Annex
David Dale Gallery

A publication of the 2017 programme at David Dale Gallery, Glasgow

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Photographer Max Slaven

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2017 programme supported by Creative Scotland, Hope Scott Trust, Stalled Spaces, Clyde Gateway, Culture Program Sofia, OCA, Henry Moore Foundation

Published by David Dale Gallery, Glasgow

Distributed by
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ISBN 978-0-9927569-1-8

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Introduction
Max Slaven

In 2016 David Dale Gallery devised a shift in its programming strategy, setting out three themes to develop over three years over the three available spaces to the organisation, concluding on the organisation’s ten-year anniversary. The premise of this strategy was to use locations within the organisation’s complex as metonyms for a linking theme or provocation for a programme of solo exhibitions.

The intention of creating a title and set of conditions for a programme of autonomous exhibitions was two-fold. On one hand the exercise was intended to be a provocation to the artists exhibiting, an opportunity to develop two sides of one exhibition – sometimes complimentary, sometimes in opposition. The other was a step towards transparency for the audience. Programmes are seldom put together with little consideration of the exhibitions preceding and superseding, however, the accessibility of these connections, or the visibility of this frame, is not always explicit. In collecting a programme under a particular title, I wanted to draw attention to the threads that connect exhibitions, that an exhibition can simultaneously be a singular entity and part of a unit – and that there were paths available to an audience to further explore this. An embellishment of this, which can be found in this publication, is the texts commissioned to sit in between exhibitions, considering this conceptual and physical connecting space, and opening a dialogue between exhibitions.

On a subjective level, this framework has developed from finding difficulty in articulating what my position is within a programme, from looking to mitigate an authorial position within exhibitions. I devise a programme, and I assist with artists’ exhibitions.

2017, the first year in this sequence and the one documented within this publication, was titled Annex. And at the start of the year this text was released to describe it, its tone possibly reflecting the organisation’s commitment to a new turn, contrasting with this current reflection:

The title is Annex. The conditions are that there are only solo exhibitions, and that every exhibition (onsite) uses the gallery and external warehouse space (woodwork).
Annexation is a sustained interaction. Its form is expansive, its content fluid. History inflects the whole, the parts pre-date their union.
Expansion expands when identity is imposed, and there the snag lies in wait. As growth subsumes outlying regions, interaction is unavoidable.
That which is annexed is inferior, at least that’s how things start. Taking the form of six solo exhibitions, Annex will be driven by the requirement that each artist present new work in two locations: the gallery’s onsite exhibition space and its external warehouse. The utilisation of both sites, and their interaction, is the project’s fundamental principle. By imposing architectural division on each exhibiting artist, Annex aims to provoke responses in practice. The terms of expansion pursued by Annex are two-fold. Conceptually, the project seeks the growth of artistic practice into new areas of investigation. Physically, it presents an increase in available exhibition space. The resulting interactions – between artist and artwork, between elements of artistic practice, between artist and institution, between institutional spaces, and between one artist and another – shifting from one exhibition to the next, and unfolding across the entirety of the programme, form the core of Annex. Annex is a process framed by the navigation of the conversations it produces. The expansion required by this project, the shifting identities of centre and periphery, entails a break with the continuous present of the unchanging. An annex is a site of development. Annexation is the beginning of a new group of relations.

The exhibitions which developed over the course of this programme were marked by a duality, the work in the warehouse always a singular counterpoint to that in the gallery. There was a coherency in how all the involved artists responded to annex, the installations in the warehouse all situated in a twilight, set in opposition to the light of the gallery space. The installations traded in a drama of the reveal – suspense built by crossing the courtyard, often through a throng of cigarette smoke and burning CLS. The success of the programme, I believe, was in giving space to the often conflicting and jarring elements of artist’s practice, pulling together varying factors to diffuse the idea of autonomy or isolationism within display. This exercise in collating and reflecting on a year’s activity hopefully offers a little more space to engage with the topics brought up, and consolidates the programme towards some sort of whole. A glance backwards is not a gesture we’re often afforded as an organisation, but I believe that this pause for consideration can allow thought to settle and be carried forward. Another will follow next year.

The original Annex text was written in conjunction with Simon Medley, a writer based in Glasgow.
A compound is a substance made up of more than one entity; a mixture with a shared purpose.

It is also a place that I grew up in.

I didn’t have a street, a village or a town. There would have been a district, but I never asked its name and no one thought to tell me.

As a child I lived on a compound in the desert; a square territory situated in sand surrounded by a white wall ten foot high. The entrance (or mouth) was a large mechanised gate that let out an aggressive clunk each time one of the two brown men - who’s job it was to guard - pressed the release button. Behind the wall and the gate were forty villas.

Inside the compound everything functioned uniformly. A smooth concrete road mapped out a single grid that separated an inner and outer circuit of semi-detached homes. The plan was designed around geometric shapes, right angles and rows that were aesthetically pleasing. No space was without purpose. Greenery of trees, shrubs and sub-shrubs were allocated, planted at regular distances in identical configurations. The symmetry of this vegetation, in a landscape with no rivers, added to the orchestrated farce that was living in this place.

The villas were bite size chunks of sameness from foundation to finish. Residents choose their own toppings. Siamese twins joined in the middle, the villas had flat roofs and beige stucco walls the texture of which I would pick at until my bitten fingernails bled. All the external wood was varnished a dark mahogany, the heat making its lacquer peel. I picked at this too, pulling away large flakes to expose the wood’s untreated surface. The palette of the compound was neutral, the finish was new, unused, unwethered. The past happened to other places. Unforgiving materials reassured us of this: marble stairs and tiled balconies; surfaces hostile to young wet feet. My knees are still a cross hatch of fine silver scars.

In the compound we lived a mirrored wonderland of synthetic minimalism. Authentic space was an alien concept, the differences between residents were leveled by the architectural harmony of our community. We did not own the things in our homes, little had sentimental value. The company provided everyone with the same, from the breeze blocks in the walls to the furniture in our rooms. I was brained by my Dad for scratching my name with a drawing pin into the bedside lampshade; these things weren’t ours to claim and where you lived wasn’t who you were.

The hot air outside was full of dust but the house we lived in was always clean. My mum, who was a nurse, had her own preoccupation with death. Dust irritated her allergies so she worked hard to make sure our house didn’t have any. Mum was also preoccupied with the cigarettes smoked by Tony and Teresa (our homebrew drinking fun time neighbors) which she swore we passively inhaled through the inches of concrete that was our common wall.

It hailed once and the sky produced frozen stones as big as gobstoppers. They shot down fast filling the shallow gutters quickly, driving piles up our front steps, pushing at the edges of our door. One summer there was a swarm
of locust. My sister and I crunched them dead, green guts spilling, as we walked to the school bus. Mangled bodies covered the ground in excess. The sky lost focus vibrating grey, they hit against our cheeks and our ears filled with their piercing song. In the playground that day as the temperature rose to thirty and with inches of dead locust under our feet, we said a prayer for a class of children in Dunblane.

My fear of bedtime had started before I lived on the compound but it escalated after we moved there. The wall made my borders more palpable, what was inside and what was out, what belonged and what did not. I never wanted to be awake when my parents ‘shut the house down’ and I often got out of bed to sleep in my sister’s room. The night time was too quiet and too still; alone in the dark I would imagine all the different ways it was possible to die. Mostly I feared what I couldn’t see but thought must be there: a stranger in the night.

My young fears grew from stories of ambiguous men: the Incredible Hulk, Frankenstein and Edward Scissorhands. These were not straightforward killers but tormented souls stricken by bodily difference. I couldn’t forget the sight of Banner’s shirt shredding across his green mutating muscles, or the slicing digits of Edward’s hunched figure waiting alone.

It wasn’t just the terrors you could wake up to - the stranger in your room or the monster outside your window – I was anxious about the atmosphere. In bed your body was prone; vulnerable to asphyxiation by carbon monoxide or smoke from a fire.

How well I slept would depend upon whether I had completed the routine correctly.

Had I tapped my hands 100 times under the running bathroom tap? Had my parents said ‘goodnight, god bless, see you tomorrow’ in the right order? A fearless sleep would depend upon whether I had checked the smoke alarm was working or the front door was locked or what I had read that day. Even now, I sleep with scissors under my pillow (in previous years a hammer) and the front door keys by my bed.

No one cares about where you are from.

What I am trying to say is that order was everywhere and still I imagined chaos. What I am trying to say is that the wall was no use; it didn’t stop the hail or the locust and it didn’t stop my fear of the stranger in the night.

What I am trying to do is read the connections between how we live and what we feel. What will you forget? When people ask what it was like to live on a compound, the first thing I say is that it wasn’t real. Then I quote Zygmunt Bauman: ‘order and chaos are modern twins’.
The Poacher
Francis McKee

This is a question of between. It’s about the boundaries that separate one idea from another, the distance traversed from one thing to the next. It’s also about the time spent in those interstices between objects, spaces, and exhibitions.

There is a deeply rooted series of protocols linked to the viewing of contemporary art. You really can’t touch unless there is a clear invitation to do so. You remain focused on the works on display, and they are presented in an environment designed to eliminate any potential distractions for the eye or mind. Like a library, silence is the default state. You are aware of your surroundings as you approach a gallery: you may be walking towards a modern architectural statement, or a historically interesting conversion (factory, townhouse, warehouse...). But protocol demands, in a royal sense, that you avert your eyes, close your mind to these diversions. The surroundings only signal the importance of the objects or events in the white space within.

In Brian O’Doherty’s pioneering exploration of the ‘white cube’ he points to this ‘limbo’ we generate around us in our experience of a gallery:

The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light... The art is free, as the saying used to go, ‘to take on its own life.’

In searching for the significance of this mode of exhibition one must look to other classes of chambers that have been constructed on similar principles. The roots of this chamber of eternal display are to be found not in the history of art as much as the history of religion, where they are in fact even more ancient than the medieval church. Egyptian tomb chambers, for example, provide an astonishingly close parallel. They too were designed to eliminate awareness of the outside world. They too held paintings and sculptures that were regarded as magically contiguous with eternity and thus able to provide access to it or contact with it.

O’Doherty was writing in 1976 and his remarks echo that of American artists in the same period. Robert Smithson, pioneer of non-sites, displacements and...
earthworks clearly documented his discontent with regard to the gallery:

Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is. Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells - in other words, neutral rooms called “galleries.” A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. A vacant white room with lights is still a submission to the neutral. Works of art seen in such spaces seem to be going through a kind of esthetic convalescence. They are looked upon as so many inanimate invalids, waiting for critics to pronounce them curable or incurable. The function of the warden-curator is to separate art from the rest of society. Next comes integration. Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement.

Smithson’s view of the neutralisation performed in a white cube is really anything but neutral. That whiteness, in all its manifold dimensions, is a political space, designed to counter dissent and ready the work for a consumer society. Equally, O’Doherty’s observation that the white cube will ‘eliminate awareness of the outside world’ and point us towards ‘eternity’ acknowledges a political strategy that separates art works from the specifics of everyday, political, life.

There have, of course, been many efforts to escape the white cube since the 1970s – alternative spaces, the adaptation of industrial buildings, and socially engaged or participatory practices embedded in communities to mention just a few. But the white cube persists and the codes around it have only grown in the intervening years.

Behind the cube lies a wider ideology of the city and the way power shapes social space. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau highlights the strategies of power in the well-known chapter ‘Walking in the City’. There he describes the vertiginous view from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center where the surrounding skyscrapers ‘compose a gigantic rhetoric of excess in both expenditure and production’. Plunging us back to the street, he explains how ordinary citizens evade the strategic nets of urban planning, employing local tactics that assert personal individuality and resistance to the consumer
landscape built around us. Pedestrians deny the sovereignty of planners and even in their means of walking signal their defiance. For de Certeau, walking ‘selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. From this point of view, every walk constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot. It practices the ellipsis of conjunctive loci.’ As activist pedestrians, we re-inscribe the space around us, editing and rearranging its priorities as we see fit. The desire lines of rogue walkers in parks are a classic example of this, ignoring official pathways for more convenient shortcuts worn into the landscape through repeated transgressions. Faced with the control and repression of planners and governments, de Certeau argues that we turn into a population of poachers, gaming the system where we can.

Within the white cube it is no different. Curatorial strategies are set out, object ranged according to taste, feng shui, anticipation of the audiences sightlines, colour contrast, theoretical beliefs, insurance values and thematic concerns. Visitors to the gallery confound these strategies as a matter of principle: maps and labels may attempt to corral their interpretative journey but tactics defeat these props of curatorial ego. Skipping links, omitting whole parts, generating ellipsis where there had been coherence visitors trail the outer world behind them as they circulate. Their deviance falls between conversation with others, sometimes with themselves, the leakage of the virtual through mobiles, selfies and google searches and calls taken. The ambulatory path across an exhibition varies enormously, resisting whole videos, only momentarily glancing at an image and partially apprehending an object. The moments of focus and concentration are sporadic and unplanned as the art works intersect with their inner lives and the traces of life outside that they have encountered on their way to the gallery. Curatorial strategies and theoretical discourse confront the raw mess of reality.

Things are no different in David Dale Gallery in Broad Street, Glasgow. A converted industrial building, it lies in a small industrial estate between Bridgeton and Dennistoun, two key locations in the history of the industrial revolution. The Gallery is now composed of two spaces – one, a white cube that still betrays its original function as industrial space and the second, an annex accessed across a yard that retains its old red brick interior. In the first two exhibitions of the 2017 in David Dale, this sense of control and evasion seems to permeate the artists’ work. Slow Dance by Rob Chavasse presents us with a series of radiators placed across the white cube gallery. The still tableau of the white radiators in a white room is, though, disrupted by the
sudden snaking movement of the radiators’ power cables as they shoot up and
down the floor, guided by invisible logarithms. The spectacle of this slow dance
is hypnotic and alienating. It’s difficult not to feel that this activity will continue
without our presence and that we are voyeuristically dropping in on a private
process. The room and its machinic inhabitants do not need us. This is the
white cube in excelsis, self-sufficient in its perpetual motion. Walking across
the old yard and into the annex we find a film - *A study of dust lennies and their
natural environment*, 2017 – documenting dust strands twisting in air currents
in the overlooked edges of buildings – attics, vents, wall gaps, duct channels
or ceiling plenum space. There is a text by Naomi Pearce that accompanies
the exhibition (*Nostalgia really works for me*) and it describes a childhood in
a compound where the buildings are laid out systematically according to a
soulless forbidding geometry. The child veers between order and chaos: the
writer tries ‘to read the connections between how we live and what we feel’.
It could be the inner voice of one of de Certeau’s citizens, reacting to the grid
like order of the planners. The micro-sensitivities of the child echo our own
responses to the exhibition: we sense the breeze crossing the yard between
spaces, the door opening and shutting in the annex while we watch the video
alters the light on the film, we struggle to find a true perspective to watch the
kinetic radiator display.

The derelict architectural corners of Chavasse’s film and the sculptural
radiators take us to the edges and nooks of buildings, the margins of the
structure. This is space that parallels territories across cities that are residual,
abandoned, borderline - gap sites or the derelict edges of more composed
environments. The writer Patrick Barron describes these ‘terrains vagues’ as
ruins and other forms of leftover space can be useful reminders of the
“depredations wrought by a destructive capitalism,” whose allegorical
presence “can cause us to question the normative ways of organizing the
city and urban life” … On a more subtle level, he adds, “hidden within
ruins are forgotten forms of collectivity and solidarity, lost skills, ways of
behaving and feeling, traces of arcane language, and neglected historical
and contemporary forms of social enterprise”

Chavasse’s works certainly evoke these spaces and the systems at play in *Slow
Dance* raise questions about our place in a more planned world that seems
to work with or without our presence. His radiators and moving cables also
awaken our instinct for animism, our desire to see these works as thinking
beings – another ‘trace of arcane language’ in the human viewer.
And if there are gaps and intuitive leaps to be made between the gallery and annex then are similar terrains to be traversed between exhibitions within a year long programme. In any absorption of an art work there is always the overlooked questions around its wider impact. Does an artwork only make an impact when we stand in front of it? Or does the impact only become apparent later, as we walk down the street away from the gallery or even days or years later? Isn’t that the point of collecting – an implied acknowledgement of the need for repeated viewings, the need to live with a work for decades perhaps? Does a painting, for instance, give up everything in the first two minutes of viewing or does it need repeated consideration, during which it may also begin to function in different ways as we change with age? And in a gallery programme what is the cumulative effect of one exhibition followed by another?

Within David Dale’s Annex programme, Rob Chavasse’s *Slow Dance* is followed by Lauren Hall’s *Private Secretaries* and the implications of a sustained programme suggest that the new exhibition also provides a new perspective on the previous show. Hall’s exhibition presents two key works – one a series of abstractions from Rorschach blots, the other an X-shaped pool in which a sub speaker generates constant rippling movement in response to low-level sounds. The abstractions – a series of ribbons programmed to move in diagonals – and the pool pulse echo the automation in Chavasse’s exhibition. Like *Slow Dance*, it is difficult to locate a perspective in Hall’s works here and equally difficult to locate a role as viewer. If the ribbons are seen as abstractions of the antiquated figure of a private secretary, then we too are abstracted, moving voyeuristically among a series of pieces that work away without acknowledging us. The pool too has a quality of abandonment – either it has been used for relaxation and pleasure or it awaits its guests. We, as viewers, are not those guests and are rendered invisible in this fantasy world.

We do though perceive elements that go unnoticed. The smoke machine that creates the ‘glamour’ of Hall’s pool sits against a wall. We can examine it and stand outside its framing to watch it do its work. As in Chavasse’s exhibition we become aware of the raw nature of the brick annex that takes on a different complexion in Hall’s installation – possibly a post-industrial nightclub. The annex door again alters the piece when it is opened and closed by other visitors. The white gallery floods with light and creates a complex and beautiful pattern of moving shadows across the space while the ribbons shuttle back and forth. We are tempted too by the street outside and the everyday life of a small semi-industrial street, taking it in while also contemplating Hall’s work.

*Lauren Hall*  
*Private Secretaries*
The walk between the gallery and the annex also give us pause for thought, processing what we’ve seen in the gallery and not knowing what to expect in the annex. There is a fine essay accompanying the show too so perhaps we begin to read it on the way (both exhibitions raise the question – when should you read the text and how does that text impact on the viewing or memory of the works?).

The text for *Private Secretaries*, by Kimberley O’Neill, introduces a series of other references – a trip by Hall as teenage to a pilgrimage site for the Virgin Mary, a murder mystery novel, the Myers Briggs Type indicator tests, Nancy Holt, Karen Baroness Elsa Von Frytag-Loringhoven, and Karen Barad on boundary conditions. The reference to Barad in particular has a significance that could be extended from Hall’s exhibition to the wider relationship of the gallery’s year-long programme and, more broadly again, to the environments in which we encounter or reflect on art. Her concept of the entanglement of matter and meaning and the ways in which we consider perception: ‘Objectivity, instead of being about offering an undistorted mirror image of the world, is about accountability to marks on bodies, and responsibility to the entanglements of which we are a part … and by being attentive to what gets excluded as well as what comes to matter.’

Barad’s statement could be applied to how we approach a gallery – literally as well as metaphorically – and how we consider the impact of the works amid the daily entanglements that surround them. Exercising a responsibility to that wider environment, being attentive to the realities that the white cube attempts to erase, from a weed in the yard to the shifting daylight in a gallery space, will give us a more honest understanding of the works we are viewing and a better understanding of the work we are undertaking by looking at them in the first place. Like Michel de Certeau’s devious pedestrians traversing the systemized space of a city, we will be more alert to poaching what we need from the overlooked combinations of materials and landscapes intrude on our memories of those art works when we are on the train home after a visit to the gallery. Perhaps the white cube has only survived so long because we refuse to submit to those notions of power and eternity that disturbed Brian O’Doherty.
The photograph on the invite for the show was taken on a family trip to Clearwater, Florida when Lauren Hall was a teenager. Enticed by a radio announcement about a local curiosity; the appearance of a rainbow-hued silhouette in the shape of the Virgin Mary on a local office building, Hall’s family made a nonreligious pilgrimage. The Catholic Ministry Organisation went on to buy the site and turned it into an officially holy location. Eventually the apparition was decapitated when vandals threw a rock at it, smashing the glass and leaving the female figure without a head. Some skeptics speculated that ‘The Virgin Mary of Clearwater’ could have been caused by a recurrent over-shooting of the building’s sprinkler system and reflections of the sun, but there was no material proof to corroborate these theories. And anyway, this kind of explanation is of little value to anyone viewing the image. Aware of the phenomena of apparitions, everything is coloured by the belief of a few, casting a hard to define outline as the shape of a miracle. The mystery surrounding its genesis leaves us with a slippery female outline with an iconic charge, attracting both adoration and violence.

When writing a character study, you must first define the type of character you are dealing with and fix their key attributes in language. Are they a protagonist, an antagonist, a static character with no agency or a dynamic individual with a quick temper? Perhaps they are an anti-social extravert, or a minor character playing a supporting role. In the process of casting a person as a recognizable type, you are reducing a personality down to a finite set of traits. You pare back complexity to enable the character and their actions to be clearly identified within the context of the story, thus creating a familiar outline that can be easily articulated to a mass audience. We can find examples of rigid types and over simplified figures populating literary genres like crime fiction.

Lauren Hall told me about Murder Yet to Come, a murder mystery novel by Isabel Briggs Myers, who was one of the co-creators of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator test. The purpose of the MBTI questionnaire is to help the user define their key personality type (made up of 4 categories, based on Carl Jung’s theories of Psychological Types), thus enabling them to better understand themselves in relation to others. The temptation to calcify the moving parts of a personality into fixed types is understandable, but how do you define a constantly changing bundle of flesh, chemicals, perceptions and experiences? The mother-daughter team who created MBTI had no experience of psychometric testing but instead adopted statistical methods used by their contacts in the banking industry as a means of crunching psychological data. MBTI has stayed true to its economic roots and is still used by some business management strategies as a way of ensuring an efficient balance of personalities within a team.

Murder mystery novels also use an efficient formula to balance strictly defined roles within an unfolding narrative, presenting characters, objects and locations to the reader as they are simultaneously revealed to the novel’s central protagonist – the sleuth. This narrative device allows the reader to follow the trail of clues in real time, giving them the opportunity to solve the crime and identify themselves as the hero. As a result, even the most gruesome examples from this literary genre are comforting to their
readership due to their familiar structure. But what is so comforting about fixed types? The slippage from logical deduction into reductivist psychology is a terrifying prospect, yet identifying and maintaining personality types might be crucial to our ability to negotiate one another in our social relationships.

Encountering an exhibition – a set of relationships between objects – may prove to be a mystery of sorts, and looking for clues could be one way to attempt an understanding of what confronts you in the gallery. Moving through the space, every material, date and dimension becomes a point from which to deduce meaning or to affirm categorization of the work. This hermeneutic approach reminds me of Nancy Holt’s 1966 piece Crossword Work, which was produced in response to Eva Hesse’s ‘Metronomic Irregularity’ from the exhibition Eccentric Abstractions. It consists of a two-grid crossword puzzle hand drawn on graph paper, within which the artist has given herself clues to solve her own puzzle. Holt commented that she didn’t classify ‘Crossword Work’ as an artwork, but more a piece of criticism that offered an ‘edge against a Lewittian way of being in the world’. The answers in the crossword, tease out art historical relationships to modernism and concrete poetry, but show the beginnings of Holt’s interest in abstraction. In the process of abstraction in art, the reduction of information and the stripping away of visual references to the world can make meaning slippery, but that uncertainty has potency. Could we view the loss of information in the process of casting types, as a condensing of than a repressing? Familiar characters and universal forms gain their attractiveness through their legibility, without losing vitality.

In some of Hall’s previous work she has appropriated and re-imagined the visible signs and abstract geometries that lie behind the mechanics of social relations. In her 2014 exhibition ‘Girls Names’, Hall recapitulated a series of monochromatic shapes that are used in early infant development tools. These simple black and white forms are found in flash cards, toys and mobiles, which are said to visually stimulate babies and encourage faster brain development. Such universal forms become carriers for parent’s aspirations for their children and an early socializing of perception. In Early Communication, Strong Bonds & Secure Attachment, Hall suspended these simple shapes from a clothes-drying pulley, placing bold signifiers of the parent-child relationship into an incongruous domestic location (where underwear is normally left to dry). Whilst Hall’s previous works also addressed the legibility of the shared signifiers that socialize us, in this exhibition those forms of categorisation are held in a tensile grip. Disturbed wool shaped into forms of Roscharch ink blots are clasped onto gold air vents edged with hair grips. Their agitated texture and random outlines resemble growths of yeast or moss. Fungal infections in the body (strains such as Candida Albicans, Candida Glabrata, Candida Krusei) can flourish in a stressed individual, whose adrenal reactions suppress the immune system and feed the fungi through blood sugar spikes. The personality types that are identified through psychological tests, such as the Roscharch inkblot or the MBTI, could also be recursive phenomena – infections that return to their host in times of extreme stress. These chronic fungal caricatures have the potential to suffocate and terminally block the development of an individual’s system, but they may also be something familiar to hold onto.
Hall’s materials and assemblages sit somewhere between supports and supported, container and contained. Although not all their parts are moving, everything feels like it is in flux or caught on loop. The blurring of those boundary conditions and the collapsing of hierarchies between form and subject, meaning and material, creates a perpetual unresolved tension. This produces more than just an intellectual reading but an opportunity for a physical somatic experience. The philosopher Karen Barad’s concept of Agential Realism seems relevant here. Although Barad acknowledges the importance of boundaries for creating meaning in the world (the necessity of shared names and categories), Agential Realism proposes that in order to understand reality we have to see that all things are entangled in complex relations. In Barad’s concept, things only come into being and are able to act through intra-actions with other things. To approach Hall’s exhibition in Baradian terms then, reveals messy connections between objects that disrupt clear-cut cases of cause-and-effect.

Fountain is a case in point: x marks the spot, watery self-care with a dangerous bottom, a neck support suggestive of the guillotine offers a precarious place to lay a female head. The title inevitably recalls DADA’s poster boy artwork Fountain by Marcel Duchamp, a work that is itself haunted by an elusive slippery female presence. The Baroness Elsa Von Frytag-Loringhoven was a performance artist, sculptor and poet working in the early 20th century New York art scene. Written off as a minor character in most historical accounts of the time, Von Frytag has recently been recognized as a key figure in the Dada movement. It has also been proposed that the Baroness may have been the real author of Duchamp’s Fountain. The case is made as such; Von Frytag was respected amongst her peers and became close friends with Duchamp, often writing to him and sending him pieces of her work. These works included assemblages of everyday objects, some involving plumbing. Many descriptions of Fountain refer to the vaginal form that is revealed in the upturned urinal, and under forensic analysis the Fountain did not possess attributes typical to Duchamp’s preceding works. This version of events is also corroborated by a letter written by Duchamp to his sister, which suggests that Fountain was sent to him by a female friend who used the pseudonym Richard Mutt.

Written accounts of Von Frytag cast her in mythic stereotypes; the lost genius artist or the archetypal mad woman. She made wearable sculpture such as tomato can bras, spoons earrings and used postage stamps as blusher. These acts could be post-rationalised today as a condemnation of capitalism’s commodification of femininity, or read – as they were likely viewed in the Baroness’ own time – as the bizarre acts of a mad woman. But the stereotypes don’t fit, her prolific output and ability for spontaneous movement contradict these definitions. Von Frytag’s poetry collection Body Sweats and her visceral performance works were immediate, they shortcut the social conventions of language, form and etiquette. Von Frytag was arrested on multiple occasions for public exposure during poetry performances on the street, as well as for instances of petty theft. Descriptions of her given by her male peers in the Dada movement are caught somewhere between admiration and disgust, detailing her abject physicality and dominant sexual presence. Her irrepressibility makes her hard to pin down. She is hard for history to digest, a slippery women trying to orientate herself amongst agitated social materials.
These days in middling drift. Science awash with irrepressible fantasy. I was both the first and third person. Futures crossing between platforms, swarming junctions, technologies are natural forces.

The fountain of youth is a concept for later, we’ll get to that. For now the hope exists, chrysalis in the innocence of 21, sweet clippings of arms swung at parties, to swimming pools drunk and bed past dawn. Lives lived and years frittered. Disappearance our forever headline. Steps slippery, all those ringing announcements for the older ages. Bodies crash and rot - there and gone. To silicates, to sands, to dusts. Past lives. The dessert left is the ageless swirling of new beginnings, fractions to stack, old lives to relive, new bodies to run with.

It was years ago when the draw of youth and the fading of mine found an intersection. For a while I had a yearly meeting with a beautiful and precocious 22yr old. From Vienna or Rome, I never wanted to be certain. Our setting was consistent; old, history rich, European city, summer, dusk. Once a year, inevitably. I imagine her hijacking a plane at 40,000ft, wrenching out the escape hatch, greedy hands feeding my case’s contents into the follies of a bruising, Atlantic storm, and when all seems lost, passports and bikinis swirling across headrests she leans in close, grinning, and passes me a parachute. Soft as rain in the storm’s eye, bumping thermals down. All to float in that perfect pond a little while.

Late May, Athens, rain off and on, 27C and the university students are getting into the spirit of the season, gassed tears of summer break joy, wet faces and leather jackets alike.

All we ever see of the stars are old photos. Dimmed lights. Bottles blow off the platform and settle in the coal-like gravel. There in purgatory, destined to fade and forget. Gaps to bridge and blanks to fill in. Space is never empty. Burn bright, forget and smoulder.

Stealing beauty, I can’t, I can, I don’t. The old man crested up to our party on the perch. His shuffle I thought I knew. There was something in the arch of the
back, the crooked little fingers, I knew him I knew. But the grey morning and last night’s buzz muddied everything. It was more one of those moments in the city, a long glimpse down to an intersection and we think we know someone. There’s the uncanny feeling of familiarity. I’ve always thought I recognised people, I knew a long time ago that my mind remembered the details. Make up is a distortion. Clothes are owned by the body. We have little and much to hide, but somehow its always there, seeping through the seams, flesh puppeteering cloth, identity is always more or less.

The bar had wound down before daybreak, somewhere along those summer streets we’d hatched a plan. Our moment for sunrise and the Acropolis, a theatre and then some, the stadia of greater humans. The path had been steep a while, the girl drifting out of sight be-tween houses, up snaking stairwells and so it came that we rested beneath a fence in the pit of Parthenon. It was here that he found us, slowly into sight a 50, 60 something man. Grey, dishevelled, running shoes from last year looking decades old. The type you recognise instantly but can’t place at all. The lunatic on the street corner, too much life throbbed through those eyeballs. It was a routine not unlike that of a bird’s; slow shuffling peck at the trash, the carrier bag had been dragged and crinkled through it a thousand times before, the once day glow orange, turned fleshy, veined, pink. He wound through our natter, collecting the cigarette stubs and on back down from where we’d come. Time passed, the sun rose, mottled clouds. Those first rays have taken 8minutes and 20seconds to reach us, they’ll hit Mars 10minutes old.

When he summited again I felt some bereft pang, that stomach turn at the end of the night, the clear shiver of a day unwanted. As he trod the steps I’d walk half an hour before, con-cept of tense forgotten. He was at my side and moving me a little, and hand cupped he brushed the ashes of a little fire from the edge of my seat. We pause there on cold. Some time goes by. He muttered, and the voice, I could swear was the very tone I hear when I write this now. And in the shadow of ruins, arm by arm, two steps below me, and two steps above, we sat, fumbled a pocket, procured a cigarette and looked out over the islands.
Stefania Batoeva & Goran Chanter
Curated by Swimming Pool, Sofia

It Is Forever Ours
You might have been here before. The pontoon, rising over a smooth sea, reflections of glaring sun, magnum surface, bliss. Did we ever believe in an aligned past, present and future to entirely saturate our presence? Now, it seems like we are totally fine with having it all ending.

*It Is Forever Ours*, an exhibition by Stefania Batoeva and Goran Chanter, is an absolute claim on the essences of temporality, control and abuse, knowledge and love. Stretched in all-out elation and all-out capitulation. Only in fantasy may we be able to bear our presence, so there it is – the human incapability to make sense of a cruel, damaged reality. Can we liberate the world and ourselves within it?

At the warehouse in the back of the gallery – it is all broken. After the water has drawn away, the pontoon is a wreck now. Milky white industrial containers block the sight – more trash; dirty, toxic, oddly glowing. The debris drags traces of a time long gone, sediment of oblivion. Smashed to the ground, a self-portrait of a hero. A dream-play astronaut. A fallen warrior. A polished idol of a time that was a great victory for all. His smoking face is the perfection of a history already decided. Another tender presence. You say: After the apocalypse, what else can one do but to admit to a cyclical nature of humanity and time. Though, it is a flat circle that spins back on itself again and again. I know, you want the romance, violence, love and generosity all to be heightened.

There is that perfect epic here, and it cuts through as the principle of conceptual elevation. The constructed wooden platform, leading towards the glow of the containers, works as a route to absolution; now rendered impassable. Two paintings hanging from above on both sides of the pontoon and facing each other suspend the surroundings in high-rise and dissolve the space to infinity. When the eyes get used to the dark one discovers the shapes of a kissing couple, a radiant heart is laid on her lap, as the nuclear light of the morning hours. In the painting opposite an ash bird is rising over another, higher horizon; in the low – a convoluted figure, an emo, the artist herself. These are now emotions saved in a time capsule, hibernating selves.

The second space is white and brightly lit; the atmosphere is concentrated and tense. Four black polythene portals are lined up on one side. Here, channeled communication replaces the self-identification at the pontoon. Chanter’s billboards are in bright, vivid colours – sharply composed streams of information. They represent wicked relations, driven by conspiracies, where facts are totally diluted, obscured, lending towards the void. It is all in: The newly built Chinese radio satellite to track aliens, the Doomsday Clock graph, Nuclear football, luxury items, upbeat symbols and logos, the infamous bloody gloves of O.J. Simpson that didn’t fit, running codes of destructions, Madonnas in blue sleeping bags hibernating in a stasis, weather maps, above all an evading Air Force One. The paranoia of terrorism is coolly visualized within an infectious spread of imagery. A genuinely corrupted system where everything interacts, and all burns.

Batoeva’s painting again becomes a field where scenes from a parallel, overlapping world dwell. There are internal logics here, thematic and painterly, that edge onto current state of affairs, but in a coded, timeless place. Power, Intrigue, Love and Death. The figures reveal themselves slowly, unlocked by the proximity to Chanter’s more recognisable sources. They break into fragments and float in the foreground, luring to the depths within. One painting – introverted. And the other a narrative, where a presence, a relation or a feared one troubles.

All works meet around the sense of an indefinable fear. This violence, this urgency should make you run.
Thank You Very Much

Summer Residency

Christopher MacInnes Spores of Love
1. **Folly**  
03.06.17  
Maud Craigie, Sian Robinson Davies, Calvin Laing, Alex Millar, George Morris, Samuel Taylor + guests, curated by Rowan Markson

2. *happening till a later time*  
16.06.17  
Jacob Kerray, Alistair Gow, Finas Townsend III

3. **EPHEMERA**  
16.06.17  
DJ Ronan Fay, Francesca Hawker, DJ Jungle Hussy, Lylo (live), Raya Mitchell, Pleasure Pool (live), Katie Shannon, Annie Lowry Thomas
4. **Sports Day**  
01.07.17  
PLUS a half-time sound performance by Roi Carmeli and Mike Fowler

5. **Inner Landscape**  
07.07.17  
Littlewhitehead
6. **Lovely**  
14.07.17  
Marc Etienne

7. **Reel Meal**  
23.07.17  
Aymeric Tarrade, Bryony Hussey, Ceel Mogami de Haas, Chloé Delarue, Christopher MacInnes, Hazel Brill, Henry Coombes, Lauren Huret, Manon Vila, Sophie Rogers, Tiphanie Kim Mall, with furniture by Simon Worthington and Florence Dwyer, ceramic plates by Joanne Dawson and dinner by MalaCarne
8. *You’re Too Kind*

28.07.17

Angeli Bhose & Kirsty Leonard, Bryony Rose, Conor Baird, Francesca Hawker, Robert Mills plus after party with Sarra Wild (OH1+1), Francis Dosoo (Rhythm Machine), Nathan Smith (OCTO CHAMP)
Somewhere, out there, drifts a tapeworm without a gut. Can you imagine a more tragic biography?

There is this louse that takes the place of the tongue of a fish — squats firm on the tongue of the host — shuffles in between the cheeks, and makes itself at home. When in Rome, etc. *Cymothoa exigua*, the diminutive isopod, primordial in appearance (like woodlouse crossed with a fat langoustine), is the only known parasite that functionally replacing a host organ.

Arriving at first as an egg in the gills, *C. exigua* outgrows its natal home and migrates towards the mouth. Possibly, this very good nature makes *C. Exigua* a disingenuous parasite. (a lousy linguist, but what ambition: the thrill of the informed palate.) The bug sucks, supplants, and inhabits, introducing itself to the mouth in place of the native tongue which it has secretly drained of blood. The fish is left largely unharmed, somewhat augmented. The louse is a homemaker; the uninvited guest becomes the unexpected host.

What is charming about the *C. exigua*, I think, is its lack of shame. Having volunteered its labours uninvited, it takes its place within the Californian snapper’s suitably capacious maw, and there it stays, already fat and always expectant. Having produced a dependency, the louse sits and tends to the rhythms of its new life with the officious zeal of librarians and civil servants, functionally satisfied with its sedentary vocation. Taking pity on the relative physical agility and cognitive adaptability of more “progressive” strains, the louse meditates on the joys of everyday nurture, and ordinary devotion.

Sometimes, an entire family moves in. If there are two males inhabiting the fish, one of the males might become a female prior to maturation, to make for a more oedipal setup. The parasite is a companion organ. Following in the tradition of *Theseus’ ship, Locke’s sock, Lincoln’s axe* (i.e. the machine whose parts have be replaced x number of times), the tongue-eating louse is a folk pharmacologist. It draws on the mimetic tradition of the bovine flatworm, *Taenia saginata*, whose wide, porous skin is all mouth at once, in its emulation of the intestine, or *Sacculina carcini*, the clutch-like barnacle that play-acts the egg sacs of Atlantic crabs. And what if they were to turn up, all at once, a true assemblage, mammalian, larval, vertebrate and mollusk. These twisted pairs and triplets are subjective, contingent upon any number of lotteries for their success (do you spawn in the host, the shit, or the lab?). But their
dependencies — if the shoe fits — dramatise the illusion of resolution, or any animal thing ever being resolved. Again: is there anything more tragic than a tapeworm without a gut?

When the host fish dies (there are eight known species that invite the parasite), after some time, the louse will detach itself from the tongue stub, leave the oral cavity, and can then be seen clinging to its head or body, externally. Eventually, it must let go. Another lost cause. It is not fully known what then happens to the parasite in the wild.

Following Michel Serres, the parasite is a mode of hospitality, a way of relating to the world as a guest or a stranger, tting it not quite like a glove. e parasitical invitation refuses exchange value, rejecting the commensuration of a transactional ethics. Instead, it rubs the channel raw, in squeaks and sweats, opening out of a limit. Given the noisy, indiscrète natures of oceans, the tongue-eating louse (masculine noun: le parasite, interference) finds that all systems gape open, mouths for living in. This is a live broadcast. The parasite encounters the network noisily interferes with its channels. How do we think the network thinks? On a good day, a knotted rat-king of optical nerves, or a web of tangential relations. Or else, various liquidities: ocean, flood, cloud. At some point, the aqueous metaphor became too tangible and abstract all at once, formal vectors laid over a rasterised grid, tending drunkenly towards inertia. Inert, as in “lacking the strength and ability to move”, or “chemically inactive”; lacking in chemistry, as in “the complex emotional or psychological attraction or interaction”. The act of drowning — draining, or jamming, for that matter — makes no attempt at a such an exchange.

Amnion, data bank, loam. Less an envelope, more a membrane, a sieve that is also a dam. e drowning metaphor favours the empirical and emotional force of immersion, pooling and spluttering, like that early scene in the Matrix, where the quicksilver coats Keanu’s arms, up his neck and plunges down his bony craw, reduced to the snake-rib of a prehistoric vertebrate. The lamprey, itself an excellent parasitic specimen, spends its life in saltwater, hitching onto unsuspecting pikes, before returning to the river in search of the spawning point, where it expires. Moore’s law becomes increasingly suspect for a notable absence of friction, heat, and dust (except, perhaps, certain threads of petro-eroticism); as does its attendantly brittle aesthetics.

Conversely, the spores disperses in a fine, sticky mist, getting by on brownian motion. Dissipations drift, latching and breaching. These words press out of my mouth and worm their way into yours, itching for a tongue to hold onto.
Prehension by way of tiny hooks on the underbelly. The interspecies mantra for living with might also be posed as a condition of digging in. In-take, information, in-human. Never greedy, but lonely, as you too would be. Because we pool our resources does not mean we understand our agendas: but we trust them to develop as I bleeds in to We.

When the SARS outbreak hit Hong Kong in 2003, it was the ventilation shafts plumbing the city’s dense residential blocks which transported the virus, beginning in the Amoy Gardens complex and eventually spreading to over a thousand cases. Residents of the floors at the middle and upper levels in building E were at a significantly higher risk than residents on lower floors; this finding is consistent with a rising plume of contaminated warm air in the air shaft generated from a middle-level apartment unit. Dinner guest were chaperoned and mutated through the infrastructure of domesticity; a co-mingling of living signals (those who eat alongside us).

There are parasites and there are parasites. After all, half of all animals have a parasitic phase. The pejorative connotations of the term is, seemingly, a particularly individualistic trait. Ambivalent to the quid pro quo of the the petit-bourgeois, the interloper is a filthy autocrat, opening up the way to new systems. If we think of the parasite as a design schema, the communication only begins when the originary dialogue has been resolved. In the parasitical relation, the feeding party cuts through the circle diametrically, eats into the circle, drains it of its rotundity, its repetitious self-preservation, its singular geometry, its centrifugal drone. It accelerates the process; a dirty sight, but it keeps us from the autoerotic careers of circles and spirals.

The channel extrudes, determining mouthshape, and mouthfeel. An aberrant phrase worms its way into your palm, and beaks itself into the epidermis. The opening of “route” already carries inside it a rupture: derived from the Latin, via rupta, “a way broken open”. One critter’s tear is another critter’s passage. The parasite breaks way for logistical sleights of hand, architectural appropriations, inside the insides of creatures unfolded, dough un-kneaded. Not recycled into the fold of production, but a selfless process of loss, habitation and nurture, as well as the emergent contours of a lossy counter-production. It is both eminently naturalising, that is, creative, and denaturalising, as in the unmaking and ungrowing of a world in its own buzz-eyed image.
Ayn Rand interviewed by Alvin Toffler in *Playboy* Magazine, 1964, was one of the earliest wide-circulation publications of Rand’s explanation of her philosophy. And although the intervening 53 years have not been kind to either the interpretation or context of this interview, it’s occurrence appears prophetic. In many ways it seems perfectly appropriate, the outpost of (white hetro) male culture arguing for objectivism has a contemporary ring to it – and indeed a lot of her chat has been co-opted by current isolationist meritocracy politics, also the dominion of adolescent men as within the alt-right. But, the elevation of production, as it’s own end, is the pertinent part here:

If they place such things as friendship and family ties above their own productive work, yes, then they are immoral. Friendship, family life and human relationships are not primary in a man’s life. A man who places others first, above his own creative work, is an emotional parasite; whereas, if he places his work first, there is no conflict between his work and his enjoyment of human relationships.

Rand’s consideration of Capitalism was not at the totality we now enjoy, but the interpretation and extrapolation remain, that humans have one purpose. The purpose can be performed in myriad of ways, but the end point must always remain in service of capital. Presently we have the opportunity that every aspect of our lives can and will be monetised, and we are gradually relinquishing the control we may of once had over this. The emotions and whims that Rand once dismissed have become financially viable, in fact an unreliable character within a contemporary economy is now preferable – the over ambition of a generation a bedrock for future investment return. It is within this context that the Playboy interviewer, Alvin Toffler becomes relevant. In his 1980 book *The Third Wave*, Toffler introduced the portmanteau *Prosumer*, initially to articulate the conflation of a person between production and consumption of media – that we now all do both, and gladly. All this content we produce is monetised, only we as producers don’t receive any of the financial remuneration, that’s expected. Instead we gain immaterial wealth of sociability and connectivity – the transaction is made clear, and expected. Sometimes the investment and return don’t always correlate, though that’s also to be expected – all capitalist structures need to include a deficit model for operation. A *Prosumer*, within their proclivity to amateurism is the standard bearer for contemporary capitalism. The talented amateur or enthusiast links *prosumer* with it’s other popular definition, a combination of professional and consumer used to describe primarily high end tech, such as DSLR cameras. There is a tendency within both, and contemporary political narratives, to do without formal training, like the Dunning-Kruger effect, the illusion of ability follows a misplaced confidence. A little learning is a dangerous thing, as the diminutive Alexander Pope said.

The *prosumer* is not a professional, they are semi-professional, and doesn’t regulate their production like one – their content is given away, though their consumption is discerning. *Prosumer* has an aesthetic, it can’t just be coldly utilitarian, simply appear to be, but with a flourish. The aesthetic rules develop in tandem with the predominant aesthetics of the internet, and are therefore co-opted into the visible politics and philosophies present. A democratisation of the image into extreme politics, memes and accelerationist techno-Orientalist fantasies. One ubiquitous genre of image is Stock Photography, instantly
recognisable with a distinctly bland flat style, the images seem to reinforce existing stereotypes and prejudices or at least extend a middling status quo by documenting and exhibiting it. One symptom that is extended through this imagery, and derives from the Dunning-Kruger effect semi-professional, is that a certain immediate gratification is expected in both knowledge and life. That the struggles of humanity can be dispatched with one weird trick, a life hack stands in the place of where one might have sought answers in a higher power – clickbait articles delivering the absolute truths of our being. The vacuous tautologies that haunt and direct the displayed imagery with Christoper MacInnes’ exhibition are borne from this condition. Both meaningless and infinite, the aphorisms intend to empower you to the limits of your current social and employment status – but no further. It’s still you and your life, except you eat better or shed calories while shaving minutes of your commute, you but better.

The accomplishment of self-satisfaction within the status quo, producing the contented consumer, chimes with Rand – and if you surround this philosophy with sexualised images you basically have the internet in a March 1964 issue of Playboy. Things change except when they don’t.

Spores of Love, the exhibition, is – to personify the technology and objects within it – a prosumer, working in a closed loop and speaking to itself it simply uses a visitor as a method of propulsion, a fuel of sorts. Working to infinite variations of a single task, and composed of necessity – high-end components when required and any old shit when not.
Curated by David Dale Gallery

Toby Christian                   The News

28.10.17 - 26.11.17

at Swimming Pool, Sofia

Hanne Lippard Numb Limb

2017
I have a strong memory of my mum teaching me how to make a good fire. We would sit together tying knots of newspaper, and see who could make them the quickest. I remember noticing that my hands were much smaller than hers. We couldn’t use newspapers that were from that day, or the day before that, or the day before that, but it was ok to burn any newspapers older than that, as their news wasn’t news any longer.

- Toby Christian, 2017
Discussion between Toby Christian, Max Slaven (David Dale Gallery, Glasgow) and Viktoria Draganova (director Swimming Pool, Sofia) that took place at the opening of the exhibition in Sofia, October 2017.

Max Slaven
So, I suppose this began when I had a studio visit with you Toby, back in March, and the conversation developed from there.

Toby Christian
Yes, I was really excited when you invited me to do an exhibition in Sofia. I am very aware of your programme at David Dale in Glasgow but I was excited to do something away from Glasgow, so … firstly, yes, thanks for the invitation and thanks also to Swimming Pool for hosting the exhibition. I think it’s important to stress that I don’t want to say things in this situation that somehow de-code the work, because the work is not encoded. I don’t believe there is anything here you can’t understand by just looking at the work. So this talk isn’t about getting the inside story of objects which are esoteric in this way, where there is some sort of secret language embedded in everything here… I hope this exhibition is completely legible. This applies to the texts on the windows too – we spent a long time working on the Bulgarian translation of the original text so that it could be read in both languages.

MS
Maybe if we can start by you giving us an introduction to the thinking behind, or origin, to the exhibition?

TC
So, to introduce my thinking around the show, there were three things at the beginning. The first stemmed from a conversation I had with two artists in an Indian restaurant in Liverpool. We were talking about the news and current affairs. And, I realised that I was talking about certain events and they both were quite quiet, and both artists said that they recently stopped looking at the news because it was inducing a sense of anxiety and that they felt much happier without looking at the news. Now obviously this could be seen as quite problematic, as of course it is good to have a sense of what is happening in the world, globally. But the conversation began to be about the accelerated and continuous distribution of news. That you can’t really escape all of these causal mutations of current events around the world. This was the first thing – an idea of not looking at the news. And, I tried this for few days, and I eventually found myself looking at the news again, perhaps even more. The second thing was a memory, and in citing this I am not saying that my
memories are somehow more significant because I’m an artist... this is the memory, which is written down in the press release and is from when I was about seven years old, of my mother teaching me how to make fire, and sitting there and starting with newspapers making knots. Before we’d start I would ask her or my father which papers we could use, and she or he would say we couldn’t use that days papers because these are the news, and we couldn’t use the ones from the day before or the day before, because these are still relevant. But we could use the ones from the day before that, as those were somehow not so relevant. This was pre-internet, and we didn’t have a computer in the house. So that’s the second thing.

And the third thing is that for a long time, six or seven years, I’ve been writing about objects that I’ve encountered, visited or collected. My training has been in sculpture, first at Wimbledon and then at the Royal Academy Schools at postgraduate level. But I started writing about objects to talk about things I had seen, and to describe them without any other people or characters in those spaces. So, myself and the reader would share them. The intention was to try to describe them as objectively as possible. Just to say I have seen this thing. So, these texts would always be in the present tense, trying to present the idea that I could offer the reader a sort of collaborative process, to imagine the object together. And that I could control the presentation of the object through being very detailed about it. This writing that I’ve been doing has increasingly started to generate potential for making ‘physical’, sculpture… Sometimes that influence is quite literal, and sometimes it is a tangential process.

Alongside those three ideas and around the time David Dale invited me to do the show, my second book was published, Collar. And so just to briefly give some context of the book – it moves between streets in Brazil, and then to Glasgow, to scenes there, and then it moves to Marseille for reasons that are there in the book. But one of the chapters that presented itself to me as potential material for experimentation with installation or sculpture was a scene I describe in a tile shop in São Paolo, where there is a stack of newspapers which are there to wrap samples of tiles inexpensively. So, I suppose alongside those two other ideas I began to think about this stack of newspapers... I was thinking really intuitively about how I might use a stack of newspapers as sculptural material.

MS
So, I wondered if you could expand on the installation here, and how these ideas informed it?
What you see around you on the walls are three phases of an installation, three concentrations of a performed installation process. I wanted to map the interior of the space with the newspapers from this city. And so, in these rooms I tried to do this using nets or grids. I was less interested in using grids that were measured and precise – I wanted this mapping of the space to relate to my body, as it is now, in the same sense as when making fire with my mother I remember my hands and her hands and how quick she was and how slow I was making those knots. But something about trying to acknowledge the size of my body now… In the first room the knots are spaced based on my ‘fathom’ – the distance between my fingertips when both arms are outstretched as far as possible… there is a further connotation of this word, towards understanding, as in saying “I can’t fathom that”. To do with being embraced and being understood. Here is a grid that loosely equates to a movement of my body. And, of course, it is not completely accurate to measure.

I was also interested in making something that naturally warps…this action or posture changes in its nature. The arrangement of the newspaper knots in the second room, if it is at all possible to divide this space into rooms, is measured using my cubit, from my elbow to the tip of my middle finger. And the arrangement in the final room, the most closely arranged knots, is measured with my span, the distance between the tip of my thumb and little finger, when my hand is outstretched.

These knots of newspaper are used to start a fire because it concentrates the density of the paper. The two long ‘handles’ of the knotted paper are almost cylindrical, and allow a lot of air to be provided for a small flame. Then the flame is carried to the centre of the knot, where, hotter, the flame can ignite the compacted paper more easily. An image perhaps in reaction to the news and the use of the newspapers. News and silence. In keeping with my initial memory, the most recent newspapers here are dated on the Wednesday of this week – it is now Saturday. This might then create some kind of atmospheric framework in the room, in which the concentration of these newspapers, knotted or muted or made illegible, increases as we move through the gallery.

In each room, there is also a small object – a stone carving based on a computer mouse. Can you talk about the idea behind bringing these objects into the installation?

Contemporary fine art, and its dissemination can seem or feel relentless...
Contemporary art seems to be always trying to create quirks perhaps in the same way that the media are. So, if you take the model of a historian and a producer of current events, a journalist, we might say that a historian is always trying to form some sort of causal narrative over a period of time, over a number of years perhaps, and the journalist is trying to provide commentary on contemporaneous events.

I am also thinking about my work in art schools, where for the first time in my life I have a desk in an office. There I became aware of these objects that I use and hold when I’m working ... I started going to the stationary suppliers and seeing the subtle modifications between these mice for computers... The very first mouse was called a turtle and it was essentially a box with a huge ball inside it. These stone carvings are not accurate copies of mice, they are more versions or ways of thinking about archetypal types of mice. This one is an ‘80s mouse, which is comparatively boxy, you would rest your hand on top of it. The mouse in the middle space has a small groove in the side to rest your thumb in, and the one in the far room is a very ergonomic mouse, which feels really different to the other mice to hold, almost like it holds your hand. I used to work a lot with stone carving. I was trying to think about returning to that, but making the things less art-historically reliant. I used to previously reference Baroque or High Renaissance vernaculars, and I lost interest in that.... These objects here are mutations around something that fixes the hand when working, so again the idea goes around some form of an object that might represent a tool of labour.

The sculptures are presented on these carpet tiles, which I have been collecting for a long time, which are reclaimed from offices or businesses, now closed in Glasgow. People were just giving them away – they were stained, dirty, and they were various colours. But I noticed straight away that a lot of the colours tried to emulate some kind a natural wood flooring.

I chose these tiles to make Platforms, or mats for the mice. The mats are no longer modular, the corners are cut to be round so there’s no suggestion that we might actually be able to multiply or duplicate this to make a larger area of the same material because the corners wouldn’t tessellate completely. And they reference the way that you cut paper to stop it being torn, like exercise books which are given round corners to protect them or enable them to last longer. So, the relationship between these grids and the mice and then also the writing...

Viktoria Draganova
At the beginning you mentioned how important writing is to your practice. What about the text exhibited in the show? We spent time together working on the translation, as the words you use seem to be loaded with all that: meaning...
and texture, image and reference.

TC
I wanted to produce some writing for this environment, and I was very excited about trying to write something for a Bulgarian readership. My writing appears in books, in journals and in installations and so I see all of these things as moments of publishing – the exhibition as a moment of distribution too – like an exhibition is a moment to publish. With this text, here I wanted to put something in which seemed outside of the schema somehow. In the conversations with Max and Viktoria we were talking about this object that was somehow alien and about these objects that present themselves to me that I collect and find and write about. This process is not something I can control – it's not an intellectual concoction, it's just something I might notice or buy or be drawn too… and in this case it was a Dinosaur encased in a bouncy ball found in a newsagent in London.

So, you can read it and hopefully as clearly as possible you can picture that ball clearly. My writing in this way is always in the present tense, always very objective in its tone, which inevitably produces poetic effect. You might notice it in this text – and I don't really want to spell this out so much – but those phrases, which seem the most objective very often have an ambiguity or a subtext. In my texts quite often other concurrent images are formed and often even other characters too, or nuances of their presence. I was also thinking about this gallery, the location of this gallery and of it as not being a ‘white cube’ space. It was formerly a domestic space, then a place where people made clothing – so it had different uses. I’m thinking about the view – so that these bouncing balls present dinosaurs, which dart about a space, in a way to surprise you with its bounciness. I wanted to try to think about scale in the presentation of the text: if you read it in the daytime you might be focusing on the plane of the acetate and the actual pane of the glass, but you might also simultaneously be looking at the landscape and the beautiful mountains, albeit out of focus.

MS
I’m conscious of not going on too long, but I had one observation that I wanted to bring up. I see the exhibition as really based on time and a sort of spiralling out of that time, from the short to the long. The titles of the three mice sculptures are based on times of the working day, and the sense that the time of your working day is categorized by the minute, and you're always rushing from A to B. And moving from these minutes to the idea of the news being present for a finite period of time. These sequential ‘presents’ constitute the past and that is possibly the case within days or now minutes with contemporary
app based news delivery. Then the news, or collection of ‘presents’, becomes useless – or only good to start a fire. But then, there is a second life where it comes back as some kind of a historical record. The same as this historicisation of the mouse over a period of maybe 40 years, in which the exhibition begins to also talk of minutes becoming decades. Within the context of this space, which speaks of time, it is not a neutral white cube… you can see, and we previously talked about this, that there’s a variety of different decades’ marks and fixtures within the space….

TC
Yes definitely – I think also we’re very familiar with the notion that ‘white cubes’ are designed to emulate a place somewhere between a car showroom and a ziggurat – they have this kind of thick, rarefied atmosphere. And in comparison, in thinking about the temporalities within this room, the potential narrative and the material of this room, or objects which don’t give away their age so readily, like the mirror. So there’s a whole range of different times that this place presents… it was an intention through doing the show to use that, to try to somehow incorporate that.

MS
Yeah, there’s a sort of concentric circle out from minute to decade which I find particularly interesting. The memory aspect of the show – there’s a certain objectiveness or pseudo-objectiveness from the news, a certain relic based memory from the mice and then a very subjective nostalgia-based passing of time from the story of the knots and the recounting of this ball – which, as much as any recounting is intended to be objective, your perception of it is unavoidably subjective.

TC
But the idea that nostalgia is somehow a stored record is an interesting one – I don’t know if I entirely agree but I’m reminded of an interview Alain Robbe-Grillet gave with the Paris Review in the spring of 1986. He talks about his belief that we invent memories, that memory is a creative process, just as we invent projections into the future.

VD
I have a question – I was wondering, does it feel different to make an exhibition in Sofia? Because you’re based in Glasgow and London and we were also talking about this centre/peripheral situation while noticing that Glasgow too might be deemed to be in the periphery. In a certain sense this distinction exists everywhere and it is probably the institution, which creates or employs a certain
type of a context. But does a certain context make you work in a particular way?

TC
I think it goes back to the thing I said at the start, that I really have a belief that everything in here is legible and I'm not interested in art that's somehow esoteric or cryptic. So in some ways making an exhibition in Brazil for example I had to adapt my ideas to the huge space I was working in, but I like to think ideologically no, it makes no difference where I am in the world. I want to make a show that can be met by a public, anywhere. I hope, I don't know if that's possible. But that's the ambition. The objects in my texts, these objects which we all know, these carpets which we all know, these newspapers which you certainly know, mice, hands, bodies.

MS
If I can just have one last comment, it's on that sort of latent violence within the installation that has this, literally, incendiary potential. And within that, there is the cleansing or obliteration of the news and written word – ceasing all sort of historical record – through burning it down. I suppose there is that potential capacity that is interesting. This is sort of brought down from any dramatic possibility by the depressing mundanity of the office tones and structure – the sense that the marble, this rarefied material could be some sort of a retirement gift or something. That the material is really not living up to its possible elevated status. I see this as another type of violence. But I wanted to ask if there was an anger, or something on that emotional spectrum, which you felt permeated the show?

TC
I don't know about anger... I think it's interesting that you say that these newspapers are like historical records. Because they are also politically biased, inflections and nuances of narratives. We spoke a lot about it in Glasgow, which newspapers to use and we were talking about newspapers like the Sun newspaper in the U.K., which is rightly boycotted by many people in Liverpool, we were talking about all of these different newspapers having a real bias. Actually, all these newspapers are completely biased. And I remember describing being in London and using public transport, seeing huge stacks of the same Metro newspaper and everyone taking it and everyone reading it in the morning. These narratives are administered on a daily basis. But in response to an idea of violence or anger, I would say then here I'm trying to slow things down, trying to decelerate things, materially, experientially. And it's the same with my writing. I spend a lot of time trying to do that. There's the fight.
A day at the end of October
Max Slaven

In Bulgaria, on a weekday evening, we encountered a locked door. The intended style of the premises behind this door was a speakeasy, the effect diluted by the distance between this street in Sofia and whatever time and place the bar planned to evoke. Confronted with a locked door, affixed with a bunch of thirty keys and a minimally stocked bookcase, the only indicator that we were at the entrance to a public bar, other than the protestations of our host, was that we’d gotten this far into the building. And that many keys can only be a gimmick. It was apparent that a key on that bunch would open the door, but fuck going through them in order - it’d take forever. Every key was marked with a number, so we sought inspiration in the book shelf, trying the street number too, to no avail. This was bad news: any bar that doesn’t welcome me openly is not somewhere I’d normally drink – one of the few lessons I can draw from my native city. However, eager to appease our host, who had gone out of their way to find somewhere interesting to entertain us, I kicked the door until a response was provoked. A hatch within the door opened, and the face of a woman emerged: “It’s the date,” she offered, and then receded. We produced our phones, exclaiming to whoever was within earshot that this was yet a further inconvenience; check the date; choose the key with the corresponding number; curse the woman for not simply opening the door; then open the door feigned confidence to the amusement of the guests sat inside, who had been party to our deliberations for the last ten minutes. Not good vibes for starting a night, I thought, but I let it go.

It was a cocktail bar, of course, which I can’t be fucked with, so I lapped my companions; by the time their drinks arrived I’d finished my small bottle of beer, and so continued the pattern: two beers to a negroni. I took one of these opportunities of mismatch to smoke, having to negotiate access to the smoking space out back with the staff, access to which was not allowed after 10pm. I was not inclined to go back out that main door so close to midnight, I’d already overcome that obstacle – who knows when they change the key? Out in the night air I left behind incongruous regulations of the bar and thought back to the gallery in Glasgow, where I’d normally be - especially so close to the next show. I thought about what state it would be in just now, what needs to change and what needs to happen.

I don’t often have to imagine these contexts. I’m usually there, working, but, in this instance, I’m in Sofia to install a show - a show between shows. I have all three in my mind, unable to separate them.
In Glasgow the gallery and warehouse will appear to be empty. The usual leftovers will occupy the gallery, changing its appearance from intentionally empty to the aftermath of emptying: items either of little importance or intended for reuse. Irregular scraps of packaging, wall plaster, screws and pieces of grey silicon on the floor – missed in the first general clear, but due to be picked up. The walls are marked, but that doesn’t contribute to the volume of the space, only the noise. A stepladder will come in handy again for the next install, so remains, as do a couple of hand tools on the windowsill. The windows remain covered with black vinyl from the previous show; we hadn’t decided if we’re going to leave it in place for the next exhibition, so it remains, awaiting a definitive decision. The windows are south-facing, the direct sunlight renders the vinyl a murky brown rather than opaque black. It also radiates heat, even in October, making the gallery stiflingly hot. I expect this is going to be a real issue to remove: the adhesive of the vinyl won’t peel off easily, having fused with the glass in the heat – so a delay before confronting this is welcome. Pools of mineral oil from the previous exhibition have collected on the floor. Due to the difficulty in cleaning it up this was also postponed, and now coats the floor in a greasy film punctuated and spread by footprints. The oil is slippery underfoot, and has the instantly recognisable odour of baby oil, an olfactory memory-trigger for some reason, even though I can’t remember it being used. The sole resident of the room who will remain into the next exhibition, and sits on the floor of this warm, dull, amber-lit, baby oil-smelling room is a small robotic vacuum cleaner. Carefully placed to avoid a patch of oil, it has been installed to be tested: dumbly rotating in an expanding spiral, flicking from its path any detritus too large to consume, until it strikes an immovable object or strays too close to a pool of oil and is sent in a new direction with a delicate kick. It works, so has been turned off and left where it sat.

The second gallery is a separate building, tethered only by a thin 75m Ethernet cable installed for the previous show. The preceding exhibition required internet access for a web scraper, and the forthcoming one will use a lighting installation which operates via an internet connection, but presently it’s not connected to anything, a 75m dead end. The dark, cold, damp, empty warehouse with potential for connectivity. Occasionally a pigeon may appear from the end of the defunct ventilation system, the other end of which is in a sealed-off section of the building which only the birds can access. The avian’s presence is observed by an LED in the deactivated alarm sensor, which blinks then turns off again. Back in Sofia, we’ve moved to the terrace outside the gallery. It’s freezing and the conversation turns to our host’s love life.
I tell you
you went out
on a limb
having no rules
and now that is also a rule
just in a numb disguise
deprived of feeling or responsiveness
the fail of the lure
the seduction gone
lust lost

You tell me
the daffodils came in place of apology
to bring nature closer
take a handful of flowers
and place them knee-deep
in front of me knee-deep in water
for the sake of breaking the ice
you tell me
human DNA is
35% daffodil

In response to your silence
I tell you No Answer Is Also an Answer
to not reveal I might be failing
to tolerate the complexity of your silence
I return to describing my day
how the wet snow felt on my face at the bus stop at 7am
how my intention is to include failure as the only strategy to succeed

You write to me
the nature of love is shown to be double and contradictory
even though it also contains the infinite resolution of its own contradiction
the nature is thus neither simple nor contradictory
it is the contradiction of the contradiction and of noncontradiction
it operates in an identical manner between all the terms in play
the access and the end
the incomplete being and the completed being
the self and the beyond of the self
the one and the other
the identical and the different

I tell you
to take your time,
and you take mine.
I didn’t say it is fine. I said, fine, as in let’s leave it at that, let’s leave after this
cup of tea as it tastes nothing to me anyway. It’s neither water nor flavour, its just over.
you tell me
the only thing left was steam
more and more steam
evaporation into air
into nothing
a nothing looking face
like no one was there just yet
like someone out sleep walking
puffy eyed and slow
looking at steam evaporating
like sleep, like thoughts, like feelings, like love
gone, puff, blank, empty, no response, active 14 hours ago
you go silent

I tell you about
images that shimmer
and that I am convinced I don’t suffer from schizophrenia
but the world appears to me in doubles
things have halos around them
ions exchange
break and fall apart
I don’t
but now I am not sure anymore

You tell me
about holding onto bodies
holding on tighter
and then I was gone
I woke up in her arms

I speak to you fast but softly about Lizards
and people and about people looking at lizards
things are hard to grasp because they are so near
or because they are your nose
alienation as radical intimacy
or ontological nearness
symbiosis of two beings - an uneasy always
and we can’t tell who is the top and who the bottom
Hostis Hospitality Hostility
friends - enemies
paranoia
ambiguity
is it
the daffodil DNA that makes our heads hang heavy?

You tell me
it will help to grow calluses
and your wife does all your cooking and cleaning and types out your poems
Repeating then is in
everyone
in everyone
in their being and
in their feeling and
their way of realising everything and everyone
comes out of them in repeating
I find you saying
Thank You and Please
at the same time
being sorry and hurt
lost and found
gone and gone and still going
anything and nothing and then something
I know what is important
I know I'm failing

You tell me
bones give fish its flavour
remove the bone before you eat the flesh
don't drink the grains of your coffee, extract the silence between the lines
keep leaping while falling, flying while sitting still
if you are not sure who you are, look in the mirror
the reflection is bending back at you
replacing you in your absence

All over time there is I am
Am I is there time all over

all time I am all time
Time all am I time all

time I am time
time am I time

there is I am
am I is there

there is all
all is there

I am
am I

there is
is there

all
there

Is
All

I tell you for I you can as well say you, he, she, it, we, you, they and vice verse.
You tell me
it is a piece of fiction.
It is a piece of fiction without the friction.
It lacks lustre. It lacks life.
And by that, I mean death.

Compiled by Kati Kärki as a parataxis of words from;

Hanne Lippard - A Day in the Studio - Frisking - No Answers is Also an Answer
Jean Luc Nancy - Shattered Love
Joan Didion - Why I write
Timothy Morton - Here Come the Lizard People
Gertrude Stein - Making of the Americans
Hanne Darboven - Korrespondenzen