

SWEET 'ART PRESENTS
STANCE



A MULTI MEDIA ART EXHIBITION EXPLORING
THEMES OF CHALLENGING NORMATIVE POWER
AND MAKING A PERSONAL, SOCIAL, OR
POLITICAL STAND

**Art Bypass Gallery
Dalston E8**

(10 mins walk from Dalston Junction and
Kingsland transport links)

13th-23rd June 12-7pm

Opening Party 13th June 6-9pm

Art, cocktails, freebies, performance and surprises

Email info@wearesweetart for full address, guest list for
opening party or to visit by appointment only for the show duration.

wearesweetart.com

Our multi-media exhibition 'Stance' acts as a response to Sweet 'Art's mission, ethos and foundation of inclusion, intersectional feminism, activism, and engagement with important social issues. In times of oppression, where the personal is political, it is more important than ever that we continue to use art as a tool for resisting, challenging and protesting against injustice.

Our selected accomplished artists, of which some may feel excluded from the mainstream artworld, explore our exhibition's theme in diverse and thought-provoking ways. As curators, we also accordingly structure our work within the exhibition to ensure that we engage and challenge audiences, through inclusivity and accessibility. The exhibited artworks relate to concepts of challenging normative power, striving to overcome adversity, and asserting the rights of ourselves and others. Many of these artworks also respond to the show's title and theme with reflections of the artists' own personal, lived experiences.

Famous When Dead

Days Away from You (2023)

£650

'Famous When Dead' was born in the industrial, pottery city of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England. His artworks are heavily influenced by popular culture, street art and graphic design.

He notes that the exhibited work 'Days Away from You' is a comment on the "contemporary struggle of an idealised self". Obvious themes in his work are not apparent, yet the recurring subjects of identity and social anxieties are notable in his more recent bodies of work. There appears to be an aesthetic and conceptual juxtaposition of the irreverent/playful, with the uncanny/sinister, particularly in his use of a bubble gum-toned, almost saccharine palette, alongside imagery that feels like it is trying to obscure one's true self and true meaning, much like the title of the piece. This overtly 'sweet' and hyperreal use of colour only further enhances the potential unease felt by the viewer of his portrait. 'Famous When Dead's portraiture obscures rather than reveals the subject's likeness and character, challenging traditional notions of portraiture by inviting in, yet paradoxically excluding, the viewer; prompting an even greater intrigue.

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Ch'i Creative

Still I Rise

Ch'i Creative ('Chee')'s practice began in the 90's with screen printing, sculpture, oil painting and more. She enjoyed trialling mediums and materials – their potential to produce exciting pieces when combined in different ways. Her most recent series pays homage to icons and their associated iconography, specifically, powerful and famous Black figures such as Nelson Mandela and, as shown, Maya Angelou. Maya's depiction is stencil-like and set against a sepia toned background, much like a retro poster or leaflet, and her infamous words, gilded in golden tones, halo her image. 'Still I Rise' echoes the unrelenting social justice work of historical Black figures such as Maya, whose words, at

their core, reverberate in their eternal relevance: to rise up, in spite of the challenges brought to Black women, past, present, or future.

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.*

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.*

*Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.*

*Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.*

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

*Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?*

*Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.*

I rise
I rise
I rise.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Dawn Woolley

#Rebel Self-Portrait 5 (2023/4)

£250

Dawn Woolley's artistic accolades span international solo exhibitions at the Perth Centre for Photography, Australia, group exhibitions at Saatchi, London, and Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo, as well as publications on themes orbiting the body, the beautiful, commodification and consumerism, within the arena of social media. Her photograph 'The Substitute (Holiday)' was awarded the title of 'World's Best Selfie', by GQ Magazine.

Dawn's exhibited piece 'Rebel Self-Portrait #5', captioned a 'photograph of performance', perfectly encapsulates the paradoxical feel of the work, as she orchestrates a piece vivacious with movement even within a still snapshot. Female legs can-can out from the piece at every angle whilst arms dazzle and distract with falsely reflective mirrors in a dizzying mirror maze, fun-fair scene. Even at a background level, the faux brick walls stand jauntily, dancing along with the bodies (or body parts). After the dizziness, the image slowly grinds to a halt, as the eerie 'real' background comes into view, the skylight starkly casting the characters into their true light – one dimensional, superficial cut-outs of real bodies and their backgrounds. In Dawn's words, the piece is a combination of 'still life and self-portraiture'; a commentary on 'selfies' as symbols of hyper-visibility, fixation and consumption of ourselves and each other.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Dianne Murphy

Priapus (2020)

£275

Dianne Murphy is trained as a painter and presently studies Fine Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee. She has lectured, worked on social justice projects, and exhibits widely.

Her current practice primarily consists of steel plate, colour-inked etchings, whereby the inks are applied in one go and printed in one pull, often resulting in one print taking an entire day to produce. Her choice of paper, colour and technique creates an immediate and aesthetic sense of nostalgia and childhood memory. Her process also resembles an archiving process. She notes that this process evolved over time from a simple depiction of what she initially considered 'happy' childhood memories, yet they eventually revealed an unconscious sense of childhood "remembered injustices". The viewer feels this too, as from the playfulness and innocence of the chosen subject emerges something else unsettlingly unspoken of – something just out of reach. There is a sense of a tension between that which the viewer may see and feel, and questions surrounding these layered meanings are evoked and evolve. The traditional techniques of printing, whereby layering over time is often applied, with space and time for layers to settle and dry, is felt as an inappropriate or unnecessary part of Dianne's process. Although often labour intensive, there seems a desire to paradoxically present the multiple layers of time all at once, in one pull, as a potential attempt at personal integration is potentially enacted. She explains: "Currently, following this questioning thread back through time has, for me, uncovered an ongoing need for us all to look within, begin to recognise our true selves and perhaps realise some form of inner peace. My subjects of interest continually evolve but have always come from the perspective of a woman and a mother, sometimes fundamentally feminist in nature.

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Elīna Šteinbergs

Take Off (2024)

£340

Elīna Šteinbergs is a Latvian-born, London-based artist, whose practice mainly materialises through sculpture, installation and performance pieces. Given her migration from the European East to West, Elina has become a collector of symbols from both the two powers and cultures, mapping them out and de-coding their signs and designs, with a focus on consumerist symbolism. In her own words: “I interweave folklore and traditions from my Latvian pre-Christian heritage which, during my childhood years in the USSR, was a source of resistance, [with] consumer goods and materials [...], [to] explore their spirit-summoning entities, thus exposing them as part of ‘the society of the spectacle’”. Such is realised aesthetically in the ‘Take Off’ photograph, where two generations spray whipped cream directly into their mouth, a snapshot which contains all the ingredients of contemporary Western consumerism – processed, packaged food, instant gratification, and greed. Accompanying the photograph is a rudimentary cardboard sculpture of the very act itself – a physical representation of the symbol; an emblem.

Elīna captions her photograph: “My mother and I first discovered spray whipping cream in 1990 when we moved from the Soviet occupied Latvia [with its] empty shelves to Wales. Both of us would sit on the sofa, spray the cream in our mouths while watching ‘Beverly Hills 90210’ and think “Ahh, we have really landed in the Capitalist West!” 34 years later, I have reenacted that setting with my husband and sons. It is a realisation how consumerism is absorbed.”

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Emily Howard

Bark and Bite 4 (2024)

£765

Emily Howard is a London-based artist and illustrator, exhibiting her piece entitled ‘Bark and Bite 4’. Her studies in Fashion Illustration may be credited for her astutely aesthetic style: fine-lined drawings, filled in with washes of rich, jewel-toned colour that are antequely beautiful. Such a distinctive style has bejewelled group exhibitions such as Rebel Dykes, Loudest Whisper and Sweet ‘Art, posters for The Dyke March and Bender Defenders - even record sleeves. In this particular piece, the sharp, bristly black mark-making is extremely fine, appearing almost fabric-like: woven and textured, even on the two women’s skin. As the two wrestling women grapple with each other, eyes locked in lust, this fibrous mark-making gathers densely around where the bodies touch, sweat and flush, illuminating the charged friction and flirtation between the figures like a form of thermal/electric imaging.

In her own words, Emily states: “‘Bark and Bite’ is a series of work [that looks] at the juxtaposition of sensuality and aggression within women’s wrestling”. “My work is a celebration of dyke decadence and tough women, through the lesbian gaze. I explore the less palatable versions of femininity and the relationship between womanhood and aggression [through the means of] hyper-glamorous aesthetic imagery, heavily inflected with a dark, brooding quality, reminiscent of German Expressionism”.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Geoff Cotton

Disobey, Don't Conform (2024)

£265

Geoff Cotton is a self-taught, working-class artist, born in London and raised in Essex. His solo art practice has evolved from his background as a commercial cartoonist and illustrator. His first experience of fine art was his sculptural practice, as part of the art duo ‘Rart and Sete’, who have

exhibited internationally, alongside artists such as David Hockney, Gavin Turk and Bob and Roberta Smith, until the passing of Rart in 2018. He now maintains his own solo art practice, as well as working as one half of the art duo 'Sons of Incoherence'.

In his current practice, he seeks to comment on and subvert notions of contemporary and historical art practice and culture. He juxtaposes traditional, nostalgic narratives/imagery, with a process-driven sense of the contemporary, through the use of digital art. 'Disobey, Don't Conform', at first glance, figuratively represents a strong female figure, in the process of boxing for an anonymous, but primarily female crowd of onlookers. The viewer, however, is not part of the crowd, but holds an alternative perspective and gaze, perhaps that of the opponent. The narrative thus becomes increasingly obscure as the figure's stance and physicality are considered. Is the subject in action or statically posing, is the strength and bravado genuine or performative? Although appearing bodily female at first glance, the figure's gender becomes increasingly ambiguous, non-binary and non-explicit. Due their position as potential 'opponent', the viewer is left uncertain as to the complicity they may hold in this narrative - about this figure's fight to 'not conform'. This evokes questions surrounding the gendering of the gaze in art and society - questions surrounding the women depicted in traditional art practice, based on gendered hierarchies and norms. The question of who is disobeying whom also feels necessary to ask, as does whether the artwork itself ironically makes a comment, through choice of composition, on the 'faceless' objectification of women in art tradition, the disempowerment of those of marginalised genders the in the art world historically, and the potential performative nature of inclusivity today. Geoff notes: "The deliberate choice of [the] protest poster style is a nod to the historical lineage of visual dissent. It is a homage to the countless unnamed [people] who have raised their fists in solidarity [with] those who have dared to voice the unpopular opinion. The boxer, potentially female, is not just a fighter in the ring but a fighter in life, embodying the struggle for self-definition and the right to [a] personal identity".

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Gen. West

Narziss – Form Follows Function #42 (2021 - 2014 rework)

Not for Sale

Surrealism, the digital image, gender and identity issues are common motifs and modes of investigation in Gen West's practice. In the piece 'Narziss – Form Follows Function #42', Gen both emblemises and enacts her search for identity. In the original photograph, taken by another artist around a decade ago, Gen plays an archetypal housewife who is turned away from the camera and towards a mirror. The mirror does not respond with her reflection, as if the inputted image was incorrect. In this re-fabled, now feminist allegory, then, the figure's female identity does not surface and is instead submerged by societal standards and stereotypes – here marks the 'female Narcissus'. Gen manipulates this original photograph through applications of mixed media directly on to the photograph's surface: splatters of shimmering paint or ink in cosmic colours that contrast the realism of the old photograph. The marks map-out this search for identity, the move away from realism as an (unsuccessful) representation of the self to a new method: abstraction – defragmenting and reframing pressured and stereotyped identities into blocks of pure colour or texture. To add personal insight from the artist herself, Gen specifically mentions red as the colour she used in the piece, within which she sought this self-recognition.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Henryk Terpilowski

Defiance (2024)

£300

Having studied Three-Dimensional Design in Wolverhampton and Sculpture in Warsaw, Henryk Terpilowski's professional practice originated with the production of Harvey Nichols' infamous window displays, before working as a freelance prop maker and specialist decorator. Since then, Henryk has been composing his own collection of sculptures and installations, containing elements of abstraction, conceptualism and surrealism. Undoubtedly, then, these years spent in both academic study and real-world application sharpened Henryk's intuitive understanding of design – design of not only a 'thing' itself, but its place and space amongst the rest of an assemblage, even among the gaps in between. Such work, then, cannot be curated nor conceived as an individual piece of work but instead as a collective scene – a microcosmic assemblage of materials and found objects as hieroglyphics to an entire story – an entire world.

In the exhibited piece 'Defiance', a plastic doll's child-like foot forces its way out of a cube of filthy ground. The theme of 'stance' is immediately visible, given the mud/plastic and real/pretend binaries of the materials that stand in contrast and conflict with each other. The theme is symbolically established also, with the child's foot representing, in Henryk's own words, a "human and vulnerable generic 'Stance' - emerging from a 'hard' (difficult) place and empowered by energy". Even this 'energy' is embodied quite literally, with what has been made to look like electrical wire circling out from the foot like a firework, in tangible emphasis of the potent, potential energy of the child's literal and figurative stance, whilst the subtle and perhaps accidental allusion to the film trope of the zombie hand bursting out from the ground fuels the piece with a more subliminal, 'thrilling' energy.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Holly Nerreter

ME/MYSELF/I [August/UpSide Down] (2023)

£199

Holly Nerreter is a German-born artist who, after her studies there, moved to California and later to the UK. She works primarily in mixed-media, and describes her hyperreal portraits as the most fulfilling of her practice to create, striving to embrace and truly capture the essence of her subjects.

'ME/MYSELF/I (August/UpSide Down)' is a self-portrait which Holly describes as being a reflection of her sense of self, at the time when her mother was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour. It also responds to her memories of the all-consuming time that followed as Holly cared for her mother at the end of her life. She describes her work as being "heavily influenced by the hidden and overlooked" In other words, she is motivated by a desire to highlight taboo social, personal and political issues, such as ageism, domestic abuse, and mental ill health. Within the hyperreal, slightly off-kilter depictions of reality in her portraits, there seemingly is a desire to make explicit that which is beyond the surface, to meaningfully expand from just mere likeness and to expose a somewhat radical yet still tender vulnerability. Holly's proficiency in drawing enables her to accurately and unapologetically depict the toll her lived experiences of grief and loss have had on her, and this is especially visible within the textured detailing of her complexation and the seemingly fixed tension of her expression. However, it is the slight over-scaling of her eyes within the portrait that, for the viewer, truly holds a sense of inescapable heartbreak. The eyes appear to communicate that she cannot and must not look away from the happenings around her, reminiscent of a hostage trying to wordlessly communicate. In the piece, the price we pay for love, the lived experience of manging a parent's end-of-life care and the unspoken story of the artist's internal world feels ever present in such beautifully human ways, which leaves the viewer with a sense of privileged insight.

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Laura Greenway

The Fight (2024)

£50

“‘The Fight’ is a lino print made in response to the Tory government’s recent attack on disabled people and the PIP benefit. Reminiscent of traditional protest art prints from the 1960’s, the piece criticises the government’s disgusting assault on disabled and mentally ill people, and invites sick people and allies everywhere to take a stance” – Laura Greenway.

Laura Greenway is a multidisciplinary artist, whose experiences of mental and physical illness are prevalent in her work. Such work has seen her awarded both the Venice Lands and the Sheroes Art Prizes. In spite, or perhaps because of these experiences of illness, Laura uses her body and its movements as her mode of artistic expression, mainly through performance and performative art. Even when not using her body directly, Laura honours its place in the production of her artwork, and she often crafts pieces that require one to be very much tactile, to ‘make’, like printing, for example. Laura makes specific mention to her affinity for printing and its repetitiveness, explaining that “[she] believe[s] this medium draws significant parallels to OCD and its rituals”. It is also worth reorienting, more positively and powerfully, this stance on printing’s repetitive and ritualistic qualities, which equally allow for an infinite number of reproductions from a single, original print: Such a process is a performance of the origin of social protest and change itself – the snowball effect from one person’s decision to take a stance.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Mandy Lane

Her (2024)

£500

Mandy Lane is a multidisciplinary artist who works predominantly in film, installation and sculpture – the latter she also currently studies at the Royal College of Art. Mandy describes her practice as one which “delves into the intricate interplay of themes [within the idea of the] domestic space”, specifically mentioning “childhood memory, trauma [...] identity [...] and intimacy”. Adding another layer to her work, Mandy’s artistic enquiries are practiced through a queer lens, which in itself reorients and reinterprets her study of feeling ‘home’, as Mandy herself notes how “navigat[ing the idea of] safe queer spaces” is “central to [her] practice”. In the exhibited work ‘Her’, the exploration of these themes feels intimately introspective, as she references the work as a self-portrait. The slumped, concrete-coloured pelvis is stripped of clothing as well as the remainder of its body. With only the areas conducive to bodily motherhood left intact i.e., the vagina, the stomach and, therefore, the womb, the invisible woman is not only deidentified but dehumanised into the mere mechanics of motherhood. Mandy explains the work as a response to “prevailing societal expectations of motherhood and womanhood”, making a particular mention to its effects on women facing poverty and/or marginalisation. Focalising a more hopeful aspect of the work, the perfectly positioned space left between the pelvis and the fragmented foot allows the audience to fill in the gaps - to almost visualise the woman as a whole. In equal hopefulness, the foot balances on its ball ambiguously – ready to run towards or away, to retaliate or reject these expectations – either way, it takes a stance.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Margo Berry

Body Empowerment (2024)

£350

Margo Berry has been a photographer for over 10 years, beginning her practice by documenting underground events and concerts, with an interest in capturing the candid emotions of her photographed subjects. Currently, she is focused specifically on self-portrait photography.

“This body of work explores the complexity of modern human interactions with the self and with others, in consideration of concepts such as sexuality, power, control and limits. From feminist perspectives, the enactments [within the work] tend to raise interesting dilemmas for the viewer regarding sexual violence and abuse perpetrated against women. The seeming 'abuse' of my body shown with the inflicted physical wounds leaves only traces of a narrative and invites the viewers to explore their own interpretations”. The artist assures that the cuts inflicted on her flesh are equally endured and enjoyed. Pushing her limits, control and stance appears to represent power in a paradoxical realm of powerlessness. A sexual yet also existential empowerment is gained in the submission to these moments of a power exchange 'roleplay'. The photographic recording of marks on her body, captured in an artwork, represent personal and BDSM community-based explorations of relational power, consent, dominance, submission, negotiated limits and boundaries. These self-portraits and their accompanying paintings create an interesting, explorative space for women and their bodily empowerment. This reversal of roles where the artist herself is an active agent in these enactments of bodily harm, by using painterly strokes on canvas, subvert power with play, and appear to act as a visual as well as symbolic representation of reclaiming and healing from past experiences.

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Mia-Jane Harris

Fight or Flight VI (2024)

£110

Mia-Jane Harris is a multidisciplinary artist from London. She gained a 1st in Fine Art Illustration, has exhibited widely, and has acquired many collectors of her work. Her work consists primarily of found object sculptures and hand-drawn, embellished mono-prints, derived from her own photography practice. She explores themes of resurrection, mental health issues, sexuality and what she describes as “morbid curiosity”. Conceptions of mortality and a ‘second chance’ at life resonate greatly in her work and are inspired by her lived experiences of adversity. Complications during her birth resulted in her being born deceased and, following resuscitation, she was left with the condition Erb’s Palsy, resulting in the partial paralysis and stunted growth of her right arm. She notes that this fascination with a second chance at life is symbolised in her practice through the use of found objects and taxidermy, which help to conjure the reoccurring themes of religious iconography and notions of resurrection. Although Mia embraces that which she describes as the ‘morbid elements’ of her practice both aesthetically and conceptually, an embedded sense of strength and positivity also reveals itself to the viewer as one learns of this personal motivation and determination through adversity to externalise and subvert that which has been traumatic. There is an unapologetic invite from the artist for the viewer to not look away from that which may feel uncomfortable or even grotesque. This tension between that which feels morbid and uncanny, yet paradoxically hopeful and even constructive in intention, feels to be the cornerstone of the strength of Mia’s practice and the foundation of the wide fascination and embracing of her works. The ‘Fight or Flight’ series of hand-drawn, embellished mono-prints has been created from photographs taken during the artists explorations of churches and cemeteries in the UK. She notes:

“The series represents the moral and ethical struggles [of] making big life decisions. These photographs are turned into hand-drawn, one-off mono-prints using carbon paper, then worked into with pen, and embellished with blood and acrylic paint.”

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Michelle Graves

Looking For Resistance (2023)

£550

Michelle Graves is a multidisciplinary artist who takes a uniquely scientific approach to her practice, by “weaving scientific research with existential thoughts”, she explains. Unlike many artists, Michelle makes more than just pictorial representations of her artistic enquiries – she presents the actual empirical evidence – the ‘answer’. No different is Michelle’s approach to her exhibited zine “Looking for Resistance”. She notes that it “was made [as part of her] artist residency at the Core Contemporary Gallery in Las Vegas. The information in this zine is the result of researching where resistance exists. It is everywhere – in war, in mental health, in circuitry, in physics [etc.]”. Her research is hand-scrawled – both texts and images, and these diagrams, rhetorical questions and notes-to-(her)self feel charged with excited energy, as we watch these answers unfold alongside her. Michelle’s research starts as ‘from the beginning’ as one could possibly imagine, with studying the resistance in particles themselves, before moving onwards to resistance inside people’s bodies, i.e., their brainwaves, with her research ultimately concluding that “there is no real resistance, just the potential for change”. It becomes apparent throughout the zine that Michelle views resistance/potential between all her research items: people, particles, magnets, and mental health as the same, one ‘type’ of resistance/potential. This is a universalising approach – alluding that not only do people have an equal potential for change (whether on a cellular level, in terms of their mental or physical wellbeing, or whether they trigger external changes to their lives), but this potential for change can occur within ‘things’ too, be they tangible objects or wider societal events, situations and structures, levelling us with both the people and happenings around us, with whom/which we would typically feel we have no power to ignite change.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Palmyre Manivet

Homebirth: taking a strong stance never felt so comfortable (2024)

Not for Sale

Palmyre Manivet is a self-taught artist, based in Hackney, London. She works primarily in watercolours and in 2021, her watercolour painting “Swimmers: Breathe” was selected to be part of the Let’s Do London Better campaign by Laura Nevill. Furthermore, her hand-painted lampshades have been featured in The World of Interiors magazine. She also takes commissions for calligraphy, illustrations, watercolour house portraits and offers a bespoke wedding stationery service. Palmyre notes her love of the fluid and meditative quality of painting with watercolours. Since giving birth to her baby at the end of 2023, she has been keeping a sketchbook to record this stage in her life. She notes the challenge in finding time and space to paint whilst being a full-time primary carer to an entirely dependent and vulnerable human being. Her fascination with childbirth began with her own pregnancy, and acknowledges that, until this point, her understanding of childbirth had been informed by depictions of birth on television, where the process is almost always dramatic, painful and even dangerous, which sparked her desire to explore hypnobirthing for own labour. Through her art, Palmyre wishes to shift an existing cultural understanding of the maternity system in the UK, to enable women to have greater informed and more positive birth experiences. *Homebirth: taking a strong stance never felt so comfortable* highlights how homebirth currently challenges the cultural mainstream in western practices, as only 2.4% of births in the UK taking place at home, with women who make this decision often being met with surprise or judgement. She notes:

“The word ‘stance’ suggests a firm, strong opinion and at a time when women are increasingly mistrustful of institutions policing their bodies while demanding that they hand over their autonomy to professional experts in a medical system designed by men, I was drawn to the hypnobirthing approach, which focuses on providing women with the tools to promote a safe and satisfying labour, so that they can be active and informed participants in their birth process.”

Palmyre Manivet (Artist’s Statement)

Poppy Cauchi

My Statement (2024)

Not for Sale

Poppy Cauchi studied prop making at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and is about to begin her MA at the Royal College of Art.

The sculptural piece *My Statement*, a clay sculpture cast in plaster, surrounded by a plastic evidence bag, may evoke an immediate and visceral response for the viewer. With the artist providing limited information about the piece, there is a sense that it exists as an exclusive invite or offering to those that may feel and know from their own lived experience, that which is shared by Poppy through her process. It indeed makes ‘a statement’, yet it is a statement that contains multiple layers, possibly subverting the idea of ‘victimhood’ implied by the evidence bag. Paradoxical to the commonly held conception of ‘the victim’, emerges something of empowerment and a desire to not remain silent, starkly evident in the scream of the figure – a scream that could be a one of pain, defiance or both. Poppy notes: “This sculpture serves as a raw and honest portrayal of my brain during a traumatic time, where I felt my life became a piece of evidence. It represents pain, and the transformative ability of art to capture difficult experiences into a medium for healing and understanding”.

Corrina Eastwood (Curator Interpretation)

Romana Ashraf

All the Birth Control Pills I Never Took (2023)

£15,000

Romana Ashraf is a painterly and conceptual artist, currently in study at the National College of Art & Design, Dublin. In her work, she seeks to craft from materials in a way that creates new visual signals of the Female Experience. The exhibited piece: ‘All the Birth Control Pills I Never Took’, follows suit – Romana aligns real contraceptive pills in a medicinally pale, pastel-coloured grid. Their uniform arrangement ends with a single white pill – a ‘full-stop’, which transforms the piece from an image to a ‘written’ symbol – a linguistic, morse-like code, that would be translated differently across nations, cultures and ages, given the drastic differences in the how the contraceptive pill has been considered, consumed and even made accessible within medicinal care, past and present.

Romana also offers her own interpretation of her work: “When [...] birth control pills are glued onto a canvas, they immediately carry a social and political resonance [...] [I take] birth control pills which are intended to be swallowed and absorbed by the body and glu[e] them to a canvas to ensure their permanence. This act demands scrutiny towards what Western medicine encourages women to ingest. It is also an undoubtedly privileged act - to essentially waste these pills when so many women are unable to access them. [It is therefore an act] which simultaneously intertwines social-historical and personal narratives”.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Rosie Burns

DOVE OF PEACE (2023)

£90

Rosie Burns has trained in archaeological illustration and has published many of her own drawings within the field. After qualifying to teach Art and Design, she went on to teach in various educational settings and continues to teach from her studio 'Rosie and Red Art and Leather', running monthly life-drawing sessions and various art workshops.

She has exhibited her work across the UK and internationally. She describes her practice as being inspired by "light and life". Helicoidal patterns and spiralling forms in nature such as DNA, shells, the sea and clouds are recurrent themes in her work. The artwork *DOVE OF PEACE* is part of series of cardboard cut-out prints with gold leaf entitled 'Peace not War', 'Peace on Earth' and 'Dove of Peace'. The original print is approximately 30x30cm. These smaller reproductions are archive-quality giclee prints, hand finished with 25kt gold leaf and presented in a simple white box frame. 10% of all sales revenue from the prints will go to Save the Children International. The work itself conceptually responds directly to the frightening events in the 'Near East', with inspiration taken for the artist's time working with Bedouin, where she taught English during the mid 1990s in the Negev desert, Southern Israel. She then went on to work as an Archaeological illustrator for Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She notes: "My stance is peace[;] divisionism leads to further conflict - all war is wrong. I am a pacifist; the universal often revisited dove is an emblem of peace."

Rosie Burns (Artist's Statement)

Sabrina Fuller

The Power of Fragility (2023)

Not for Sale

"The Power of Fragility includes various artefacts brought back from a journey into the future [...] Together these elements describe a future on Earth, following a Great Migration, where those with the means to do so had colonised space, and had taken with them all those who could be useful. They left behind, on a supposedly dying planet, women past child-bearing age, the sick, the disabled, the mentally ill and the ugly [-] those who remained set [in] caring for the planet and for each other" – Sabrina Fuller.

Since the awarding of her MA in Photography, Sabrina Fuller achieved lead artist residency at the ArtsQuest Lifeboat group, in addition to involvement in the bOlder artist development scheme, Lux Critical Forum 2022-3 and the Feminist Duration Reading Group. Such involvements have honed her internationally exhibited work.

Sabrina works primarily in mediums that somatically record the human experience, such as "still[/]moving image, voice, sound and text", she gives as examples. The exhibited piece - 'The Power of Fragility' - is a hyper-collage of each of these mediums, layering the sound, text, paper designs, and more of those deemed inconducive to a capitalist future. The literal cutting and re-sticking of such elements serves as a physical manifestation of the video's message: the hope to deconstruct, reconsider and recreate the idea of an ideal future on Earth and who its ideal tenants truly are; to reorient the meanings of progress and productivity to ones which entail sustainability instead of excess and care instead of colonisation.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Sal Jones

Pearl Necklace (2022)

£250

Sal Jones has a BA Hons in Fine Art, as well as a PGCE in Art & Design. She lives and works in Hackney, London and works as an artist and freelance art educator in the museum sector. Sal has exhibited extensively in both group and solo shows and has been selected for annual open

exhibitions with ING-Discerning Eye, Society of Women Artists and Royal Cambrian Academy. She has also been shortlisted for the Wells Art Contemporary, Wales Contemporary Art Prize and long listed for the Women's United art prize. Sal primarily works with oil paints and in the genre of portraiture, yet, unlike traditional portraiture, there are no sitters. The paintings focus on our relationship with representation and explore human reaction and empathy. She is particularly drawn to a gesture captured rather than conventional poses - those unguarded moments. She notes:

"I work from photographs and found images, inspired and influenced by cinematography. The subjects are mostly women (often fictional or notorious). I find painting a visual way to comment on contemporary life. I wish to take a moment to connect; by capturing a glance, a look, an emotion that unites us. I select the subjects and their expressions for that instant of sensitivity, a social or cultural relevance; something we can relate to as viewers. These will often defy the usual portrait genre and gender stereotype. 'Pearl Necklace' is one of three paintings inspired by 'A Very British Scandal', which tells the story behind the divorce of the Duke and Duchess of Argyll in 1963, one of the most notorious, extraordinary and brutal legal cases of the 20th century. It is a real story about a woman who refused to be slut shamed, who refused to go quietly and refused to do as she was told. The painting feels as if it is a snapshot or snippet of an observed image and acts as a clue or piece of evidence from a scene. There is a sense of seeing through a lens at a distance from the action. The work was painted in thin layers of monochrome oil paint, with a hard-edge, circular border which exaggerates the voyeuristic nature of the piece".

Sal Jones (Artist's Statement)

Salma Istwani

GO (2023)

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Salma Istwani describes herself as a global majority artist from London. She studied at the Chelsea School of Art and further at London College of Communication. She is a founding member of RIOT SOUP, an art collective of global majority women artists which was created as a grassroots solution to addressing racism and inequality through the arts. Her own art practice focuses on creating visually dramatic, often enigmatic and sometimes surreal depictions of the human form and experience. Her most recent work explores the complex relationships many of us have with the ideas and systems that form our societies, and the 'vicious cycles' these create within our personal narratives.

GO is part of a series of works titled 'Adam and Eve'. These works look at the complex relationship many of us have with the ideas of sin and morality. Through symbolism from the original story of Adam and Eve, the series depicts [humans'] refusal of the belief that disobedience is synonymous with immorality, as well as reflecting on [how] our constant [battle] with our need for collective morality interacts with our 'sinful' attempts to find paradise on earth, creating intricate, layered and vicious cycles of behaviour.

Salma Istwani (Artist's Statement)

Sons of Incoherence

Third date (2024)

£577.28

"At the centre lies our protagonist—a man laid cruciform on the cold floor, his body echoing the sacred pose of Christ on the cross [...] His suffering mirrors the universal struggle—the burden of sin, the longing for salvation, and the desperate plea for meaning [...] Enter the enigmatic doll—a paradoxical figure [...] She steps upon the man's chest, drawing crimson lines across his skin. Her presence embodies both judgment and mercy—an agent of pain and revelation [...] The doll's knives evoke the crown of thorns, the nails that pierced Christ's flesh [...] Yet, here lies the twist—the doll's artificial limbs [and] the juxtaposition of steel and plastic. In our digital age, sin takes new forms—

greed, apathy, environmental exploitation. The doll symbolizes our mechanized existence, our detachment from nature and empathy. She compels us to question: How do our sins manifest today? What blades do we wield, unaware of their impact? [...] "Third date" beckons us to take a stance. The man's bloodied chest is our canvas—a call to action. We must confront our sins, not in self-flagellation, but in conscious choice. Each blade, each wound, represents a decision—a chance to heal or harm. We cannot remain passive observers; [...] Ultimately, the piece asks: How much suffering are we willing to endure for our sins? [...] The cruciform man and the doll—two sides of our existence—beckon us to decide. As viewers, we become witnesses, participants in this cosmic drama. Our response matters; our stance defines us"

Sons of Incoherence (Artists' Statement)

Tracy Brown

Resistance (2024)

£300

The artist Tracy Brown offers her own autobiographic and historical context to the exhibited pieces 'Resistance' and 'Waiting', from her 'Altered Histories' series. She describes having "struggled with an eating disorder for the majority of [her] life", and how "altering fashion magazines" therapeutically "purge[d] [the] toxic imagery" she was ingesting. She continues: "before seeking professional help, this practice, combined with a study of feminism, proved essential to recovery." Her present-day practice continues to carry this torch, testifying how "women continue [to] struggle for inclusion in major museums, galleries, and collections. Appearing as sexual objects of desire and consumption [across] our visual culture, subconscious biases and behaviours are formed that hold women back".

In the two mixed-media artworks, Tracy adorns the female figures in unabashedly garish neon paintwork, that transforms into not only clothing but superpowers, which defy and defeat the men in the original piece. Such paintwork pulls the women out from their nude and sepia-toned shadows and into a new light, no longer the secondary subject but the primary protagonist of their own story that plays out across the piece. Tracy's vandalism is a real, re-writing of history, one which is powerfully impolite and impatient, the antithesis and antidote to the expectations of women and their place within art.

Jess Ross-Dreher (Curator Interpretation)

Yasmin Noorbakhsh

Unowned Ravel (2023)

£250

Yasmin Noorbakhsh is a Persian-British multidisciplinary artist, living in London. She studied Fine Art at the City & Guilds of London Art school and has been shortlisted for different prizes such as the Zabłudowicz Collection's Mother Art prize, the Brixton art prize and the Barbican Art Trust Open. Her practice examines notions of veracity; she has a particular interest in how our understanding of events can be affected by media bias, personal and cultural projection, assumption, and censorship. Her work is inspired by socio-cultural beliefs and events. It often depicts the erasure of events and objects and how they can lose their complexity and origin when looked at through certain constructs or agendas. She borrows cultural and historical signifiers and fuses them with elements of contemporary practice to create a strong sense of friction and collision. She notes: "As a female artist and a member of the Iranian diaspora, my practice is infused with liminal space experiences [as well as] the theme of hybrid identity and its associated uncertainty. There is a constant questioning at the core of my practice, which explores the relationship between pattern and chaos and how they overlap and intersect. Multifaceted layers, interweaving diverse motifs and complex surfaces depict the state of constantly existing between two spaces; between the known and unknown; the

pleasant, and unpleasant; the West and the East and how sometimes these intersect and become intertwined”.

‘Unowned Ravel’ evokes the complexity of the artist’s personal and collective experiences as a woman and was made in exploration of the recent Iranian socio-political 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement. The powerful sculptural piece makes reference to the act of Iranian women cutting their hair, historically a traditional sign of grief and anger. Within the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement too, this has become a brave act of collective sorrow, defiance and protest.

Yasmin Noorbakhsh (Artist’s Statement)