

ABSINTHE §2

ABSINTHE §2

Nancy Allen
Beatrice Lettice Boyle
Luca Bosani
James Capper
Rayvonn D'Clark
Billy Fraser
Jane Hayes Greenwood
Mimi Hope
Marie Jacotey
Natalia Janula
Victoria Kaldan
Rosie Kennedy
Thomas Langley
Martin
Lilian Nejatpour
India Nielsen
Elizabeth Prentis
Ben Reader
Skeuomorph
Tom Ribot
Ted Le Swer
Juan Manuel Salas Valdivia
Nadja Voorham
Mitch Vowels
Corey Whyte
Jim Woodall
Rafal Zajko



Editors Forward

Charlie Mills

*This pale opal wine aborts misery,
Opens the intimate sanctuary of beauty,
– Bewitches my heart, exalts my soul in ecstasy!*

Jeanne La Goulue – *La légende de l’Absinthe?* (1917)

Absinthe. The word abounds with mystery and intrigue. Subject to rumours of debauchery and despair – even death – the history of absinthe is filled with a sobering discourse of addiction, ruin and mortality. A menace to our society, our families and ourselves, filled with a wickedness and temptation that will make a beast of man and scourge our moral duties; turn those who are chaste to carnal pleasures, those who are pious to the most unholy of mischief.

The following publication has been produced in conjunction with ABSINTHE \$2, the second of 4 major exhibitions of emerging artists over the course of 12 months that draw from this rich history of fantasy and sedition. Comprising a hybrid, eclectic, and at points inexplicable presentation of the weirder side of London’s emerging art scene, ABSINTHE \$2 evokes a mandala of artists that cut and splice between mediums and styles; a kaleidoscopic trip into the city’s current alternative art practices.

ABSINTHE \$2 will present the work of 28 London-based artists, a fortnightly live events programme and publication. ABSINTHE is curated and organised by Charlie Mills, Billy Fraser & James Capper – it would not have been possible without the help of all those who have worked to make this project a reality. In particular, we would like to thank all the incredible artists involved in the first installment of the project, as well as Matt, Andy, Tim & Sean from the Spit & Sawdust, whose support and faith in the project has been invaluable.

To drink absinthe is to taste magic. To pull back the curtain and see the other-worldly, the hidden and the clandestine. It is the love-drunk clamour of a birdsong after dark; a trill screech of obscenity from deep within the jungle.



Floral evocation

Ben Reader

Your gnarls,
Your grarls,
Hiddling,
Iddling away.
Creeped with
Puscular,
Kipples and kine.
Crevasses and caves,
Voluptuous
Fatted bark.
Creeking
Armrits.
Riddled
And hiddled.
Pidling away.



Ben Reader, *Lagrime* (2018)





Artist Interviews with Hector Campbell

Lilian Nejatpour

HC **As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including performance, sculpture, audio and video artworks. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

LN I work quite thematically with research, so the initial stages are often written as essays and visualized further through sketches. I don't always know how or what they will be used for, but usually it's quite a long process. I need time to sit with different mediums to see how they fit conceptually within the research.

I also associate different mediums to different times of the day, like composing usually happens in the evening when I'm less focused. I usually read and research in the morning when I'm more alert. Running also helps me imagine objects and sculptures in various spaces when my mind is completely dissociated; it really helps me filter out a lot of visual noise.

The process of matching up concept and medium really depends on the environment I want to create for the viewer. I think my work is heavily reliant on an audience so the space it is exhibited/performed in also dictates the final outcome to an extent.

HC **Iterations of your 2018 performance piece, *Choreophobia*, have been staged at Turner Contemporary, Chisenhale Studios, Somerset House and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, could you explain the conceptual idea underpinning this work?**

LN 'Choreophobia' is the name of a book by dancer, choreographer and researcher Anthony Shay, in which he examined the intervening occurrence of colonialism and Western thought on Middle Eastern dance practices, and



the term has come to define the conflict and phobia of male dance in the Middle East.

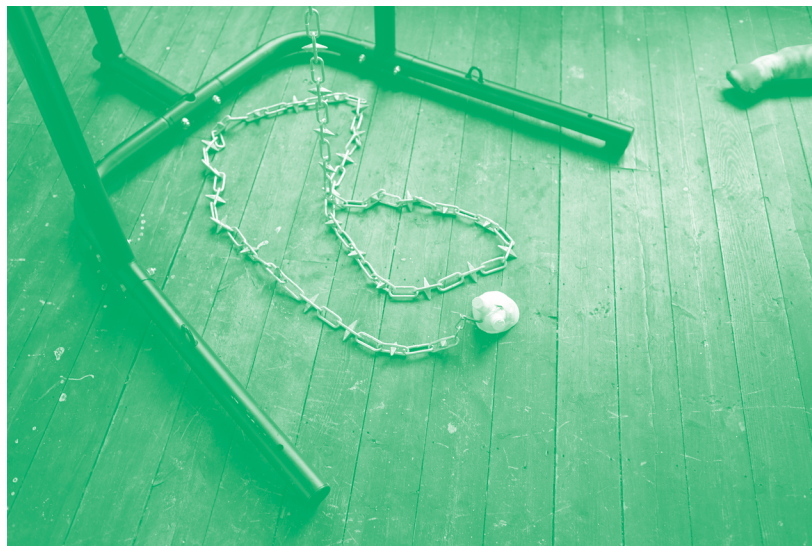
After World War II, the Pahlavi government sought to convert traditional, male dance to "new, sterile dance forms" in order to comply with Western audiences. The project explores how this propaganda was used to manipulate gender normativity through dance in the Middle East, until dance became criminalized in 1979.

The work began as a heavily researched essay, which moved into performance in collaboration with dancers Eva Escrich González and Lauren Stewart. I began deconstructing Shay's concept by placing my own geographical displacement into choreography, sampling movements from gestures associated with the now banned Iranian solo improvised dance.

At the time I was also reading Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space", exploring what it means to exist between two nationalities, a liminal space. The aim of the work was to hybridize my own identity through bodies that resisted one another and sonically represented parts of my upbringing in the North of England and the Middle East. This was highlighted through an assemblage of niche, 4x4 bassline tracks from Bradford and reversed Iranian pop songs.

Choreophobia is still a project that I'm developing; I think it requires a long time to deconstruct different interpretations of thinking from both a Western and Eastern mindset. I often find it a strange place when I discuss the East as a British Iranian. Specificity is key and I'm continually refining this further through my research practice.

HC **You've previously stated that your work "questions technological invasiveness and sentimentality", this cannot be more evident than in your collaboration with artist Simon Weckert, *Dumbphne* (2017), created for the TADAEX & NODE exchange programme. Could you tell us a bit more about that work?**



Lilian Nejatpour, *Hoist* (2019)

LN TADAEX is a digital arts festival that runs in Tehran every year. I was selected to take part on behalf of Iran in collaboration with German artist Simon Weckert. We both came from different disciplines, Simon is a programmer and coder, and I was working with animation and sculpture at the time. Our ideologies towards technology and subjectivity were conceptually very similar, especially in terms of how we interpreted digital invasiveness and structures of control through the emergence of smartphones.

The installation and film, *The Dumbphne*, came from our interest in the production of labour in contemporary app culture. Particularly how this labour is constantly active and left unacknowledged. We thought about producing a 'real life' smartphone in the form of a large, sculptural phone box that incorporated objects simulated as 'apps'. It was quite clunky and heavy, the antithesis of a slick android (hence the title).

HC **Collaboration plays an important part in your artistic output, and you regularly work with dancers, composers and filmmakers. How do you approach artistic collaboration? Is it hard to rely on others to enact your artistic vision?**

LN I've been quite lucky with my collaborators. I've worked with dancers Lauren and Eva for over a year now and we've become really close friends. It's always exciting to see how they translate my research into a movement sequence as well interpret video research into choreography. Dancers work spatially, with clear intentions after each gesture – that was a new challenge for me, trying to break down movement into a narrative and understand how one movement transitions into another and why. I slowly became aware of a system of notation and the language of scoring movement with meaning.

I recently commissioned artist and filmmaker Rebecca Salvadori to create a short piece in response to the

research surrounding *Choreophobia*. The film, *Lilian's Vow*, is a portrait of *Choreophobia* and our collaborative dialogue together. It's been an incredible process to have another artist involved, producing her own response to the work through film and text. I also produced the soundtrack of for Rebecca's film, so there have been many outputs triggered by different artists involved in the project.

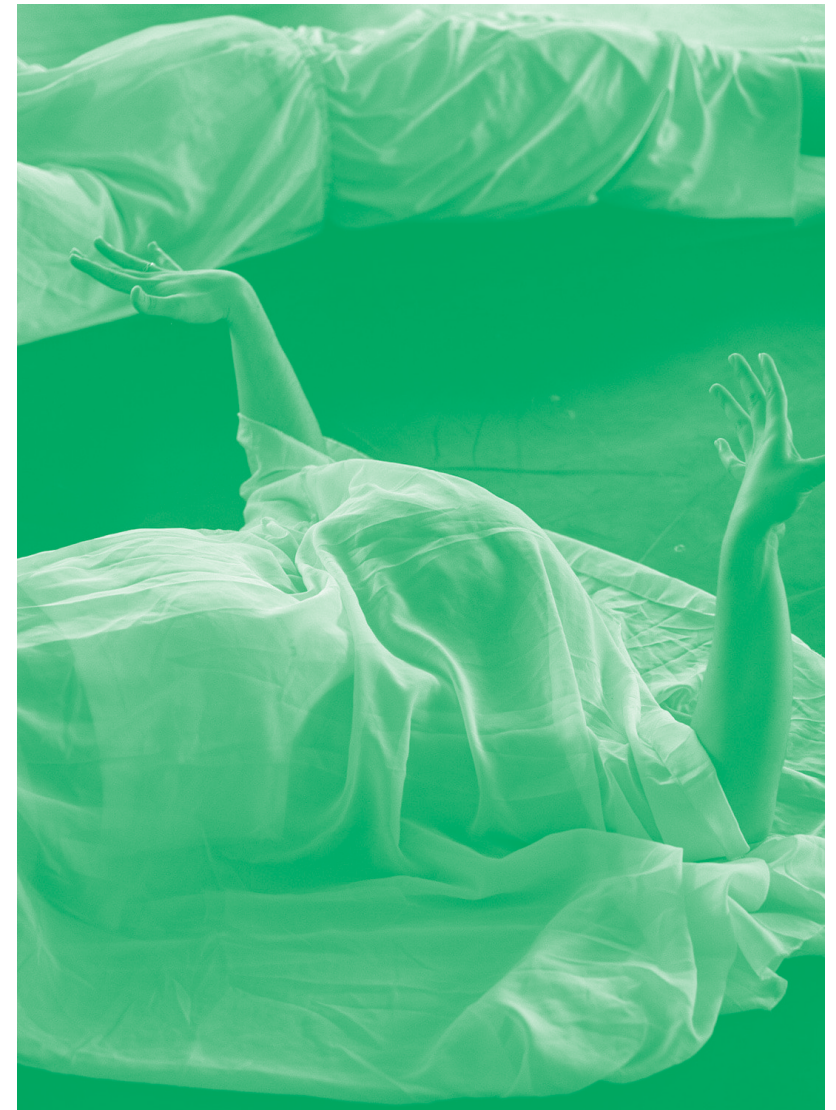
Ultimately, I need to have chemistry with whoever I work with and energy is really important for me. My approach is usually quite open in terms of collaboration, I don't always know if it's going to work but I think its about being patient and throwing yourself in with another artist. I guess it's about how you both evolve with one another during the making process.

HC **Finally, could you give us an insight into how you are approaching the ABSINTHE project, and what you are working on for the exhibition?**

LN During my first meeting with curators Charlie and Billy we discussed the history of the pub, founded in 1856 and previously known as the Beehive, infamous for its illicit activities, including dog breeding, drug trading and prostitution. At the same time I was thinking about the Château de Lacoste in France (ex residence of Marquis de Sade) and how these histories become imbued into the furniture of these illegitimate environments, reflecting a criminal and sexual aberrance.

This concept is notable within French literature of the 17th century. The Sofa by Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon features the narrator anthropomorphised as a sofa to become a central voyeur watching over the various activities happening over the course of the novel. I thought about the context of the Spit and Sawdust pub and a piece that could act as voyeuristic furniture like *The Sofa*.

I responded to the history of the pub with *Hoist*, a sculpture inspired by self-help poles; a device used for lowering a body in and out of bed. Instead of lifting a user,



Lilian Nejatpour, *Choreophobia* (2018) Photographed by Dimitri Djuric

the load is a half-filled Evian bottle with two necks made from plaster, withdrawn by a fishhook, hung by a galvanized chain. The sculpture becomes part of a new furniture, anthropomorphized as a medical aid – a material analogue for the erotic, cruel and failed body, which is seismic of a sexual colonization; a failed attempt to lift up a bottle with a limb-galvanised chain.

Interview

Juan Manuel Salas Valdivia

HC Having previously completed an exchange programme at Université Rennes 2 in Brittany, France, you're currently engaged in the Air-Montreux residency programme in Montreux, Switzerland. How has the residency been going? Are they something you look to do more of?

JMSV The residence has turned out to be quite a spiritual experience for me. I know very few people here. I live in a kind of glass cage, with the most beautiful landscape I could imagine. I am also disconnected from other artists or people with whom I can receive feedback about my work. It is a place with all my needs covered, so all my attention is focused on myself and my paintings. All that is a very good combination for interesting things to arise in my work.

As my first artistic residence and it has worked quite well, I have produced a lot and I feel that I have found interesting resolutions in painting. The only disadvantage is that more than ever I feel conditioned by space or logistics; the studio is a pristine apartment where you have to be careful not to make any mess, in addition the art store is in another city so I have to move everything by train, plus the materials are very expensive in comparison to Mexico. Even so, it is an experience that is very worthwhile and that I will continue looking for in the future.

HC As well as your practical art education you've studied art and painting theory extensively. How do you look to marriage the academic and the material?

JMSV I think that this "marriage" is always in tension or in dispute. An excess of academia can end up sterilizing work, but an imbalance of the material leads to a lack of direction. I have always seen it as a very intuitive process, which develops organically as one studies and works at the same time.



I think a lot about the decision making that exists in painting, and with the risk of sounding delusional, I speak of a decision making in an almost cosmic sense. How each gesture or stroke that the body marks on the surface of the canvas is a decision that is caused by a web of events and moments; the materials that we decided to use, the visual and historical baggage that precede us and even the sensitive state that you are in.

I am also convinced of the existence of a creative fuel – an energy that is nourished through everything we study, observe and live – and how it is stored and embodied in objects or ideas. Of course, all this is unconscious most of the time, but it is important to stop and think about it from time to time in order to make decisions or take a step away from ourselves.

HC Your *Imagen Posible* series explores the possibility of painting in the digital age, incorporating and immortalising technological error such as glitches into your works. Could you tell us a bit more about this series? What are the conceptual ideas underpinning these works?

JMSV This series is mainly thinking about glitch as a pictorial



Juan Manuel Salas Valdivia, *Untitled* (2019) & *Articulation #7* (2019)

phenomenon. It's one of my favorite series, and as I go on working and reflecting on it, I find more interesting things.

I think a lot about the Bacon-Deleuzian concept of diagram or catastrophe: a kind of pre-pictorial "loss of will" exercise, governed by manipulated chance, but in reverse. Instead of the body losing control and building the image from that chaos or diagram, here the machine is "humanized" and a data storm destroys all the figures that appear in the image. For a fraction of a second bodies tear on the screen, objects become saturated with color until they burn or a landscape is joined to a face that should appear on the next plane. Multiple spaces and times that inhabit the video merge to create a new image.

I also liked very much the idea of 'hunting', waiting for the glitch to manifest itself and having to capture it immediately. Each of these configurations is unique and unrepeatable, so if I lose a valuable glitch, it's gone forever.

Alongside this process I continue with the small landscapes that I call "articulations" as they are material links between large-scale works. These are not based on any glitch, but their structure imitates many of these

resources, so they work as studies or experiments.

The most recent work axis of this series is to produce my own glitches through a method known as datamoshing, the process of manipulating the data of multimedia files to achieve certain visual or audio effects when the file is decoded or reproduced. Although this resource sacrifices the fortuitous or random nature of the first glitches, I can focus more on the symbolic dimension of the images. For example, crossing the portrait of a certain historical character with that of the landscape of a specific geography. This is my most recent issue, and I feel that I still have a lot to explore.

HC **Alongside your own artistic practice you have also been the coordinator of 'Lateral' artspace, how did you balance the two? How did that project inform your own artistic output?**

JMSV Lateral was one of the richest artistic experiences I have ever experienced. Started with Arturo Cerda in 2016, the project was conceived as an independent exhibition space, "lateral" to the mainstream galleries in the city of Guadalajara.

Although it was a space oriented to the production and exhibition of contemporary art, the important part was really everything that happened around the exhibition, more than the exhibition itself. It was very important for me in artistic terms for all the exchange of ideas between many young artists from the city, you could see how and where they started their ideas, how they were modified through dialogue, and how they resolved them in some piece or installation. The 'Lateral' space was also my studio and the artists who developed something, or exhibited, there also saw and talked with me about my work. All those experiences modify your ideas indirectly.

HC **You've previously exhibited in experimental curatorial projects such as Extended Call (curated by ABSINTHE'**

Billy Fraser), what draws you to these projects? And can you give us an insight into the work you'll be exhibiting in ABSINTHE?

JMSV For me, it will always be fascinating to see my work exhibited in another country, for many reasons. One of them is to see how your piece relate with other pieces or discourses that one might think are radically different from yours because they are in a different culture.

Something I like very much about this kind of projects, is that they represent a very interesting generation of emerging artists from the British scene, so, in some indirect way, by exhibiting there, you find yourself immersed in that cultural nucleus that otherwise it would be impossible to access. Then it becomes interesting to see your pieces there, to think of them as a familiar object in the midst of other strange objects, or as a strange object in the midst of familiar objects.

For this exhibition, I will be presenting two paintings, continuations of the 'Possible Image' series that I have been developing during the Air-Montreux residence. One is based on a glitch like those mentioned above, and the other is my own articulation. What I find most interesting of these two works in particular is that they were made at the same time, so you can see how they both dialogue and cross each other, although one is a face-body and the other, a kind of landscape.



Interview

Jane Hayes Greenwood

HC **As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including painting, sculpture, digital and video artworks. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

JHG My work definitely expands out of a painting practice. I have always had an interest in objects; the relationships we have with them; the way we invest in and covet particular things and the power they seem to have over us. In 2015, I spent a lot of time drawing and painting objects, thinking about them as psychological repositories as well as active agents

Whilst coming across things in the world that interested me at that time, I started making small sculptural pieces as props for these works. It felt important that they existed as models to be represented rather than exhibited, but I began to have more and more ideas for works that could be made in different materials rather than just straight paintings on canvas. There is a lot of fluidity and reflexivity in my practice. Something might start as an object in the world, be translated into a painting, then further evolve into a CGI animation and back to painting etc. The different forms and approaches to making feed each other and continue to generate excitement and new work.

HC **Much of your work is heavily research-based, with your last solo exhibition, *Lead Me Not Into Temptation*, examining issues related to desire, consumption, shame and eroticism inspired by the story of the Garden of Eden. How do you use research to develop the conceptual ideas that support your artworks?**

JHG I'm quite greedy when it comes to research so if I become interested in a subject, I tend to gorge on connected artwork, imagery and information. I really love those



research holes, where you make lots of new connections between seemingly random things and you can open them up and follow the offshoots. As a way of making some kind of sense of this, I make lots of drawings. In a similar way to the small sculptural pieces I was making in 2015, these kind of drawings are usually very raw. I see them as a way of thinking through different ideas rather than being works in themselves.

For *Lead Me Not Into Temptation* the research was focused but broad, I made 150+ drawings at the beginning



of that project as a way to process what I was thinking through. From these I filtered and distilled the things I felt were important and had depth and then developed these into paintings, and a large-scale sculptural installation.

HC **Alongside your own artistic practice you are also the Director and Co-founder of Block 336, a Brixton-based public art space and studio provider that aims to encourage the creation of site-specific work. What do you believe to be the importance of site-specificity, and how does it differ to works created for the 'White Wall'?**

JHG At Block 336 we invite and commission artists to produce new and ambitious solo projects, by giving them time, space and support. Typically an artist will spend 5+ weeks working in our gallery spaces, in a residency-style install period. They will receive technical support and feedback from our team before opening a 4-week exhibition that has a connected, public-facing events programme.

Block 336 is a non-commercial gallery that doesn't rely on sales of work, meaning artists are able to make work without that pressure and create something that they may not have been able to realise previously.

For many artists, Block 336 is the largest space

they have exhibited in so it really gives them a chance to stretch out and do something exciting. We feel this approach is more interesting and generous for both artists and audiences.



Jane Hayes Greenwood, *The Queen of Poisons* (2019)

HC **GiG Gallery in Munich will present your latest solo exhibition this July. What can we expect to see at that show?**

JHG The exhibition is titled *The Witch's Garden* and will feature a new series of plant paintings alongside some larger works that feature figures in garden-like spaces.

The powerful, threatening image of the witch really interests me. Perceived as transgressive and frightening, 'witches' have been persecuted throughout time, largely because of entrenched misogyny. By showing difference, these women were often viewed as dangerous; trespassing on territory deemed as off limits; posing a threat to patriarchal structures.

With the plant paintings, I am thinking about them as potential ingredients for love potions and spells. Some are based on plants from herbal fertility guides, such as the now extinct *Silphium* which was reportedly used as a contraceptive and aphrodisiac. *Silphium* is reported to have a heart-shaped seed and one theory suggests this might be where the heart shape symbol originated from ♥

HC **You've previously exhibited in experimental curatorial projects such as Ultra Sunrise (curated by IKO and Milk Collective), what draws you to these projects? And can you give us an insight into the work you are exhibiting in ABSINTHE §2?**

JHG I like the energy of DIY projects. They are often run on miniscule budgets and are therefore driven by love and belief. I guess I'm drawn to the collaborative and generous spirit of these endeavours.

The work I am showing in ABSINTHE §2, *Queen of Poisons*, was made as part of my plant series. I started by looking at imagery of wormwood and other herbs involved in the making of absinthe. The painting evolved into the depiction of a plant which is as much under the effects of something psychedelic, as having hallucinogenic properties itself. I wanted it to occupy a trippy space, growing strange forms and radiating an acidic glow as if inhabited by the green fairy.

Interview

Thomas Langley

HC **As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including painting, drawing, sculpture and installation. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

TL I've always been interested in the inherent values of both materials and objects. I seek to hunt these down and work with them as a complete package, I'm not sure the concept and the material are entirely separable.

HC **The use of text as a visual device, a tradition that incorporates graffiti, sign painting and advertising/political slogans, has been evident in your work now for quite some time, how do you develop the visual language and phrases that appear within your works?**

TL Often my placement of text takes into consideration several contexts, both the painting field/plane and the wider space in which that occupies, be it a gallery, a shop, an institution, a pub or a corridor – playing with site is as important for me as spacial formal decisions like composition.

Having said that I also drive for rhythm, balance and presence in the making of painting.

HC **Many of your mantras become repeated across many works, including 'Make It Better', 'Kill Me Now' and most noticeably 'Buy Mum A House', what effect are you looking to create with this use of repetition?**

TL I think a lot about the transference of labour, the hammering of the grind or hard graft, and making multiples highlights this notion of work.

I also like to make collections of works in order to create a larger context. Within the coupling of sculpture



and wall based work or a series of paintings individual works can function as modular components of a wider narrative or sentiment.

HC **Your 'Mummy's Boy' series recently culminated in a solo exhibition at Cob Gallery, presented in collaboration with**

five of London's best contemporary art galleries. The show felt much like a retrospective, with the press release noting the series end. Is that the last we'll see of 'Buy Mum A House'? And if so how does it feel to close the door on such a body of work?

TL It's been a heavy load, setting it down for a breather feels good at the moment.

HC **The Cob Gallery exhibition also marked the debut outing for your representational landscape pieces, devoid of any statements and slogans, are you enjoying expanding into that genre of painting?**



Thomas Langley, *Mummy's Boy X Grand Designs* (2019)

TL Absolutely, there is so much I want to explore further. Although it's all object making, text based and image based slogans function in much the same way for me

HC **You've spoken in the past about your plans to work a Do-It-Yourself masters programme had you not been invited to attend the renowned Royal Academy Schools. Since**



Thomas Langley, *Something Proper* (2018)

leaving with your post-graduate diploma last year, how are you finding the transition from art school to the wider art world?

TL I actually made and went through with my own almost fictional masters program, based on a hybrid of traditional craft guild attitudes towards mastery coupled with a lot of influence from Henry David Thoreau's memoir 'Walden' (in which the author takes on a similar venture).

I've been lucky enough to enjoy some great opportunities post-RA, and it's been great working with new faces these last 12 months.





Interview

Elizabeth Prentis

HC **As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including performance, painting, installation and video artworks. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

EP I work very instinctively, each piece comes from a gut idea. All works encompass: absurdity, humour, risk of failure, masculinity, process, movement, labour, activity and scale. These, I guess, are 'action' or 'mission' words, but they are not set out as a manifesto. If an idea doesn't explore all these 'mission words' then I find ways in which I could use other materials or mediums until it feels right. If I have to spend too long on the initial matching of material/medium/process, I move on. I want the final work to mirror the energy and intuition of the initial idea. I aim to create an outcome which is humorous and energetic, but honest to the level of labour involved in its making.

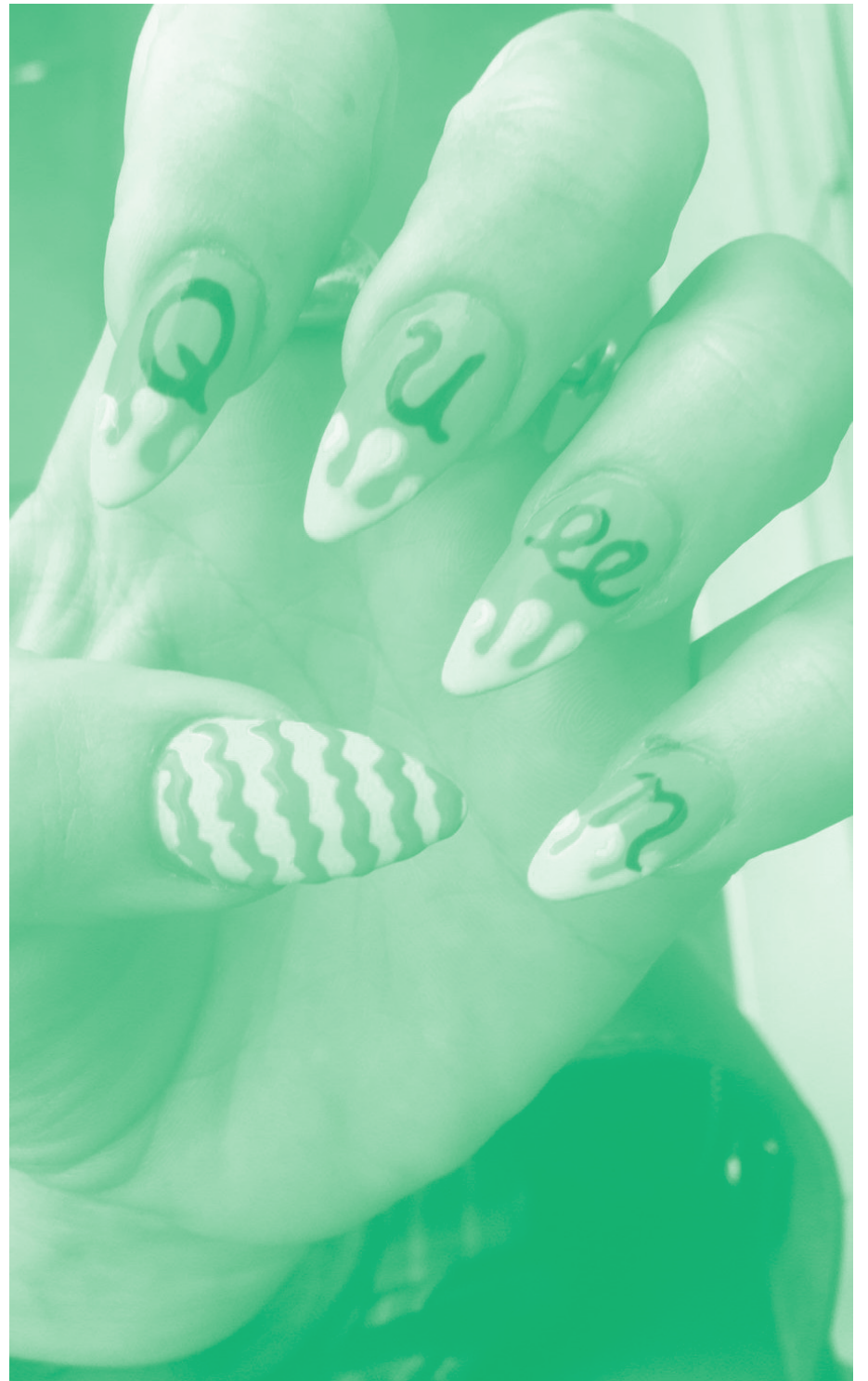
The risk of failure is core to my work. Allowing the unknown to manifest itself in a piece is what holds my interest in the work. This is what led me to move away from 'traditional' sculpture materials and processes, and move in to an area where the sculptures are realised as a live performance. Developing knowledge of material and speculating how it will behave on a large scale is what keeps me excited, motivated and curious as a maker.

HC **I've noticed that many of your performance and video pieces incorporate objects from the world of construction; with hard-hats, high-vis jackets and boiler suits becoming your costume, and building materials and machinery your artistic tools. What are the conceptual ideas underpinning these works?**



EP I use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as costume for a mixture of reasons: Firstly, for practicality; I've always been interested in working on a big scale, with heavy materials and machinery or industrial equipment, therefore PPE is an element which cannot be avoided. However, by choosing to use PPE as costume, it allowed me to critique both the bureaucracy of the Health and Safety system and the masculine assumptions associated with PPE.

When I was studying, there was often an assumption that because I was making big, heavy sculpture from 'traditionally masculine' materials my sole purpose was to



make some angry anti-patriarchal statement. Questions such as “How does the gravitas and masculinity of these materials and processes affect your work as a female artist?” began to piss me off! I retaliated against this commentary and became a caricature of myself and the conversations which were happening. By pairing a boiler suit, hard hat and hyper-masculine industrial equipment with red lipstick, a perfect manicure and traditionally domestic or feminine materials I was able to mock people’s assumptions about my practice.



HC **Your 2016 degree show involved a piece entitled, *IT'S TIME TO SLIME*, which incorporated around 450kg's of homemade slime dropped from a height to create a 'slime fountain', a work which Grayson Perry commented was 'rebellious against health and safety'. Do you agree with the Turner Prize Winners perception of that work? And have you often encountered health and safety roadblocks that hinder your performances?**



Elizabeth Prentis, *JELLY FLIP 1* (2019)

EP I think my work does rebel against Health and Safety to a certain extent, it is impossible to avoid, the systems are in place and not going anywhere, but it can be totally infuriating.

I, as the maker, should have full control of my work and how my work is viewed or activated. Obviously, no-one wants anyone to get hurt – no artist wants to do a “Richard Serra” – but what is infuriating is that often the health and safety systems lacks common sense, especially in an institution context. The zombie land of guidelines and box

ticking feels like a game of cat and mouse to get proposals for work accepted.

IT'S TIME TO SLIME demonstrated the stubbornness you need to make large scale work, as there was constant pressure to change or adapt the work to make it fit into a tidy, easily assessed box. It was also an example of manipulating risk assessments in order to be compliant with health and safety. Often there's all this paperwork for then nobody to bother to turn up and check the work matches the documents! Having to do this level of administrative and risk assessment work for materials such as slime, was my own way of mocking the bureaucracy of health and safety infrastructure.

HC **I understand you've recently begun painting again after many years? How are you looking to marriage painting and performance within your work?**

EP I did my first ever painting in 2017 as builders next door were chucking out some plywood and I had some emulsion kicking around. I was too skint to realise any sculptural works and didn't have a studio at the time. My work is expensive to produce and takes a lot of logistical planning whereas a painting can be done quickly and spontaneously, I use it as a 'breather' from the stress of planning sculptural works or performances.

I'm curious to start digesting these paintings. As with the rest of my practice, they stem from a gut feeling or reaction rather than considered compositions. I'm not content with them just being paintings, I feel like they are almost blueprints for further experiments or development within sculptures, performances or installations.

HC **This August, Lungley Gallery in East London will present your latest solo exhibition *I Don't Like Broccoli, but I'll try Anything Once*, curated by Siannon Saunders. What can we expect to see at that show?**

EP *I Don't Like Broccoli, but I'll try Anything Once* will be the first time I attempt to translate a painting into a performative piece of work.

As I said, these paintings are intuitive, and don't necessarily need to exist only as painting. *I Don't Like Broccoli, but I'll try Anything Once* is the first painting I did, on the discarded ply from the builders next door. I will be making a performance based re-enactment of this painting for the show.

HC **Finally, could you give us an insight into how you are approaching the Absinthe project, and what you are working on for the exhibition?**

EP For Absinthe I am realising a project I have wanted to do for a long time: *JELLY FLIP 1*. I will be filling a pond liner with 360 litres of lime jelly and attempting to flip it out of its mould, using the manpower of the audience at the opening.

JELLY FLIP 1 has a direct link to absinthe's colloquial term 'Green Fairy.' This feminine portrayal of a highly potent liquor is interesting. 'The Green Fairy' is alluring and sexy but in reality, absinthe is a potent, powerful liquor. Jelly is a soft, approachable, feminine material. It's nostalgic and inviting, but when it's scaled up to nearly half a tonne, suddenly these adjectives don't apply anymore. It becomes heavy, masculine, dominant, powerful, problematic. It is still jelly, but when presented in industrial quantities, our relationship to the material shifts.

I have been coming to the Spit & Sawdust daily to fill the pond with jelly, allowing each layer to set before pouring the next. Chatting with pub locals has been really lovely and has enhanced the narrative of the piece. I really advocate work that is accessible to all, whether you have an art education or not, so to be in an environment with people from all walks of life discussing the piece and the process has been fantastic.



Interview

Jim Woodall

HC **As an interdisciplinary artist you work across a wide range of artistic mediums, including sculpture, photography, installation and video artworks. How do you approach the matching of concept and medium?**

JW I would say I am primarily a sculptor and do not necessarily consider the use of video separate from say, my use of concrete or an 'endurance' event. I am preoccupied with time – it's structure, manipulation, control, relation to power and forced entropy. To give an example, I consider the work *Adaptation Of A Memory Of My Fathers Studio Circa 1981* to be a sculpture, although it was constructed from performance, audience participation, video and conventional sculpture. It is both a portrait of my father and his favoured material, clay, as well as an examination of recollection, remembrance and transience; a stage set, documented by 7 video cameras, with the footage shown as live feedback and the pots produced during the performance shown in a grid; all of these elements are the components of the event, and it is this 'event' that I recognise as a medium.

I could also reference the work *If I Don't Have You* that was shown at Matt's Gallery. The gallery space, which was about to close and move to a new location, I understood to also be a kind of stage. The four concrete pillars, built to replicate the existing pillars of the space, were the performers and the anticipation of their imminent collapse became the medium; 'event' as a material again.

HC **As one of the founding members of the Cut-Up collective, the interventionist art group that ran between 2004 – 2009 and focused on reappropriated public billboards. Can you tell us a little about the aims and activities of that collective?**

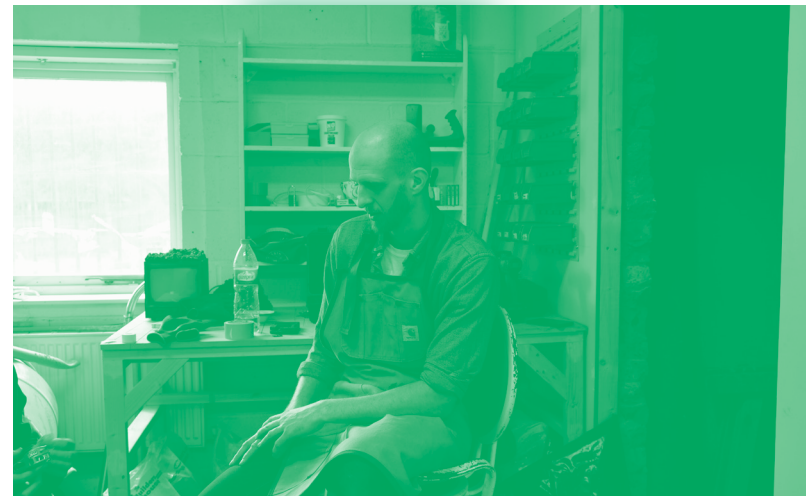


Image courtesy of Artist Run

JW The initial aims of the collective were somewhat naive and born out of ideas from multiple readings of Situationist texts. There was a genuine belief that we were continuing in the lineage of Debord and Lefebvre's detournement practice, spending nights tearing down billboards and breaking into bus shelter lightboxes, changing adverts to images of kids with ASBO's, disorientated ravers, rioters and freedom fighters, all whilst wearing high-vis jackets.

This was during a time of encroaching internet presence, pre-Instagram, pre-data manipulation, pre-smart phones. Google Image Search was a relatively new thing, and we'd spend hours searching for images, grouped by themes and verbs, for the billboard collages. As the group matured, we became more focused on the process of granulation and aggregation itself. Not just of data and images, but of material and action.

Different members of the collective worked in different ways – 16mm film works with additional images applied directly to the film, sound pieces using handbuilt analog modulators and synthesisers and performances involving cars, drum kits and stacks of washing machines. Some of the most exciting moments were putting on large exhibitions in public spaces without permission – like

the neighbourhood of Poblenou in Barcelona (2005) the basement of a multi-storey car park in Williamsburg, New York (2007) and multiple streets of Hackney Wick (2008).

I think the underlying themes of the collective still inform my practice today, and it was from this intense period of making that I still use a variety of media now.

HC **Many of your installations and sculpture incorporate the use of self-destructing concrete, the once solid and permanent material made weak and transient. What are the conceptual ideas underpinning these works?**

JW Concrete itself is not a medium, but a process, constantly changing, strengthening, deteriorating and breathing. It's also decisively political, being cheap, easy to source, environmentally destructive and socially divisive. It carries with it the utopian optimism of modernism, yet visibly shows its failures due to its structural demise, difficulty of removal and oppressive use in wall building and war defences.

It is a highly visual material. It scars the landscape with its mass, erodes and changes colour. It is able to dramatically demonstrate the act of collapse during earthquakes or bomb strikes. It represents both human endeavour and failure, and will tell the story of our existence after we have eradicated ourselves from the planet.

The forms I make with concrete are always architectural, mimicking pillars, walls and the blocking up of windows or doorways. The destructive element is essentially the speeding up of what is pre-determined – concrete will collapse. There is something captivating about watching a wall slowly creak, crack and collapse or a pillar split open and defy gravity as it leans over. Concrete carries much of its own conceptual ideas, so I use it as raw as possible and let the material and its destruction speak for itself. The event of the collapse is important to me – it is a part that's mostly out of my control, although I do try to direct it.

HC **Your no stranger to durational artistic performances, once even spending two weeks living in a recreated security hut under 24hr surveillance. What can endurance performances achieve that perhaps traditional, staged performances cannot?**

JW When I've made video works, I will camp in the location that I'm filming in, spending days under a flyover for instance or in a carpark in Beckton. It's an immersion that I feel is necessary to the work.

The security hut was designed to mimic a hunter's hide and was built in the lead up to the London Olympic Games. The aim was to question and subvert how people situate themselves in relation to social codes. A ring of CCTV cameras set up like sentinels around the hut, as well as fluorescent lights on the surrounding grounds, emulated the security operation of the Olympic site itself. Foregrounding the effect of the mega-event on the individual, the hut provided a 'stage' for me to explore isolation and alienation, where the waiting-game was played against mass mediation.

The endurance event is lived experience rather than performance; I think it's the space made available for mistakes, failures, accidents and imperfections that occur (though this also happens in a 'staged' performance) – the work is built and altered during its own lifespan.

HC **ABSINTHE §1 saw one of self-destructing concrete works installed within the Spit & Sawdust smoking area. How are you looking to evolve this series across the subsequent Absinthe iterations?**

JW The ABSINTHE work was at first a response to the space – it's a pub, so I felt it needed to incorporate pub language. I see the work as a statement on a placard rather than a sculpture per se, and the boarded up window location made sense, at the back of the pub with the smokers.

Stand Still And Rot was the first iteration,



Jim Woodall, *Matter Is Not Dense* (2019)



Jim Woodall, *Stand Still And Rot* (2019)

employing a simplicity, directness and punkish use of language. The second text, *Matter Is Not Dense*, is linked to a knowledge of structural languages and 'thinking' through materials, i.e. the proposition that to think with the hands is a different kind of intelligence.

I've occasionally used text in my work and it's always been hard to find the right note, to speak of material in a delineative or political manner, yet at the same time be relational to a feeling or emotion. I wrote a lot after my Father died, trying to write purely about my understanding of material whilst directly grappling with loss and pain. The often transitory nature of my work chimed with my understanding of his passing.

Not Now Coming Soon will be next text and correlates to the adverts in the area outside building sites, but also relates to our punctured and hastened experience of time. All of the text panels installed will eventually collapse and be destroyed.

Interview

Antoine Brutal

HC **I understand that after years working as a freelance tattoo artist you recently opened the underground tattoo parlour 'Pleasure' in East London? How did this project begin, and develop?**

AB Pleasure has been an amazing adventure that started from the original idea of Heartless Jasper, and it now involves Stone Le Tattoo, Charlotte Weston Dj Treesha and RCDW. What I was invited to be part of in the beginning, a safe space in which to practise, work and develop further our skills as tattoo artists, has become what it is today. We are all stoked that we have managed to connect with other tattoo artists from all over the world, from Korea to France and California to Sweden etc.

It's nice for each of us to have the potential to meet people who enjoy our artwork, and to get the opportunity to go and guest at different private shops around the world, to discover more of what people practise and develop in different locations.

HC **In the tattoo world you've gained notoriety for your special interest in medieval woodblock print imagery, how did you become interested in this niche area of art history? And what contemporary relevance does it have?**

AB I developed a huge interest in medieval artwork for its violence and historical subject matter, Kings being assassinated, people being decapitated, witchcraft and how witches were treated at the time.

After further research I began to be really intrigued with the famous "masters" of woodcuts, as well as painters of the 13th & 14th century who started to shape and model the way we creatively recreate and represent the body today. Close to realism but with a touch of infantile



mistake, I especially like when things have an aspect of error in them. Every century sees an evolution in art practice, but the representative style used by those ancient masters stoked my curiosity to another level!

HC **The contemporary tattoo culture appears to place more importance on tattoo artists than ever before, with commissioned tattoos almost becoming a thing of the past and original artwork becoming more and more popular. Do you agree with this trend? And if so, why do you think that is the case?**

AB The evolution of tattooing in the Western world has always involved a lot of imitation, of famous artworks by famous artists that have been repeated and repeated for decades. It's still popular today with younger generations and I'm sure that culture will remain strong around the world.

However, part of every new generation is



embracing things that the older generations would consider bad or “scratch” and I do see people getting more and more interested in the tattoo artists themselves. Artists creating original artwork with new shapes and new textures, there are lots of incredible styles growing from all over the world that all have something to give. In every country you can find stunning artwork that each retains aspect of their own past historical influences.

Artists who do their own, original work has a real

vision to it, they must know how to create straight on the body and that is what made artwork really powerful. There are millions of examples all around the worlds; my friend Sandropilat is doing astonishing work in Milan, mixing his own designs and bringing tattoo performances to another level alongside other great tattoo artists from Italy or England. I also really like Eastern European tattoos, they have amazing artists nowadays that bring new view and texture to their work, such as Syndromelzrs and many others from Euthanasia Sport in Kiev, Ukraine who do really dark work.

HC In that past decade the line between tattoo art and fine art has become even more blurred, with contemporary artist David Shrigley tattooing visitors to Frieze Art Fair in 2010, and famed tattoo artist Scott Campbell bring his Whole Glory project to the London fair’s 2016 iteration. What are your thoughts on the boundaries between tattoos and art?

AB Following on from the last answer, the evolution of tattoo art became more original and vibrant as the ideas comes more and more from the artists and not the client. Custom tattooing has been building for a while, these tattoo artists are artists because of their vision of art on the skin.

The link between fine art and tattooing has become blurred because people allowed tattoo artists to work as they should, creating their own artwork. Artists such as David Shrigley and Scott Campbell are good as both of them have a vision for what tattooing can be, and that it can have a better consideration within the art world. The future will bring more and more of those performances I’m sure. Tattooing is as old as cave paintings and it was surely meant to be back in the contemporary art world.

HC Prior to your work as a tattoo artist you graduated with a BA in Painting from Camberwell College of Art. Do you still maintain a painting practice? How did your background in painting influence your career as a tattoo artist?

AB I have always viewed painting and tattoo in a schizophrenic way. Studying painting influenced the first flash sheet I draw, but now my everyday tattooing seems to influence my painting, they are linked but both have different styles. I continue to paint and will show more artworks in the future, at the moment I am focusing on my practice and learning how to have the ability to work on a bigger scale work too. At the beginning of my art studies I also staged performances, and coming up with tattoo performances is again a return to what I was learning and studying back then.

HC **You'll be hosting an experimental tattoo workshop as part of Absinthe §2, could you give us an insight into what that performance will involve?**

AB For the performance I want to explore what 'The Green Hour' could be nowadays. 'The Green Hour' was popular in France during the early boom of absinthe, at 5pm everyone would go to the local bar for a glass of The Green Fairy.

I can't explain all the details involved in the performance, as I like to keep a few aspects secret. I will be inviting people to participate in my own 'Green Hour', an experience for both body and mind that will involve tattoos, or external marks as I am calling them for this performance. It will also be an interactive performance that would involve the participant to work alongside me whilst I tattoo. I'm looking forward to it and meeting the audience.

Interview

Marie Jacotey

HC **Your work contains a strong emphasis on both physical and visual representation, incorporating textiles or working directly on a textured material such as dust sheets and plaster. How do you approach the matching of images and materials?**

MJ It all feels empirical. I'm drawn to the very material aspect of making, in a simple almost abstract way, regardless of content, finding tension and balance between contrasting mediums, imagining some unexpected matches is one of the motors and great joy of my practice.

Alongside that playful physical research, I have various and obsessive themes that come in, in the form of texts and figurative depictions that participate in the global harmony and fundamentally hybrid nature of everything I make.

HC **Despite using a very analogue form of creation – pencil on paper – your drawings contain aspects of visual construction more in line with photography and cinematography. Are you influenced by those two disciplines?**

MJ Yes, definitely; mainly photography, which is everywhere nowadays. I have a huge database of pictures I collect – that I take myself but also find online or in magazines, catalogues, etc – to use as inspiration. I guess my way of composing images is an obvious testimony of the nature of my sources. I do love cinema but films are paradoxically less of a direct influence than literature, for instance.

HC **Your works depiction of often mundane, quotidian, yet intimate activities would suggest a similarity to the oversharing we see daily on social media. However, I understand your drawings are rarely, if at all, auto-**

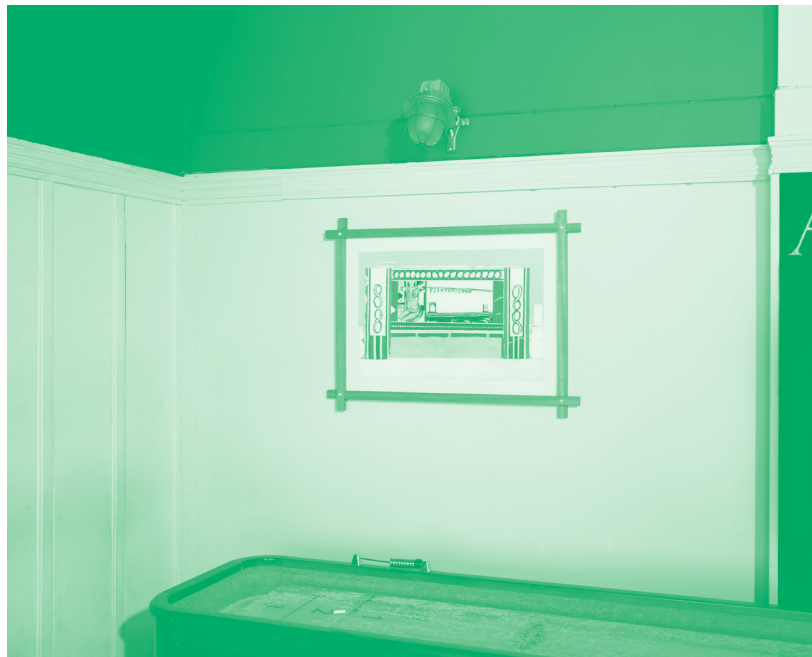


biographical? What is your relationship to social media and your opinion on the blurring of the public and the private?

MJ In a way, my drawings participate in the exact same strip tease and feed the very same hunger that exist within social media. If they aren't autobiographical per se, they still are highly personal and use an aspect of oversharing more than they wish to comment on it. The exponential use of social media and the blurry nature of public / private to me is just an indicator that people are starved for understanding themselves and each other.

The only distinction I would make between anybody sharing their everyday life on Instagram, for instance, and the work I intend, would lie in the translation that takes place in any artistic endeavor. I'm transforming experiences in order to process them. The intention at work is inherently different. Plus, the public display in a work of art of the intimate is an actually very old fashion and classical thing to do. The fact that the depiction of intimacy seems now to primarily reference social media rather than being considered as inherent to the nature of art doesn't bother me. And, accessing so openly people's (staged) intimacy is in a way an undeniable source of inspiration.

HC **Fashion appears ever present within your artistic output, be it within your drawings through your depictions of personal style and popular trends, or more obviously your 2016 collaboration with McQueen. Are you especially interested in, or influenced by, fashion and stylistic trends?**



Marie Jacotey, *Sarcophagus bed* (2018)

MJ Yes, absolutely! I think it goes hand in hand with my curiosity for materials and applied arts in general, architecture, design, etc.

HC **In 2013 you graduated with an MA in Printmaking from the Royal College of Art, London, having previously completed your DNSAD at École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. What was your experience of both UK and French arts education? What were the similarities, and how did they differ?**

MJ I had a very great time in both institutions, mainly through the meeting of like-minded groups of peers and super talented individuals. French and English educations felt wildly different. I felt much more positivity oozing in London, an encouragement to become an autonomous artist and the possibility to make a living from it, however tough that would certainly be.

The future felt more competitive and pessimistic whilst in France. This said, I was also younger and possibly less confident at the time. Such broad statements are tricky to enounce coming from a singular anyway. I'm just very grateful to have experienced two ways, been offered the opportunity to study and to keep discovering other ways to think and navigate contemporary art since I left school.

HC **Collaboration plays an important part in your artistic career, and you regularly work with both writers and poets to match the verbal and visual. How do you approach artistic collaboration? Does it allow yourself to view your work in a new perspective?**

MJ It definitely does allow me to look at my work from a different angle and pushes me to explore realms I wouldn't have had on my own. Which is both good and challenging at times. I approach those collaboration with great eagerness and as empirically as the making of my work. It participate of the same process to me, finding tension in unexpected matches.

HC **Having previously featured in the one night only Absinthe 2018 exhibition, what are you excited about for Absinthe 2019? Can you give us an insight into the work you're producing for it?**

MJ Absinthe 2019 felt like an amazing blossoming to the Absinthe 2018 bud. I'm super excited to be included in that ambitious display and was so grateful to get to show one of my latest drawings, framed by Soft Baroque, 'The Sarcophagus Bed' a dry pastel fantasy on Japanese paper.



ABSINTHE §2

18 May – 10 August

Curated by Charlie Mills, Billy Fraser & James Capper
Published by Kronos Publishing
Edition of 100

Edited by Charlie Mills
Graphic design by Stephen Dalley
Interviews & Essay by Hector Campbell
Poetry by Ben Reader
Photography by Billy Fraser

Copyright ABSINTHE and Kronos x Elam Publishing 2019
Text copyright the authors 2019
Images courtesy of ABSINTHE

ABSINTHE
Spit & Sawdust
21 Bartholomew Street
London SE1 4AL

@collectivending
www.collectivending.com

