

end/begin

Fine Art Exhibition

1st January - 10th January 2021

Alex Hughes

Caroline Nugent

Joanne Forrest

Katarina Szajkoova

Exhibition Catalogue

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Exhibition Statement

End/Begin is a Fine Art exhibition launched on the 1st of January, running until the 10th January 2021. Due to Covid 19 we have been unable to host the exhibition in a real space, therefore, we have created this website to allow a wider audience access to our work.

The exhibition theme arose from consideration of the Japanese concept of Wabi-Sabi.

“Wabi-sabi reminds us that we are all transient beings on this planet—that our bodies, as well as the material world around us, are in the process of returning to dust. Nature’s cycles of growth, decay, and erosion are embodied in frayed edges, rust, liver spots. Through wabi-sabi, we learn to embrace both the glory and the melancholy found in these marks of passing time. This patina draws us with a power that the shine of the new doesn’t possess. Our universal longing for wisdom, for genuineness, for shared history manifest in these things”¹

This created a narrative thread for the work that this group of artists examines through their various practices. The artists collectively consider the decay and erosion of material and memory, of the process of flowers returning to dust, and looking for wisdom and tolerance in a conflict strewn shared history.

Early 21st century art has seen a rising concern with re-presenting the past. Many artists are embracing obsolete technologies, abandoned places and outmoded materials: resuscitating unfinished ideas: revisiting documents and testimonies; and restaging possibilities.² There has been a marked increase in contemporary art practices concerned with memory. In one form, the artist works to simulate memory processes and create fictional archives by way of collecting and classifying things or using narrative.³ In the other the artist creates a work which rejects the imaginary or symbolic archive in favour of the real archive, making use of documentary sources or found footage, be it to address historical themes or to subvert given interpretations of events.⁴

Joanne Forrest is a sculptor attracted to the use of materials and objects containing a trace of a previous existence, of growth, decay, and rust, of temporal existence, captured for a moment before inevitably devolving to nothingness.

Alex Hughes is also looking at decay using flowers as a motif to describe personal loss and grief. Hughes uses print etching and sculpture to explore the ephemeral nature of flowers, commenting on the transience of life and the feeling of melancholy they engender as they mark the passing of time.

Caroline Nugent is considering the loss of identity through a loss of memories. Using mixed media and found objects to highlight the patina of the old, these works reflect a shared history and the fraying edges of a life well-lived.

Katarina Szajkoova is examining the destruction of heritage sites during conflict using paint and video stills and shares with us her longing for wisdom to resolve the conflicts and wars that inevitably lead her beloved monuments to crumble to dust.

In this exhibition the artists have found an ideology in Wabi-Sabi, that brings their meditations on the cycle of birth, death and everything in between to the viewer in a multi-faceted on-line exhibition. They are responding to the unique situation these times provide with their observations on the things that matter to them, of a life well lived, and the glory and melancholy found in their marks made on the passing of time.

1. www.utne.com/mind-and-body/wabi-sabi (Accessed 10.11.20)

2. Groom, A., 2013. *Time*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, p.16

3. Boltanski, C., Darboven, H., Dion, M., Dreyblatt, A., *On Kawara*. The Atlas Group.

4. Orlow, U., 2006. *Latent Archive, Roving Lens*. (In: *Memory*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012).



Alex Hughes

Artist Statement

Alex Hughes is a young female British artist, studying Fine Art at the University of East London. Her practice is multidisciplinary, approaching her artwork with a focus and exploration of the memory through botanicals, its relationship to us in the part it plays in our lives and its ephemeral nature. Subsequently, this parallels with the transience of life. Using printmaking as a springboard for her work, she primarily focuses on etching – due to its permanence – and turns the idea, thought or feeling into sculpture form. As time has gone on sculpture has become the more dominant in her practice. Using flowers to show different time periods in her life and also future aspirations. Finding the beauty in death and the gaining in loss, she hones in on the things women don't always say but feel and the role society plays in how we think about ourselves and each other as women and as people.

Drawing influence from artists such as Anya Gallaccio, Eva Fernandez and Joseph Cornwell, with every sculpture, she explores further and further into the materiality of flowers and pushes them to a new boundary until they become something new. Letting them take their own shape and grow and evolve sometimes beyond her control, as people do.



Alex Hughes

My Centre of Gravity (2020)

Dried flowers, plaster, steel pipe and ink

108cm x 38.5cm x 27cm

Like most of my work, this piece is made following an event in my life that caused a series (wave) of emotions and realisations. The idea originally formed from the etching that is cast in the plaster plate at the very bottom of the sculpture. I kept looking at it and thinking of my mums kitchen sink. The marks resembled something used and worn over time. At the same time the pattern of the mark reminded me of my womb. Being a young woman with endometriosis and seeing the marks on my womb, I couldn't help but make this link. Then the idea for a sink came to me. For a woman, the womb is our centre of gravity; equally, so is a kitchen sink. I guess you could say that this piece is a way of me expressing the worries I have around my reproductive health. Learning to love it for its ugliness and beauty. Grieving the failures I feel my body has put me through.

Nothing about making this sculpture has been easy. From the day I began I faced challenges. Firstly its mainly made of plaster which sets at a specific speed, which is great but also challenging. Trying to place each side together was probably to most difficult part and required a lot of hands.



Alex Hughes

Rest in Peace, Sonny (2020)

Dead flowers, perspex box and steel rods

116cm X 30cm X 30cm

This sculpture is meant to represent something unattainable. Each flower playing a part in the scene that's encased in a box. The large sunflower turned upside down at the bottom (Sonny); a table. The smaller sunflowers on top of it; food. And the roses and other sunflowers around it, looking down; people, a family. Or are they all gathered around to grieve the death of Sonny? Grieve the death of a table? A family dinner?

The process for this, although simple, wasn't the easiest as the flowers are incredibly fragile and don't tend to stay in place. Adding that to the stand causing the perspex box to wobble occasionally, made setting each piece in place nearly impossible. The slightest movement sets off a tiny earthquake within the box, petals and leaves flying around, flowers falling down and sunflower seeds at the bottom shaking.



Caroline Nugent

Artist Statement

Caroline Nugent is a London based multi-disciplinary fine artist working with a variety of materials to create sculptural forms that lead the viewer to form their own interpretations. A graduate of University of East London (BA Fine Art, 2021) her mixed media artworks are characterised by the use of everyday domestic objects, often creating several practically identical works, using traditional casting and hand building methods to create works in porcelain, clay, resin and bronze. Old family photographs and textiles now feature in her recent exhibition works made during lockdown. Her artwork reflects on the repetitive nature of domestic life and the problems affecting those living with mental health issues. Impermanence, decay and loss – of loved ones, memories and identity are themes that dominate. The fragility of the material itself often becomes a metaphor for the fragility of the individual, and our identities. Collectively the works speak of confusion, isolation, ageing and memory loss.



Caroline Nugent

Chair (2020)

Cotton sheeting coated with Paverpol™

106 x 95 x 106cm

Chair is a piece that follows on from a painting I made a few years ago. The empty chair signifies loss or hope of a return, or it can represent evidence of long-absent occupants in an abandoned space. A chair is a familiar object, one we all use every day, created for the human body. The chair is a physical reminder of human occupation of space, a proxy for humans not currently in the space. This chair speaks to both a physical loss and to the loss of memory. Covered in a dust sheet it waits for someone to return. There is a faint body imprint of the person recently gone. It is a memory of a chair; with no visible support it is of another place.



Caroline Nugent

***DNA* (2020)**

Stitched photographs, wooden frame and satin binding
600cm x 43cm x 31cm

DNA is the story of two young people who met, fell in love, married and had a family, before one died after fifty-three years of marriage. They are my parents, hence the name of the piece *DNA*. I did not know these people who were young, carefree and happy. I know only the stories they told me. As I looked through these old photos, I could see the love that carried them through the years. I have treated these photos to the same process as *Quilt* (2020), printing on tracing paper, coating with PVA and stitching together. These are colour photos and the intensity of the light catching them transforms and lifts them to a greater vibrancy. The two lines of photos are bound with satin, one white binding as my mother is alive, one black for my dead father. They are attached to a frame at both ends signifying the beginning and ending of that period in their lives.



Caroline Nugent

***Quilt* (2020)**

Stitched photographs, satin binding, thread

250cm x 145cm

Quilt is made from old family photos of my mother-in-law in her youth. I found these photos in an old suitcase and I was curious to see the woman I know when she was young. I discussed them with her in the hope she would remember more of her past. Some photos were of interest, but then I realised that her memories of these times have become lost, and she was mixing things together to create new stories. Confabulation is common among people with dementia when a new history is created amid the truth.

These photos are not part of my history, but they are full of familiar faces, of family and friends that were part of a large extended group to be found at gatherings and parties.

By printing them onto tracing paper I transformed the texture of the photos. They became translucent, like my mother-in-law's memory. Coating them in PVA transformed them again, making them brittle and fragile, again like aging memories.

I stitched them into a quilt as dementia had once been described to me as having a blanket of memories with frayed holes and so I created my own blanket of confabulated memories with holes. Cotton threads hanging from the binding symbolise unravelling and hanging on to memories by a thread



Joanne Forrest

Artist Statement

Joanne Forrest is a British mixed media artist, based in the practice of sculpture; focusing her work on the found object and materiality.

Repetition, reflection and mindfulness play an important part of the making of Forrest's work and it is this dialogue with the material that ultimately informs her intentions. The found object contains a trace of human existence, with its own allegories and associations, these objects are transformed by Forrest who then leaves her physical mark on the work before the viewer imbues their own interpretation upon the piece.

Forrest's work is grounded in the ancient Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, of finding beauty in imperfection and accepting the natural cycle of growth and decay. Forrest embraces the concept of ephemerality and accelerates the devolution of materials through manipulation and alchemical processes.

Forrest has recently begun to recognise parallels in her work with the art of quilt making; of piecing together individual components, or blocks, to create larger work; of using materials discarded by others; of revealing pattern and texture in the work; and of a sense of home and community. Whilst the materials she uses are often industrial, or quite literally rubbish, she transforms them with a sensitivity of touch and creates a sense of order out of the chaos.



Joanne Forrest

Concrete Blocks and Eggs (2020)

Concrete, cardboard, wool, steel filings, nails, eggshells and modroc™

Installation: 250cm x 200cm x 30cm

This installation was created during the pandemic of 2020 using found objects from the home. It is 250cm x 200cm x 30cm and consists of over 1,500 broken eggshells, each covered in Modroc™, set amidst a selection of concrete blocks varying in size from 30cm³ to 10cm³. Each concrete block is combined with different materials including packaging materials such as cardboard and sheep's wool as well as rusty steel filings. These materials puncture the surface of the concrete rendering it useless as a building material, fracturing its strength and accelerating the process of ultimate failure and disintegration of the materials.



The work is full of contradictions and tension both in the materiality and of the making. The eggs were about a moment in time during lockdown, of experimenting, reflection and mindfulness; the repetitive nature of covering the eggs came to represent my own fertility cycle, womanhood and home. They have a materiality about them, they are fibrous and contain the physical trace of the maker. They are both strong and sensitive and a delicate juxtaposition against the harsh brutality of the concrete blocks.



Katarina Szajkoova

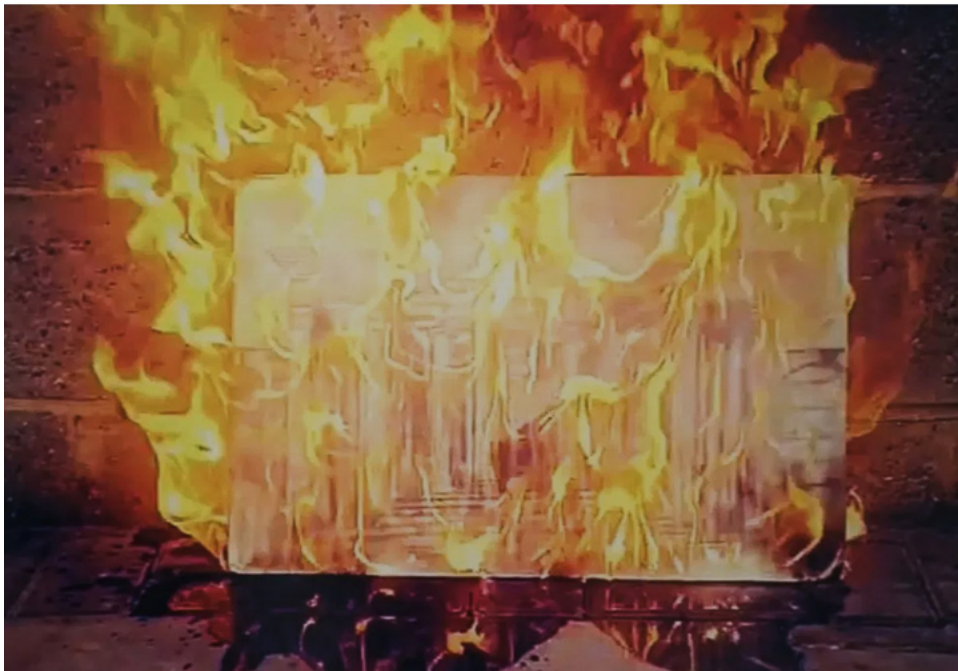
Artist Statement

Katarina Szajkoova is currently a 3rd year Fine Art student at The University of East London. She is a London based female artist who is fascinated by a variety of heritage cultures. As a child she has been inspired by Middle Eastern culture. At first her art focused on portraying people's faces and bodies. Later she decided to combine her fascination with her passion to create content that will challenge world issues and speak up against discrimination.

She uses oil paints to create her works that focuses on iconic buildings that speaks to her abhorrence at the senseless violence of war and the loss of lives and communities. She paints realistic pictures of old buildings that were destroyed during military actions all over the world. She takes the perfectly painted wooden boards, drastically pours white spirit onto them, lights them up and films the whole process. She is primarily showing the horror and the cruelty of war.

She never knows how the piece will end up looking as she lets the fire do the job, when she feels the moment is right, she puts the fire out and her work is complete.

The painting becomes a dark and sad image of loss and tragedy. She is emphasising the importance of culture, and the value of lives. Her aim is to represent the conflicts that are caused by racism, power, wealth, religion and language. She is influenced by media and news reports, specifically about destruction around the world.



Katarina Szajkoova

Destroyed Landscapes series (2020)

Palmyra Syria Tetracylon Monument. Destroyed by ISIS in 2005

The Church of the Archangel Michael Warsaw. Destroyed in 1923 (Set of 2)

Hatra Iraq. Destroyed by Isis 2015

Each: 85cm x 59cm

Digital photographs on foam board

The destroyed landscapes series which I have produced are buildings destroyed in past conflict. The materials I used for my work includes digital photographs on foam board. The size of these prints are 85cm x 59cm. These prints come from digital photos of my artwork, in which I painted on wooden boards using oil paints. Once finished with the painting by using white spirits and a lighter I set them on fire. This creates a purer picture of a dark and sad image of loss and tragedy, the reason that I created these pieces were because they were destroyed in conflict and this allows us to see the destruction caused by war and violence. I can relate to this because of the reasons behind war and conflict, the main factors in this comes down to race, religion, power and greed. As a young girl moving to a different country with no knowledge of the language, I had first handedly witnessed the effects of bullying in the form of race and religion, this has inspired me to show my representation of violence through my artwork by painting these images and setting them on fire even buildings that haven't yet been affected by destruction but could potentially be.

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Thank you for visiting our online exhibition

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