Unquiet Moments: Capturing the Everyday

Nigel Shafran, Fruit bowl collecting water from Dad's office, 1997-1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Exhibition catalogue

MA Curating the Art Museum
The Courtauld Institute of Art

THE COURTAULD

Unquiet Moments: Capturing the Everyday is an online exhibition that can be visited at https://unquietmoments.courtauld.ac.uk. The exhibition opened on 18 June 2020.

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Acknowledgements

Our thanks

Unquiet Moments would not have been possible without endless support and encouragement from numerous individuals. We thank first our Head of Programme, Martin Caiger-Smith, who has been unwaveringly supportive and generous with his wisdom and expertise. Without his insight and genuine care, this exhibition could not have been realised.

Likewise, Dr Barnaby Wright and his colleagues at The Courtauld Gallery have provided invaluable feedback from the start of the process in December 2019. We have in fact called upon almost every department at The Courtauld, and could not have made this move online without Eva Bensasson and Geoff Moss, or generated such a level of interest around the exhibition without Ashleigh Toll and the marketing and communications team. We would also like to thank Grace Davenport for her expert guidance on development.

We have benefitted from the unparalleled expertise of Sam McGuire and Joanna Woodall in developing our written and audio interpretation, and are incredibly grateful for the personal interest they have taken in our project.

The Arts Council Collection have quite literally made the impossible possible, and we are incredibly grateful to Joshua Dowson, Natalie Rudd, Heather Welsh and Beth Hughes who have worked tirelessly to make our ambitions possible. Likewise, we thank Eleanor Scott and the team at Somerset House, who have generously shared expertise and shared their platform with us to host our public programme.

In this catalogue, we would particularly like to recognise our graphic designer, Mathilda Della Torre, whose elegant hand-drawn designs have done so much to imbue this online project with a sense of human contact and intimacy.

Finally, we would like to thank all our artists and their galleries, who have been incredibly supportive of *Unquiet Moments* and the exhibition's move online. They have made the navigation of this unknown territory not only manageable but liberating.

The Courtauld and Somerset House collaborative digital programme is supported by

Morgan Stanley

With thanks also to:

The Courtauld Gallery
Dr Alexandra Gerstein
Coralie Malissard
Dr Ernst Vegelin
Graeme Barraclough
Dr Karen Serres
Dr Karin Kyburz
Kate Edmondson
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Matthew Thompson
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The Courtauld Institute of Art
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Dr Fern Insh
Dr Grace Williams
The IT Department
Lorna Gozzard

Sutton PR
Fiona Russell
Laura Preece

Arts Council Collection
Jill Constantine
Robert Hill

Somerset House
Abigail Francis
Amy Warner
Jian Wei Lim
Karishma Rafferty

Michelle Evans
Stephanie Pilling

Special thanks to all our artists, their galleries and estates:

Alejandra Carles-Tolra
Alek O.
Dr Andrea Luka Zimmerman
Barbara Walker MBE
Charlotte Prodger
Fiona Crisp
Kabir Hussain
Karl Ohiri
Kathy Prendergast
Linda Karshan
Sir Michael Craig-Martin CBE
Dr Mikhail Karikis
Dr Mohini Chandra
Nigel Shafran
Sir Richard Long CBE
Dr Sunil Gupta
The Susan Hiller Estate
Dr Vanley Burke
Veronica Ryan
Zarina Bhimji

Cristea Roberts Gallery
Gagosian Gallery
Hollybush Gardens
Lisson Gallery
Matt's Gallery
Paula Cooper Gallery
Towner Art Gallery

Introduction

Unquiet Moments: Capturing the Everyday celebrates the recording of everyday life through the making of art. The images and objects in this exhibition capture small wonders and disappointments, intimate joys and tragedies. As diaries of personal experience, portraits of families and communities, and traces of loss, these artworks illuminate the moments that shape our individual and collective histories.

We are living in a moment of unquiet. We hope that this exhibition and its catalogue offer visitors a sense of human connection and joy in a difficult time. Yet we also hope that this exhibition encourages a useful kind of unquiet, an unsettling of thought and a refusal to be silent. At the moment of this writing, in the ongoing context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global movement for racial justice, we believe that attention to everyday stories and struggles is rendered more, rather than less important. As Saidiya Hartman writes, a freer life must be 'invested in and articulated…as an ideal and as an everyday practice'. The imagination of who and what we are, as individuals and as a society, takes place in the realm of the everyday, in life as we live it.

This digital exhibition, which opened on 18 June 2020, speaks to a time in which a global pandemic has altered the rhythms of daily life for many. With works of art drawn from the Arts Council Collection and The Courtauld Gallery, *Unquiet Moments* calls attention to the diversity of day-to-day life as experienced across many times and places. Spanning four centuries of artistic practice, these works testify to an enduring impulse to record, reflect upon, and reimagine the everyday.

It is often artists who do the work of helping us to be conscious of the everyday as a realm that demands our attention, the labour of our care, and our moral investment. By their own intensity of observation and transfiguration of the ordinary, artists demand that we look, and look again. As Richard Deming writes, 'By bringing [the] ordinary world into focus,' artists 'work to increase a sense of what it means to live a life, to deepen an awareness of what constitutes a relationship to the world as we find it'. A deepened awareness of the world as we find it may be a first step toward the world as we wish it to be.

In this catalogue, we are grateful for the opportunity to include interviews with several of the extraordinary artists whose work is featured in our show: Veronica Ryan, Nigel Shafran, and Barbara Walker.

We are pleased to present the work of scholars, artists, and writers who have generously responded to our theme and illuminated the connections between this exhibition and its historical moment.

The Black & African Solidarity Show, a London-based platform that celebrates the work of Black artists and academics, responds to our section of 'visual diaries' with an archive that foregrounds daily practices of Black joy and love. B.A.S.S. community members Craig Stevens, Feven Eyob, and Shamanie Briscoe weave together poetry, music, and performance. Collectively entitled *Heaven's Daily Regimen*, these creative practices bridge the quotidian and the transcendent, building heaven with the materials to hand.

Mallika J. Balakrishnan, whose academic work focuses on human rights, philosophy, and the politics of Latin America and the Caribbean, responds to our section of 'family albums and community portraits' with a lyrical essay, *Everyday Resistance*. Her work speaks to the 'especially unquiet' daily experience of 'those of us whose communities are routinely Othered and racialized', yet also illuminates the resilience that lies in everyday pleasure. She writes that '[i]n the resonance of our little joys, we cultivate a defiance'.

Jessie LB, a Minneapolis-based poet, fiction writer, and activist, responds to our section on 'traces of loss' with a creative work entitled *Everyday Traces_ Nostalgia*. In this series of interlinked excerpts from her journal, she explores the loss of human connections and bodily touch resulting from months of quarantine. And in the context of ongoing protests against police brutality and systemic racism in the city, she also looks to 'the ways in which oppression has been undone before, especially in our small lives, our secret intimacies with ourselves and each other'.

As curators, we have taken time to reflect upon the exhibition and the choices we made as we developed and adapted it, and our discussions are presented here as well.

In October 2019, our group of nine students embarked on a 12-month MA Curating the Art Museum programme at The Courtauld Institute of Art in London. The programme focuses upon the history, methodology, and practice of museum curating. Each year, the culmination of the course is the opening of a fully student-run exhibition. For emerging curators, this is a unique opportunity to experience the creation of an exhibition from concept to installation, negotiating every aspect from official loan requests to marketing, events, and exhibition budgeting.

The process of creating *Unquiet Moments* began in December 2019, with a brief to engage with its planned site at Somerset House. The exhibition was to be staged in the Embankment Galleries and was to respond to the building's history of housing all records of births, marriages, and deaths in the UK and archiving the wills of the nation. As we thought about this history, we were struck by what such a registry might omit, which stories might remain untold. We conceived of our exhibition as an alternative archive, in which overlooked moments of everyday life might be gathered and preserved.

At the end of March 2020, we learned that, due to the pandemic, physical space in the Embankment Galleries would not be available and the exhibition would have to be developed entirely in digital form. The Courtauld shifted to remote learning, and many of us returned to our home countries. After that, we picked up where we had left off, using Zoom and WhatsApp to bridge the distance—from Los Angeles to Brussels—that now separated us.

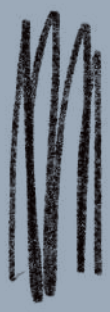
As the pandemic forced museums and galleries across the world to close their doors to the public, we joined the rest of the art world in rethinking the exhibition model. We recognized that, under the circumstances of the pandemic, our interrogation of the 'everyday' had only become more relevant; the questions we were asking only more urgent. What followed for us was a new kind of learning, focused on developing an online platform that would allow the exceptional quality of the works of art to shine through digital screens. While we acknowledged the challenges, we also knew that an online audience would be larger and more diverse than any audience we could have attracted to a physical gallery space. We were excited at the opportunities that the online platform would offer for us to develop and present a wide range of creative and interpretive content and innovative strategies to increase accessibility.

Unquiet Moments: Capturing the Everyday is our response to these unusual circumstances. We hope that visitors find a measure of connection, solace, and understanding in the extraordinary works of art and in the interpretive materials that we have brought together in this exhibition.

Visual Diaries

These works of art provide a visual record of the passage of time and the course of personal experience. Drawing on the observation of daily events, they range from traditional artists' sketchbooks to more unusual records of a day's journey, such as a book whose pages are dipped in the mud of a flowing river.

Artists also use their work to look inward: to record moments in which personal identity shifts and evolves. These visual diaries capture the minute, day-to-day changes that take place in body and mind as we grow and age. Literally or figuratively holding up a mirror to the viewer, these artists invite us to engage in self-reflection.



Curatorial Conversation

Curators Julie Bléas, Elizabeth Keto, and Anastasia Pineschi reflect upon their favourite artworks in this section, the diverse ways in which artists have recorded daily experiences, and the resonance of the visual diary in the internet age. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

EK: How would you say that we developed the theme of 'Visual Diaries'? What were some of the key works that helped you personally think about and define that theme?

JB: I feel like for me 'Visual Diaries' was always at the heart of the overall theme of *Unquiet Moments*. I remember that when we first started, we were really interested in the idea of artists recording moments of daily life and depicting scenes of everyday life. We were interested in how artists were actively recording and preserving these moments that might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten.

AP: It's so interesting when you take a look at the section that we've organised now, and you see the diversity of how people are recording these very personal moments. You have something like [*The Dreaming Youths* by Oskar] Kokoschka, which is a very imaginative, almost fictionalized but beautiful narrative tale, and then you have something like [*Ten Months* by Susan] Hiller, which is more scientific, academic, and documentary. I really like this section in particular because of that diversity.

JB: I like what you say about diversity, because when you look at this section, you have [*BRIDGIT* by Charlotte] Prodger or the sketches by Rembrandt and Cézanne, which are recordings of very mundane, everyday experiences. But then you have the Kokoschka or the Hiller, which are these incredible recordings of life-changing moments. I like that we were able to bring together these records of completely different kinds of experiences.

EK: What do you think makes a visual diary different from a more traditional written journal?

AP: For me one of the differences between a written account and a visual diary, as we've presented it, is the idea of form, because in a written account there is often a narrative structure, with the date at the top of the page. In visual diaries, you can throw that out the window and think instead about how to record these experiences in the most poignant way for yourself.

JB: Yes. If we had compiled extracts from people's written diaries, I don't think that we would have had the same sense of diversity. There's also a difference in the sense that in a work like Hiller's, she's taken the photographs, then returned to them and cropped them and decided how to present them. In a written diary, you might expect to find a recording that's more stream of consciousness. It's really interesting to experience what's essentially a constructed diary.

EK: What are some of your favourite works in this section?

JB: There's [*Kid's Stuff 1-7* by Michael] Craig-Martin. I'm really glad that we included it, because the works in this section often focus on the artist's perspective and experiences. But the Craig-Martin is also asking you to reflect on your own experiences, and I think that's a really clever way of including the viewer.

I think the drawing by Cézanne also resonates very strongly at this moment. It's a sketch of his wife sewing, and it resonates with this sense that we've all picked up hobbies recently and been so absorbed in these quiet pastimes that we wouldn't have paid much attention to.

AP: One of the works I've been thinking about is Richard Long's *River Avon Book*,

specifically because it embodies a physical action. In order to produce this book, he actually had to go out, take a walk, dip the pages in the river, and bind it into a book. There are these mud deposits on the pages, and there are patterns made by water that has drained off in different ways. It's a book, which ties back the idea of a diary, but there are no words in it. The work has such a strong emotional significance to him, and it's just mysterious enough that the viewer is drawn in.

EK: I love that sense of mystery. You imagine secrets settling into the mud of the river.

AP: I mean, rivers have been a part of human experience since the beginning of time. You set up cities next to rivers, and people rely on rivers for their source of life and water. In the UK, you have this whole sport around mudlarking, where people will go to the River Thames and start sifting through the mud at the bottom to find random things. People can find these very personal moments and relationships to water.

EK: I also wanted to pick up on something you said about the Cézanne, Julie: how it resonates at this moment. How would you say this theme or the works in this section relate to the moment we're experiencing right now?

JB: Actually, I was just thinking now about the Hiller, and about how for so many women, the experience of pregnancy has been so changed in this situation. When we think about how COVID-19 has impacted our lives, it's hard to even understand just how *many* aspects of daily life have been altered.

AP: I think that in the context of COVID, there are also moments like the one captured in the Cézanne: moments that you're grateful that you didn't miss. Normally if you're raising a child, you might be missing all these important learning moments. Now maybe you have the time to develop an even closer emotional bond with your child or your spouse, where normally you might have quite different lives and schedules and see each other only when you eat dinner and go to bed.

JB: I think it relates to a sense of slowing down during these months of quarantine. Artworks like the Rembrandt sketches remind you that even if you're living with someone, you might not always take the time to slow down and really look at and appreciate them.

EK: Could you talk about how the different works fit together? Were there any works that you started to see differently because of the juxtapositions or groupings here?

JB: I was thinking about the Craig-Martin and Kokoschka. The [statements] that Craig-Martin [makes] in his work — 'How strange it is to be my present age', 'How strange it would be to be twice my present age'— are similar to the questions that, in a very different way, Kokoschka raises about longing and self-discovery and change. Craig-Martin was in his thirties when he made that work, and he was, like Kokoschka, in the process of growing up and changing.

AP: It's strange to think about recording a process of transformation, because it's like there's a bridge between who you were and who you are. How do you record something and relate to it if that's not who you are any more? I think both of those works are good examples of how you might relate to a past self whom you no longer identify with.

EK: How do you feel that the artworks or theme of this section were changed by the move online?

AP: I think that there's a huge potential for a digital space to be a visual diary. The

creation of personal blogs or even MySpace and other social media sites are often archives of how you were in the past.

JB: And the thing with diaries in general is that you often own them, you handle them and see them up close. With the online platform, we were able to allow people to zoom in and see up close in a way that they might not be able to in a physical space. Especially for the works on paper, you can't get that close when they're in frames on the wall. Online, you can really get a sense of the artist's marks.

Heaven's Daily Regimen

Black & African Solidarity Show

The Black & African Solidarity Show (B.A.S.S.) is a vehicle for the celebration and dissemination of Black and African expressive culture. We sustain community through our creativity and shared passion to hold space for Black joy. *Heaven's Daily Regimen* presents snapshots of everyday love practices. The entries represent creativity as a tool to construct the world in which we belong and in which we believe.

For Feven Eyob, every ፊደል(character) is an attempt to take root in the tradition of their ancestors. A balancing act upon the slackline of old and new, in pursuit of a grounded existence. Similarly, Shamanie Briscoe, a singer/songwriter, channels and directs her lifeforce through the vibrations of her voice and guitar.

Through this divinely prescribed training regimen, B.A.S.S., a regiment of warriors, adjust our trajectories for the radical future that awaits.

Heaven's Daily Regimen
Craig Stevens

In these vessels

everyday is a transoceanic voyage
Blindly navigating through a cage of tidal waves
Thrown overboard to battle the sharks and the sea or
deposited in a foreign land where heaven is a fantasy for sanity

So we toiled
and we toiled
For centuries long
The pain you can feel in them old working songs, but

What if we got heaven all wrong?

What if heaven wasn't earned but built?
If so - we deserve it by now
If so - we should make it somehow

A revelation such as this will change your day-to-day in every way
I'm proud to say

Beneath this brown skin is predestined
Agape, so

everyday we train our bodies
We train our voices
We train our minds

We sharpen our balance, tongues and pens
Heaven's daily regimen

We forge creativity into swords of light
Guerilla warfare
Liberation in plain sight

Everyday we fight, we win
Heaven's daily regiment

An expedition within
A mission to reclaim pillaged loot
A royal horde of cosmology and kinship
Bronzes of dignity and serenity

A centering of our divinity
A daily dose of joy
Love as intravenous therapy

Though it may not look like God's master plan
Here we stand

Heaven in vision is prerequisite of heaven in hand

The dreams of our ancestors
Beyond what we may understand

We land
somewhere between tears of joy and pain
For how well we know the burn of hell

But these days we labour day and night
Paradise is our birthright, and

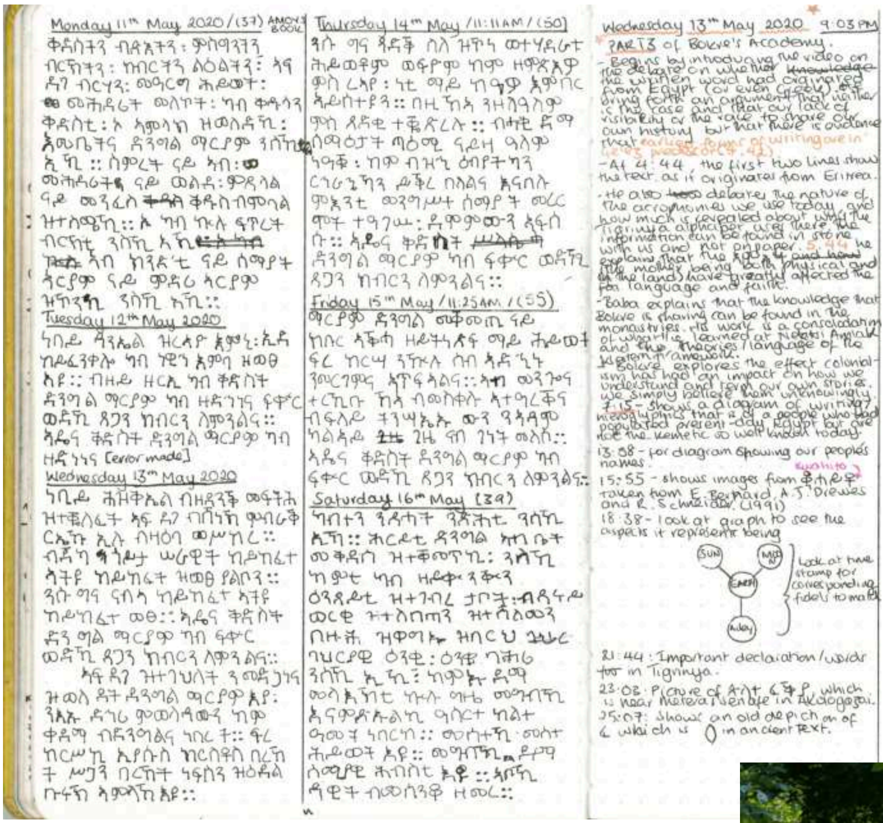
As we exhale our heaven into existence
The children of gods
Rest in radical resistance

Everyday I get closer and closer
The Sun gets warmer and warmer

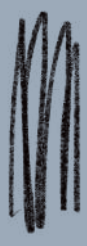
Closer to myself

They say health is wealth
And I believe that

I need to get healthy for myself.
I need to trust myself
I need to love on myself
So I can show you what is love.


Monday 11th May 2020
Thursday 14th May
Tuesday 12th May 2020
Friday 15th May
Wednesday 13th May 2020
Saturday 16th May
Wednesday 13th May 2020 9:03PM
PART 3 of Bokre's Academy.
the debate on whether
the written word had originated from Egypt
the first two lines show
language and faith.
Baba explains that the knowledge that Bokre is sharing can be found in the monastries.
explores the effect colonialism has had on how we understand and
we simply believe them unknowingly.
13:58 - for diagram showing our peoples names.
shows images from
and R. Schneider (1991)
18:38 - look at graph to see the aspects it represents being
SUN
Look at time stamp for corresponding fidels to match
21:44 : Important declaration / words too in Tigrinya.
25:07: Shows an old depiction of
in ancient text.

Works of Art



Sir Michael Craig-Martin CBE RA (born 1941)
Born Ireland, works UK

Kid's Stuff 1-7, 1973
Mirror, tape, and text on plastic, 7 parts, each 40.6 x 30.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC1/1974

In *Kid's Stuff 1-7*, an early work made when the artist was 32, Craig-Martin explores the curious revelations that come along with aging. Viewers can see themselves in a series of seven mirrors, each combined with phrases that blend nostalgia and self-reflection. Inviting viewers to occupy his position and to imagine their own life experiences, Craig-Martin pays careful attention not only to the physical experience of aging, but also to the inner emotions beyond the mirror's surface.

Artwork Text:

How strange it is to be my present age.

I feel I know myself.

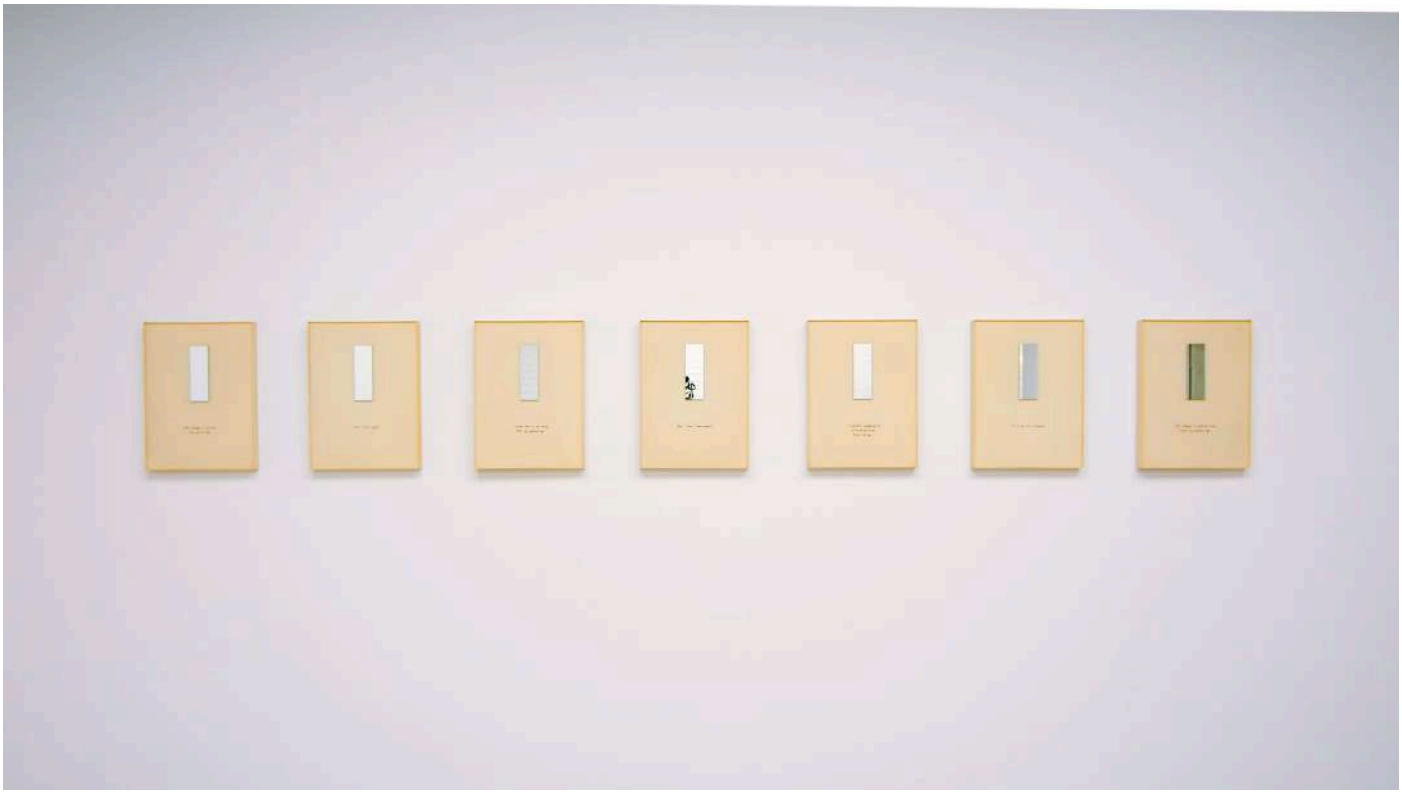
I recall how it was being half my present age.

Did I feel I knew myself?

I remember wondering how it would be to be twice my age.

It is not as I imagined.

How strange it would be to be twice my present age.



Michael Craig-Martin, *Kid's Stuff 1-7*, 1973. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist, Gagosian Gallery, and Cristea Roberts Gallery. Still from a specially commissioned film made in collaboration with the Arts Council Collection. Film credit Ed Prosser.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-1669)
Born and worked Netherlands

Saskia seated at a table, undated
Chalk (red) on paper, 10.6 x 12 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1978.PG.185

Two studies of Saskia, c.1640
Chalk (red) on paper, 13.7 x 15.5 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1978.PG.184

Saskia(?) sitting up in bed, holding a child, c.1635
Red chalk on laid paper, 10.6 x 14.1 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1978.PG.183

Drawing played a central role in the period of artistic flowering known as the 'Dutch Golden Age' in the 17th-century Netherlands. In addition to its importance in the conception and preparation of paintings and prints, drawing emerged at this time as a medium to be mastered and even collected in its own right.

Perhaps the best-known Dutch artist of this period, Rembrandt, embraced drawing from life. He often sketched his first wife Saskia van Uylenburgh. He oscillates between the more precise, descriptive strokes that depict Saskia's face and the thicker, more fluid, almost abstract lines of her body and clothing. Both a glimpse of everyday, private moments and a celebration of line, this group of studies suggests the artist's gift for elevating humble subjects.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, *Saskia seated at a table*, undated © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, *Two studies of Saskia*, c.1640 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, *Saskia(?) sitting up in bed, holding a child*, c.1635 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)
Born and worked France

Hortense Fiquet (Madame Cézanne) sewing, c. 1880
Graphite on paper (pale cream wove, with laid and chain lines), 30.9 x 47.2 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1978.PG.239

Cézanne frequently depicted his future wife, Marie-Hortense Fiquet, engaged in quiet activities: sitting, sewing, and sleeping. He uses both line and negative space to construct this drawing of her. Cézanne is known for leaving drawings and paintings 'unfinished'. Perhaps intentionally, the area of paper beneath Hortense's hands is blank. While we can tell that Hortense is sewing, our imagination must fill in the void. Like Hortense absorbed in her sewing, we are absorbed in Cézanne's web of lines.

Relatively little is known about Hortense. Cézanne spent years hiding their relationship from his family. His sketch captures her in an everyday pursuit, memorializing a small moment of her life. Yet the sketch also seems to leave much unknown, concealing even as it reveals.

Paul Cézanne, *Hortense Fiquet (Madame Cézanne) sewing*, c. 1880 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Linda Karshan (born 1947)
Born US and works US and UK

15.6.00, 2000
Graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC54/2000

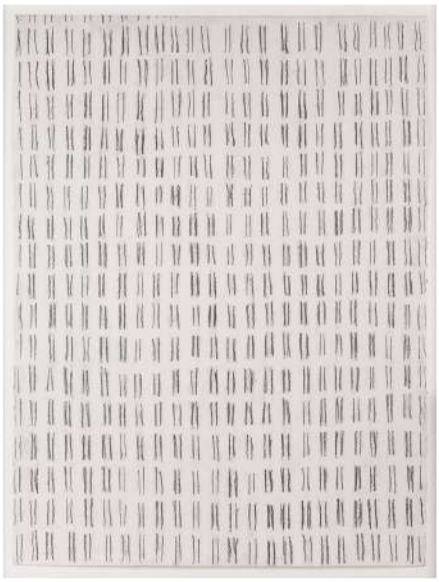
8.6.00, 2000
Graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC56/2000

5.8.00, 2000
Graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC55/200

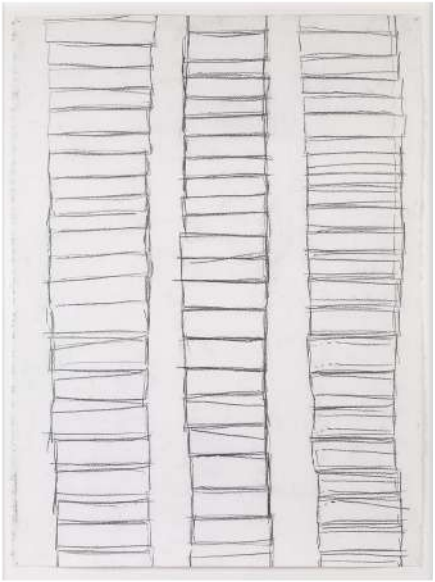
From a simple repertoire of horizontal and vertical lines, Karshan creates a near-infinity of different possible arrangements. Her marks and patterns are abstract, yet the series of lines also suggest the rhythm of breathing and walking.

She describes her drawings as capturing 'the creative moment when the work comes into being, and the artist recognizes it'. Her quick, simple marks catch this moment as it passes through her body and onto the page. Each of these drawings recalls to her a specific day when she stood at her studio table.

Linda Karshan, *15.6.00, 2000*. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.



Linda Karshan, *8.6.00, 2000*. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.



Linda Karshan, *5.8.00, 2000*. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Sir Richard Long CBE RA (born 1945)
Born and works UK

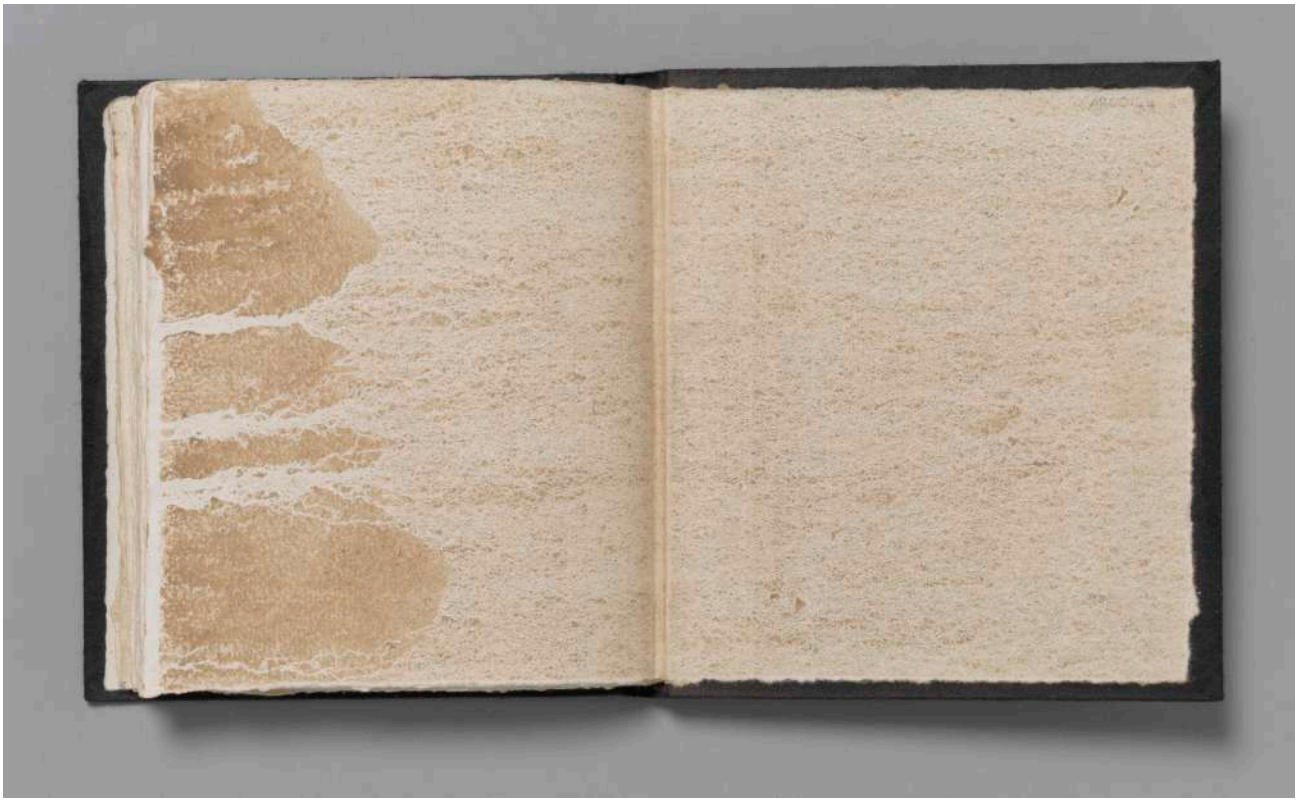
River Avon Book, 1979
Mud and water on paper, 14 x 16.4 x 1.4cm
Arts Council Collection, AC 2003

River Avon Book, 1979
Book with mud on paper, 15.8 x 14.2 x 1cm
ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, AR00144

Edition of 120, 106 produced

Long is deeply connected to the River Avon. He often calls it his 'home' river, as it flows through his hometown of Bristol. Walking along the riverbank and dipping enormous pages into the river mud at key points along the way, Long created an intimate portrait of the waterway as he experienced it on his journey. After allowing the pages to dry and binding them into a book, Long was able to bring the river home with him. The book is fragile; many of the pages are caked in mud, which has begun to flake over the years. But to Long, the book's importance lies not only in its physical record of the river's changing waters, but also in the way it evokes his own experiences over a lifetime.

Richard Long, *River Avon Book*, 1979. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland © Richard Long. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020. Image courtesy of the Arts Council Collection.



Richard Long, *River Avon Book*, 1979. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland © Richard Long. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020. Image courtesy of Tate.

Charlotte Prodger (born 1974)
Born and works UK

BRIDGIT, 2016
Single channel HD video, 32 minutes
Arts Council Collection, ACC15/2016

BRIDGIT explores how our identities can constantly shift in response to the people we meet, spaces we occupy, and memories we hold. Prodger's film was created using a compilation of three- to four-minute clips recorded on her iPhone, overlaid with spoken word and text. Shots of the artist's home, views from the train and of the Aberdeenshire countryside are accompanied by insights into the artist's experience as a queer woman. *BRIDGIT* employs the intimate, personal histories of Prodger and her circle as a means to explore the formation of the self. The title refers to the Neolithic goddess Bridgit, whose identity has shape-shifted across time and geographical boundaries.

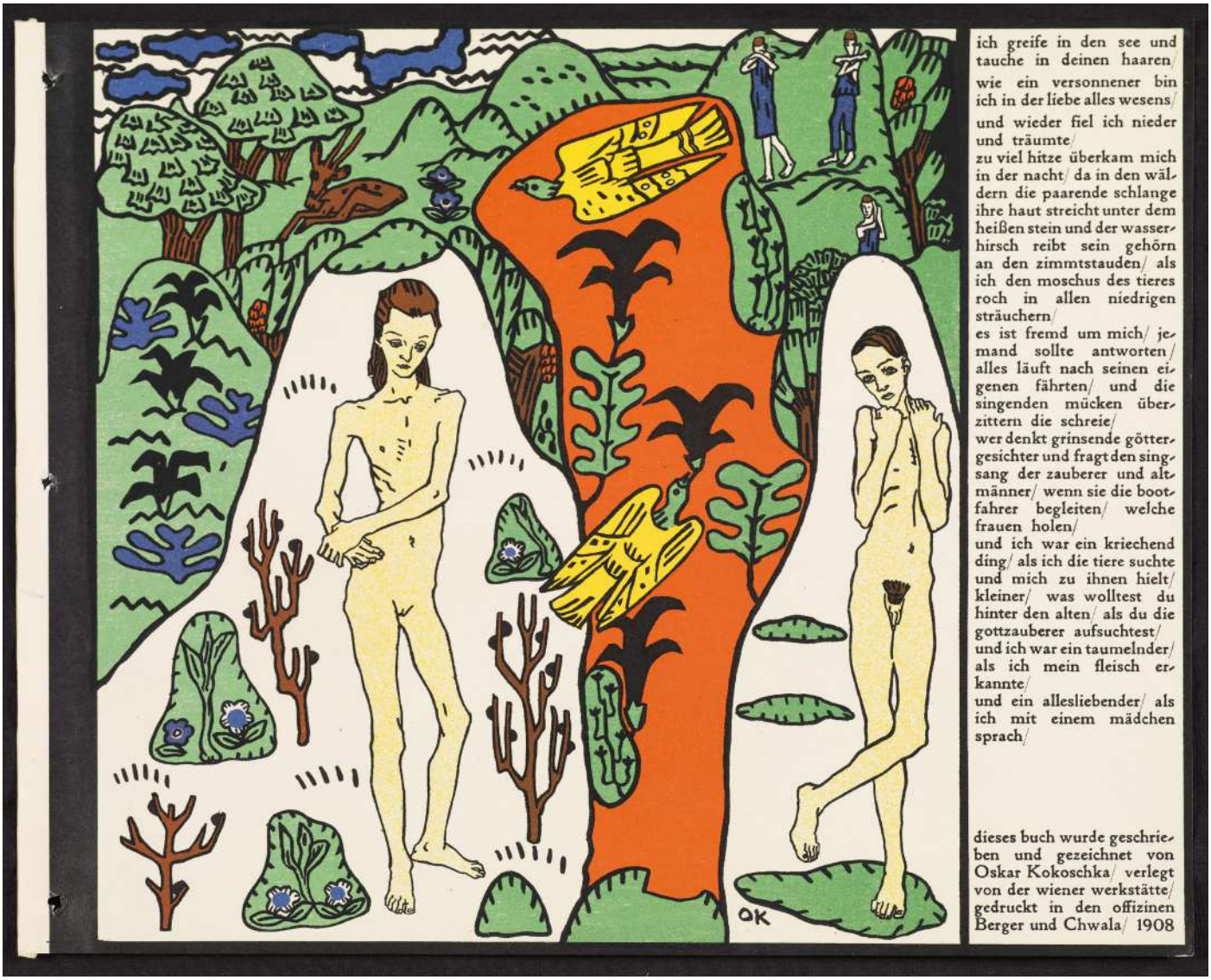
Charlotte Prodger, still from *BRIDGIT*, 2016. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980)
Born Austria and worked Austria, UK, and Switzerland

The Girl Li and I, from *The Dreaming Youths (Die träumenden Knaben)*, 1908
Artist's book with eight colour lithographs, each 29.3 x 24 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, G.1978.PG.88

When a 21-year-old student, Kokoschka was commissioned to illustrate a children's fairy tale, but soon abandoned this brief to create his own picture-poem dealing with themes of adolescent love and sexual awakening. Kokoschka described the work as 'a kind of record, in words and pictures, of my own state of mind at the time'. He later called it his 'first love letter'. The dreamlike tale was inspired by his own life, evoking his feelings for a fellow art student named Lilith.

Unfolding like a journey, the lithograph illustrations depict a series of colourful landscapes scattered with wild flowers and inhabited by animals. In the final lithograph, entitled *The Girl Li and I*, Kokoskcha places a naked couple, reminiscent of Adam and Eve, in an idyllic garden setting. Each figure stands alone, encircled by a shroud, forever separated from the other.



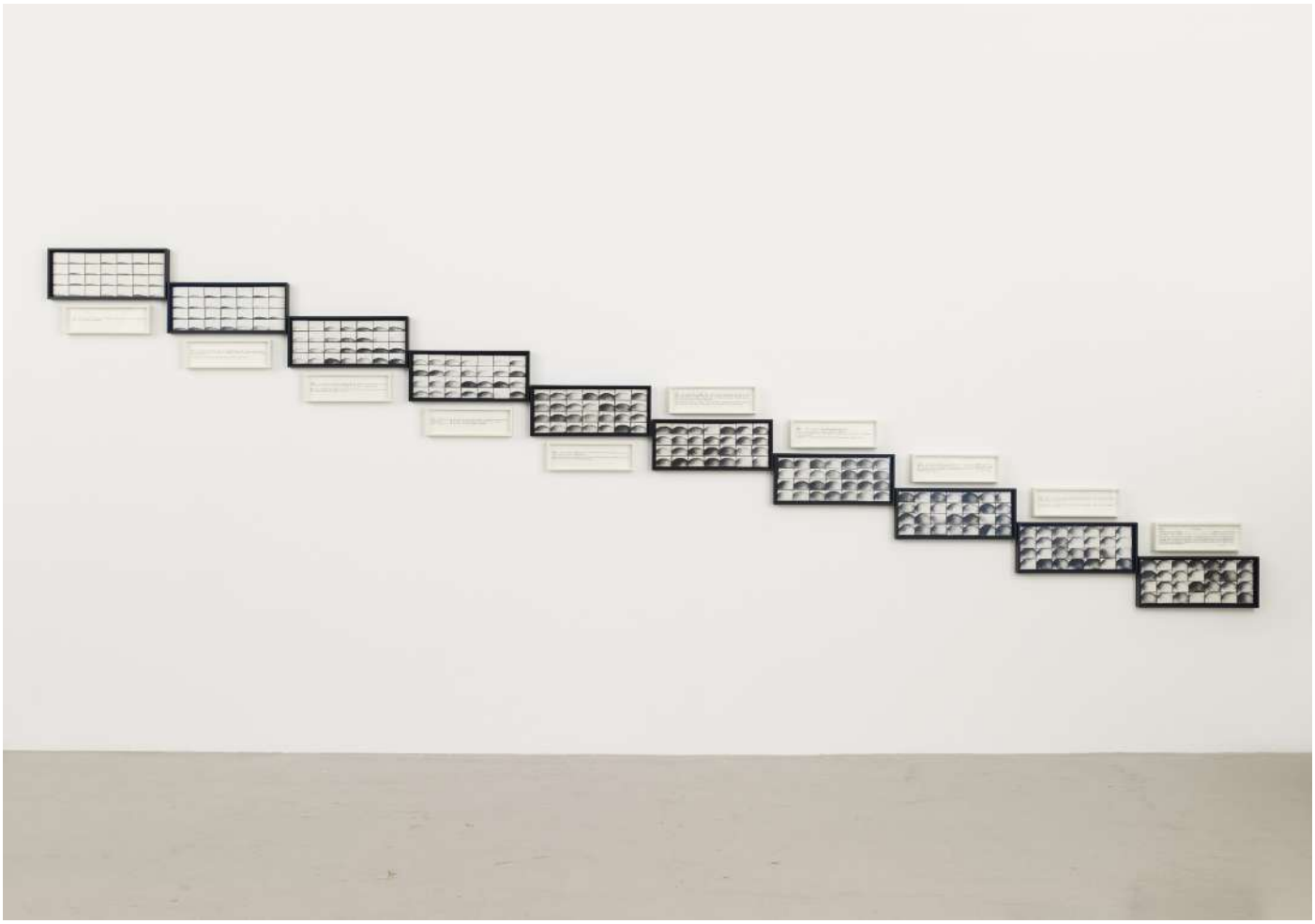
Oskar Kokoschka, *The Girl Li and I*, from *The Dreaming Youths* (Die träumenden Knaben), 1908 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London and Fondation Oskar Kokoschka. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020.

Susan Hiller (1940-2019)
Born US, worked US and UK

Ten Months, 1977-1979
10 black and white composite photographs, 10 texts, arranged sequentially
Arts Council Collection, AC 3023

Hiller recorded her own pregnancy with a critical eye, documenting her thoughts in a journal and the changes to her body through daily photographs. In *Ten Months*, she arranged the resulting images and texts in grids that correspond to lunar months.

Hiller once called herself 'both a participant [in] and an observer' of her pregnancy. She described her intention to break with 'the traditional sentimental image of pregnancy' and chronicle the mental as well as physical changes that came with this moment in her life. Later, she reflected that this approach made the work controversial, because it was so unusual for a woman to be 'both the artist and the sexed subject' of a work of art.



Susan Hiller, *Ten Months*, 1977-1979. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Susan Hiller. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery.

Artwork Text:

ONE/ She dreams of paws, and of “carrying” a cat while others carry babies.
Later, all the cats pay homage.

TWO/ She must have wanted this, the predicament, these contradictions. She believes physical conception must be “enabled” by will or desire, like any other creative process.

(Pregnant with thought. Brainchild. Giving birth to an idea.)

THREE/ She will bring forth in time. Their “we” will be extended, her “I” will be altered, enlarged or annihilated. This is the terror hidden in bliss- -

She keeps on describing bodily states, as though that will help her incorporate the changes within her notion of ‘self’.

FOUR/ She writes:
One is born into time. And in time, introduced to language… Or rather - -
One is born. And through language, introduced to time… Perhaps even - -
One is born, in time, through language.

FIVE/ She now understands that it is perfectly possible to forget who one has been and what one has accomplished.

Continuing the piece requires great effort. It is her voice, her body. It is painful being inside and outside simultaneously.

SIX/ She speaks (as a woman) about everything, although they wish her to speak only about women’s things. They like her to speak about everything only if she does not speak “as a woman”, only if she will agree in advance to play the artist’s role as neutral (neuter) observer.

She does not speak (as a woman) about anything, although they want her to. There is nothing she can speak of “as a woman”. As a woman, she can not speak.

SEVEN/ Knots and knows, Some NOT’s & NO’s about art - -

1. The subject matter of a work is not its content.
2. A work’s meaning is not necessarily the same as the ‘intention’ or ‘purpose’ of the artist.
3. There is no distinction between ‘reading’ images and reading texts.

EIGHT/ She is the content of a mania she can observe. The object of the exercise, she must remain its subject, chaotic and tormented. (“Tormented” is not too strong a word, she decides later.) She knows she will never finish in time. And meanwhile, the photographs, like someone else’s glance, gain significance through perseverance.

NINE/ It is easier to describe thoughts than feelings. It is easier to describe despair than joy. For these reasons, the writing gives a false impression: there is not enough exultation in it.

At that point, she writes: Time is no longer a hindrance, but a means of making actual what is potential.

TEN/ 10 Months
“seeing” (& describing) ……..……..……..……..……natural ‘fact’ (photos)
“feeling” (& describing) ……..……..……..……..……cultural artifact (texts)

She needs to resolve these feelings of stress caused by having internalised two or more ways of knowing, believing, and understanding practically everything. She affirms her discovery of a way out through “truth-telling”: acknowledging contradictions, expressing inconsistencies, doubletalk, ambiguity. She writes that she is no longer confused.

Family Albums and Community Portraits

Works of art can powerfully articulate the collective identities of families and communities. Some document the familiar bonds between parent and child or the relationships between neighbours. Others point to new kinds of social ties enabled by the internet, which might take on particular relevance in the current pandemic.

Some of these works of art document the daily experiences of communities facing the threat of cultural erasure or misrepresentation. Here documentation becomes an act of survival, and the everyday a site of resistance and resilience.

Curatorial Conversation

Curators Anna Duch Giménez, Elizabeth Keto, Sophie Ridsdale-Smith, and Zaena Sheehan discuss the development of this section of the exhibition, the unexpected relationships that have emerged between the different artworks in it, and the new reality of online communities. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

EK: How would you say that we developed this theme, and what were some of the key works that helped us to define this aspect of our exhibition?

SRS: We found Vanley Burke's work quite early on. We started out thinking about the rites of passage of birth, marriage, and death [that are recorded in the archives at Somerset House], so that's what led us to his photographs of weddings and baptisms and other celebrations. Then we looked at the rest of his *Handsworth from Inside* series, and I think that was quite a key starting point in helping us to develop this section.

ZS: I think we all felt, when we were looking at the public register [of births, marriages, and deaths] and thinking about the relationships that were recorded in these documents, that these were records of the nuclear family and conventional marriage. We really wanted to expand the scope of that, to a whole community. I think the works by Burke encapsulate that very deeply. In the series, there are instances of family connection and traditional rites of passage, but also moments that suggest the broader community and the importance of those links.

ADG: I think we developed the idea of documenting a community particularly in response to the works by Burke, Sunil Gupta, and Barbara Walker, which are all works that in some way fill in the gaps left in mainstream media or official archives. The works are not only about exploring the relationships within a community, but also about documenting that community and creating a public record. It's almost an act of citizenship, that act of documenting your community.

SRS: At one point, we realised that there are so many moments that, as you say, go undocumented, and that helped us to develop our theme of the everyday and recording everyday life. To me, those moments that aren't documented in a traditional archive almost feel more important, because people don't pay attention to them as much as they would a wedding or baptism. It feels like these small moments should be given more attention, because they're so intimate.

ADG: I feel like of all the sections in the exhibition, 'Family Albums and Community Portraits' has the deepest sense of that intimacy, because it's about people, it's about relationships and people interacting. In the works about family, there's often this intense sense of connection. I'm thinking about [*The End and the Beginning* by Kathy] Prendergast, in which there's interwoven hair from three generations of a family. It's amazing: there are literally three lives woven together.

ZS: I was thinking about the Prendergast and how we've framed this section, going from [Mohini Chandra's] *album pacifica*, which is so incredibly expansive and expressive of this immense diasporic community. And then you go right down to the minute scale of the Prendergast and this very tightly woven bond between three generations of the same nuclear family.

SRS: It's funny, I wouldn't think of big groups of people as being really intimate? Maybe interactions between two or three people, but here there's all these different scales and types of closeness.

ZS: I think it's a question of cumulative intensity. Interactions between members of the group over time build up this sense of closeness and the shape of the group and a

collective sense of belonging.

EK: Could you speak more about that sense of belonging?

ADG: I feel like we have to talk about Alejandra Carles-Tolra's *Where We Belong*. It's quite literally about belonging. Our section is called 'Family Albums and Community Portraits', but if there's one work that really erases the line between a family and a community, I feel like it's this one, because this community is so tightly bonded together over their shared love of Jane Austen. They stay together because the community is such a strong network, and they're able to support each other. There's this sense of a found family. Going back to the idea of the archive, I think that traditional archives tend to put emphasis on genealogies, but found families can also have such a strong impact on people's lives.

EK: Are there any works that you felt came to mean something new once we had placed them in the context of the other works in this section?

ZS: I've always felt that the Carles-Tolra photographs and the [etching by] Berthe Morisot are such a beautiful pairing in this section. There's a real sense of intimacy and touch and femininity that they both exude, expressed in a very contemporary medium and then in an Old Master-style [print]. It's just a beautiful connection, visually and conceptually.

ADG: I also like how we've been able to include Jonathan Richardson's sketches in this section, which were a later find. What we were able to highlight is the connection between the artist and his son, and this idea of generational connection, as is evoked by Prendergast or Morisot. The sketch by Richardson the elder showing himself at the age of 30 looks so much like his son, and it suggests that they had a very close relationship.

EK: How do you feel that this theme of 'Family Albums and Community Portraits' speaks to the current moment?

ZS: If anything, the current moment reminds us of the importance of families and communities and of the strength and resilience that we draw from one another. The act of solidarity through community-building is so important, both in relation to current social and political developments and to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SRS: I think for us as a group of young curators, there's a resonance in that all of us have moved back to our families and our home communities. We've been thrown into this section ourselves. We've been living it.

ADG: I agree with Zaena about the importance of communities in the current moment. We've seen that mutual aid has been emphasised as one of the tools of healing and growth for communities. What I really like about this section is the sense of an active relationship to a family or community. There is a sense that if you're born into a community in which you don't feel that you belong, you can actively choose or make a new community. For example, in the [Jane Austen Pineapple Appreciation Society depicted by Carles-Tolra], the people in that community have sought it out. It's not where they originally came from.

ZS: I think one of the things we've tried to do in the exhibition is to draw attention to the social and political forces that govern our experience of the everyday. But what really emerges in works such as those by Carles-Tolra, Burke, or Walker, is the fact that these networks of care can help us resist these forces and move with resilience through the everyday.

EK: Are you thinking about how this theme or these works might feel different in an online space?

SRS: I've been paying a lot more attention to the drawings. In a gallery, I know that I personally would be more drawn to works such as Barbara Walker's oil paintings or Mohini Chandra's [large-scale photography installation]. Whereas having all the artworks at similar scales on the website means that I've spent quite a bit of time with a work like the [Berthe Morisot etching], zooming in and looking at the marks she made. I've spent longer with it than I would have done in a physical exhibition space.

ZS: I think we've also been incredibly lucky, in that we've been able to include a greater number of works on the digital platform. There's an idea of accumulation. You build a better sense of families and communities through a more diverse and numerous set of works.

EK: Online communities are also a new phenomenon of this century, and there's a certain resonance that our own section on community was realised online.

ZS: The nine of us became an online community ourselves. For me, it's shown the importance of these new forms of connection. Postgraduate learning can sometimes be quite a solitary experience, but we've had a completely different way of connecting this year through technology.

ADG: Online communities have grown so much in the past few years. I think the first online communities were probably surrounding interest groups and fandoms, and at that time in the early 2000s, people would be saying, 'Get away from your laptop! Go play outside!' And now people are realising that these online connections are just as important and valuable. It's not that online experience isn't real life. It is real life, it's just a different way of communicating.

SRS: There's also the fact that most people will likely be looking at our exhibition alone, on their computers. This section is so much about the relationships you have with other people, and I hope that it provides people with an opportunity to reflect upon their own relationships and reminders of times when we were all together.

Everyday Resistance

Mallika J. Balakrishnan

'For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society. Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within.' -Audre Lorde[1]

'Arguably the majority of provisions in human rights instruments deal with political contestations that shape the quotidian contexts of our daily lives, be it as citizens of particular nations or citizens of the world.' -Vasuki Nesiah[2]

The week after my grandfather died, we who'd gathered to mourn him undertook a great sifting through his photo albums: authoritative, leather-bound things, with gold embellishments. Through Aba's eyes, we saw my grandmother in a sari by the River Cam, friends gathered for a recent birthday in Georgia, a few black and white photos of Aba's parents in Karnataka. And of course, the family portraits of the 90s: three generations, angled inward at the photographer's behest.

Unlike those family portraits, my favourite photograph of Aba was never printed. In it, his slightly hunched profile faces right, hands set down on the kitchen table where he'd often be found listening to Hindustani classical music or telling detailed stories about his Quit India days. Books on spirituality are scattered behind him; peeking out from the corner is a small American flag left on our doorstep one fourth of July. The photo is taken, you can tell, by someone who loves him. And this makes all the difference.

What does it mean to be captured by the eyes of someone who loves you?

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The notion of the everyday is often employed to evoke safety, intimacy, and the comfort of routine. These are useful touchstones, but they do not exhaust the capacity of the everyday to be an equally alienating, tiring site of struggle for basic rights and recognition. This second, especially unquiet sense of the everyday is familiar to many of us whose communities are routinely Othered and racialized by those who never got to know us first. Thus starts the dance of the everyday: wake, endure, resist, persist, exalt, repeat.

In advocacy work, narratives of suffering and oppression can tend to dominate the news feed and the mind: if we don't display the harms being perpetuated, one asks, how will we garner awareness, empathy, action? I cannot count the number of humanitarian campaigns I have seen peddling images of starving brown and black children. Passive viewership of traumatic spectacle easily becomes its own routine. On white witness of contemporary lynching, Zoé Samudzi writes, '[w]hiteness transmutes atrocity images into ephemera, into a thing to be collected, more quickly than we would like to imagine.'[3] But there is a different sense of everyday vulnerability in visual representation that invites less charity and more solidarity: everyday pleasure, everyday joy, and everyday resistance.

In the context of a normalcy constructed to be dehumanizing for us, choosing to lift up community and family as we see ourselves subverts the unsafety of the quotidian. In the resonance of our little joys, we cultivate a defiance that says *I refuse to be painted by a world that fails to consider my pleasure as part of the everyday*. adrienne maree brown captures this connection beautifully: 'A lot of pleasure activism is also leaning into the simple pleasures of existing, right here, right now.'[4]

[1]Lorde, Audre. "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." In Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984.

[2]Nesiah, Vasuki. "The Politics of Humanitarian Morality: Reflections on 'The Hazards of Rescue.'" In Human Rights: Moral or Political?, edited by Adam Etinson. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Several of the pieces in this section of *Unquiet Moments* call us to witness joy in border spaces, in content or in name: *Exiles*, *Boundary I* and *II*, or *Handsworth from Inside*. These titles engage the liminal—from the Latin, *limen*, for 'threshold'—in its most literal sense. Artistic acts of documentation like these bridge narratives, engaging the viewer in the complexities that pop up when you step into someone else's home. I'm reminded of artwork that has, in the past, invited me in: the background objects in Jordan Casteel's *Visible Man* portraits, the settings painted in Joy Labinjo's *Our histories cling to us*. These works, like many in *Unquiet Moments*, strike me as an invitation to understand better, a proffered link between realities.

As I tell my loved ones often, one of the most beautiful moments of getting to know a new person is seeing them, for the first time, in their element. Watching a musician play, or a teacher educate, or an activist mobilize: in those moments, I am privileged to bear witness to a fuller contextual totality of their personhood, tenderly granted the opportunity to cross a threshold and know them more fully. Artists who document families and communities, perhaps, invite us to bear this same witness to their work as testimony: we, in turn, must engage responsibly with their gift of border-crossing.

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Richard Deming writes that 'the paradox of the ordinary is that our relationship to it changes the more we pay attention to it.'[5] Perhaps it is true that by examining the everyday, we alienate ourselves from it. But when the everyday is characterized in part by injustice, such a distance can be liberatory in its conscious cultivation of belonging, resilience, and solidarity. Art that captures our everyday resistance takes up no less than the task of survival. In family albums and community portraits, artists pass along precious knowledge that continues a tradition of reclaiming the everyday as a space of sanctuary. By preserving records of community resilience, art from the inside propels us forward with the defiance needed to carry on in non-ideal circumstances. As the philosopher Lisa Tessman argues, 'striving in the face of the absurd permits one to maintain a claim on what one is unjustly denied (full personhood); the absurdity lies in the fact that the strivings will never attain their goal, but must be carried on nevertheless; to give up striving would be to announce one's acceptance of the injustice.'[6] Family albums and community portraits remind us to keep striving for fulfillment, even when our fulfillment is considered a threat; by means of our continued striving, we stake claim to justice and assert that our resistance, too, is worth commemoration.

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Mallika J. Balakrishnan grew up by a river in the US South. Her academic and professional work has focused on human rights, philosophy, and the politics of Latin America and the Caribbean. As a musician and writer, she works to highlight the importance of interdisciplinary, community-driven movements. Mallika is an organizer with No Tech For Tyrants, a UK-based migration/technology justice collective. She is a Marshall Scholar and is currently studying for the MLitt in Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy through the St Andrews and Stirling Graduate Programme in Philosophy.

[3]Samudzi, Zoé. "White Witness and the Contemporary Lynching." The New Republic, May 16, 2020.

[4]Gonzalez, Catherine Lizette. "In 'Pleasure Activism,' Adrienne Maree Brown Dares Us to Get In Touch With Our Needs." ColorLines, February 26, 2019.

[5]Deming, Richard. Art of the Ordinary: The Everyday Domain of Art, Film, Philosophy, and Poetry. Cornell University Press, 2018.

[6]Tessman, Lisa. "Feminist Eudaimonism: Eudaimonism as Non-Ideal Theory." In Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal, edited by Lisa Tessman. Springer, 2009.

Artist Interview: Barbara Walker

Barbara Walker MBE creates intensely observed and empathetic portraits of individuals and communities. Working in painting and drawing, she addresses questions of scale and visibility that bridge the aesthetic and the political. She spoke with curator Sophie Ridsdale-Smith about her process and the spaces depicted in Boundary I *and* Boundary II. *The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.*

SRS: What was it that interested you in documenting this community?

BW: So, these paintings are almost 19 years old. This work was conceived when I was doing my BA, and I started them in my third and final year…I wanted to capture a culture and a lifestyle of the African Caribbean that spoke to me whilst I was growing up in Birmingham. A new form of identity politics was revealed to me, a new visual language. In many ways, the concept somehow opened up a set of formal values and aesthetics and sensibilities that wasn't immediately accessible to me at the time, though it was an inherent intuition, I suppose.

I was interested in paying homage and celebrating, as well as adding to the narrative of other Black artists. It was important to pursue this idea, in order to tell our stories. Often enough our experience and our histories are interpreted by others, but here you had someone from inside, not from outside, giving their perception—my perception at that time.

Boundary I and *Boundary II* came from a series called *Private Face* (completed in 2002). It was one of my most ambitious projects. Subsequently over a two-year period 21 pieces of work were produced. From there I had my first major show, at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham.

SRS: How do you think that *Boundary I* and *Boundary II* relate to the exhibition's theme, 'capturing the everyday'?

BW: I think the works relate to the title on a few levels. These paintings celebrate a snapshot moment in time. They capture real people, real lives, real relationships, which an audience can resonate with…I was inspired by the idea of taking normality and something simple, and transferring it into something extraordinary, spectacular, and meaningful.

SRS: There's such a strong insider's perspective in these paintings. How did you gain the trust of your subjects?

BW: …Basically, I tend to work slowly and meticulously. There's a lot of thinking and testing my hypothesis and unpacking involved in my process. I would say that's 80 percent, and then the rest is painting, the practical side, production. There is always a natural drive to take on projects or subjects that are new to me. Anything too familiar doesn't excite me and can end up being predictable. I like challenges, I like things that make me think. If anything is too familiar, I'm not learning. So, I'll dive in and from there…see what happens.

Going back, and re-considering these paintings, I was drawn to the ideas of looking at spaces, looking at everyday rituals and practices in communities, at daily activities. It could be looking at figures and the interplay and complexities of group compositions. I was also trying to capture the private and spaces in between. I wasn't interested in the posed or staged. I wanted to come in very naturally and represent the energy, spirituality and the alchemy of subjects.

After identifying where I wanted to go and who I wanted to figure in the work—barber shops, hairdressers, dance halls and everyday individuals…It took me a while to work up the courage to enter the barber shops…Before I pushed that door, I think I circled it—like a hawk circling its prey! Then I thought, let's take the plunge.

There were two barber shops in question. The group composition [in *Boundary II*] is on Soho Road in Handsworth, Birmingham. When I entered it, I immediately just sat down among a row of men and waited. Obviously, they saw me there, but they didn't say anything and they just carried on in conversation with each other. The shop was really full at that time of day. Eventually I plucked up the courage to ask the owner, who was at the time working. I explained I was an artist and my ideas for the project. And he just said, 'Carry on. Do your thing.' I explained to him my process, that I make sketches and take photographs, and asked, 'Do you mind?' And he just said, 'No, you carry on.' He didn't really ask the customers, although equally they could have said no! Luckily enough they allowed me. From then, once I had the go-ahead…

SRS: How long did you spend in the shop that first time?

BW: I spent about two hours. I didn't want to just go in and snatch a moment and then depart. It's about the emotions, understanding what was in front of me and taking the experience away with me, which would ultimately translate into the painting. Mentally and physically, it's quite strange, quite exciting. I was nervous, but also passionate, almost ruthless in the sense that I wanted to get this work…I was just sitting there witnessing the moment and listening to conversations like a fly on the wall. I've never had that experience before. As I said, I like certain challenges, and the paintings are coming from a female perspective in the male environment of the barber's shop.

The other composition of the two men was from another barber shop. That one I had to try a bit harder to win their trust, and for them to be comfortable with me. It was a slow simmering moment and ended up with me spending longer time there. It was a smaller barber shop, not as bright as the other one, with little room to navigate and move around. I followed my usual protocol, I introduced myself and explained why I was there. Immediately there was a resistance. 'Why do you want to take these photos?' 'Who are you?' From that moment, I had to really reassure them that I'm from the community and how my parents lived down the road and show that I was who I said I was…Eventually they sheepishly, grudgingly allowed me to go ahead but I could only take photos under their conditions, so had to work from a vantage point behind and to one side of the two sitters.

In many ways what seemed to me at the time a restriction and the apprehension I felt, actually played in my favour, and offered me a challenging and as it turned out, a very interesting composition: pointing up the subtlety of these two individuals and the connection between them. And I love that angle, because it immediately adds another layer of mystique, of mystery: who are these individuals? By presenting that composition, I'm allowing the viewer to implant or insert their perception of who these individuals are…and the nuances of this everyday relationship.

I was working in a very limited palette, because an aspect of my process is that I do as much sketching as I can from the photographs. At the time I was working in black and white film. Sometimes colour in photographs can be a bit too artificial and get in the way, and create another interpretation. Black and white is just that—very graphic, it's concise and succinct. Once in my studio, I will create several sketches, just to get familiar with the composition and formal planes. Then I'll translate those drawings into a painting and incorporate my colours. I'm constantly creating and playing through ideas, but at the same time taking references from art history and from popular culture in terms of colour and painting styles.

SRS: Why do you think that artists have been drawn to depicting barber shops as significant spaces in Black communities?

BW: I can't speak for other artists, but the barber shop space has been in my consciousness for many years. The barber shop is a familiar street-scape presence in the Handsworth area of Birmingham, where I grew up. Not surprisingly, the barber shop is very much a male-dominated environment, which can be intimidating and alienating to me. But in documenting a space like this, I sought to dispel and set aside the somewhat negative association that dominated media images of Black men. I wanted to present a sensitive, empathetic interpretation of one of the very few spaces in which Black men could freely congregate and fraternise. You see the framing here of these individuals. They are not framed as sports personalities, musicians, protesters, or hyper-sexualised bodies. These are just men: figures in a space. The paintings seek to depict the social interactions that take place in environments such as this, where the rituals and ceremonies of everyday Black life occur.

SRS: Did you stay in contact with them?

BW: I stayed in contact. Interestingly enough, this series of work is a trilogy, and the owner bought the third, *Boundary III*. There is a large poster reproduction of the original painting in the shop. Sadly, some of the figures in the paintings, I know have now passed away.

SRS: I know you're interested in the hierarchy of materials. Can you talk about the importance of the medium in your work?

BW: I define myself as a painter, working in the spaces of painting and drawing. However, in recent years I've been working largely in the area of drawing. After the *Private Face* series, I began to have a crisis around painting: an introspective moment in what painting does, what painting can achieve. As artists we live constantly in the space of insecurity and sometimes can doubt ourselves. So, while trying to figure things out in my head, I moved into drawing. I think I was intimidated by painting, because at that time, I was asking myself the question 'Was I good enough?' I was measuring myself up to artists from before, since painting has a long history. Looking back, I admit I was immature and lacked confidence. I made a mistake in terms of comparing to what had gone before, instead of adding to the narrative and trying to contribute something better or additional to the story.

But when you talk about hierarchy—I chose painting for that long history, for that reverence, for that gravitas. I wanted to use painting as the tool and symbol to represent a story. These paintings are large, some of them are six foot by five, or seven foot by four. It's about making them monumental...I was interested in the idea of painting, and the symbolism, and the marker of painting, and how it sits within perception and contemporary practice. I could have created these works through drawing, but I thought it was important to use that medium to make a political mark and a political statement... Talking about this hierarchical concept, drawing always seems to come at the bottom. There's painting, sculpture, and drawing always sits on the periphery or is marginalised. I thought about that for these recent works, making an argument that drawing can sit equally, side-by-side. It can hold its own. So, I'm always going back and forth. Maybe if I do paint again, I will be playing with these ideas, unfolding these ideas.

SRS: Can you speak about the importance of scale and colour in these paintings?

BW: Scale was very important and still is today. Going back to one of the reasons for creating these works, within my

research I realised that…this community had been shaped by photography. But I hadn't come across any paintings that documented African Caribbeans in the mainstream in the UK. Those pigments hadn't saturated contemporary art practice at the time. Now there is a celebration of the Black figure and the Black body. But at the time, I recognized that there was an absence and that absence posed questions for me. It became a problematic for me.

Going back to scale—scale is about taking the anonymous, powerless, and lonely, and making them monumental. I purposely aimed to position my work in mainstream settings and galleries. That's where I wanted these works to be seen and understood and respected. And in doing so, to change perceptions. Arguably, you could create something just as monumental and powerful that is small. But at the time my aims were to work really large. I wanted to be free with these paintings, I wanted them to seduce, so that the viewer would be surrounded and confronted with this work.

SRS: Did you draw inspiration from other artists and art-historical sources?

BW: Everything inspires me. There are hundreds of artists whose work I admire. It's also important to me to look outside the box of who is and who is not an artist. Having said that, whilst making the work, I inserted myself into the history of works by Gustave Courbet, Jean-François Millet, with these depictions of labour and of class. I was also exploring the language of painting, and these artists spoke to me and resonated with the issues I was dealing with.

Alongside those artists, I was looking at contemporary photographers who were grappling with these issues, so photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Vanley Burke, Eve Arnold. I was looking at social documentary, and how they had captured a community through photographs. I was trying to create that through painting. In particular, I was looking at Vanley Burke, and I resonated a lot with his documenting of the Black community in Birmingham.

SRS: Vanley Burke's work is in our show as well. What would you say is the significance of the title *Boundary*?

BW: Titles are funny things. They're often fluid. Titles can come well after the exhibition, or through literature, or a statement, or a conversation. It was whilst I was sitting and listening—there was a lot of listening—I was trying to make myself small, funnily enough, so the attention wasn't on me. I wanted to sit and bear witness to what was unfolding in front of me, to have that luxury of being allowed to witness.

What was starting to unfold was a conversation. There were certain men in that space who were starting to talk about nostalgia. They were talking about home, and the Caribbean, and Jamaica in particular… Their talk was filled with bravado and filled with charm, and there were stories unfolding in that space…What started to occur was what I interpreted as boundaries, in terms of location, culture, memories. They were reliving and reminiscing. There was that sense of existing in one space, but longing to be somewhere else. That's where the idea of boundaries sprang from. They were talking about boundaries, but also there were boundaries in the sense that I'm in that space. The work shows how close I got to them, and the distance.

To go back to the question of these characters, the barber shop is this place where men can come together. You have the usual suspects, you know. You have the agony aunt. You have the politician. You have the sympathiser. You have the different ages of the men, the relationship of the older, the senior men to the young men who enter that space. The energy and

the dynamics—trying to capture that in a painting. You can imagine, the way in which I work, there were some 40 photographs of that one barber shop, and I picked just one. I still have those images of people in my archive. You never know, I may go back to them again. They're there, as a legacy of that moment in time.

SRS: What relevance do these paintings have today, particularly in the context of isolation [brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic]?

BW: COVID has made us pause and reflect and slow things down. It's also shed a spotlight—COVID and before that, Grenfell—on inequalities that continue to exist in our society. For the BAME community and working-class individuals, it's highlighted the difficulties that they face day to day, which have worsened. The basics of life—feeding your family, educating your children, paying your rent—are acute for those who are low-paid or those already on benefits. Many people have lost their jobs or have young people who will find it more difficult to find work due to COVID, and the gap between rich and poor has been magnified.

On the plus side, the pandemic has shown how valued front-line staff are—shop workers, porters, delivery workers, nurses. It has put a spotlight on these individuals, and made us stop. There's a social consciousness at the moment. It's made us take stock.

SRS: When visitors are looking at your works online, what questions would you want them to ask themselves? What do you hope they'll notice?

BW: I never set up an expectation of the viewer or work in the context of explicitly eliciting a reaction. I just expect them to enjoy the work, get into the work, or even if they don't enjoy it, it's their reaction… Once I've spent time conceiving those works, I then put them out there for the audience. I hope that they enjoy it, first and foremost, and learn from the experience of looking at the work, whatever that may be that they take away.

SRS: How do you feel that these paintings might change when they're viewed online? Do you welcome the online platform?

BW: Yes and no! I think, due to COVID, [the online platform has] been very beneficial in terms of connecting people and playing a part in inclusion and accessibility. But there's nothing like a physical exhibition, to be able to get up close and see the brushstrokes. It touches your all your senses—the visual, the smell, even a sound piece sounds different in a space. For sculpture, you can't walk around it, you have a screen that flattens images there and then.

However, I'm interested in my audience, and I use the online platform for accessibility. From my own research, I've learned that not everyone is comfortable entering the white cube space. This is more accessible and diverse.

Through Zoom, I've been able to access a lot of interesting conversations. [When I'm in one physical space] there are the complexities and issues of travel and our footprint…When thinking about online, I can think globally…I never think local; I think globally about audience and who can see the work. I'm thinking about a new generation, a younger generation, engaging with my work. With this online platform, there's no cutoff point for the exhibition at two months or a year. It has a longevity. It's now and archival at the same time.

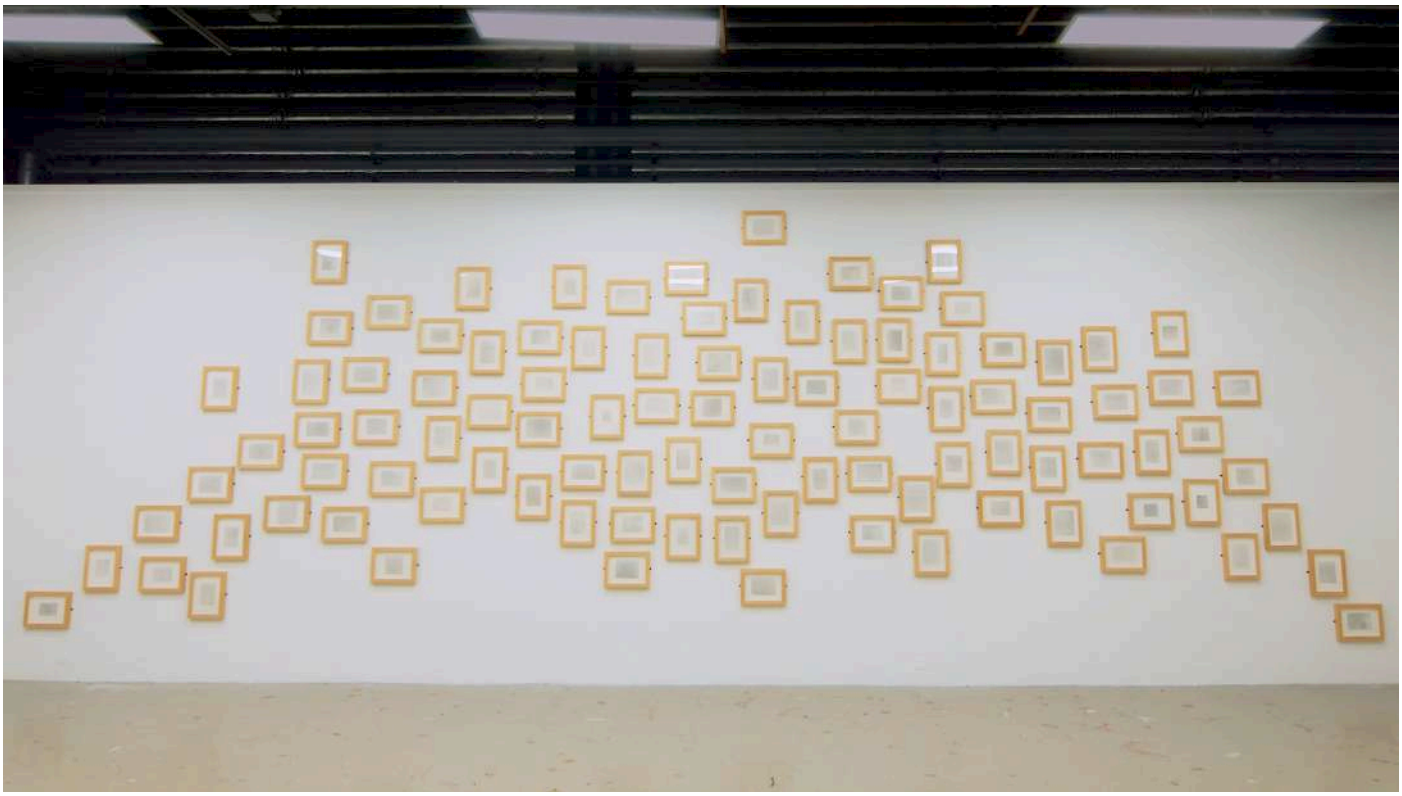
Works of Art

Mohini Chandra (born 1964)
Fijian-Indian, works UK

album pacifica, 1997
Photographs, fibre, wax and toner, 25 x 20 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC 53/2000

In *album pacifica*, Mohini Chandra gathers 100 photographs in an effort to reunite and pay homage to members of the Fijian–Indian diaspora. Chandra's ancestors were forced to travel from India to the British colony of Fiji to work on sugar plantations. At present, her family is spread around the world, from Canada to New Zealand.

This project grew out of Chandra's letters from relatives, which were often accompanied by bundles of photographs. For *album pacifica*, Chandra photographed the handwritten messages and studio stamps on the reverse of each print. She has described the resulting installation as an 'abstract map of the experience of migration'. Although Chandra employs the personal medium of the family album, the reversal of the photographs inverts any claim to intimacy, encouraging us to reflect on our own histories and experiences.



Mohini Chandra, *album pacifica*, 1997. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist. Still from a specially commissioned film made in collaboration with the Arts Council Collection. Film credit Ed Prosser.

Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)
Born and worked France

Berthe Morisot drawing, with her daughter (Berthe Morisot dessinant, avec sa fille), 1889
Etching, 13.8 x 19 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, G.1978.PG.71

Morisot depicts an informal drawing lesson between herself and her daughter, Julie, who appears eager and curious, leaning in close to her mother. As in many of Morisot's depictions of children, even this very young subject appears to be an individual being with her own thoughts. Morisot gazes directly at the viewer, creating an assured portrait of herself as an artist.

In this work, Morisot uses a printmaking technique called drypoint, in which the artist scratches directly into the metal plate with a needle. In doing so, she is able to imbue her print with an immediacy close to that of drawing.

Berthe Morisot, *Berthe Morisot drawing, with her daughter (Berthe Morisot dessinant, avec sa fille)*, 1889 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Alejandra Carles-Tolra (born 1988)
Born Spain and works Spain and UK

Untitled, from the series *Where We Belong*, 2017
Studio lustre C-type print, 30 x 20 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC30

Untitled, from the series *Where We Belong*, 2017
Studio lustre C-type print, 30 x 20 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC31

Untitled, from the series *Where We Belong*, 2017
Studio lustre C-type print, 30 x 20 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC32

Untitled, from the series *Where We Belong*, 2017
Studio lustre C-type print, 30 x 20 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC33

In this series, Carles-Tolra documents the activities of the Jane Austen Pineapple Appreciation Society, a group connected by a shared love of the 18th-century English novelist. These four photographs show close-up glimpses of several members of the group seated together. Their intertwined hands and feet suggest the strong emotional bonds that unite them. Carles-Tolra's images illuminate both the escapism inherent in the group's costumed social events and the real feeling of communion and belonging that members may find there.

Alejandra Carles-Tolra, *Untitled*, from the series *Where We Belong*, 2017. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist. Originally commissioned through the Jerwood/Photoworks Awards, supported by Jerwood Charitable Foundation and Photoworks.

Vanley Burke (born 1951)
Born Jamaica and works UK

Baptism, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 36.8 x 46.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1594

Wedding from Handsworth, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 37 x 46 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1602

Handsworth from Inside, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 32 x 38.7 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1604

Educational Outing, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 36.6 x 46 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1598

Grove Junior School - Reading with Teacher, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 52.5 x 43.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1596

Back Garden from Railway Bridge, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 51.3 x 39.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1597

The Widow, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982
Black and white photograph, 47.1 x 35.3 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 1600

In *Handsworth from Inside*, Burke documented daily life in the African Caribbean community in the Handsworth neighbourhood of Birmingham over more than a decade. The artist works to compile and preserve the histories of Black communities in the UK. He recalls a moment in the 1960s when he decided that ‘history has a starting point and that this moment, right then, would be the starting point of our community’s history from my perspective’.

Burke describes photography as a way to affirm people’s experiences and identities. ‘I love collecting things that have been discarded and drawing value out of them’, he says. ‘I think it is the same with individuals–you need to place some individual attention on them to make them shine, and that’s the essence of what I do in my photographs’.

Vanley Burke, *Baptism*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *Wedding from Handsworth*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *Educational Outing*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *Grove Junior School - Reading with Teacher*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *Back Garden from Railway Bridge*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Vanley Burke, *The Widow*, from the series *Handsworth from Inside*, 1968-1982. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Barbara Walker MBE (born 1964)
Born and works UK

Boundary I, 2000
Oil on canvas, 182 x 121 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC33/2013

Boundary II, 2000
Oil on canvas, 121 x 182 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC17/2014

Boundary I and *Boundary II* capture moments in Walker's home community in Handsworth, Birmingham. She spent time photographing and recording what she saw in barber shops around Handsworth, then translated these photographs into large oil paintings. Walker uses oils to give her work warmth, familiarity, and intimacy, qualities that can be lost in social documentary photographs.

A sense of trust and respect is evident between the barbers and their clients and between Walker and her subjects. The artist makes it clear that she had to work hard to 'gain some trust with these individuals'. She felt that it was vital to illustrate Black figures as she saw them, saying that 'the painting[s] seek to depict the social interactions that take place in environments such as this, where the rituals and ceremonies of everyday Black life occur'. Walker aims to 'challenge the stereotyping and misunderstanding that abounds, and offer a sophisticated and positive alternative in a mainstream setting'.

Barbara Walker, *Boundary I*, 2000. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist and Cristea Roberts Gallery.

Barbara Walker, *Boundary II*, 2000. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist and Cristea Roberts Gallery.

Sunil Gupta (born 1953)
Canadian, born India and works UK

Humayun's Tomb, from the series *Exiles*, 1987
C-type print, 80 x 64.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 2004

India Gate, from the series *Exiles*, 1987
C-type print, 80 x 64.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 2005

Lodhi Gardens, from the series *Exiles*, 1987
C-type print, 80 x 64.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACP 2006

Indira's Vision, from the series *Exiles*, 1987
C-type print, 80 x 64.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Due to laws imposed during the colonial period, India's queer communities could not express themselves in public until a landmark Supreme Court ruling in 2018. In 1986, Gupta asked a group of anonymous volunteers to stage intimate encounters against the backdrop of important cultural monuments. The resulting photographs provide evidence of relationships and exchanges that typically went undocumented in mainstream visual culture. Gupta describes *Exiles* as 'staged documentary', originating from an activist imperative to create images of a community which he felt 'just didn't seem to exist'. The accompanying texts come from snippets of conversation recorded in Delhi and communicate the lived experience of its queer residents.

Artwork texts:

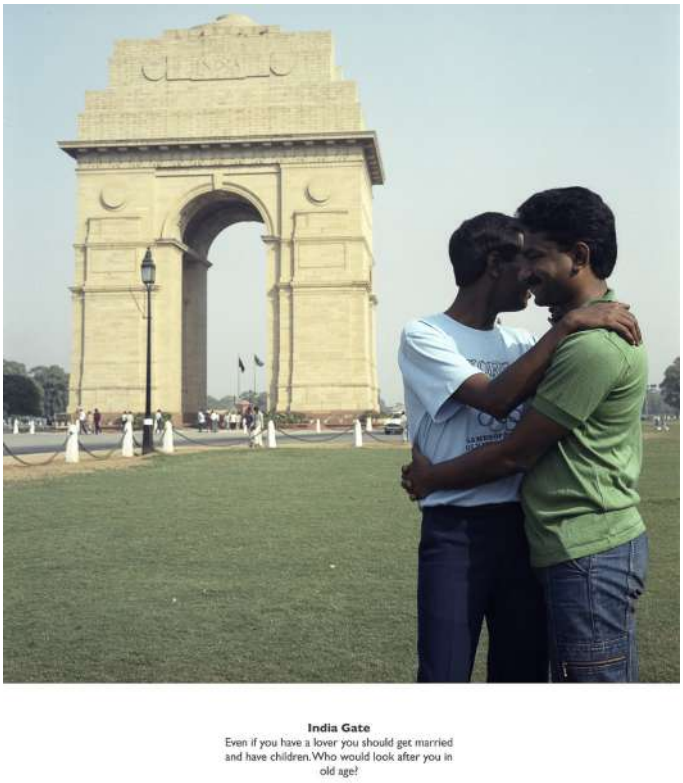
Humayun's Tomb
Americans - talking about AIDS and distributing condoms. Nobody believes them. They're always telling us what to do.

India Gate
Even if you have a lover you should get married and have children. Who would look after you in old age?

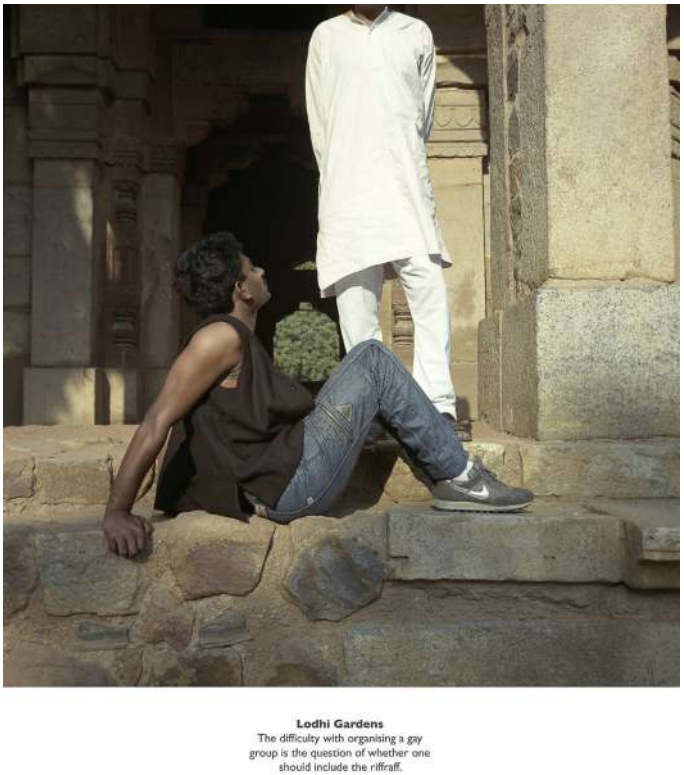
Lodhi Gardens
The difficulty with organising a gay group is the question of whether one should include the riffraff.

Indira's Vision
Why do you go on about changing the law.
I don't want to be a martyr.
I'm happy the way things are.

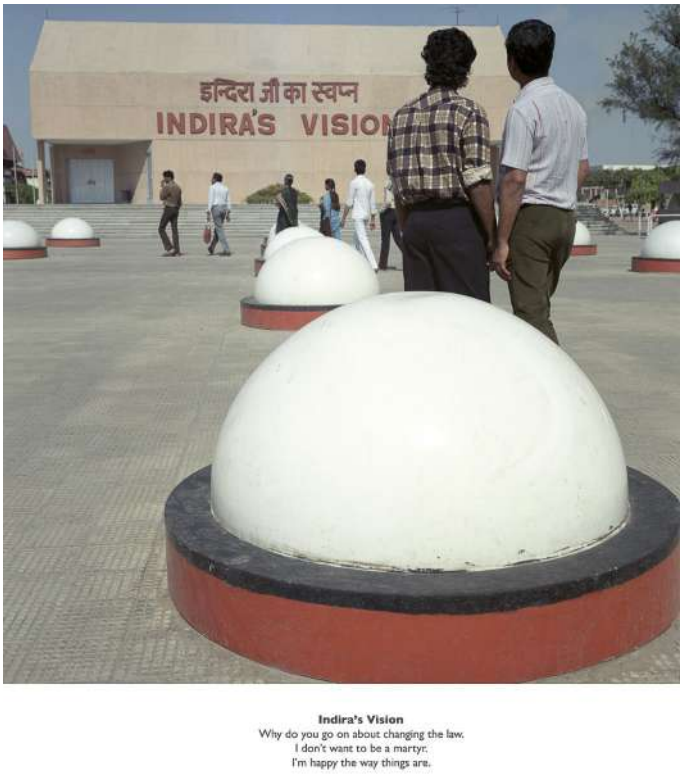
Sunil Gupta, *Humayun's Tomb*, from the series *Exiles*, 1987. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.



Sunil Gupta, *India Gate*, from the series *Exiles*, 1987. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.



Sunil Gupta, *Lodhi Gardens*, from the series *Exiles*, 1987. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.



Sunil Gupta, *Indira's Vision*, from the series *Exiles*, 1987. Collection of the artist © the artist.

Kathy Prendergast (born 1958)
Born Ireland, works Ireland and UK

The End and The Beginning, 1996
Human hair and wood, 5.5 x 4 x 4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC21/1996

A hair's breadth can contain a world of meaning. A single hair holds the genetic information that maps our ancestry and growth. A lock of hair can be an intimate memento given to a lover.

Prendergast winds strands of hair from her first child, her mother, and herself round an old wooden spool. This sculpture references her mother's skill at sewing and connects the generations together. The smallness of the object adds to its intimacy: one could cradle a whole family in the palm of one's hand. In this delicate portrait, Prendergast intertwines memory, family, and the cycles of growth, death, and rebirth.

Kathy Prendergast, *The End and The Beginning*, 1996. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Jonathan Richardson the elder (1667-1745)
Born and worked UK

Profile portrait of Jonathan Richardson the younger, 1736
Graphite on paper, 15.3 x 13 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1952.RW.1465

Self-portrait, 1735
Graphite on parchment, 10 x 7.8 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1952.RW.1662

Self-portrait at the age of thirty, 1735
Graphite on parchment, 14.7 x 11.6 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1952.RW.1660

Profile self-portrait, 1732
Chalk on paper, 37.8 x 27.1 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1952.RW.3932

Portrait of Jonathan Richardson the younger, 1733
Chalk on paper, 28.6 x 23.9 cm
The Courtauld Gallery, D.1952.RW.1655

In this group of sketches, Jonathan Richardson portrays himself and his son, who shared his name. Richardson the younger was an artist and writer who often collaborated with his father. So closely did the two live and work together that Richardson the elder described his son as his ‘other self’.

One of Richardson the elder’s self-portraits is particularly intriguing. In his *Self-portrait at the age of thirty*, Richardson shows himself as a much younger man—he was then aged 60—and as a look-alike to an artist whose work he admired, Rembrandt van Rijn. While his portraits of his son emphasise family ties, this unusual self-portrait gives us a sense of Richardson’s aspiration to be part of an artistic lineage.

Jonathan Richardson the elder, *Profile portrait of Jonathan Richardson the younger*, 1736 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Jonathan Richardson the elder, *Self-portrait*, 1735 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Jonathan Richardson the elder, *Self-portrait at the age of thirty*, 1735 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Jonathan Richardson the elder, *Profile self-portrait,* 1732 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Jonathan Richardson the elder, *Portrait of Jonathan Richardson the younger*, 1733 © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Traces of Loss

The routines and rhythms of the everyday seem permanent, until they change. Loss runs through the fabric of everyday life, whether it be the loss of a loved one, a change of place, or the alteration of a way of life.

In many of these artworks, objects such as a family photograph, a mislaid glove, or a kitchen table take on a powerful resonance. They preserve traces of the people who once touched and used them. Other works excavate the memories that remain embedded in landscapes, places, and architecture, after moments of migration or exile. We are reminded that the everyday is constantly altered by loss, recovery, and renewal.

Curatorial Conversation

Curators Annie Birchenough, Elizabeth Keto, Matilda McEvedy, and Sophie-Anne Paoli reflect upon the process of curating this section of the exhibition, the resonance of ideas about loss in the current moment, and the losses and gains of moving an exhibition online. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

EK: Could you talk about how we developed the theme of 'Traces of Loss'? What were some of the key works that helped us to define this section?

SAP: I think that for me the idea of loss was born from the brief we had from Somerset House, [which referred to] the rites of passage of birth, marriage, and death. Loss is always an important part of any transition in life, whether that is the loss of an identity or a previous sense of self.

AB: I feel like we articulated the ideas of traces and residues very early on. That sense of marks being made and left is quite intrinsic to the archival impulse. That is fundamentally why people want to document [their lives]: to prevent traces from being lost. For me, there is this trace or thread of loss running through all of the works in the exhibition.

I think that this section approaches the idea of loss in a few different ways. There's the sense of the loss of a person, so there are works that are very elegiac and mournful. But you also have senses of loss that are articulated through space or objects left behind, through traces locked within places and things. There's also loss that is articulated less as absence than as a transformation or transfiguration, which can be quite hopeful.

MM: Often, the artists [whose work is in this section] are creating in order to deal with something that was lost. They're making something out of nothing, something out of an absence. It's very poignant and hopeful.

EK: Are there a few works in this section that you feel speak particularly powerfully to this theme?

AB: For me, *How to mend a broken heart* by Karl Ohiri has been a central work since the beginning. That work could have been put in a number of sections, and here it links 'Traces of Loss' back to our section of 'Family Albums and Community Portraits'. Ohiri's work opens this section with a very autobiographical reflection upon loss and the use of artmaking, photographic practices, or archival practices as ways to come to terms with personal experiences of loss.

MM: There is that element of personal loss in Veronica Ryan's *Lamentations in the Garden* as well. But I think, just like Ohiri uses personal stories to speak to broader collective histories, Ryan also does that in her work. She talks about [the volcanic eruption that buried] Pompeii and the later eruption that buried part of Montserrat, her place of birth. She uses this family photograph to speak to many different stories. There's a mystery to this work that you can't fully unravel.

AB: Many of the works in this section have that many-layered interrogation of loss. The artworks look one way on the surface, but actually they are much more complex. It's been such a privilege to talk with the artists [during our exhibition process], because a lot of that complexity has emerged in those conversations.

SAP: I also wanted to talk about Nigel Shafran's photographs [from the *Dad's office* series], particularly in relation to what you said, Matilda, about making something out of an absence. This series of photographs is very quiet, but at the same time very powerful and evocative. The series evokes loss and memory and nostalgia. The photographs aren't explicitly about these emotions, but they pervade

the images so strongly. Making something abstract into something tangible for a viewer—that's very powerful.

MM: Even now, I'm drawing new connections between the works in this section. Sophie-Anne, you've spoken about the light in the Shafran photographs. Looking at [Zarina] Bhimji's work [*Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India*], you can see her use of light, which she says is as important as any human figure in her work.

SAP: I think what you are saying about the atmospherics is so important in Shafran's work. In the [*Dad's office*] series you have rooms in the house captured at different times of day and in different lights. It evokes this idea of ephemerality, the passage of time, and the eternally recurring cycles of a day, or of a life.

EK: How were you thinking about this theme at this moment in time, the moment that we've been living and the moment that visitors to the exhibition are living?

MM: It is a moment in which many people are experiencing loss—loss of loved ones, jobs, or just ways of life. People are trying to figure out how to make new routines and reimagine their daily lives in a time when it's all been shaken up.

AB: The different ways in which we've articulated ideas of loss in this section speak to that: on the one hand incredibly mournful, but on the other hand transformative and productive. I think that *Edward Higgins White III* by Alek O. really speaks to that second idea, in the sense of taking something that has been discarded or rendered redundant and breaking it down and building it up into something new. In this moment, we have a sense that the past might be broken, and we're asking how we can build it up into something new and beautiful and functional.

For me, that's why [*Children of Unquiet* by Mikhail] Karikis is such an important end note to this section. The film is speaking to the loss that follows a social and industrial moment of development and change. Whilst on the one hand, the film is speaking about the ruin of a place, on the other hand, that place has been reclaimed by nature and by children. Poignantly, it's actually very in tune with the future that we might be stepping into after this pandemic. There's a potentially redundant shell of a past life that's being explored by a new generation, and there's an incredible hopefulness at the end of it.

SAP: The idea of nature reclaiming these spaces is also very poignant. The pandemic has highlighted our vulnerability as human beings, no matter how much technology has progressed. It's been an opportunity for me to re-examine my priorities in life and to refocus on the more important things and learn how to slow down.

This also relates to another section in the exhibition, 'Family Albums and Community Portraits', in that the pandemic has highlighted how much we count on each other at the moment. Here in Paris, for the first time I've met my neighbours, and people have gotten together to clap for the health workers in the evenings. There's a new sense that we have to be strong together.

MM: I think that idea of sharing grief and grieving together relates to the way in which many of these artists are sharing their stories with the viewer.

AB: Andrea Luka Zimmerman's film *Estate, a Reverie* really ties these ideas together, in that the film is exploring how the experience of loss can be something that binds a community together. The film is a diary of a community that's experiencing something very difficult—the woeful inadequacy of the government to look after people—yet it is presented in a way that is so intimate. It's a political statement, but

it's a quiet commentary on the connectivity of people and the joint experience of loss.

EK: When we initially thought about moving the exhibition online, we were often thinking in terms of loss—the loss of the physical space—but I think that attitude has changed a lot over the past few months. What would you say has been lost and what has been gained through moving the exhibition online?

SAP: For some works, such as Alek O.'s [embroidery] or Fiona Crisp's [large-scale photographs], there is something that is lost, in the sense that these works have a texture, an aura, a presence. That cannot be easily translated on a digital platform. But I think we were able to compensate for that loss by offering a multilayered and multisensory interpretation that allows the viewer to engage with the works on a more profound level. In particular, the audio pieces evoke strong memories and convey the texture or particularity of the works through different means, through other senses than the visual.

MM: Having it online also means that people are looking at the exhibition from their homes, and we are connecting with people in their homes. There's so much storytelling in the audio. All these stories and narratives layered on top of each other means that people are able to connect with others in a time when they might be isolated or they can't be fully reunited with friends and family.

SAP: It's also a very intimate experience to be looking at these works by yourself. You don't have to be conscious of how long you stand in front of a work or how you behave. There is something very powerful about having that one-to-one experience with a work of art, which you can only get digitally.

Everyday Traces_Nostalgia

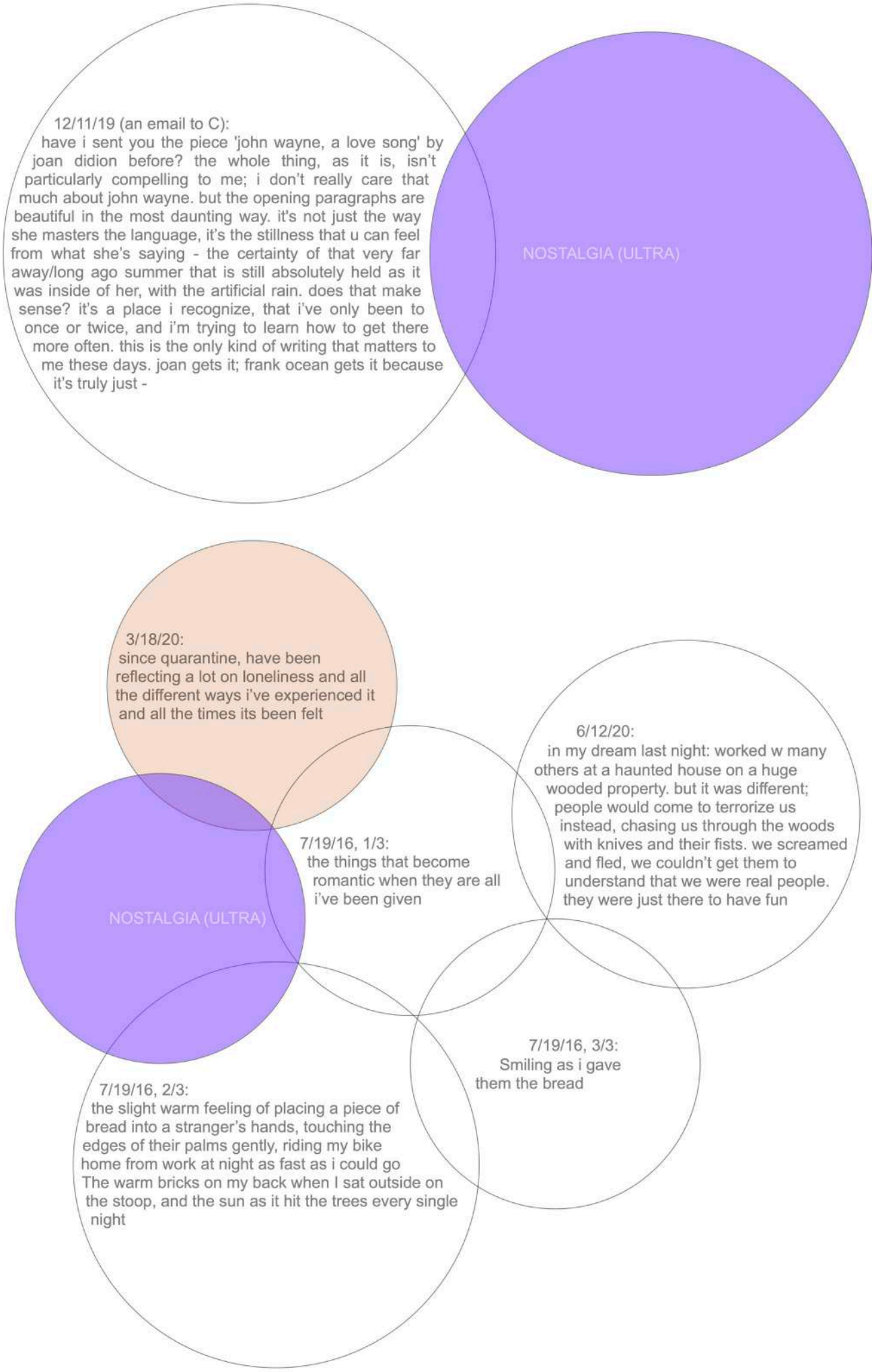
Jessie LB

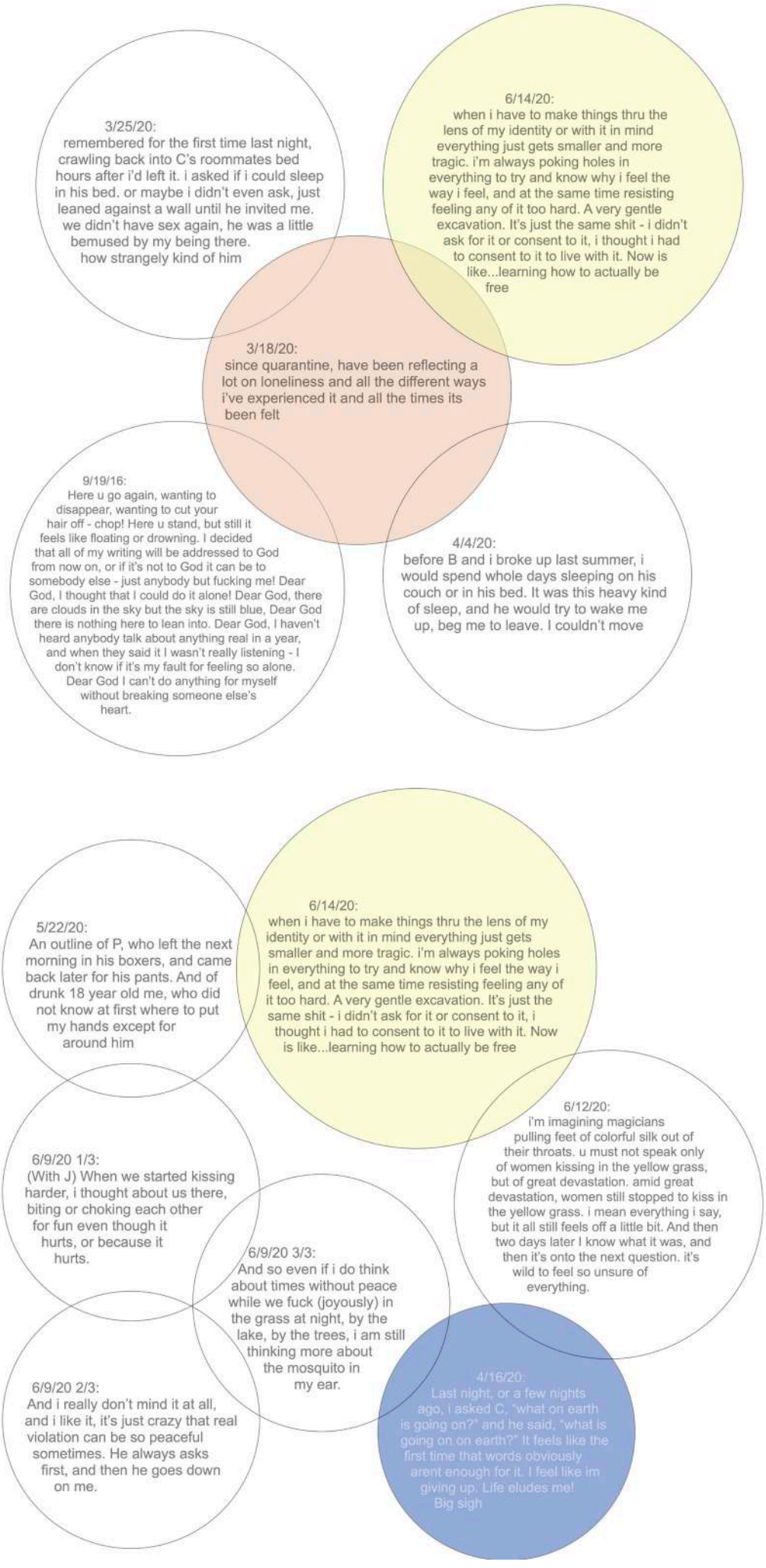
A month or so into quarantine, I started rereading my old diaries and footnoting them. Let go from my restaurant job and living alone, I felt a bizarre pressure to be fine all of the time, and prove it, while also feeling that pain was increasingly inherent and inevitable. I wanted to grieve and show it openly, which seemed inappropriate, knowing as I did how relentlessly loved and lucky I was. More than ever, it felt like the many aspects of my life were too opposed to each other to be real. Through footnotes, I reaffirmed to myself the ways that love, loneliness, and nostalgia need each other, and learned how to live between them.

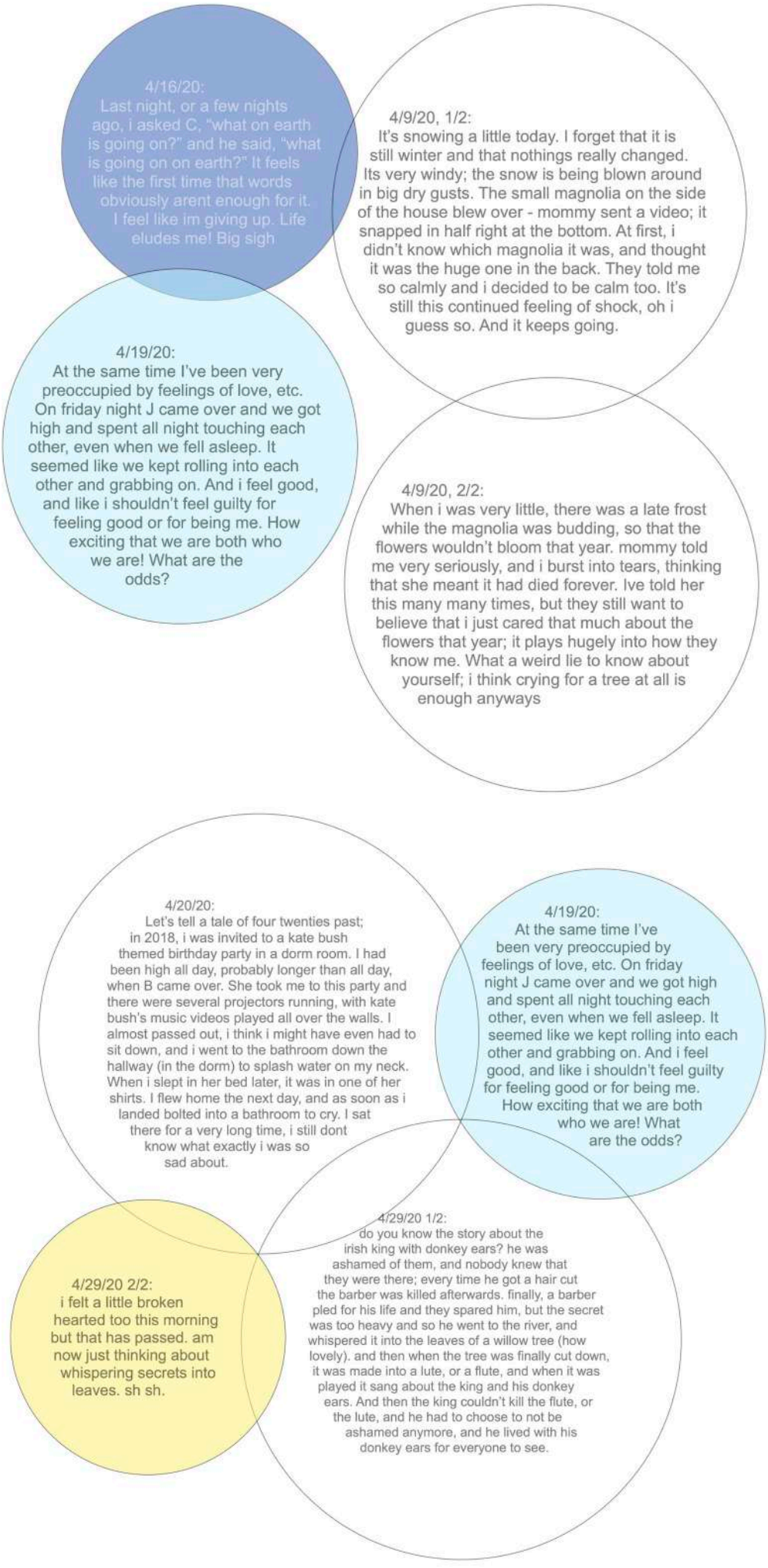
And then, George Floyd was murdered, and our city was on fire. I couldn't stop reading Ilya Kaminsky's *Deaf Republic* over, and over, hearing glass breaking, shots, screaming, at night, opening my windows before the sun rose in the morning to smell the smoke and sulfur in the very early summer air. We sat up waiting for the people we loved to come home from protests, and then they would, finally, covered in tear gas and crescent moon cuts and bruises from rubber bullets. In the midst of all of it, there was so much love. Everyone was fighting, friends begging their friends to be safer, friends begging their friends to care more. Are you still washing your hands? Where have you donated? What are you reading? Have you eaten? Can I feed you? My boyfriend came home at two in the morning with flowers he'd ripped from somebody's lawn, and when he handed them to me a pair of protective goggles came tangled in their stems.

As much as we're learning about our country, our respective spaces in it, as ferociously as we can take in the theory, we still feel uncomfortable about the tenderness that springs up in spite of, or because of it. And as I watch my white peers loudly embrace revolution as if it's something new, I keep an eye to the past, to the ways in which oppression has been undone before, especially in our small lives, our secret intimacies with ourselves and each other.

Jessie LB has a B.A. in Creative Writing and American Studies from Macalester College and lives in Minneapolis.


12/11/19 (an email to C):
have i sent you the piece 'john wayne, a love song' by joan didion before? the whole thing, as it is, isn't particularly compelling to me; i don't really care that much about john wayne. but the opening paragraphs are beautiful in the most daunting way. it's not just the way she masters the language, it's the stillness that u can feel from what she's saying - the certainty of that very far away/long ago summer that is still absolutely held as it was inside of her, with the artificial rain. does that make sense? it's a place i recognize, that i've only been to once or twice, and i'm trying to learn how to get there more often. this is the only kind of writing that matters to me these days. joan gets it; frank ocean gets it because it's truly just -
NOSTALGIA (ULTRA)
3/18/20:
since quarantine, have been reflecting a lot on loneliness and all the different ways i've experienced it and all the times its been felt
NOSTALGIA (ULTRA)
7/19/16, 1/3:
the things that become romantic when they are all i've been given
6/12/20:
in my dream last night: worked w many others at a haunted house on a huge wooded property. but it was different; people would come to terrorize us instead, chasing us through the woods with knives and their fists. we screamed and fled, we couldn't get them to understand that we were real people. they were just there to have fun
7/19/16, 3/3:
Smiling as i gave them the bread
7/19/16, 2/3:
the slight warm feeling of placing a piece of bread into a stranger's hands, touching the edges of their palms gently, riding my bike home from work at night as fast as i could go
The warm bricks on my back when I sat outside on the stoop, and the sun as it hit the trees every single night


3/25/20:
remembered for the first time last night, crawling back into C's roommates bed hours after i'd left it. i asked if i could sleep in his bed. or maybe i didn't even ask, just leaned against a wall until he invited me. we didn't have sex again, he was a little bemused by my being there. how strangely kind of him
6/14/20:
when i have to make things thru the lens of my identity or with it in mind everything just gets smaller and more tragic. i'm always poking holes in everything to try and know why i feel the way i feel, and at the same time resisting feeling any of it too hard. A very gentle excavation. It's just the same shit - i didn't ask for it or consent to it, i thought i had to consent to it to live with it. Now is like...learning how to actually be free
3/18/20:
since quarantine, have been reflecting a lot on loneliness and all the different ways i've experienced it and all the times its been felt
9/19/16:
Here u go again, wanting to disappear, wanting to cut your hair off - chop! Here u stand, but still it feels like floating or drowning. I decided that all of my writing will be addressed to God from now on, or if it's not to God it can be to somebody else - just anybody but fucking me! Dear God, I thought that I could do it alone! Dear God, there are clouds in the sky but the sky is still blue, Dear God there is nothing here to lean into. Dear God, I haven't heard anybody talk about anything real in a year, and when they said it I wasn't really listening - I don't know if it's my fault for feeling so alone. Dear God I can't do anything for myself without breaking someone else's heart.
4/4/20:
before B and i broke up last summer, i would spend whole days sleeping on his couch or in his bed. It was this heavy kind of sleep, and he would try to wake me up, beg me to leave. I couldn't move
5/22/20:
An outline of P, who left the next morning in his boxers, and came back later for his pants. And of drunk 18 year old me, who did not know at first where to put my hands except for around him
6/14/20:
when i have to make things thru the lens of my identity or with it in mind everything just gets smaller and more tragic. i'm always poking holes in everything to try and know why i feel the way i feel, and at the same time resisting feeling any of it too hard. A very gentle excavation. It's just the same shit - i didn't ask for it or consent to it, i thought i had to consent to it to live with it. Now is like...learning how to actually be free
6/12/20:
i'm imagining magicians pulling feet of colorful silk out of their throats. u must not speak only of women kissing in the yellow grass, but of great devastation. amid great devastation, women still stopped to kiss in the yellow grass. i mean everything i say, but it all still feels off a little bit. And then two days later I know what it was, and then it's onto the next question. it's wild to feel so unsure of everything.
6/9/20 1/3:
(With J) When we started kissing harder, i thought about us there, biting or choking each other for fun even though it hurts, or because it hurts.
6/9/20 3/3:
And so even if i do think about times without peace while we fuck (joyously) in the grass at night, by the lake, by the trees, i am still thinking more about the mosquito in my ear.
4/16/20:
Last night, or a few nights ago, i asked C, "what on earth is going on?" and he said, "what is going on on earth?" It feels like the first time that words obviously arent enough for it. I feel like im giving up. Life eludes me! Big sigh
6/9/20 2/3:
And i really don't mind it at all, and i like it, it's just crazy that real violation can be so peaceful sometimes. He always asks first, and then he goes down on me.


4/16/20:
Last night, or a few nights ago, i asked C, "what on earth is going on?" and he said, "what is going on on earth?" It feels like the first time that words obviously arent enough for it. I feel like im giving up. Life eludes me! Big sigh
4/9/20, 1/2:
It's snowing a little today. I forget that it is still winter and that nothings really changed. Its very windy; the snow is being blown around in big dry gusts. The small magnolia on the side of the house blew over - mommy sent a video; it snapped in half right at the bottom. At first, i didn't know which magnolia it was, and thought it was the huge one in the back. They told me so calmly and i decided to be calm too. It's still this continued feeling of shock, oh i guess so. And it keeps going.
4/19/20:
At the same time I've been very preoccupied by feelings of love, etc. On friday night J came over and we got high and spent all night touching each other, even when we fell asleep. It seemed like we kept rolling into each other and grabbing on. And i feel good, and like i shouldn't feel guilty for feeling good or for being me. How exciting that we are both who we are! What are the odds?
4/9/20, 2/2:
When i was very little, there was a late frost while the magnolia was budding, so that the flowers wouldn't bloom that year. mommy told me very seriously, and i burst into tears, thinking that she meant it had died forever. Ive told her this many many times, but they still want to believe that i just cared that much about the flowers that year; it plays hugely into how they know me. What a weird lie to know about yourself; i think crying for a tree at all is enough anyways
4/20/20:
Let's tell a tale of four twenties past; in 2018, i was invited to a kate bush themed birthday party in a dorm room. I had been high all day, probably longer than all day, when B came over. She took me to this party and there were several projectors running, with kate bush's music videos played all over the walls. I almost passed out, i think i might have even had to sit down, and i went to the bathroom down the hallway (in the dorm) to splash water on my neck. When i slept in her bed later, it was in one of her shirts. I flew home the next day, and as soon as i landed bolted into a bathroom to cry. I sat there for a very long time, i still dont know what exactly i was so sad about.
4/19/20:
At the same time I've been very preoccupied by feelings of love, etc. On friday night J came over and we got high and spent all night touching each other, even when we fell asleep. It seemed like we kept rolling into each other and grabbing on. And i feel good, and like i shouldn't feel guilty for feeling good or for being me. How exciting that we are both who we are! What are the odds?
4/29/20 1/2:
do you know the story about the irish king with donkey ears? he was ashamed of them, and nobody knew that they were there; every time he got a hair cut the barber was killed afterwards. finally, a barber pled for his life and they spared him, but the secret was too heavy and so he went to the river, and whispered it into the leaves of a willow tree (how lovely). and then when the tree was finally cut down, it was made into a lute, or a flute, and when it was played it sang about the king and his donkey ears. And then the king couldn't kill the flute, or the lute, and he had to choose to not be ashamed anymore, and he lived with his donkey ears for everyone to see.
4/29/20 2/2:
i felt a little broken hearted too this morning but that has passed. am now just thinking about whispering secrets into leaves. sh sh.

from 'John Wayne: A Love Song' by Joan Didion

In the summer of 1943 I was eight, and my father and mother and small brother and I were at Peterson Field in Colorado Springs. A hot wind blew through that summer, blew until it seemed that before August broke, all the dust in Kansas would be in Colorado, would have drifted over the tar-paper barracks and the temporary strip and stopped only when it hit Pikes Peak. There was not much to do, a summer like that: there was the day they brought in the first B-29, an event to remember but scarcely a vacation programme. There was an officers' club, but no swimming pool; all the officers' club had of interest was artificial blue rain behind the bar. The rain interested me a good deal, but I could not spend the summer watching it, and so we went, my brother and I, to the movies.

We went three and four afternoons a week, sat on folding chairs in the darkened hut which served as a theatre, and it was there, that summer of 1943 while the hot wind blew outside, that I first saw John Wayne. Saw the walk, heard the voice. Heard him tell the girl in a picture called War of the Wildcats that he would build her a house, 'at the bend in the river where the cottonwoods grow'.

As it happened I did not grow up to be the kind of woman who is the heroine in a Western, and although the men I have known have had many virtues and have taken me to live in many places I have come to love, they have never been John Wayne, and they have never taken me to that bend in the river where the cottonwoods grow. Deep in that part of my heart where the artificial rain forever falls, that is still the line I wait to hear.

Didion, Joan. "John Wayne: A Love Song". *Slouching towards Bethlehem*, by Joan Didion, Harpercollins Publishers, 2017, pp. 29-30.

'**from Deaf Republic: 4' by Ilya Kaminsky**:

"You must speak not only of great devastation
but of women kissing in the yellow grass!"

I heard this not from a great philosopher
but from my brother Tony

who could do four haircuts in thirteen minutes,
his eyes closed, reciting our National Anthem to the mirror.

"You must drink cucumber vodka and naked sing all night
Unite women and boys of the Earth!"

He played the accordion out of tune in a country
where the only musical instrument is the door.

"Speak not only of great devastation"
so said my brother, who could not write or read

but spent his days covered in other people's hair.

Kaminsky, Ilya. "From Deaf Republic: 4 by Ilya Kaminsky". *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, May 2009, www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/52522/deaf-republic-4.

Artist Interview: Veronica Ryan

Veronica Ryan is a sculptor who works across a wide range of media and found materials. Her evocative objects often explore ideas of interiority, containment, and accumulation. She spoke with Matilda McEvedy, one of the curators of Unquiet Moments.

MM: How do ideas for your work emerge? How do you begin the artistic process?

VR: There isn't one way ideas emerge, myriad modes of thinking operate. Sometimes I begin with particular intentions which evolve through process, the work usually offers its own direction within that paradigm.

MM: This work sits in a section of the exhibition that addresses loss and the traces of things past. Can you speak a little about how these things relate to this work?

VR: This particular work is autobiographical, it was processing a number of personal family tragedies where there is often a domino effect. I was also influenced by the visual images of John Baldessari, which I felt a connection with.

MM: Can you speak about the role of metaphor in your work?

VR: Making connections between ideas, and representation lends itself to metaphor as a way to transcend literalness.

MM: What is your interest in childhood experiences? How is memory addressed in *Lamentations in the Garden*?

VR: One's life is determined by early experiences, by inheritance and the environment. Analysis gives one tools for processing and figuring things out. Early and inherited trauma defines particular world views.

MM: How do these drawings speak to your sculptural practice?

VR: The drawings are an extension of the sculpture. The ovoidal shapes have more than one meaning, including the medical and landscape references for example.

MM: Your work addresses the relationship between the external and internal. Can you talk about the act of covering and obscuring in this piece?

VR: The internal, external coexist in dialogue and conversation, in tandem.

MM: How did you find the experience of intervening and drawing upon these family photographs? Was this creative process a cathartic one?

VR: Catharsis (cleansing) wasn't the intention of the work, there was no release of repressed emotion. Using photography was the most direct way to speak in these works. Titles give roadways and indications into the work, signifying grief and sorrow framed in time and space.

MM: How do you feel *Lamentations in the Garden* changes when being viewed online through a screen?

VR: I had a viewfinder as a child, it was fascinating looking through a screen, through another screen evoking a virtual memory.

Artist Interview: Nigel Shafran

Nigel Shafran's photographic practice centres on the objects and settings of everyday life. Unquiet Moments *includes selections from his 1997-1999 series* Dad's office, *in which Shafran captured the empty rooms in which his father once worked. Shafran spoke with Matilda McEvedy, one of the curators of the exhibition, about his inspiration and process.*

MM: What draws you to these everyday subjects?

NS: I'm interested often in what's in front of us, and, I suppose, less interested in the extraordinary. The consumerist world often can suggest you shouldn't be happy with what you have. And that's not my belief...It's all there in front of you.

MM: This series sits in a section of the exhibition that addresses loss and the traces of things past. Can you talk a little about how these ideas relate to your work?

NS: I think we often define ourselves consciously or unconsciously through the decisions we make and the stuff and objects we surround ourselves with.

MM: Are you also present in the photographs?

NS: I took the photographs.

MM: These photographs have been described as still lifes. How do you go about taking your photographs?

NS: This might be a very banal answer, but that is simply what I do. But if I'm attracted in some way to a subject, I will try not to talk myself out of taking a photo, however mundane or banal or uninteresting it may seem...even or especially if I don't understand why I'm attracted to it.

MM: So there's a real spontaneity to your photography?

NS: I try not to stop myself from responding. Also [I know that] I can't go back to capture something another time because things change, myself included.

MM: What continues to interest you in the medium of photography?

NS: This is almost an impossible question to be asked, it's too big to answer. I'm not really interested in photography, but rather [in] communication. I communicate through my work, and not normally through talking.

MM: How far do you think photography transforms ordinary things by the mere act of recording them? Is there a balance between that transformative capacity and the idea of respect for things as they are?

NS: Just by the act of photographing something, means you are looking at something, picking it out and saying, 'Look at this'. [You are] being attentive and photographing a subject and saying, 'take notice'. And that's really enough for me, giving it that attention.

Often if I see a subject that is affecting in some way, I will just try not to get in the way of how to communicate that in a photograph. I try not to put anything in the way of what I've found affecting, I try to communicate that as simply as I can to the viewer.

MM: What do you think is added by viewing *Dad's office* online through a screen?

NS: There are positives and negatives to the work being in this online format.

The work was meant to be viewed in a book with the photographs in a particular sequence. I had control over this book format: the printing, the design, the sequencing. This was the original way I wanted it viewed.

But I guess the positive [aspect] of being

online is that more people can see the work...I value my work being out in the public eye and having people take something away from it. It's a nice validation in some way for people to find something of interest in my work.

MM: What do you hope a visitor will take away from this work?

NS: I can't really say how people respond to my work, but I do hope that it's affecting in some way.

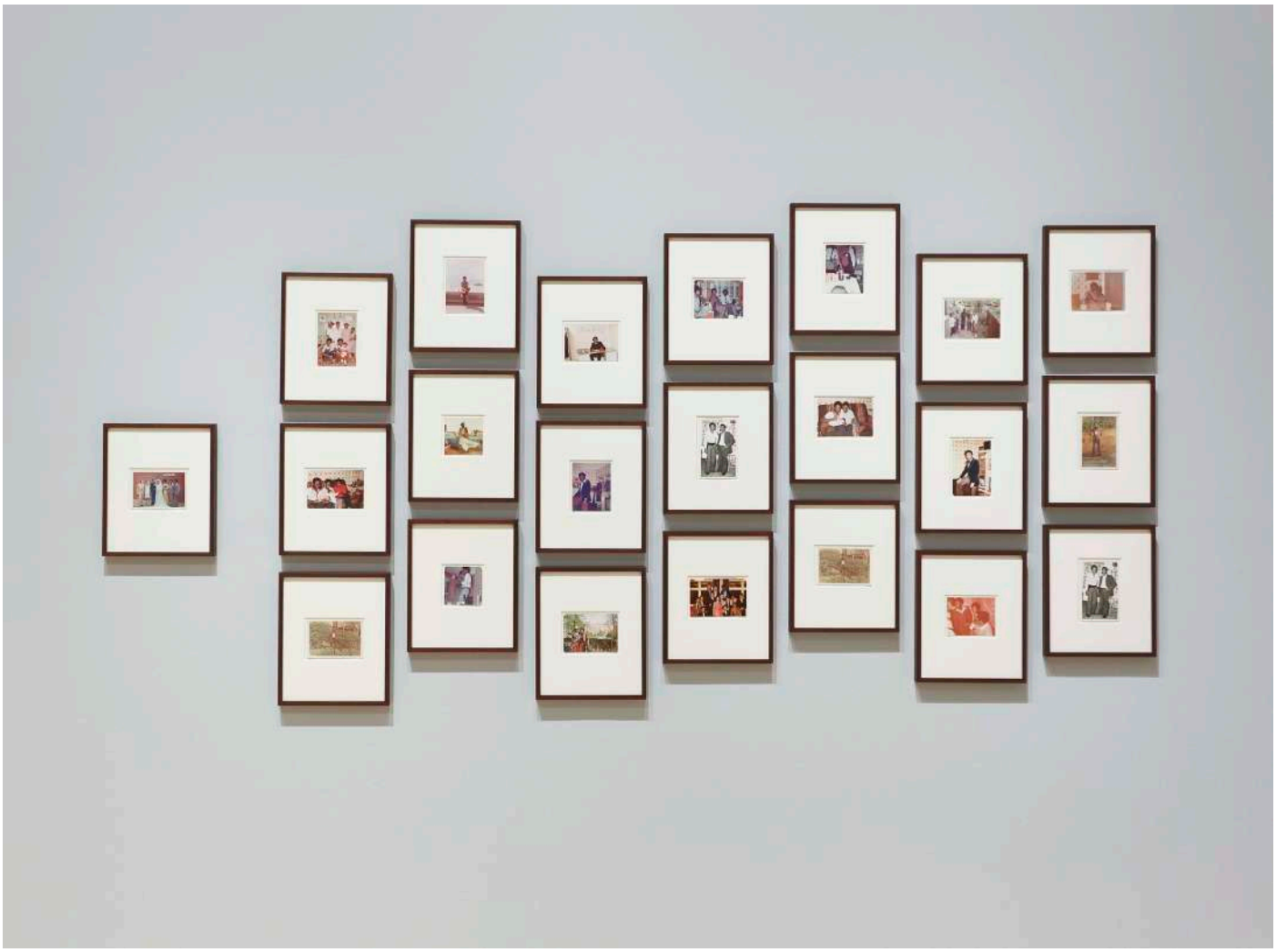
Works of Art

Karl Ohiri (born 1983)
Born UK and works UK and Nigeria

How to mend a broken heart, 2013
21 defaced photographs and 1 wedding photograph, dimensions variable
Arts Council Collection, ACC32/2016

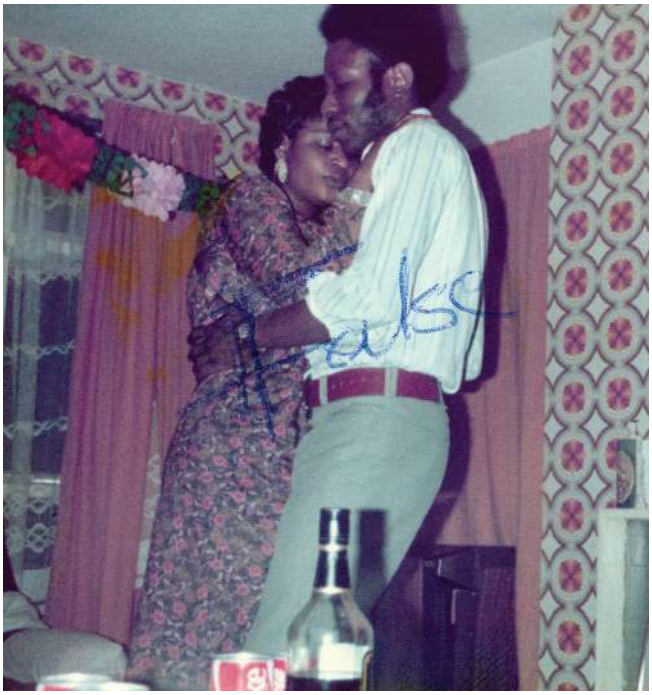
Ohiri gathers family photographs defaced by his mother after the breakup of her marriage. Sometimes she inscribed the word ‘false’, or else ‘out of my life’ over her husband’s image. Sometimes her blue pen simply scribbled over his face or body, as if to write him out of this personal history. Ohiri often works at the intersection between personal experiences and broader social structures or collective histories. As the artist explains, ‘They are snapshots narrating a story of love, pain, and frustration whilst inviting the viewer to contemplate the deeper narratives within the frame’.

This work forms part of a series begun after his mother’s death. Ohiri speaks of the power of photography to provide ‘a gateway to the past’. He reflects, ‘When my mother passed away, there were so many memories that were never recorded. The mundane little moments that make up every day were the things I missed the most when she was gone’.



Karl Ohiri, *How to mend a broken heart*, 2013. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Karl Ohiri, Detail from *How to mend a broken heart*, 2013. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

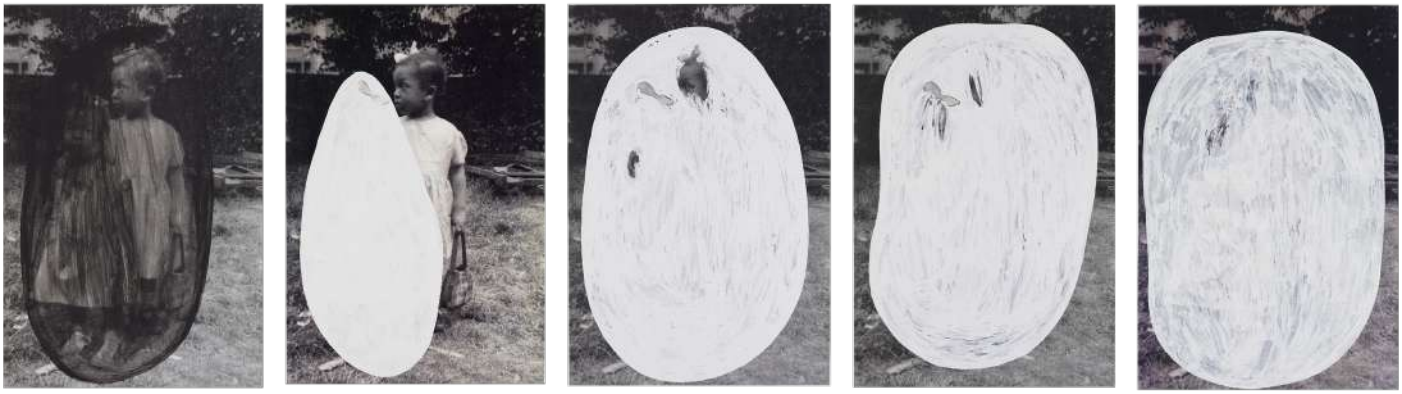


Karl Ohiri, Detail from *How to mend a broken heart*, 2013. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Veronica Ryan (born 1956)
Born Montserrat, works UK and US

Lamentations in the Garden, 2000
Acrylic on silver bromide print, 5 parts, each 43 x 27.9 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC37/2001

Voids of black and white paint obscure our vision of two young girls in a garden. The photographs show the artist and her sister in their childhood home in Watford, UK. The poetic title of the work alerts us to a sense of grief, yet the rounded, stone- or seed-like forms that hide the two human figures offer us no clear narrative. This work both deals with significant personal loss and speaks to historical trauma and erasure. Ryan created the work after the 1995 volcanic eruption that buried the south of Montserrat, her place of birth. She has said the eruption inspired her to reflect upon themes of 'loss, and the end of things' in her artistic practice. Like volcanic ash, the photographs preserve memory. Yet the sculptural forms and photographic images interrupt each other, creating blind spots and ambiguities.



Veronica Ryan, *Lamentations in the Garden*, 2000. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery.

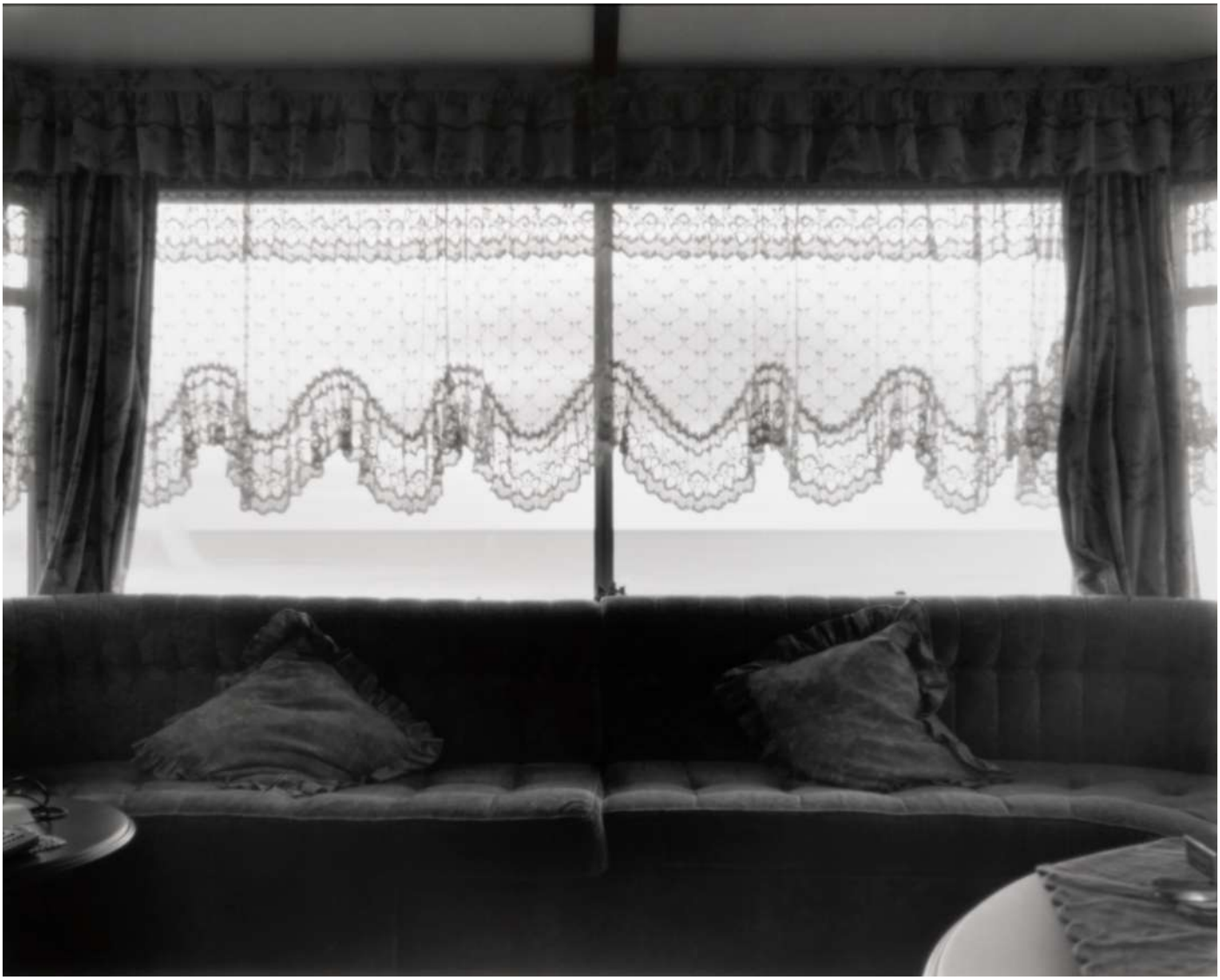
Fiona Crisp (born 1966)
Born and works UK

TD8, 1999
Photographic paper, MDF, and aluminium, 121 x 151 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC34/2000

TD35, 1999
Photographic paper, MDF, and aluminium, 121 x 151 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC35/2000

Crisp took these photographs in Berwick-upon-Tweed, a seaside border settlement that witnessed a centuries-long conflict between the English and the Scots. Interested in what she calls 'liminal spaces', Crisp was drawn to Berwick as a place with a historically fractured identity. In these photographs, taken in a clifftop caravan park on the periphery of the town, Crisp records the presence of communities that may face the threat of exclusion or erasure.

Using a handmade pinhole camera, Crisp explored the city and the surrounding landscape, interrogating what was immediately visible and looking for traces of complex, sometimes deep-buried histories. The long exposure times needed to produce images from the pinhole camera impart to the resulting photographs a sense of atmosphere, gravity, and stillness.



Fiona Crisp, *TD8*, 1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Fiona Crisp and Matt's Gallery. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020.

Fiona Crisp, *TD35*, 1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Fiona Crisp and Matt's Gallery. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020.

Nigel Shafran (born 1964)
Born and works UK

Fruit bowl collecting water, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999
C-type photographic print, 47 x 57.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC17/2009

Kitchen / Pollarded tree, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999
C-type photographic print, 47 x 57.4 cm
Collection of the artist

Kitchen table, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999
C-type photographic print, 47 x 57.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC18/2009

Seatless chair, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999
C-type photographic print, 47 x 57.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC19/2009

Curtain [sun], from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999
C-type photographic print, 47 x 57.4 cm
Collection of the artist

Shafran's work is often inspired by the stuff of everyday life: piles of dishes, plastic packaging, supermarket shelves. In *Dad's office*, Shafran captures the objects left behind in the rooms in which his father worked. As in still life painting, the objects we see—a kitchen table or an empty fruit bowl wrapped in soft, natural light—seem to be imbued with meaning and mystery. They function as reminders of the man to whom they once belonged, retaining traces of his presence.

Shafran sees his practice as 'an acceptance of how things are'. He chooses to photograph domestic scenes and objects, letting the objects speak to our ways of life. He explains that 'how people place things can be telling of how and what we are'.

Nigel Shafran, *Fruit bowl collecting water*, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Nigel Shafran, *Kitchen / Pollarded tree*, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999. Collection of the artist © the artist.

Nigel Shafran, *Kitchen table*, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Nigel Shafran, *Seatless chair*, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Nigel Shafran, *Curtain [sun]*, from the series *Dad's office*, 1997-1999. Collection of the artist © the artist.

Alek O. (born 1981)
Born Argentina and works Italy

Edward Higgins White III, 2011
Embroidery, 43 x 22.5 x 3.5 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC3/2011

Edward Higgins White III is one of a series of carefully embroidered textiles. Measuring less than a meter long, it is made from the unpicked threads of discarded gloves, collected from the streets of Helsinki, Finland. The title refers to the first American astronaut to walk in space, who lost a spare thermal glove in the process.

Alek O. is interested in how objects retain traces of their past histories. She often takes apart everyday items—umbrellas, jumpers, coins, gloves—and builds them back up into handcrafted things of beauty. Whilst the original form is destroyed, the raw material is transformed, and the abandoned object is imbued with new life.

Alek O., *Edward Higgins White III*, 2011. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Zarina Bhimji (born 1963)
Born Uganda and works UK

Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India, 1999
Colour cibachrome on aluminium, 122.4 x 173.4 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC40/2001

Bhimji created this work during her first return journey to Uganda, which her family was forced to leave in the 1970s after the expulsion of the country's Asian community during the regime of Idi Amin. Although her work often begins with archival research and documentation, she aims to create 'a type of narrative that is not tied to language'. Instead, she creates images and soundscapes that resonate on a deeper level of feeling and memory. Often focused on evocative landscapes and abandoned architecture, Bhimji's work calls us to a practice of close attention and imagination.

Zarina Bhimji, *Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India*, 1999. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London

Kabir Hussain (born 1960)
Born Pakistan and works UK

Terrain - 5, 2001
Bronze, 23.5 x 269 x 86 cm
Arts Council Collection, ACC15/2003

Terrain - 5 traces the surface of a vast landscape. It is not an accurate topography, but rather the memory of a birds-eye view. At the age of seven, Hussain made the journey to the UK from his birthplace in Pakistan. Looking out of the aeroplane window, the artist was mesmerised by the landscape of the Middle East below him. Since then, he has created many landscapes in bronze, sketching their surfaces in three-dimensional form. *Terrain - 5* attempts to make sense of the feeling of human insignificance prompted by nature's immense spaces. This work reduces the landscape to a tangible, tabletop size and eternalises it in bronze.

Kabir Hussain, *Terrain - 5*, 2001. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Mikhail Karikis (born 1975)
Born Greece, works UK and Portugal

Children of Unquiet, 2013-2014
HD video (colour) and stereo sound,
15 minutes 39 seconds
Arts Council Collection, ACC28/2015

Karikis's film *Children of Unquiet* examines the effects of the global economic system on local communities and landscapes. It is set in the Devil's Valley region of Tuscany, Italy, where the world's first geothermal power plant was built in 1911. In the film, children from the surrounding area explore the now-abandoned village that once housed the power plant's workers, discovering ways to rejuvenate a place that no longer serves a purpose. They climb over the empty pipes and decaying buildings, read philosophical texts about production, and reclaim the thudding and hissing of the volcanic landscape as the soundtrack to their play.

Mikhail Karikis, still from *Children of Unquiet*, 2013-2014. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

Andrea Luka Zimmerman (born 1969)
Born Germany and works UK

Estate, A Reverie, 2015
Single channel HD video, 83 minutes
Arts Council Collection, ACC2/2016

Zimmerman's *Estate, a Reverie* was filmed over seven years within the Haggerston public housing estate in London, during its years of demolition. Made in close collaboration with the estate's residents, the film offers insight into the community within which the artist lived for 17 years.

Focusing on the celebrations of everyday life, the film seeks to avoid the statistical lens through which housing estates are so often viewed. Zimmerman presents the 'spirited existence' of the community, whilst quietly drawing attention to the underlying neglect inflicted by wider social and political forces.

Estate, a Reverie speaks to the power of film as a space of resistance, strength, and reclaimed visibility. It is a diary kept and an archive made; it is an elegy for a place now gone and a portrait of the community that once occupied it.

Andrea Luka Zimmerman, still from *Estate, a Reverie*, 2015. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist and Fugitive Images.