##### Text  Description automatically generated

##### Sweet ‘Art is celebrating its 10th anniversary as an organisation this year. We wanted to look back over our 10 year achievements and try and bring together some of the amazing artists we’ve worked with over the years as well as some new artists wanting to respond to our past work. Ret*respect* will be a retrospective response to Show #1, our launch exhibition that took place back in 2012 in aid of International Women’s Day. Since then we as an organisation have responded to the necessary and every shifting narratives and perspectives surrounding inclusive intersectional feminist thinking and action and have reflected on what this means and how we can respond meaningfully to successes and mistakes in our work, activism and politics as we always strive to do better. This exhibition will explore, contrast and compare responses to feminist issues societally and creatively since our launch show 10 years ago.

Addie Low

*Ester I*

£100

“I have focussed my art career […] around the lines, worries, curves, and expressions of the female”. Addie Low’s use of big brush marks keeps each colour textured and distinct in this portrait of Ester from James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, who is sent to another town and, resultingly, her death when she falls pregnant. In the novel, she is seen as a ‘sinful’ woman who does not go to church and is sexually active – challenging the norms of the time. James Baldwin was an African-American writer whose works examined race and racism and his characters like Ester bring to the forefront of the mind the importance of intersectional feminist work.

Feminine expression and, specifically, worry is brought to the surface of the portrait through Low’s technique – technique Low describes as an effort to “create more depth”. The large, dark brush strokes dotted with white acrylic create a really three-dimensional, ‘full’ appearance which works particularly well in the female figure’s dark eyes that appear on the brink of overflowing with tears. The soft and separated colours created by such brush work seem to speak to this idea of a tear-filled vision.

Amanda Cotton

*We 100*

POA

“We 100 is a collection of life-size female sculptures. Each sculpture explores new materials and processes, while creating a platform for communication, social observation and collaboration. The project is ongoing and I plan to continue adding to the collection until I have 100. At the beginning of the pandemic, I created a life-size sculpture of myself using reclaimed clay. I learned a lot about the process of sculpting clay but I learned a lot more about myself, emotionally and physically. While this was not what I expected, I see now that it was inevitable given the intimate nature of the sculpture. Knowing that ‘Clay Me’ would eventually collapse due to the nature of the material, I created a mould to enable the making of the 100 sculptures and the continuation of what had become a significant project for me. While the outline is based on my form, each cast has the potential to represent much more and I decided I wanted each subsequent sculpture to be collaborative. My aim is for ‘We 100’ to help anyone who participates in it, and everyone who views it to see themselves and life differently – hence the title ‘We’.

Carolyn Whittaker

*Navel Gazing. 2022.*

£150, each print one of 10

Carolyn Whittaker describes her practice as “ephemeral performance[s]” – a concept that typically describes transitions/processes in art or nature that are only momentary, and one Whittaker uses to express her thoughts about “the unstoppable nature of time”. These types of processes take place in “wax, ice, jelly or ice-cream forms as they burn or melt”, but also can be used to create a sort of representation of subjects more difficult to put into words or images, like “migration, refugees and closing borders”. In this collage of nine photographs, solid substance fades into just a stain (or vice versa), whilst the scattering of metal pins or staples interrupts the smooth flow of the transition from solid to liquid or to mere mark, suggesting a desperate attempt to piece back together; to prevent time’s unstoppable undoing.

The title is described by the artist as “exploring the term from a more positive representation of how it is often used by some to describe artists' practice. There are times when contemplation is needed at the cost of wider perspective to reflect on personal journeys” and has (hopefully) also been submitted for exhibition as a positive comment on the self-reflectivity of Sweet’ Art’s feminism.

Chloe Davies

*The Quarantined Body*

£800

“To create my practice I involve the women I know and interact with […] My unique hybrid bodies are created to form a togetherness suggesting that each part adds up to form a whole body. I want to suggest that whilst we should celebrate the unique characteristics of each body and the individual aspects of our different experiences, we should also highlight our collective connection.” The naked body stands alone and vulnerable in front of a medical, bathroom-tiled looking background, reminding the audience of the literalness of ‘isolation’ during the pandemic and the health anxieties that many often felt within ourselves and towards others. However, the lonely limbs pieced together create a whole female body, and whilst the different colours and sizes create visible difference, the body ‘fits’ – it works together in a way we can recognise from the ways women have come together during the pandemic and we can hopefully all see a part of ourselves within this put-together, community body.

Chris Avis

*Looking Back*

£200

“It was hard to look back”. Chris Avis started her investigations on female identity and time “studying the frozen expressions on mannequins” alongside self-esteem in elderly women. *Looking Back* feels like a ‘looking back’ to the interesting relationship between these two ideas; where the vertical columns of the photo seem to pull the viewer back through time to the central image of the elderly woman as a young woman; it shows not just an image that will never fade, but a joyful feminine spirit frozen in time with it. The elderly woman’s photographs are placed around this image in a way that feels both proud and protective, her own smile complementing instead of contrasting with her smile from the central photo of her as a young woman. The photograph reminds us of the ideal of feminine beauty that passes through the different eras and their standards of youthful beauty. More literally, the title offers an introduction to the theme of retrospectives and reflection and a ‘looking back’ over one’s past.

Holly Nerreter

*Protect the Past to Save the Future VII*

£299

“The bad fades faster than the good”.

Against anti-ageing media narratives directed mainly, and therefore misogynistically, towards women, Holly Nerreter’s use of mixed media in each of her drawings in the *Protect the Past to Save the Future* series creates drawn lines that seem to correspondingly sit in each and every line of the women’s faces. With the heavy use of monochrome all over the drawing, everywhere draws our attention; every part of the subject’s face is emphasised by the sharp light and dark of the marks made. Because of this, it feels like we are asked to celebrate ‘the whole woman’ for what she is and not what she has managed to blur or accentuate under the instructions of misogynistic media. The marks made on the face flow into each other in a way that speaks to this idea of connected wholeness.

Jenny Klein

*The Planets 1 Latitudes*

£175

Jenny Klein says of her practice: “I work with a range of materials and techniques to explore the ways surfaces retain and reveal experience, sensation and memory. Processes are combined to create new textures and associations […] A photograph might be stitched into, or the subject enhanced or interrupted by tape or mark-making. Stitch and piercing are both an alternative form of drawing and a way to consider the limits of surface. And these are gendered techniques, reflecting my longstanding interest in feminist discourse. I hope to place my work within a context of women artists using the possibilities of different materials and means to share their experience of the world”.

Klein describes *The Planets* series itself as “photographs of [her] body, stitched into to create additional lines and new textures. Presented as circles, these become whole worlds hence the title of the series, *The Planets*, with its suggestion of a universality and also a monumentality, mass and time on a vast scale, which all our bodies might contain”.

Jerome Beresford

*Untitled*

£100

Both an architect and artist, Jerome Beresford’s work feels like it corresponds to both practices in the way it visualises a meeting point between human and machine modes of making and creating. Beresford’s submission for Show #1 – a plotting of hand-drawn human icons that represented data on “sex-selective abortions in India and China” – has been given, in his words, a “reboot”, which meant for Beresford an attempt “to retain the spirit of the work whilst decolonising it, refocusing it on the UK, and updating the techniques used to create and produce the work”. As he says – “We’ve all learnt a lot over the last 10 years”. Having reconfigured the mind and matter of his Show #1 work, Beresford has created a portrait of ink plots which decode the data on gendered violence that takes place here in the UK. Representing computed data artistically, Beresford seems to ‘install’ an innovative acknowledgement and interpretation of the sheer numbers and statistics that feel insufficient on their own to express the realities of gendered violence.

John Gathercole

*Summer of Silver Seeds*

£280

“*Summer of Silver Seeds* looks at the displacement of idylls in modern thinking set against the memories of past experiences”.

The blurred brush marks, melancholy blue shades and a partially transparent foreground portrait that fades into the same colour palette of the background seems to speak to the ideas of ghosts and memories. The abstract female figure, wearing the iconic, retro and Madonna-esque pointed cup bra, appears watch the equally ghostly aircrafts above heading to the horizon; military in design and numbers, the aircrafts perhaps paint a war-like part of the picture. To add another point to the historical timeline John Gathercole’s painting produces, the house in the centre-back adds a subtle mark of modernity. Perhaps we are asked to re-question women’s role in history; and how the parts they played in the big events have been undermined, unwritten and often unavailable.

Julia Uberreiter

*Seelenraum Nummer 2*

£250

“The approach my work takes is a socio-politicized practice. My glance falls on everyday commodities and absurdities – just what we call ‘normality. There are topics consistently popping up in my work, like self-optimization, usability of human resources, bodytuning, consumption, high glossy retouched gender stereotypes, neurosis of profiling, body politics, anthropocene, our life experiences during corona, an inner discomfort. My antipathy is what drives my multi-disciplinary work”

Karen Byrne

*Like Other Girls*

Price on application

“Gold spandex - […] [T]here is an ambiguity to our associations with the material – joyous and celebratory, vulgar and over the top”. This ambiguity could also speak to a wider sense of uncertainty or, really, the wider *reality of impossibility* in achieving the ‘right’ femininity; both the right ‘type’ and the right ‘amount’. As Karen Byrne herself says, “[t]he stuffed form suggests flesh beneath”; and this flesh is both – in contradiction - contained and accentuated by the stretch of the spandex. The flesh is moulded into the anti-women slurs of ‘slag’ and ‘slut’ – it doesn’t even form a human body. It feels like a reminder of the sexist reduction of women beyond their bodies down to dehumanised flesh alone; jelly-like and moldable into the shapes of slurs that women unwillingly become symbols of.

Leena McCall

*Smile - Postpartum self-portrait*

£2,500

“The title of the painting belies the true feelings of the figure in the painting. There is no trace of a smile here. It is reminiscent of the immediate aftermath of having a child - the 'happy event' when photographs are taken on the operating table, as the mother lies with screaming baby on top of her chest, the anaesthetised tugging of her insides as they sew her back up ('Smile!'). Her body has been a vessel for 9 months, prodded and poked, no longer her own because of the foetus growing inside her. She has become a vast object, with no control over her own being. And after the removal of the baby through an opening in her stomach, she enters a new phase of womanhood - motherhood.

The psychological and physical trauma of having a child by c-section or otherwise is often overlooked, as everyone's attention turns to the new human being freshly delivered. Job done. Smiles all round.

She cannot bear to see her body in the mirror anymore. She does not recognise herself in the reflection - an old cardboard box, used to carry objects feels like the only suitable way of disguising the disgusting nature of her post-natal body.

Her past is alluded to in old paintings propped up against the wall. The erotic portrait of a distant Berlin model, now the underpainting for this new artwork. If you gaze at the space between her head and the window, you might glimpse the ghostly image of the model's arm, as she leans on her knee, nipple exposed and now hidden, framed by the easel in the background. The erotic era is over.

She is becoming a/her mother as she works on the copper plate portrait to her right. She is coming to terms with the next phase of womanhood, knowing that eventually she will become her mother. The ageing process is inevitable.

The light in the room points to the brush in her hand, the new painting on the easel. Art is the light, art is the rhizomatic thread in this self-portrait. Art is what makes it all worthwhile.

Addendum April 2022: I was pregnant with my first son at the private view for the first Sweet Art show, ten years ago. Two of my paintings of a Berlin model Ms Ruby May were on show. I was full of energy, excitement and anticipation of what motherhood might bring.

Ten years on, I feel exhausted. Yes, I am still a feminist, but I feel like feminism has a long way to go. I feel pretty disheartened and isolated from the world. COVID and homeschooling three kids, cooking, cleaning and generally feeling like a domestic servant, rather than domestic goddess makes me wonder where my hope and idealism has gone. I know art is my salvation, but I am burnt out by motherhood. “

Linda Vuorenvirta

*Lounging*

£30

Stating the male gaze as the subject of her piece, Linda Vuorenvirta’s digital illustration feels like a determination to direct *our own* gaze, as women, towards each other and even inwards, towards ourselves. After all, the character of *Lounging* who confidently meets our own gaze in her messy room and in her comfortable underwear; her phone in one hand and her vibrator in another, certainly feels like a look in the mirror for a lot of women. “My work echoes the sentiments of Leena McCall from Show #1 by also creating images in which female subjects have full agency over their own bodies and their own situations. My illustrations each have some elements of sexuality in them, ranging from a subtle coy glance to a vibrator in hand, but the characters are in control and are active participants in their own narratives”.

Lita Doolan

*Really good face cream*

£55

“Once, I got stopped at Sloane Square by a man giving me a free eye cream sachet. All well and good, though I had to go into the glitzy shop to get the sample. Ok. Then I had to sit on the leather-bound chair to have it applied. Thankfully, my cheeky mid-morning ice cream was melting on the floor, so they didn’t want me there too long. I got out with a mid-priced purchase in a beautiful bag, but another girl wasn’t so lucky. I’m not sure either of us wanted the face cream. We wanted the dream […] I kept my purchase, didn’t use it much and never went back. I think the shop closed a week later. It had a beautiful chandelier and they took it with them. Sloane Square is still shiny though. I try to capture the shiny surfaces that persist”.

Luna Phelan

*‘YOU’RE SO GOLDEN’*

£12,000

Luna Phelan says: “I like to create an irony and playfulness [in my practice]. The audio pieces assist these intentions – they are also playful and most often consist of open conversations between women that are combined with ambient and musical sounds […] connecting my artistic practice and efforts to represent feminine culture with my interest in audio tracks and composition”.

*‘YOU’RE SO GOLDEN’* really reaches these aims of conjuring the events and emotions of female young adulthood - the white-bright highlights on the female figure’s hair and clothes in the dark evening of the background creates a flash photography sort of effect; surfacing the audiences’ own hazy memories of drunken activities captured by an equally drunk photographer. Phelan combines intimacy and femininity together in a way that feels fun and familiar; far removed from the sexually-charged male gaze.

Maria Arvaniti

*De Rerum Natura*

£6,000

Greek-born Maria Arvaniti is conscious of the misogyny that has not lost its momentum throughout social and cultural practices from past and present; country to country and these practices collide in the *De Rerum Natura* . She creates appearance of weaving – “specifically, the traditional weaving practices for the marriage dowry of Greek women” – with another traditional practice: origami. The insistence in traditional modes of production is entirely contradicted by the final product – “the effect of the pixelated image” – an effect created by the origami itself; the piecing together of vibrant, folded paper in an arrangement that that generates these “elements of movement” that are suggestive of a motion picture. In bringing together social and cultural practices seemingly distinct as products of their own times and places, it is as if Arvaniti rids us of this illusion; exposing how some old, traditional practices and new cultural phenomena like television and film work in strangely similar ways – producing and perpetuating rumors, rules and realities for women’.

Maroula Lambis

*Reravel Part ii: Coming Undone*

Price on application

Maroula Lambis is a South-African-born female artist, who works with the mediums of photography and embroidery. Her work often resides within the realms of melancholia and solitude. In *Reravel* – a work in three parts – these themes come together in a profound proclamation of her own experience with (peri-)menopause, specifically illuminating the feelings of shame and isolation that often surface at this time; feelings that seem to suffocate even more given the stigma of female ageing.

“This piece was made at a time of extreme isolation during which I found myself marooned

on an island, experiencing peri-menopause.

Unravelling. Slowly, silently.

Dealing with losing myself and losing my mind felt neither strong, nor pretty.

The feeling of shame in talking about it, hardly allowed me to admit it to myself.

Peri-menopause

Ageing

The lack of support played out like a crisis.

At 50, I reravel the feelings of being reduced and becoming invisible.

By sewing pieces of myself back together, I make myself stronger.

A work of art borne of broken bits.

Process: I looked at Boro, an ancient Japanese art form resulting from mending worn, torn

and broken fabric, in order to make it stronger. Boro uses Sashiko, a running stitch

meaning little stabs. Worn and torn is how menopausal women are described. We feel the

little stabs of being overlooked.”

Mia Hawk

*Becoming Lola*

£4,000

“A portrait of actor Kayi Ushe. Kayi played the lead (Lola) in the UK tour of *Kinky Boots*: the musical. I met with Kayi and followed him backstage during one of his shows, witnessing the two-hour transformation it took for him to turn into a drag queen […]. We both talked about what we wanted to achieve with the image; normally, drag queens have a very polished final image. In the painting, Kayi is washing up (and doing his vocal warm up at the same time). He is wearing his corset and bra; still to put on the final dress. I particularly like the presence of the mirror; we only really see his reflected image since his back is turned to us, which I find particularly fitting, seeing as becoming a drag queen has a lot to do with the image presented. We wanted to capture some of the mundane and ‘real’ aspects of backstage life, as well as having it juxtapose with the image of a flawless drag queen. I took inspiration from this in the style; leaving certain aspects of the painting dirty and unfinished”.

Mia Wilkinson

*BIG GIRL PANT$*

Price on application

Mia Wilkinson imagines these “joyous, exaggerated and sometimes grotesque portrayals of the female body as a method of challenging male objectification and reconfiguring the male gaze […] The shameless space-taking of these oil figures as they fill the canvas create “claustrophobic scenarios which topple onto the space of the viewer, creating a pantomime of entangled bodies”. The big-knickered buttocks appears to proudly project itself as front and centre of the canvas, meeting any objectifying gaze head (or bum) on; confidently challenging the mode and manner in which painted women are placed on the canvasses of classical art, as well as gendered understandings of crudeness, vulgarity and hilarity.

"This painting was made by taking a small section of some drawings I had been doing as an evolution from my lockdown drawings (where I incessantly drew everyday and completed an A3 piece from scrolling my phone and collating it into a single line drawing). I evolved because I didn’t want to produce a drawing for sale or for a brief and so took it down to an A5 sketchbook and drew front and back scrawling every page so that it couldn’t be framed or extracted from the book to be sold.

I’ve explored painting these “doodles”. They are taken from my own subconscious : algorithm ratio. They are fast paced and I draw images I am naturally intrigued by or perhaps shown by the technology that we rely on to feed our emotions and our brain.

I look at gender stereotypes and roles in the culture of our world and a lot of our world is online. Big girl pants is a phrase I recognise from childhood. Usually being expressed by a woman to girl.

Ideas : woman in swim caps usually resonate with older women/ desexualised/ unmarked they body is flattened by the swimming costume and the cap removes the hair.

Cat and pussy and vagina

White pants frilly big"

Nadia Nervo

*M*

£190

“In this series, I invite strangers to sit naked”. In Nadia Nervo’s photographic nude, the breast feels central; a centrality that is emphasised by the immense photographic sharpness that focuses the breast closest to the camera and therefore the viewer. The focus fades outwards towards the rest of the body and the background that makes up the perimeter of the image; a soft, dream-like focus that complements the soft dreaminess of the white walls and white bedsheet and seems to mimic the focus/fade of our own eyesight. It feels real and therefore it feels familiar, as if the stranger’s body, when seen from the corner of our eye, could be anyone’s; could be our own. In taking on the task and the style of the nude, you could say that Nervo takes on a tool used in many men’s hands to objectify, but the honesty and rawness of the focused-to-fading natural lighting and the naked female body it illuminates work in the same way to show an organic, authentic, and yet still very female sexuality through our own lens and gaze.

Ng’endo Muki

*Homage to Wangari Maathai*

*Portrait of Marielle*

“Portrait of Marielle: In August 2018 I held an animation workshop in Nairobi with a group of young artists. We wanted to celebrate the Brazilian human rights activist, Marielle Franco. We printed hundreds of images from videos of Marielle online, and worked frame-by-frame, drawing over her image as she walked the streets of a Rio favela. We drew our gestures on and around her smiling face, and with each mark, we felt closer and closer to Afro-Brazilians, and to her story.

Homage to Wangari Maathai: While on an artist's residency in Brazil in November 2018, I screened Portrait of Marielle to audiences in Salvador. The audiences were moved by this celebration of Marielle Franco, and asked to create a film in response. I held a workshop with young Baiana artists in Salvador, and we made a film celebrating the Kenyan environmental activist, Dr Wangari Maathai. The two films perform as an act of solidarity between Africans and Afro Diaspora thriving through very similar socio-political experiences in the Global South.”

In 2020, Ng’endo exhibited in Show #1 saying at the time “I am interested in the concept of skin and race, and what they imply; in the ideas and theories sown into our flesh that change with the arc of time. I focus on African women’s self-image, through memories and interviews; using mixed media to describe our almost schizophrenic pursuit of globalised beauty."

Phoebe Ackers

*Keeping up with the kraze 3*

£500

“Phoebe Ackers is a British artist who currently lives and works in North Yorkshire. […] [H]er latest work explores themes relating to the body in the form of ‘soft sculpture’. Although comforting to look at, the context behind these works illustrates an investigation”.

Ackers’ work feels really reminiscent of Jeff Muhs’ concrete sculptures; sturdy, building-type blocks that, literally, bend to ‘shapewear’-like materials marketed and, therefore typically associated with, moulding the much softer materials of female forms, from lengthening and slimming stilettos or constricting corsets. Unlike the obviously feminine shapes and materials of Muhs’ sculptures, Acker’s sculptures are less recognisable as bodies and make their impact from their odd geometric shapes tied with what resembles rope – both components illuminated in their own artificial light from their vibrant, neon colours. This lack of bodily focus doesn’t necessarily take away from the ‘human’ feel of this sculpture through – but the powerful abstractness arguably shifts the emphasis towards the emotional instead of physical impact of society’s manhandling of the narrative on the ways women’s bodies should be moulded into certain acceptable shapes and sizes.

Rosie Burns

*Where we all come from!*

POA

“[T]he notion of ‘where are you from?’, whether in reference to being a ‘local’, race, ethnic origin etc. is mightily bothersome. [The question is] [a]rguably a misplaced concern that has resulted in endless divisions (war, social unrest and so on and so forth) – all human beings come from the same place – a womb”.

Rosina Godwin

*Mutter III*

£300

*Mutter IV*

£330

“*Mutter IV* plays with the feminine quality of the colour pink, as tactile softness is counteracted with coarse, pubic-like fibres”.

Rosina Godwin says of the works : “The pieces were created in response to the Trump presidency, which accelerated the acceptance of misogynistic views and the erosion of women’s rights”. The sculptures seem to explore the complexity of often dismissively simplified female roles and Rosina Godwin states motherhood as the example used in the *Mutter* series, which can be “nurturing and life-giving, but also terrifying and destructive”. Emblemising the multiplicity of the female gender and the roles attributed to it are the sculpture’s featured “multi-functional body parts, which merge male and female genitalia”. This idea is also underpinned by the material of the pieces themselves – knitted fabrics - which “subvert the homely feel of knitting to challenge the traditional hierarchy of the arts, by using a craft medium associated with women’s domestic work”.

Godwin has brought together knitting and gender issues in ways that have birthed innovative and new ideas throughout her career as a whole, having produced writings such as *Freudian Knits and Body Bits* and *Slits, Tits and Phallic Knits*, as well as leading experimental knitting workshops across the country.

Sabrina Fuller

*A Disorderly Paradise*

Price on application

Sally Hewett

*Nursing Chair*

Not for sale

“The nursing chair belonged to my granny; she used it to breastfeed her children. My mum inherited it from her and I inherited it from my mum; it’s a chair that carries the family history. We’ve all sat on it to do all sorts of different things. My mum reupholstered the chair years ago when she was young and it was worn […] I wanted its new upholstery to reflect something of its history”.

One could say that creating a furniture-human hybrid literally brings Sally Hewett’s nursing chair to life. The ‘live’ materials of faux skin and veins decode the mere marks and imprints of the chair prior to its artistic reupholstery; blind, tactile memories that merely hint at the rich memories held within the chair. Allowing these memories of nursing – often a shared and significant female experience - to be seen; to exist outside the mind and within art – grants these experiences the celebration and salute they deserve.

Sal Jones

*I Was Respected*

£2,500

“The painting is of Monica Bellucci as Lucia Sciarra in the *James Bond* film *Spectre* […] I chose this image as she was a controversial choice for the film – being 50 at the time – and the oldest ‘Bond Girl’. Much was made of this in the media; is it really still scandalous that an older woman would be with a younger man? It’s interesting that she was, in fact, only three years older than Daniel Craig at the time of filming […] I also feel uncomfortable about the term ‘Bond *Girl*’ […] [W]hen women are called ‘girls’, they are, in fact, being infantilised, disrespected and not taken seriously”.

Sal Jones is a British artist, best known for her emotionally-charged, vibrant and textured oil paintings, portraying subjects from film and popular culture. She presents these women as familiar strangers who engage the viewer on a personal level; creating conversations with quotes, dialogue and titles. Appropriating source imagery from film, media and popular culture, her paintings investigate our love of the dramatic, focusing on themes of questioning, love, betrayal and power-play as seen from a woman’s perspective

SILVIYAR

*Lucid*

£190

*Fire Cage*

£200

SILVIYAR completed her BA with Honours: Fine Art in Venice, Italy, and her MA in Graphic Art and Printmaking in Sofia, Bulgaria. The raw materials she chooses to paint on complement the raw and primal spirit of her paintings, which feel like a celebration of divine femininity. From the way the vibrant and emotive primary colours and expressive marks seem to surface soul and an almost alien-looking identity, it seems as if this divine femininity is a femininity focused in the soul within and not on the surface level.

“In the past few years, I have predominantly been working on reclaimed wood. I am particularly fascinated with old, distressed wooden beams which I collect from the streets of London, then [I] cut and paint on them. Memory, mortality, love and loss are my main subjects. I explore […] the matters of the heart; playing with symbolic elements and hidden messages. In my work, I project […] conscious and subconscious images. The way I work is very spontaneous and meditative – most of the time everything happens in one go. Often, the narrative unfolds over a few artworks”.

Sons of Incoherence

*Ocra*

£250

Ocra serves as a celebration of “[t]he power and defiance of the feminist movement”. Crafted from tampons, sanitary towels and blood - what *Sons of Incoherence* see as “the actual materials that represent the beginning of womanhood” - the visceral piece is a far cry from the cold, inhuman stones and metals used to form the well-known sculptures erected typically by and for men. Given the history of secrecy and shame surrounding sanitary wear, the choice of materials seems not only an unabashed refusal of this shame, but gives to the idea of female menstruation this same power and strength we associate with more standard sculptural materials. You could say this power doubles itself in what it forms: the universal symbol for ‘fuck you’; the middle finger. As the Sons of Incoherence also enjoy subtle, layered humour, it is possible that the piece could be a sly comment on the ubiquity of the theme of menstruation in feminist art, bringing more contemporary dialogue about ‘what makes a woman’ to the fore.

Soriyah Hatri

*Seen.*

£50

“During quarantine, I had a lot of struggle with inspiration while attempting to make art and while I could not attend live drawing classes I began to use my body as a reference instead. I truly felt a freedom whilst creating self-portraits; a power I didn’t know I had. I could be seen and uncensored through the work. Ultimately, I’ve gained a higher self-esteem and confidence in myself as I worked with my body; I’ve come to love it rather than be ashamed and hide it away like our culture teaches us to do”.
As Soriyah Hatri’s words suggest, the pandemic brought to us a restriction to the outside world which forced us to turn inward for inspiration and allowed ourselves to serve as our own muse, our own tools and our own final product – a change of direction in nudes made even more significant given their long lineage of creation under and for the male gaze.

Zita Holbourne

*Zita Holbourne - Poet˜Artist˜Activist – Self-Portrait*

£100

“I campaign for equality, freedom, justice and human rights through art and activism. I am a multi-disciplinary artist: a visual artist, writer […] curator and vocalist. I love colour and so vibrant colour features throughout my work”.

The vibrant colours so typical of Zita Holbourne’s work cluster around the neck and head in the self-portrait, forming almost a crown of colour. The title of the self-portrait and, to add another dimension to the idea, the very nature of the self-portrait style, feels like a recognition of the self; articulating who Holbourne is and what they do – typically the two pillars of personhood. The multi-coloured geometric shapes that illuminate the accessories of the picture seems to speak to the persona that Holbourne articulates in her title and description; a multifaceted artist with multi-faceted interests.

Ret**respect** exhibition open: 9th May- 22nd May 2022

The Art Bypass Gallery Chronicle Tower, 261 City Road, EC 1V1AJ

Texts written by Jessica Ross-Dreher and Charlotte Elliston.

Thanks to all of our contributing artists for taking part in the exhibition.

Huge thanks as well to our volunteer team: Clare McMullen, Harjoyt Kaur, Jessica Ross-Dreher, Justine-Diane Winter, Tara Ennis.

Sweet ‘Art are: Corrina Eastwood, Charlotte Elliston and Siân Matthews

[www.wearesweetart.com](http://www.wearesweetart.com)

