

Group Exhibition

2018

Georgia Bates
Robyn Benham
Rose Bibby
Phoebe Boulton
Katie Brown
Amanda Dodd
Jess Fletcher
Jak Humes
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I Can Still (Still)

Following on from the exhibition *I Can Still* (2018) at Gallery North, Sandyford building, Squires Annexe presents the new group exhibition, *I Can Still (Still)*.

I Can Still (Still) is a group show of works by final year undergraduate Fine Art students at Northumbria. It centres on 'making' and the 'making of making', offering insight into the varied and discursive forms of contemporary arts practice that are at the forefront of current cultural conversations and arts production. The works offer synergy between practice and exhibition making, and these investigations allow *I Can Still (Still)* to have a succinct message - praxis makes practice.

Curated by Sue Spark & Kate Liston

Georgia Bates and Ed Lawrenson

Georgia Bates and Ed Lawrenson, working with the NES artist residency in Skagastrond, Iceland, aim to document and increase the visibility of the small fishing village. Our work uses creative documentation through a live website, that will change everyday to display workshops from different artists. Throughout the exhibition we will communicate between Skagastrond and Gallery North to blur the lines between two institutions and investigate their individual approaches.

Robyn Benham

I had no intention of performing and yet I don't think my body would have kept up with my mind if not, I have begun to use my body to speak for me. Our bodies, the participants and I are communicating to our audience, testing reactions, waiting on them, waiting on you to participate in activating public space.

I ask, what is personal space and where can we control it? How often is this space interrupted by others? In one strand of work I map and plan collective performances that investigate personal space and boundaries between our bodies and publics. This primarily takes form through workshops, firstly in a private space with individuals. I ask my participants to discuss what is public space? The workshop then develops into a series of actions which guide participants towards new experiences of public space. I approach these activations through a learning to listen to a space, and through (re) negotiations of the individual's body and its movements. By borrowing approaches used by LARP artists I document work for installation in new ways, which exist as; Audio recorded de-briefs, Diagrams and reflective writing. Thus, constructing stimulating ways for work to live, but considers the privacy of the individuals who take part.

A habitual route is shifted by vulnerable gestures which echo an imbalance of control. By cutting out our visual environment - restricting sight using blindfolds - and restricting our movement - through remaining still for extended periods of time. The work aims to create private spaces for participants within structured and controlled public spaces. I work closely with individuals in a private setting they are used to. Guiding them through my approach to performance and then placing this into a public space with the intention of activating a 'dead-space'. Using an institutionally structured space allows me to interrupt how the public might usually approach such spaces. I am then able to question my relationship as an artist to my audience, if work resides in public space then who isn't the audience?

Rose Bibby

Museum artefacts have consistently interested me and in using specific forms of display, I aim to question what society values and why certain histories are given less attention than others, especially in relation to female lives. Influenced largely by Jean Baudrillard's writing on the precession of simulacra, I mimic environments such as shops and museums, picking out different aesthetic elements of existing spaces and forms, both physical and online.

In imagining everyday objects as artefacts, I aim to question who and what we place value on as a society. By showing the production of these blatantly fake 'artefacts', I reference mass production, the process by which the cheap clothing I replicate was originally made. In doing so, I consider the human labour involved in the production of these objects in order to question what contributes to their value and whether the objects produced are seen as more valuable than the workers producing them.

I also consider the term displacement in relation to the personal and cultural ownership of folk song, songs which have changed over time and in which the original author is unknown. Each song has a different story and each story represents a different part of our cultural history – showing how both attitudes and language have either changed or remained. Taking these narratives as starting points, I pick out certain lyrics that resonate with me and consider how they can be applied to today.

Phoebe Boulton

My art practice explores a mixture of paintings, weavings and sculptural assemblage pieces. The one main inspiration my work draws from is colour. In using colour, I investigate my interest in combining the studio, gallery and domestic objects, which I explore by merging the hand-made and the ready-made together. Works are often only as effective as the space in which they are situated. How a space feels is completely subject to what is placed within it and which part each object inhabits.

Katie Brown

dyslexia

noun

a general term for disorders that involve difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols, but that do not affect general intelligence.

I use my personal experience with dyslexia when creating text and image works, drawing from my daily frustrations which are relatable for people with and without dyslexia. I am interested in how other people perceive my work, as I do not see the same way as everyone else. I live in a tinted green world, where without this particular colour, text appears messy and confusing. Through my work, I show others what it is like to see in the same way I do, playing with the appearance of text. As I struggle with reading, I tend to view text as image, therefore I create artworks which change the function of language.

Amanda Dodd

The mycorrhizal species of fungi live hidden in the soil most of the time; they are probably best known for their fruiting structures which produce much of the wonderful weirdness depicted in TV and film works such as; *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Avatar* (2009). This distinctly fungal organism sprouts massive organic underground networks of floating spores. These spores, and the rotting of organic matter all capture the 'otherness' of fungi: neither plants nor animals, often bizarre-looking, and associated with decay. As weird as they may seem to us, fungi are integral to the story of the evolution of our landscapes and climate.

Mycorrhizal fungi are less diverse but more pervasive, never seeing the light of day. Their small size allows threads to burrow into the depths of rocks to retrieve essential nutrients. The fungi efficiently deliver soil minerals, in exchange for energizing sugars. This fungi to fungi symbiotic relationship, that works from plant to plant, shapes the biological makeup of nature's communities as a whole.

As a result of this growing body of evidence, many biologists have started using the term 'wood wide web' to describe the communications services that fungi provide to plants and other organisms.

*'These fungal networks make communication between plants, including those of different species, faster, and more effective...we don't think about it because we can usually only see what is above ground. But most of the plants you can see are connected below ground, not directly through their roots but via their mycelial connections.'*¹

This fungal internet exemplifies one of the great lessons of ecology: seemingly separate organisms are often so connected, and depend on each other. Like us with air, we all share the earth and all of its weirdness. The connection between purity of air and the wellness of such an ecosystem is a factor that must be conserved. Air occupies space. As well as having weight. The pollutants present in the surrounding air have a detrimental effect on the above ground fungi ecosystem, in turn affecting the complex network below ground. Without protection and control over the ever increasing pollution of our atmosphere, this co-evolutionary relationship between organic species will cease to exist.

¹ Fleming, N. (2014). Plants talk to each other using an internet of fungus. [online] Bbc.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20141111-plants-have-a-hidden-internet> [Accessed 29 May 2018].

Jess Fletcher

Light is an element of nature that is fundamental to life on earth, it is essential to enable human sense of sight and made possible the knowledge we have gathered through vision. Light is taken for granted, an everyday occurrence that doesn't require much thought yet it is so intrinsic to the function of every living being.

"Light is one of the most revealing elements in life ... It is the most spectacular experience of the senses ... But as its powers over the practice of daily living become sufficiently familiar, it is threatened with falling into oblivion. It remains for the artist and the occasional poetical moods of the common man to preserve the access to the wisdom that can be gained from the contemplation of light." (Morley, 2010)

The computer is a dominant force that is capable of transforming the dynamic of the sublime. For instance, the twenty-first century has been denied the choice to not be technological and it is near impossible to not come into contact with some form of tech-activity. The inability to make a decision to actively participate in this new age of technological living positions the twenty first century at the mercy of their own creation. This is perhaps where technology now enters into a relationship with the sublime.

"globalised communication technologies give rise to a perception of the everyday as fundamentally destabilising and excessive" (Morley, 2010) the increasing power of technology is possible to be feared and this connects to Burkes idea of 'terror' in sublimity, this supports the idea the sublime now no longer remains within the boundaries of nature.

Jak Humes

MASCULINITY

noun

1. possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men.

"handsome, muscled, and driven, he's a prime example of masculinity"

synonyms: virility, manliness, maleness, vigour, strength, muscularity, ruggedness, toughness, robustness

MASCULINITY, an indefinable concept that has been highly debated throughout history and is currently a widely discussed notion in contemporary society. Recent arguments have claimed that MASCULINITY is in crisis, due to its everchanging nature and its dominance threatened. This exhibition attempts to address these debates surrounding the idea of MASCULINITY and what it means and is defined as in the 21st century.

Coming from a working-class environment where MASCULINITY was accepted as the dominant social norm, I struggled with the expectation of MASCULINITY growing up as a queer man. This led to a resentment of MASCULINITY, which I continue to struggle with today. This encouraged me to be influenced by other Queer artists who have addressed the same issue. Using their influence as well as Queer and Feminist theory I have attempted to present a subversion of MASCULINITY through the eyes of a queer man.

'Tutu Face' attempts to address the infringement of MASCULINITY onto both gender and sexual identities and how this creates anxiety within identity for the individual. This is achieved through the juxtaposition of the tutu mask with intimidating masculine urban environments depicted in the images.

I attempt to address and subvert the concept of MASCULINITY, through identity, sexuality and gender. These three concepts influenced both myself and my work, as well as the decisions of placement for the pieces. I have intended to create an overwhelming experience which was unapologetically flamboyant and queer with the intent of addressing the dominance and rise of toxic MASCULINITY in contemporary society.

Ed Lawrenson

The acknowledgement of elephants in the room and structures, both physical and immaterial, is a way to shift the ways in which we approach our own experience within the art world. We can create our own contemporary art world or we can adhere to that of one that is already thriving. However, I would like to challenge the institution from within through Trojan elephant Activism techniques, but instead of being hidden inside ready to leap forward and create art, I would build this metaphorical Trojan elephant out of glass. I believe you can elicit discussion through the act of shedding lights on the infrastructures that you find yourself within. Albeit, from the elephants arse.

Clara Nathan

Filmmaking, video, photography and installation are the mediums that I use to explore and question femininity as a construct. Focusing predominantly on cinema and television, my practice examines how popular media reinforces an 'ideal' image of femininity.

The idyllic image of femininity has objectified, limited and shaped female bodies to please a male heterosexual scopophilia¹ gaze. We have been bombarded with image of femininity which is identified within popular media throughout the centuries, from the classical paintings of the female nude form to present day starlets found within film.

'Whoever has the cinema has a lever for subverting the world.' (Koch, 1985)

¹ The obtaining of sexual pleasure by looking at nude bodies, erotic photographs.

Becky Norrington

Discovery and experience in landscapes have always been at the core of my practice. The Northumberland coastline has been a significant source of material and inspiration over the past few years. One particular part of this coastline, Low Hauxley, has been an area I have been exploring in more depth due to some recent archaeological discoveries there. Excavations behind the dunes have revealed traces of our ancestor's lives from the Mesolithic period; human footprints, animal tracks and ancient forests have been preserved in the peat. Knowing of these histories, which for thousands of years have been hidden under our feet, has enriched my experience of these familiar landscapes, adding a deeper sense of mystery and curiosity.

Walking in these landscapes, collecting interesting objects, and making work on-site are vital processes in order to understand a place. From these on-site experiences, I can then make work in the studio which relates to the materiality of the landscape. The materials and objects I've collected during my own artistic excavations include animal bones, beaks, fossilised teeth, driftwood, dried seaweed, clay and charcoal. Working with these materials in the studio helps to evoke the place they came from, and helps me to further understand the relationships and conversations between me, as the artist, and the natural world. The forms of these objects, the mystery of their existence and their constant transformation inspires me to depict them as ambiguous forms in landscapes; creating abstract impressions more than a realistic representation. The mysterious nature of the work often feels quite spiritual, as these natural objects become the focus, and capture a certain elemental power. Like a Shaman, I seek to make relations with Nature's objects and places, creating narratives and understanding the dialogue between the artist and the landscape, Man and Nature.

Andrew Parr

While constructing the amusement park that now goes by the name of Vibrantville, my primary intention has been to blur the line between fiction and reality. The main mechanism that I have used to enforce this is through having a series of miniature attractions on one end and a marketing campaign comprised of (mostly fictional) event posters as well as a social media account.

To date, there have been four completed attractions that make up Vibrantville's roster: The Vinyl Spinning Teacups (2017), The Cake Carousel (2017), Nausea (2018) and The Steering Ferris Wheel (2018). These meccas are made from items including: record players, cake stands, recycled packaging, television monitors, car steering wheels, mirror ball motors etc. As implied in the amusement park's name, 'vibrancy' is a key component of these rides when it comes to the colour choices, which consist of red, yellow, blue and green.

On the other hand, the goal of the marketing campaign for Vibrantville has been about crafting a narrative that has seen these individual rides each have their own solo exhibitions. Each of those are archived here with posters chronicling grand opening events of these attractions at different dates, times and locations across the globe such as the United States, Japan, Israel, Spain and the United Kingdom. A further layer of documentation, mainly covering the construction process of the meccas, can be seen on the official Vibrantville account on Instagram (@vibrantville_2017_18).

Don't forget to put #vibrantville on social media!

YouTube Link to the film Nausea: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj8bIXWnqXU&index=3&list=PLR2TdPrZc8n2T5CorSRJETyF9IIEEFTk5>.

Chloe Randall

From what began as a study of the depiction of the artist's self beyond physical appearance and realism – my practice has grown into an exploration of media, the self and the unknown entities that emerge somewhere in-between. I use myself as subject and a medium studying how an identity can be personified or represented through object and shape. Through this exploration of colour and media the work evolves a life beyond my own self-portrayal; each with its unique quirks, personalities and spirit, the orbs become their own being. Through the process of ongoing experimentation, the pieces evolved naturally - each orb developed its own quirks and traits; sprouting legs, fur and woollen backs the orbs gained a life of their own. Creature like characteristics led me to view the pieces as their own beings, each possessing a unique personality, new identities grew and blossomed. From what began as a study into myself and portrayal became an exploration of media and object - the art I created as an extension of myself evolved an identity of its own.

Ellen Ranson

I am interested in how different paintings are granted different levels of prominence and credibility within a gallery. Gallery and museum spaces have been typically dominated with white male artists' representations of the female figure. They decorate both physical spaces and the art historical canon as embodiments of fears and desires central to the patriarchy. Alongside LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities, their image or the images of which are elevated in history becomes distorted through this very narrow perspective. This feeds the viewer stereotyped, disempowered and tokenised images of these 'others'.

Abstract Expressionism is emblematic of these issues, whereby female artists' of the era were marginalised and disregarded, whilst male artists' rose to prominence. This blueprint can be applicable to contemporary patriarchal power structures.

Alongside formal explorations, my work aims to perform the arrogance and ego associated with the Abstract Expressionist male painter archetype.

How do these historical issues filter into the contemporary gendering of abstract painters?

Kat Syddall

Every experience we embody alters our perspective on life. It is my aim to create art that is in itself an occasion, an active encounter that alters the individual human experience in a positive manner. An art that stimulates all the senses, that triggers memory and provides a new sense of pleasure, one that is ungendered, accessible and ageless. An art that explores colour, form, our relationship with space and our own kinesphere. An art that seeks out pleasure in the harmonious tensions of movement and restriction, sweet and sickly, precision and imperfection.

Greek philosopher Plato visualised 3 dimensional harmony through his 5 perfect geometric crystals. Without geometry, space is an infinite void. Using it gives us a tangible image of space, allowing us to move with fluidity.

I believe that true pleasure can be found in action, encounter and movement. This concept was explored by dancer and philosopher Rudolph von Laban, who spent his life theorising movement and creating his system of Labanotation (a series of symbols denoting human motion), using Plato's crystals as a map to consciously move through space.

Playing with methods of Labanotation and sacred geometrical movement in my performance work, I made a series of prints that create a visual lexicon of these gestures, with a focus on the body in motion as a site of true pleasure. This print encompasses notions of process and abstraction, combining personal desires with everyday pleasures through colour and repetition. The sculpture in which this print hangs is a reflection on Plato's icosahedron, and mirrors the viewers own movement.

Darryn Sharpe

About the Cheese

Someone once told me “it defies analysis” and I wonder if that’s true. I often ask myself what ‘it’ is that I do, or even do ‘it’ for. As Philip Guston would say “we are image-makers and image ridden” maybe he was right, but maybe he was wrong. Is it there to ‘attract’ or ‘repulse’ as it floats precariously amidst an inertia of boredom. But it is only just a painting after all. Composition and structure are merely constituents that are pleasing to the eye that the old masters put into play. But it is only a painting after all, despite its cheesy distraction that is only paint. Maybe it’s not enough to ask what we want from a painting, but to ask the painting what it wants, what it would say if at all it could say or want or even need anything. But it can’t, it’s just a painting after all. If you can stand there and laugh then that’s good enough, because in the end it’s all a little bit absurd really.

Catherine Thompson

My practice explores the boundary between painting and sculpture, informed by the idea of a heterotopia – a place where multiple realities co-exist within one space, allowing viewers to inhabit the same space as the art. As traditional boundaries dissolve, my work becomes more inviting and is part of an expanded field of painting/sculpture. By considering alternative ways in which to examine objects and how these may be termed, the painting/sculpture combinations allow for interaction, revealing hidden details as you move around the space it inhabits. This idea was expressed through a Rosalind Krauss thesis, titled *The Expanded Field of Sculpture* (1979). I have been further influenced by architecture, monuments and landscapes. The pieces take on new forms that reflect the traditional, yet are quirky and leave the viewer to ponder if I have repurposed furniture.

The structures take on a sense of something new whilst also reflecting a reminiscent quality of home. In retrospect, my practice has been heavily influenced by my past, such as my chosen colour palette. Though at first subconscious, I realised it is the colours of my bedroom walls throughout its alterations from childhood to adulthood, which I have used within my work. With these bright pastel, candy colours, my practice holds a warmth that is both appealing and inviting, a home away from home. Similarly, artist Jessica Stockholder creates site specific works with various home-based materials.

With geometric forms the structures hold similarities to furniture, further relating ideas of the home. These structures hold the “ghost of function”. The sculptures are functional only in that they hold other materials, they have become something with a new aesthetic purpose. Discarded materials such as paper make further associations to the everyday. The paper becomes deceiving, usually overlooked and considered mass produced and flimsy. Yet paired with the contrast of wood, the paper appears solid and imposing. The paper supports its own weight and holds its presence within the space. It could appear threatening, a giant paper cut waiting to happen. There is “playful deceit” within these works, a “trapped energy” being released as these pieces transform their material structure. There are considerable contrasts between the strong, rigid wood compared to the soft flowing movements of the flexible paper. The solid structures are planned whilst the paintings are instinctive, each creating different effects that complement one another.

These hybrid forms hang in the balance between old and new. The rippling and marking of the paper creates a permanence that reveals action. It is possible to imagine the crushing of the paper or the rustling sounds this creates, bringing a focus on time. The twisted forms emerge like a rejected idea crumpled into a ball and thrown to the bin and discarded. This discarded and forgotten thing holds a presence where it recaptures importance. It holds tension and an ephemeral state in which it could fall apart at any moment.

GREAT
EXHIBITION
OF THE
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09 SEP '18



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