

Neither

Use nor

Ornament

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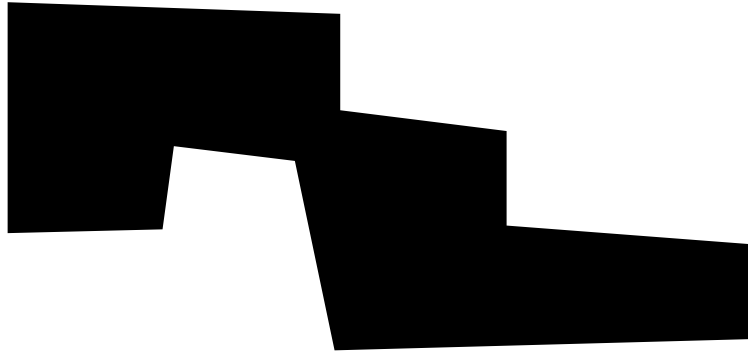


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WEBworks Mentors: Sonia Boué, Miranda Millward and Sarah Mossop, with additional mentoring by Katherine May.



## A 'living, breathing entity'

I designed *Neither Use nor Ornament* to accommodate autism specifically, and this has really meant something quite profound, ours is an innovative and pioneering approach.

Behind the scenes, areas of project design have been constantly tested, and adapted, by leaning into 'group brain' and specialised mentoring which is entirely tailored to the individual. The sensitivity required to constantly recalibrate ideas and practices for neurodivergent artists has spilt over to the benefit of all.

Disablement can come in many forms, and it's been important to be able to accommodate illness and the unforeseen. I have come to understand that founding a project on accessibility for autistics tends to mean greater access for all.

Across the project, being open about my neurology has enabled others to learn about themselves in neurological terms, and this is also why my early thinking for this project has evolved so greatly.

Human neuro-ecologies are living, breathing entities, and viewed as such all boundaries and divisions slip away.

*Neither Use nor Ornament (NUNO)* was adopted as a title to allow us to work under one project umbrella.

The idea was for *Museum for Object Research* artists to exhibit together - they had been working on their proposals since 2017 and had a tight exhibition concept. *WEBWorks* artists had come in later and would showcase their work in a related programme of events.

I didn't want to shoehorn *WEBworks* into the *MfOR* exhibition concept, but this worked against two core project aims; access and inclusion. *MfOR* and *WEBworks* had also begun to overlap.

*Museum for Object Research* is a resource and a showcase for artists whose work with objects forms the core of their practice, and who therefore identify as 'object artists'. We have been collaborating and curious about objects together online since 2014. An archive of blog posts collected from the A-N blog site, and our current posts can be accessed on: [www.museumforobjectresearch.com](http://www.museumforobjectresearch.com).

*WEBworks* is a pioneering and innovative autistic-led project originating from Arts Council England funded research. We are a peer support and mentoring group of autistic and 'neurodivergent' creatives. We also provide a consultancy and advice service for arts organisations. *WEBworks'* research focus is autistic professionalism in creative practice.

### Mapping *Neither Use nor Ornament*

I began this project with a foot in each camp - *MfOR* and *WEBworks* seemed to represent the two worlds I straddled as a late-diagnosed autistic person in a non-autistic world.

As *NUNO* has evolved, I no longer feel this. There is no division. In sharing my journey as autistic project lead, I've been able to build trust and understanding across the project.

I'm enabled to lead, and my 'shortcomings' are compensated for by what I've come to think of as 'group brain'.

Whenever I've needed it, there has been a rich pool of talent to draw on, a sea of helping hands, and extraordinary good will.

It's important to explain that not only is *NUNO* a responsive and relational project, it is also founded on the concept of 'neurodiversity'.

### 'Neurodiversity'

- Is a term used to explain the value of all neurological profiles. It draws on biodiversity as a model for thinking about human neurology.

- It refers to all humans, whereas the term 'neurodivergent' refers to humans who may differ from a supposed 'norm' (usually dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, autism, or bipolar).

- It suggests that we need all kinds of brains to thrive as a species.

### *Neither Use nor Ornament* timeline

- 2013 I inherited my grandmother's handbag. My object-art practice began.
- 2014 I created the *Museum for Object Research (MfOR)* on the A-N blog site. Artists come on board.
- 2015 A community of 'object-artists' gathered to create the *MfOR* community.
- 2016 I got my autism diagnosis.
- 2017 Miranda Millward and Sarah Mossop became my professional mentors.
  - Arts Council England (ACE) funded my research into how to bring my *MfOR* blog to life, and lead my project autistically.
  - I discovered a group of autistic creatives, and founded *WEBworks* (professional support and mentoring for 'neurodivergent' artists).
- 2018 Miranda and Sarah became core members of the *WEBworks* mentoring team.
  - I developed partnerships with Arts at the Old Fire Station, Magdalen Road studios, OVADA and Oxford Dance Forum.
  - ACE supported my proposal to bring *MfOR* and *WEBworks* artists together in an inclusive exhibition programme under my autistic project leadership. Oxford City Council gave us a Culture Fund award to make our website accessible.
  - Naomi Morris' Research Residency at Magdalen Rd Studios launched our project in August.
- 2019 Hugh Pryor's supported *Still in Motion* exhibition and workshop at Arts at the Old Fire Station took place October 2018 - January 2019. Both proved successful and fertile testing grounds for the *WEBworks* model.
  - NUNO* became one. The fourteen artists would exhibit together under one roof. I understood that the truly radical thing would be to make this exhibition about the work and not about autism.

Sonia Boué

# Sonia Boué

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## Conversation

My work for the NUNO exhibition conjures the atmosphere of my father's political exile from Spain to England (1939 -1989) using domestic objects relating to family life and our constant journeying between Birmingham and Barcelona to visit my grandparents in the 1960s and 70s.

Unknown in his lifetime, my father, José García Lora, is now the subject of a study by my collaborator, Dr Helena Buffery, as an exemplar of Spanish Republican exile theatre. *Conversation* draws on his creative life, and his one grand obsession: to be a famous playwright despite his exile, or perhaps because of it.

NUNO takes place in 2019, which is the 80th anniversary of the Retirada, when the democratically elected Republican Government was defeated by General Franco's Fascist forces and nearly half a million Spaniards fled for their lives from Spain. My piece, *Conversation*, forms part of a body of work undertaken since 2013 responding to this history, and I'm delighted to be able to present it in this anniversary year under the NUNO project umbrella.

Originally my title for this work was to be *Portrait*, but the title *Conversation* is more apt in the context of a silenced history because conversation was absent: in common with other traumatised Spanish Republican exiles, my father couldn't talk about his experiences. Yet, as a dramatist, his early works focused on aspects of the continuing Franco dictatorship, and the extreme poverty of life in a shanty.

For *Conversation*, I revisit these early plays, and revive my 2014 invention of the imaginary *Not Lorca Theatre Company*, playfully alluding to the missing 'c' from the family name, which was always confused with the towering figure of Spanish Republican theatre, Federico García Lorca.

At this time I became fascinated by the props and stage direction in my father's plays, and began to view my assemblage works and the performative side of my practice as fertile areas of creative common ground. The sense of parallel interests and shared sensibilities led to the idea of a posthumous collaboration.

After months of research, in December 2014, an intertextual play called *Playa y Toro* appeared. Entering a trance like state in my freezing studio, I wrote it in the space of three weeks. *Conversation* features an excerpt emanating from a telephone receiver, which rests on a vintage suitcase of the kind seen in photographs of the Retirada, but on a miniature scale.

*Playa y Toro* combines a cast of characters from my father's plays, *A Bull for Antonio* and *Tierra Cautiva* (The Captive Land), and my online blog, *Barcelona in a Bag*. It opens with the conceit that Lora (the playwright) has gone missing and the cast are stuck without him to write the action. We join them at the

close of the play when Lora has returned, and Antonio must make a decision: bull or bust!

*Playa y Toro* attempts to work through the traumatic critical reception for my father's play, *The Captive Land*, which failed to translate to British audiences. This experience was to haunt him, and both his exile and the failure to find an audience for his work became entwined.

In *Conversation*, I seek to give my father a voice, and to dignify his life long struggle with mental illness, which I chose to reframe as a truthful resistance.

As ever, in my work for NUNO, objects have led my process and guided me. My interest in 'object work' as a creative practice and as 'embodied' research is what brought NUNO into being. I hope in future to be able to collaborate with academics in the areas of cultural studies and material memory, to further understand 'object-work' as a core feature of creative practice.

## Contents:

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Sound - A reading of *Playa y Toro*, first made for my BBC Radio 4 programme, *The Art of Now: Return to Catalonia* in 2018, has been reworked to sound like a melodramatic radio play. This is presented in a 'suitcase telephone'.

Assemblage - One vintage display cabinet containing objects from the family archive. Where I have been unable to use original pieces, stand-ins have been sourced.

A framed black and white aerial photograph of the French internment camp at Le Barcarès, given to me by Annie Foroni during the making of *Return to Catalonia*. The photograph shows the barracks where my father was held captive in 1939.

My plan had been to present a 'groaning cabinet' (heaving with allusion) but this changed with the development of the voice piece, which prompted me to make a decisive edit.

At the time of writing, I am considering using some of the props alluded to in the play for the exhibition. There will be sand.

Photography - During the making of *Conversation*, I documented the contents of the cabinet, including new arrivals and changes in configuration, with a Canon EOS 400D. This was a departure from working almost exclusively with my iPhone in my art practice.

This process became completely absorbing to me. This documentation is presented as a slide show on a small monitor.

Photographs for this booklet were taken with the Canon EOS 400D after the cabinet edit. They reflect a new way of seeing and documenting which has emerged in the process of making this work.



# Kruse

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## Ambit

*"A pilgrimage is a ritual journey with a hallowed purpose. Every step along the way has meaning. The pilgrim knows that life giving challenges will emerge.*

*A pilgrimage is not a vacation; it is a transformational journey during which significant change takes place. New insights are given. Deeper understanding is attained..."*

Macrina Wiederkehr

For artists, who anyway struggle with issues of isolation as a consequence of self-employment, the need to build networks and be part of an active community is vital for career success. For autistic artists, who may struggle with communication and social isolation, building peer networks and communities is hugely important and probably doubly hard.

My initial intention with this project was to travel from my studio to the homes or studios of the other artists taking part in the project, either through walking or taking public transport to highlight the distance and sense of isolation that may affect other autistic people. In keeping with the overall title of the project, *Neither Use Nor Ornament*, I planned to create a knitted 'drawing' as I travelled; knitting as a metaphor for connected community, with 6 central stitches (representing the 6 autistic artists I planned to visit) looping over each other in a cable pattern.

As the project moved forward my own autistic imperfections and struggles impacted themselves on the work. The first walk, from Birmingham to the Welsh coast had to be taken in short sections rather than in one go. The main Welsh section, from Knighton to Aberystweth had to be abandoned after three days as my walk was unsupported and I was struggling to carry supplies for the four-day 'wilderness' section of the walk.

Returning to my studio after making an unsuccessful attempt was crushing. Worse, as the original plan had failed I struggled to adapt my thinking and planning to develop a new route. This impacted on my plans to travel to the other artists until I found myself in the new year with none of my initial plans completed.

At this point I realised that this 'failure' was the work. My inability to physically reach the others on this project, my struggles with communication, support, rigid thinking and impaired planning skills is the reality of functioning with a neurodivergent brain.

I am still knitting an object of no use, using fine sock yarn and 3mm needles I'm knitting every mile that lies between myself and the other autistic artists on this project. The central 6 stitches remain, looping in cable pattern, each loop representing one of the 488 miles between us. Each inch of knitting represents 1 mile and I commit to knitting 10 'miles' of knitting every day.

Alongside the knitted object is a series of landscape photographs taken on various walks. The landscapes have been digitally remastered to create scenes of bleak isolation; cold, remote, unpeopled vistas. In the sky hang strange moons and suns made by a device I wear or carry as I walk, which turns my movements into inked dashes and dots. While the knitted object expresses the labour required to function socially as an autistic person, the digital images evoke the inner distance from others; an inner solitude which can be both comforting and painful.

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## Works:

*Ambit*, 2019  
Handknitted sculpture. Sock yarn, wooden knitting needle

*Solitude*. 2019  
Digital Painting

*Whiteout*, 2019  
Digital Painting





# Katherine May

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*Can we talk?*

Writer Katherine May's work for NUNO arrives in the form of a website presenting three multiform conversations with lead artist Sonia Boué.

Bonding over autism diagnosis, and the often obsessive joys of creative practice, *Can we talk?* traces their earliest online contact to the present day where we find them at the British Library talking about the background to NUNO.

NUNO sees Katherine reconnect with the 'maker' side of her creative practice.

[can-we-talk.co.uk](http://can-we-talk.co.uk)

Naomi  
Morris

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 skin  
 lose

never all that, swarming thin,  
 thunders through broken brain  
 bitter cold furrowed  
 rushes through, dense with it,  
 dense grey clouds for several sight,  
 shadows, shadows, shadows,  
 dark, dark, dark, dark, dark,  
 thick darkness creeps through  
 tearing through muscles, tearing through  
 terrible ache spans limb to limb,  
 right through the base  
 flooding whole world  
 tears that never wear  
 streaming consistently down face

# Hugh Pryor

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## *Lung Tonic*

This work invites the viewer to rethink their relationship with everyday objects. These bottles have been in the ground, in a rubbish tip in Oxford, for around 80 years and have re-surfaced due to the excavation activity of badgers. Thus this work highlights the interplay of wastage and usage, of humans and nature, and of the invisibility of the millions of tonnes of rubbish we discard every day. The ephemeral and fleeting nature of objects and possession is made evident through the layers of translucency and almost imperceptible boundaries between objects.

Extract from conversation between Katherine May and Hugh Pryor on Facebook Messenger, January 3rd 2019.

KM: ... What medium do you work in?

HP: *Good question! Bottles at the moment...I've been collecting bottles whilst out walking Ronnie my dog*

KM: Do you find many? We get a lot left on the beach in the summer.

HP: *They've been collecting under my bed... I mean I find them around badger sets*

KM: Badger sets??

HP: *The nature reserve I walk Ronnie near where I live was a pre-war rubbish dump*

KM: Oh I see! So they're old bottles! How lovely!

HP: *You're not allowed to dig them up*

KM: But the badgers unearth them

HP: *But the badgers don't know that!*

KM: Thank heavens for badgers!

HP: *So I look for bottles while Ronnie looks for squirrels*

KM: That sounds like a good deal. It's a bit like mudlarking.

HP: *They're not very valuable but I like finding bottles I haven't seen before...*

KM: I'd love that too. Can you tell what they once contained?

HP: *So now I've got to figure out what to do with them all...*

KM: Yes, what are you going to do with them all? I bet they're beautiful!

HP: *At the moment I'm floating bottles in a fish tank To see what happens...*

KM: It sounds like you have a lot of fun. Do you always experiment like this?

HP: *I'm trying to get just enough air in them so they only just float...Yes...*

KM: I imagine them making lovely clacking sounds in the water

HP: *They do a bit...I've ordered a couple of water pumps from Hong Kong to get the water moving So an aquarium for bottles...*

KM: Like strange fish! Are you a bit of a collector? I know Sonia is.

HP: *and I need to sort out the lighting as well... It looks like a futuristic underwater city...Just with bottles thank goodness! Otherwise it would be unmanageable*

KM: I hoard books. It's getting out of hand...



# Sonja Zelić

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montaža — dječak (montage — boy)

VHS tapes and a box of tailoring fabric offcuts and ephemera are the starting points for a video portrait of a father born in a country that no longer exists. Borders disassembled and reassembled — fragments of video torn from their context reflect a journey of displacement and survival through war.

*'By the spring of 1943 there were 12 million foreign workers in Germany' — my father was one of them — a conscripted worker in Germany's armaments factories. 'They amounted to 40 percent of the nation's workforce, and in some arms factories 90 percent of the workers were non-German.'*

Charles Whiting, *The Home Front: Germany World War II*, 1982

**the threshold of a world no one knew existed**

My father was born in Yugoslavia, experiencing one war at its axis and the next at a safe distance. At the age of 16, at the start of the Second World War, he was conscripted to work in Germany with thousands of others.

**a feather and a hammer fall and hit the moon's surface at the same time**

A few years after the war ended, during the period of repatriation by the allies, he was sent to the the UK to work, eventually finding work as a tailor for a men's outfitters in Wales, having started his apprenticeship as a boy in Yugoslavia.

**it speaks five official languages, and prays to an Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim god — this is no imaginary land this is Yugoslavia**

His experiences continue to affect my life as an ever present echo reflected now in images of 'economic' migrants and those fleeing war in the news and media today. The echo was there way before I interviewed him one Christmas and got to know him as more than just 'my dad'. Here was a person who had survived times of great danger, through ingenuity, resourcefulness and luck, and through the kindness of others, but who was also traumatised by what he had witnessed and experienced. He never talked about any of this until that Christmas.

**I have never seen a man so scared**

By the time he came to the UK he knew about borders — about crossing them, or not crossing them.

**when you're outside in one of those spacesuits you're really in space, there are no boundaries to what you're seeing**

A pile of VHS tapes of programmes my dad recorded from the TV, (wildlife, westerns, the Apollo and Discovery space

missions, documentaries about the Second World War, coverage of the 1990s war in Yugoslavia...), holiday/home videos, an audio interview with him, other ephemera/objects, and film/video created in the course of my art practice — is the material I am working with.

**five miles per second — that's the speed of these films and tapes as they free fall weightless around the earth**

In dis-assembling, juxtaposing and reassembling this disparate source material, releasing it from it's context to act in a free-floating state, I hope to find a space where borders intersect — where words, images and sound can collide and make new meanings.

**you gradually realise that you're weightless and everything is floating, the fluid starts shifting into your head and your head feels like it's filling up with blood and you just have to get used to it**

TV was a window to the outside world in our house. As a child, I watched coverage the Apollo space missions with my Dad in mutual wonder and excitement, it was where we connected.

There is so much I didn't ask, but I've been finding his young thoughts in the spaces between the images and words and sounds I've been working with. This piece is an opportunity to connect with him again.

**The Natural World**

I am learning to value and be more conscious of my neurodivergent thinking and communication process, which are becoming evident in the creative structure of the work.

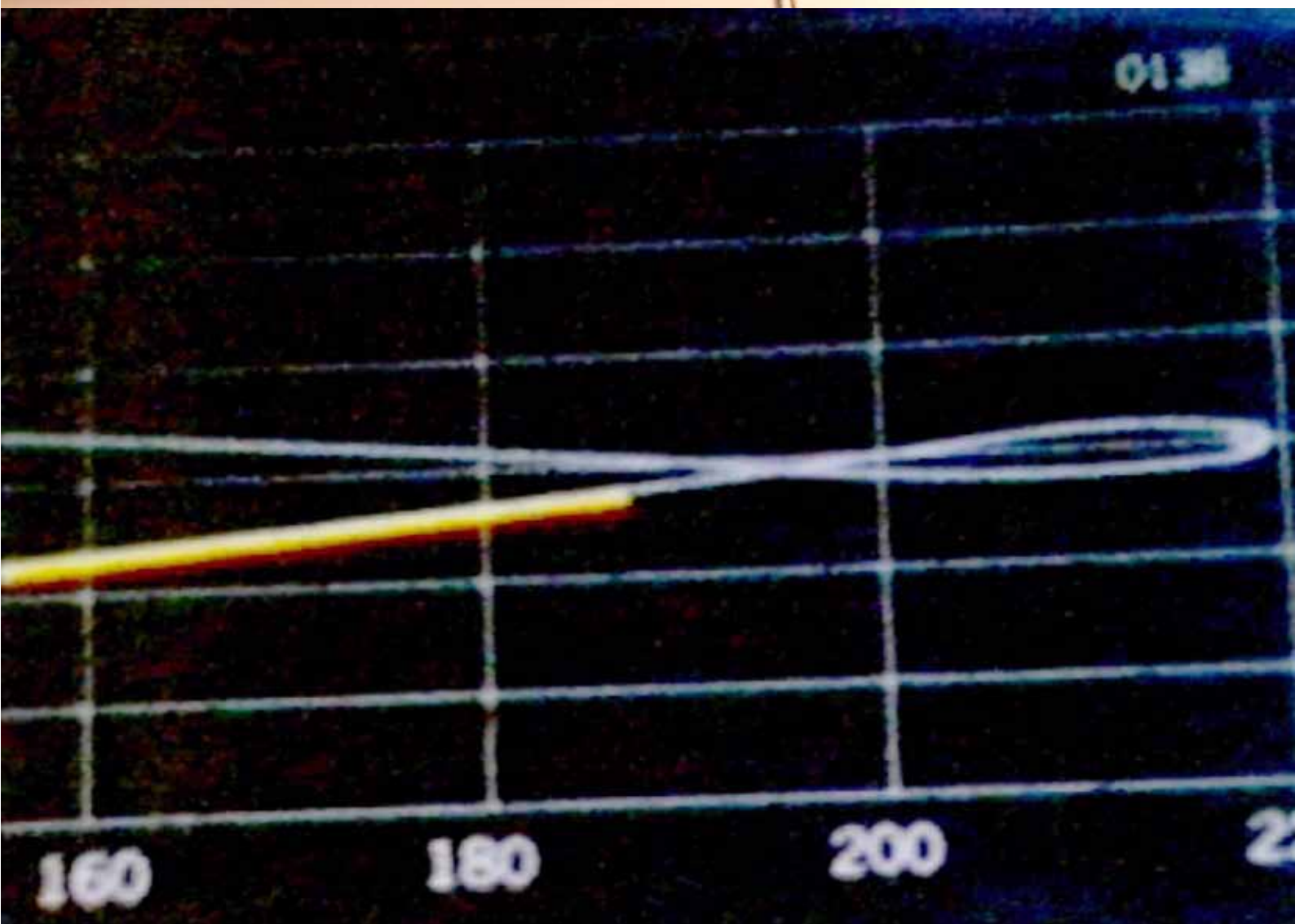
In the comments section at the end of an online piece on foreign workers in wartime Berlin, there's a question, or rather accusation in relation to migration that familiarly disregards the effects of war and poverty:

*At war's end, what happened to all of the foreign labourers who were in Germany? How were they separated from Germans? How were they returned to their respective countries and how were they treated upon their return? But most importantly, how many of these labourers were truly forced to go to Germany to work and how many voluntarily went to make money?*

I hope this film in some way will help to address these questions.

**Here frozen in time is a glimpse of what the Earth was like long before the steam engine or the automobile, before humans began to burn fossil fuels. The cores from Antarctica are a vital link between the past and the present.**





# Caroline Street Collaboration

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*Caroline Street: The absence of something... revisited*

During the mid to late 70s we (Neil Armstrong and Dave Edwards) shared a Tyneside flat in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. We were both studying Fine Art at Newcastle Polytechnic.

This area was (and still is) quite run down - occupied by a mix of what some may term 'the socially impoverished' from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In many ways, as students from West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire respectively, we parachuted ourselves into a community we initially had no obvious connection to. Unrest and inequality were about to manifest themselves in the politically polarised Thatcher years, and our dodgy, defunct terrace was a 'still standing' example of this changing world.

After college we eventually went our own ways – NA as a practising artist and commercial designer/film maker, and DE as an art therapist and a psychotherapist. The flat we shared on Caroline Street was demolished. There was some attempt to redevelop parts of the surrounding area but Caroline Street itself has been left as open grassland. It now resembles an urban beach, where rubbish and crap wash up and are held in grassy tentacles.



# Neil Armstrong

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*Caroline Street: The absence of something... revisited*

I often use objects as starting points, as catalysts. An object comes readymade with a narrative, but objects don't sit still - they continue along the timeline with the rest of us, so there is never a point at which they are completely resolved.

I'm not entirely sure why, but I have always been inclined towards the wrong end of the binoculars; the end that makes everything look far away. So, it may seem perverse, but when asked to be part of the Neither Use Nor Ornament show, my first inclination was to propose a very large object, one that contained many other objects, but that also doesn't actually exist anymore. This meant beginning with an empty space and seeing where memory and recall would lead.

The idea of 'who tells the story' is one of frequent debate in contemporary Britain and one that has fascinated me for a long time. There is of course no one version of history; only ever a partial, edited view from the protagonists' perspective. With this in mind, I asked my long-time friend, Dave Edwards if he would be interested in re-constructing the narrative that is Caroline Street with me; in collaboration and in tandem.

Initially I was interested to see what might happen when the same receptacle of memory is viewed from two quite different perspectives and life experiences. We documented our initial conversations and swapped an ongoing email train of thoughts in order to try tease out some common themes.

The site itself begs a whole bunch of questions. There is the sea of grass that now grasps all manner of flotsam, with our former flat as the shipwreck and the ongoing tumble of debris an ever-changing ocean of intrigue. A page from a Turkish takeaway menu, a squashed can of lager, a plastic ray gun water pistol, the Dummies Guide to mortgages, all offer clues.

I decided an entry point for me would be a series of photographs I took using the back wall of Caroline Street when I was still a student. They were the only tangible visual trace I could find from those days. I had happened upon some kids in the back lane, or in fact they had happened upon me. Subsequently, they became part of the photos. Rather spookily I was, even then, exploring notions of the power of objects and how the value of 'things' might be subverted by dematerialisation. In the context of the art world this was broadly termed 'conceptual art' (in the gallery there is further explanation of my appropriation of a poster by Victor Burgin which connects with this concern).

Using a found piece of wood as a ruler I chalked some lonely lines on our dilapidated terrace wall. The local kids added so much more with their irreverence and playfulness. Photos as a record of that event were to be the only trace, yet rather ironically, those photos became objects in their own right, and now have an expanded narrative.

There was bound to be a political thread in this piece. We lived in Caroline Street in turbulent times and there are still many of our country wide societal tensions on open display in contemporary Caroline street. The shop at the top spills out all manner of recycled household objects onto the street and beyond, these reclamations being picked over by a rich mix of multi-ethnic incomers. Some of the indigenous locals are happy with this, some are not.

I managed to find the two surviving kids in my photographs. Amazingly one of them now lives in a block of flats overlooking the very wall I took those original photos. She lived in the USA and returned with her American husband to this place where, despite comparative deprivation, they both feel comfortable. Her family generously offered me a closer insight into their local community.

So many threads are there to be explored, and deciding on which to concentrate was the most difficult. I offer a mix of the personal with the people 'p' political. I am conscious that considering Caroline Street today requires a hard stare at a place which is a microcosm of so many debates within today's imperfect society. The presence of one unkempt grassy space reveals a flat full of rather large issues, requiring both ends of those notional binoculars.

Works:

*ONCE UPON A TIME: THE PROPOSED HEALTH CENTRE*, 2019  
Lightbox and cardboard model featuring Daisy Armstrong. The streets around this area were named after children of the local Victorian developers. After the demolition of Caroline Street, a health centre was proposed but never built.

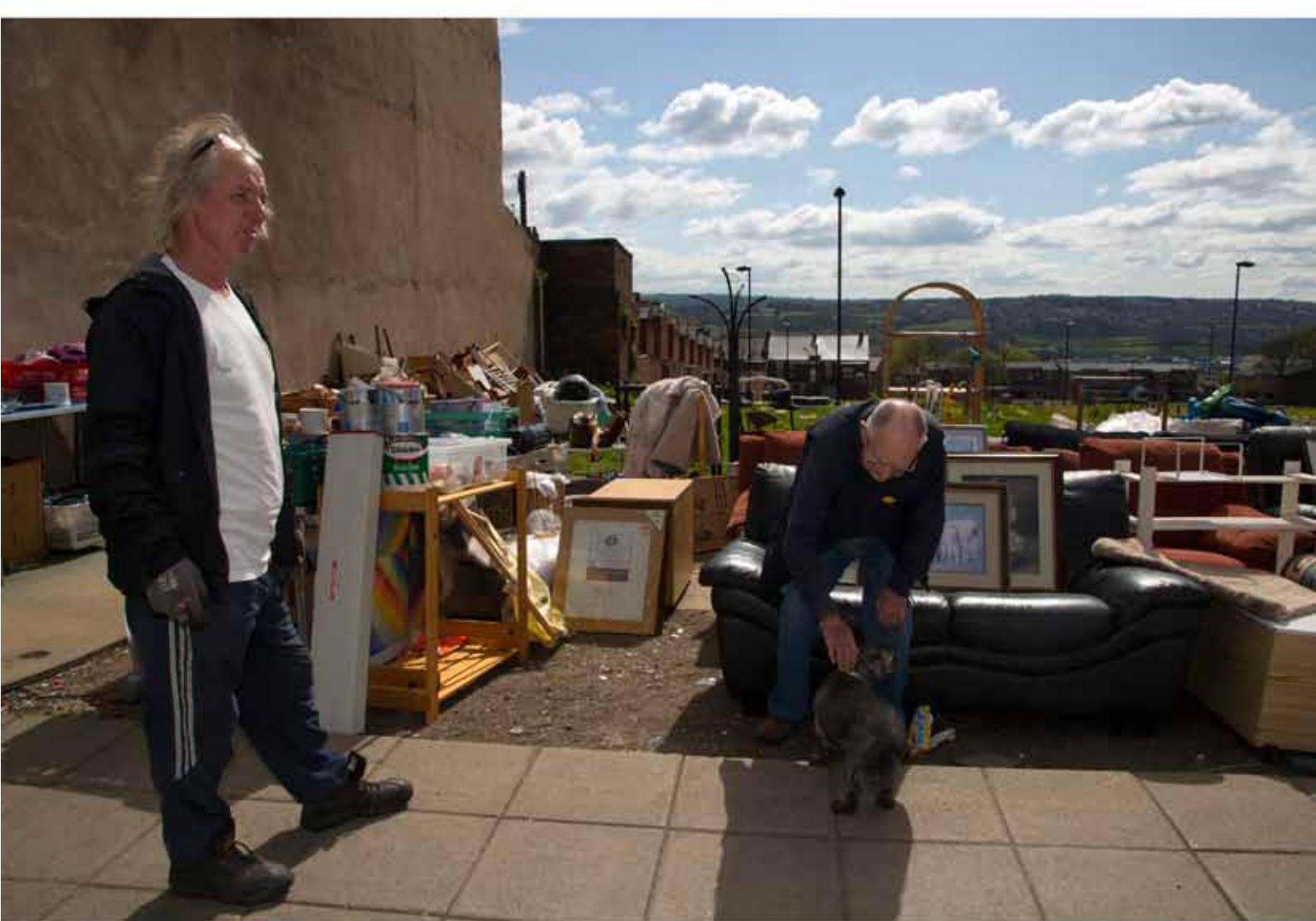
*The digital frame*, 2018-19  
Snatches of conversation from two of the now grown children (brother and sister) featured in the photos, along with two other family members.

*RE-POSSESSION*, 2019  
With reference to a single poster by Victor Burgin posted round Newcastle in 1976. Series of seven.

*Blackboards*, 2019  
I used similar ones in the 70s to emphasise space. Now used as a means of expressing thoughts in flux.

*Red light bulb*, 2019  
Paul (one of our co-flatmates) would swap the main room light bulb for a red one to provide the required atmosphere for our house parties.

*The video*, 2019  
In the 70s I used the technique of mono printing as a method of 'automatic drawing' to try connect thoughts directly with the paper away from the confines of traditional drawing technique.



# David Edwards

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*Caroline Street: The absence of something... revisited*

Although I have been exploring and working with the psychological significance of 'objects' – real and imagined – for most of my career – initially as an art student, later as an art therapist and a psychotherapist - only recently have I begun to give serious consideration to the importance of objects and material culture in relation to my own life.

Since 2016 - when I left my last salaried post - I have been moving out of the world of work and into retirement. This has been a challenging psychological process. Who am I now?

I am also in the process of moving house from Sheffield - where I currently live - to North Tyneside; the place where I was born and have always thought of as 'home'. Where do I belong?

This process of change has involved sorting through boxes of 'stuff'. The kind of stuff we acquire over a lifetime; memorabilia, correspondence, images, books, gifts received and much else besides. How did I get here?

The longer I spent in the presence of these objects the more I began to think about the place they occupied in my life. To begin with this was more a matter of practicalities than any form of intellectual, creative or 'therapeutic' exercise. The primary task was that of decluttering my life and deciding what to keep and what to throw away.

As we know from studies of infant and adult behaviour, throughout life certain objects may acquire powerful symbolic significance for an individual. While we may, as infants or children, form a particular attachment to a toy or piece of material, as adults an item of jewellery or clothing may assume similarly special importance. During periods of transition – such as leaving home, or following a bereavement, for example - these objects may assume even greater importance. and we may become very attached to them.

In the circumstances, Neil's invitation to collaborate on a project responding to the space where we once shared a flat with a view to contributing to an exhibition exploring our relationship with everyday objects proved very timely. Not least through providing a vehicle through which to creatively explore my own relationships with everyday objects and the narratives that accompany them.

The individual and collaborative work submitted as part of this exhibition takes the form of a visual, as well as an emotional and psychological exploration of what is and what was; absence and presence, the past and the present. These explorations are ongoing and all the work on show should be considered provisional.

While being rooted in a particular place - Caroline Street in the West end of Newcastle upon Tyne - these works nevertheless

seek to address a number of wider themes; including the nature of identity, social change, the passage of time, the sense of dislocation and loss. The flotsam and jetsam washed up by the tides of time and which now litter the largely neglected space that Caroline Street occupies provides a powerful metaphor for researching and responding to these issues.

Works:

*Time and Tide, 2018-19*

This piece takes the form of a series of photographs of objects found on or around Caroline Street. The photographs are mounted and exhibited at floor level, obliging the spectator to look down. The composition of the piece emphasises the interior emptiness of Caroline Street, along with both the ugliness and melancholy beauty of the objects to be found there.

*Wall of Babel, 2018-19*

Words, as well as images are very important to me in relation to the way I experience and make sense of the world in which I live. This text-based piece consists of quotations, extracts from correspondence and conversations between Neil and myself, extracts from conversations taped around Caroline Street and elsewhere and text drawn from other sources, including the journal I kept around the time I was living on Caroline Street. These narrative fragments are deliberately difficult to follow and require our full attention in order for meaning to be created.

*Dave and Neil's Pop up Homage to the 2018 Royal Academy Summer Show, 2018-19*

This playful piece references the 2018 Royal Academy Summer Show curated by Grayson Perry. The work consists of a miscellaneous collection of art works drawn from a variety of sources; images made in response to Caroline Street, images acquired near Caroline Street, art work made by Neil and myself at different points in our lives; including the period we lived on Caroline Street. The work is intended pose questions about the nature of the curatorial process and invites the spectator to reflect on what they consider to be good or bad art.



# Dawn Cole

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## *Time is a Healer*

My work for the NUNO exhibition responds to the loss and trauma caused by war and conflict through 3 generations of women in my family and the inherited trauma still evident today.

My Nanna, Edith was born in Margate in 1896. From a large working class family she sadly lost her brother William when he was killed in action in 1916 during the First World War. Edith married Joseph Jackson and had a son William (Bill) who she named after the brother she lost, and a daughter, Eileen, my Mum. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Bill enlisted in the Royal Artillery; against his mother's best efforts to persuade him to be a conscientious objector.

Sadly, I never knew my grandfather Joseph. He developed lung cancer in 1943 and was nursed at home by Edith and Eileen until he died in October 1944. Bill was given compassionate leave to attend his father's funeral. This was to be the last time Edith and Eileen were to see him as he was killed in action on November 27, 1944.

Eileen, then just a teenager, recalls this time, remembering her father's pain, her mother's loss and then the dreadful news of Bill's death. So many wounds. Many, for Eileen, remain barely healed, ripping open at the slightest thing, tearing her apart. Wounds she has lived with all her adult life. Wounds that have caused anxiety and depression and phobias but also a strength and determination to speak about her past to ensure it never remains buried. So much sadness through three generations of women; my Great-Grandmother losing her son and my Nanna her brother William, then her husband and her son and my Mum her father and brother, Bill.

When I was invited to take part in the NUNO project I saw it as an opportunity to make work in response to my collection of empty clocks. I have been buying empty clocks for many years. Each one bought because it reminded me of something else or someone. These empty clocks, hollow and missing what most would see as the vital component that makes them clocks and yet to me they are still keepers of time. Their design, construction, workmanship and materials all recall the fashion and craft of another time, the wear and tear evidence their time worn use and the fact that they have now been discarded and disposed of, separated from their original owners most significantly suggests the ultimate moment in time – death. For NUNO I decided to use a broken, black slate mantel clock, bought because it reminded me of one that my Nanna had and which I have since learnt was passed down to her from my Great Grandmother; a perfect connection.

My first ideas were to mend the broken slate clock with paper containing words, however as I began to work with the clock, photographing it and making rubbings of the damaged parts

I began to experiment with the notion of replicating the clock somehow.

Lead and textiles are materials I use regularly.

- Lead for it's contradictions; toxic if ingested, used to make bullets and shrapnel shells, used for protective aprons in x-ray rooms, to line nuclear bunkers and to line coffins to slow down the body's natural decaying process. A heavy metal that has a very low melting point and a fragility and instability that seems at odds with both it's ability to harm and protect.
- Textiles, and particularly hand embroidered or embellished pillowcases and handkerchiefs, for their associations with women's work, home making, and their ability to contain the traces of those who use them through the hand decoration and DNA from bodily fluids.

It seemed logical that these materials were appropriate to use to make the other clocks, replicas of the original made with materials that to me spoke of conflict, anxiety and fragility

On 28th July 2014, the centenary of the start of the First World War, I began to collect my own hair, hair that ended up tangled in my hairbrush. I stopped collecting it on November 11th 2018, the centenary of the end of the war. I wanted to explore the idea of 'tearing one's hair out' as a metaphor for the anxiety experienced during conflict and on a personal level when my Mum had her first break down she lost most of her hair. My research in the past has included the material culture surrounding death and bereavement and amongst my archive I have a memento mori; a brooch made from woven hair as a reminder of a lost loved one and also of one's own mortality. Using my own hair is quite literally a physical manifestation (through the DNA present in the hair follicles) of my connection with the people that my work for NUNO symbolises.

From initial ideas and the proposal I submitted my work for this project has expanded and changed significantly. This is no surprise as it is what always happens once I get into my studio and begin making. The making process becomes a form of research and helps to channel thoughts and ideas. The creative process takes me by the hand and leads me where I need to go.

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## Works:

### *Time is a Healer*, 2019

- A triptych of clocks placed side by side on a mantel shelf.
1. made from lead
  2. made from hand embroidered handkerchiefs, lead and stitched with lead thread
  3. the original black slate clock, repaired with lead and containing human hair





# Jenni Dutton

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## *Absurd Sewn Selfies*

Jenni Dutton lives and works in Somerset England. She trained at St Martins and Byam Shaw School in London. She uses a wide variety of materials and techniques exploring issues around memory, identity and loss, and has worked on series incorporating mixed media textiles, sculpture, installation and painting.

Her current preoccupation with the complexities of ageing can be seen in *The Dementia Darnings* and the *Absurd Sewn Selfies*.

Jenni's work has been exhibited throughout the U.K. and more recently in Holland, Dublin and China. She has work in many public and private collections.

## Works:

### *Self Portrait With Portals, 2014*

This assemblage was made for a mixed exhibition in a shipping container on Watchet Docks in Somerset. I needed to express more of myself than just a likeness, so I sliced up the painted portrait and created recesses using layers of MDF in which I placed small objects. Growing up in an army family, we moved all through my childhood and at boarding school some items took on a preciousness and almost talisman-like quality. There is no space here to explain what memories these objects conjure up in my adult mind of my childish self. Those fears and fantasies, stories woven around the pieces, I no longer know if they are really true.

Does this matter? It brings to mind all the things one has lost. How do we connect with memory and what happens to memory over time? What is the role of the object in making these connections?

### *Passport Paintings, 2016-17*

Recently I needed a passport. I hadn't renewed this important document for 15 years.

I kept all the old ones. As a way of exploring self, identity and time I made 6 paintings from all the passport photos and then painted significant items that relate time-wise into the foreground of each painting. I became self conscious as I was aware of the objects and their significance, causing me to reflect and remember, which made me nostalgic, regretful and sometimes sad. I refined the choice of items, adding something that I noticed fitted the narrative that was jostling for attention. The reason some of these objects have survived is quite random. I mourn some of the objects I no longer have.

### *Lowlights, 2017*

Vanity, ageing and ego with a touch of the ridiculous, *Lowlights* prefigures the *Absurd Sewn Selfies*.

### *Absurd Sewn Selfies, 2018-19*

The challenge NUNO offered was to incorporate an object with the *Absurd Sewn Selfies*, work I have been developing for the past two years as I explore my own ageing.

I have a fascination with dolls, particularly damaged dolls as they offer a rich narrative opportunity, an unconscious link to half remembered myths and fairy tales. Nostalgia, longing and loss are all emotions I associate with this discarded dolls head. There are many other associations and viewers will bring their own.

### *Briony Holding a Doll, about 1980*

This photo of my daughter was taken by Paul Medley when we lived in Oxfordshire



# Ruth Geldard

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## *Open Carry*

Previous work has often referenced, but not explicitly, the body. To this end I wanted to begin by recording physical manifestations of the wearer, in terms of wear, fade and creases, as they appear on the bag. I am also interested in the possibility of the idea of a psychic distance, that connects bag and wearer. To do this I plan to treat the object in anthropomorphic terms and have set up portrait sessions where a bag is brought to my studio by its owner, side-lit and drawn or painted, exactly as I would for a human/animal sitter.

Being part of the NUNO project has given me an opportunity to investigate something that has fascinated me since childhood, specifically used handbags. I believe this mild obsession was triggered by a visit as a child, to a Bring and Buy sale where, with a handful of coppers, I bought nine other-women's handbags. I can remember the details of them all and the thrilling combination of unexpected largesse with the heady scent of previous use and wear, induced a lifelong passion.

I began the project with one of my own old bags that I had found impossible to throw away. I hoped that making a portrait of it would ameliorate this feeling of attachment. Then I opened this out to friends to come forward with their old bags. I anthropomorphised the portrait process by lighting each bag as if it were a human model. I used the sessions to talk about each friend's bag and what it meant to them. Common themes emerged; for some people a handbag is almost a physical extension of their body with an acute awareness of their bag's proximity. This would sometimes cause anxiety if the distance between wearer and bag became too great. The "safe" psychic distance is altered by location, for example, it is greater at home than when travelling in public.

This immersion into all things bag-related brought up several common themes. The idea of the "death" of the bag and difficulty with disposal two mentioned bag-heaven. People talked at length about the specific awe inspired by their mother's bag, the carrying of it was related to holding an unexploded bomb. And that is where the title, *Open Carry* comes from as I discovered a lot of defensive and war-like language around bags. It is not uncommon for a woman to fight off an attacker to keep her handbag and Margaret Thatcher allegedly used hers as a weapon.

During the making of the figurative images the complexity of our relationship with handbags became apparent. What had seemed so seductive in the beginning; the beautiful aging surface, the special scent of inner handbag and the wonderful connecting anecdotal stories, all pointed towards something much deeper, more cerebral. I could now see this figurative copying as an information gathering, a gleaning exercise and not the actual work, that was still to come.

At this point I changed medium from two dimensions to three and began to work away from the model. The freshness of the untried medium, stone carving, with its disciplines, constraints and unexpected freedoms, caused me to slow down and allowed my unconscious to express what I was beginning to work out: that a handbag is so much more than a physical or even mental receptacle, what I imagined as a sort of multi-functioning psychic holdall. It seems with hindsight a more accurate description is as a repository for deeply held, perhaps unconscious memories and feelings. And I now view the things kept in them as mere cyphers, references, that like bag-behaviour itself, simply points towards something underlying, something inner. My mother's last handbag had, amongst all the detritus of used stamps, rubber bands and till receipts, a passport sized baby photo of her eldest, now retired, son and a small glass vial of my father's ashes.

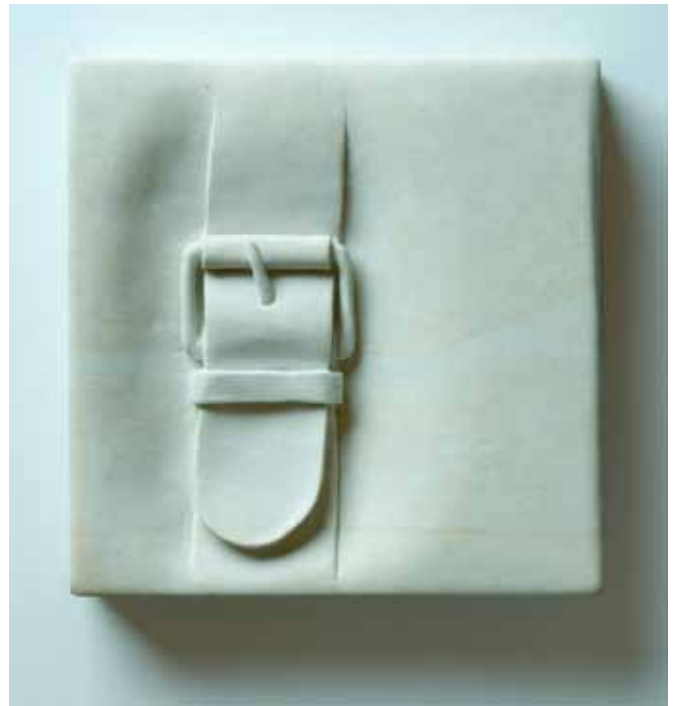
I now view the first part of the project as an external information gathering, through interactive research and the making of disciplined, figurative work, and the second as a slow burning process (over many months), a distillation of all that gathered information, allowed to steep and evolve into the actual work, a series of stone carvings called: *To Keep I – IV*.

Works: (opposite page)

*To Keep I*, 2018, Caen Stone  
*To Keep II (3 stitches)*, 2018, Caen Stone  
*To Keep III (small stitches)*, 2018, Caen Stone  
*To Keep IV (buckle)*, 2018, Caen Stone

Additional works:

*Ruth's Bag*, 2018, pencil on cartridge paper  
*Judy's Bag*, 2018, watercolour & crayons on watercolour paper  
*Sarah's Bag*, 2018, charcoal on paper  
*Corinne and Tony's Bag*, 2018, watercolour on watercolour paper  
*Amy's Bag*, 2018, mixed media on paper  
*Sadie's Bag*, 2018, Ink and crayon on watercolour paper  
*Jeremy's Bag*, 2018, (watercolour and crayons on watercolour paper  
*Francesca's Bag*, 2018, pastel on paper  
*Lisa's Bag*, 2018, pencil on paper  
*To Skin*, 2018, ... materials ...



# Patrick Goodall

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## *Sleep of Reason*

This accumulation of objects centres around a vintage dental chair headrest that came into my possession in the 1980s. I was working in an adolescent unit in the grounds of a Victorian psychiatric hospital. The hospital had its own dental department, which had left an old dentist's chair in the hospital scrap pile. As a scavenger of all things strange, I rescued the chair and transported it to my art room, where I reclined on it feeling very pleased with my good fortune.

The next day, however, I got a 'phone call from the dental department asking if they could have the chair back. It had been placed in the scrap pile by error and they needed to cannibalise it for spare parts for another chair. I asked if they needed the headrest and they said no, I could keep it. As three porters struggled to remove the heavy chair, I wondered how on earth I had moved it a considerable distance by myself. Like reports of adrenaline fuelled acts of improbable strength in emergency situations, I was motivated by the mania of object rescue, where the beauty of something unwanted and unloved is not to be allowed to be lost (I remember once jumping through the flames of a bonfire to rescue a lovely old chair that someone had just thrown on as fuel).

The headrest is beautifully made in chrome and leather. The engineering is sublime. One movement of the handle releases two joints, allowing the mechanism to adjust to any height or angle in a smooth and fluid manner before tightening firmly in place. It reminds me of a hare.

The associations are not so beautiful, however. Imagine how the chair was experienced by a person with paranoid delusions or hallucinations. What special measures or strategies were needed in order to enable essential dental work on extremely vulnerable and frightened people?

I have other stories about the tripod and the anvil. Sometimes I don't even need to use the original object - the tripod is a replacement for the original which was mysteriously 'lost'. Its loss becomes part of the story. It has connections with my father, but also of stability subverted. The anvil holds a memory of wonder and the realisation of power and control.

Objects are repositories of stories. Groups of objects in juxtaposition suggest a multiplicity of stories in active 'conversation' with each other. This particular conversation piece relates to a childhood memory of being given laughing gas at the dentist in the sixties. I was profoundly affected by the way reality seemed to shift, soften and distort under the effect of the anaesthesia. Around the same time in California, Timothy Leary was advocating L.S.D. as a gateway to psychic liberation. The mining town I called home as an eight year old offered only the dentist and his gas mask, but it may have been the start of a lifelong fascination with the slippery nature of reality.

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Works:

*Sleep of Reason, 2019*  
Mixed media assemblage - aluminium, steel, chromed steel, ceramic, ferrite magnets, iron powder, dental floss, dimensions variable.



# Kate Murdoch

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## *102 Pieces of Glass*

I work predominantly in the medium of assemblage, collage and installation. My materials are sourced from a lifelong passion for collecting and I'm interested in objects as indicators of the passage of time. Steeped in social and political history, objects frequently open up opportunities for personal and political discussion, particularly around issues of class and privilege, as well as value and worth.

Wider themes of loss and remembrance are also explored, reflecting my fascination with the permanence of objects versus the fragility of human existence - essentially, how objects can outlive us.

The *Neither Use nor Ornament* group show touches on these recurring themes in my work. What is an object 'worth?' Is an object that's useful more valuable than one that's purely ornamental, for example? How can we put a price on any given item?

On the surface, the objects presented in '102 Pieces of Glass' are of no real monetary value - but once it's revealed that some of them belonged to my late grandmother, then they become imbued with a personal history and narrative, and the emotional value of them is infinitely greater.

The objects I gathered from the house that my late Nana was finally forced to leave after some 75 years bring a poignancy to an otherwise random collection. For me personally, they evoke deep-rooted childhood memories around family and relationships, connections, love and loss.

The objects selected speak volumes about my Nana's identity, age and social standing in the world; there's a lot of mass-produced cheap glass amongst the 102 pieces and very little high quality lead crystal. They also reflect the different eras my Nana lived through - the ever-changing trends and fashions. They are a reminder of how much life has altered over the last century, particularly in relation to the things we own nowadays - the domestic, everyday objects we have in our homes and make use of.

There are 102 objects in this piece of work, symbolic of the number of years my Nana lived. I am inviting people to engage with them, rather than simply viewing them from a distance. I'm aware of the powerful emotions that certain objects evoke in me, and I'm curious about the impact they might have on others. What do these objects mean to you?

I'm asking people to introduce some colour, whether that's literally, by adding something, or through sharing a story about the particular piece of glass that catches their eye. What is it that appeals to you about it? Does it remind you of somebody? Does it trigger a memory from your past? Is it an object that you simply consider might be useful, or are you attracted to it for its aesthetic appeal - or perhaps even for its ugliness?

I'm curious to see what the people of Oxford add to this collection of objects when I bring them to the Ovada Gallery for the NUNO exhibition. How will they respond to the invitation to be actively involved in a piece of art? What unique touch will they bring in order to inject a greater vitality to it? And will the piece ultimately be 'worth' more at the end of the process?









