

## ***Synthesis: New Acquisitions***

4 October – 10 November 2017

*Synthesis* brings together five recent acquisitions for University of Salford Art Collection, and represents our three main collecting priorities: **From the North, About the Digital and Chinese Contemporary Art.**

Although individually very different, each work reveals some of the hidden concepts or overlooked processes behind how objects and artworks are made. This exhibition also demonstrates our commitment to working in partnership with arts organisations across the North West to support the development of new work by artists.

Manchester based Darren Nixon responds to the idea that an artwork takes on different formations, titles and 'personas' when in storage, on display or out on loan. The colours and patterns of the panels – which are re-arranged whenever exhibited – take inspiration from existing works in the University of Salford Art Collection; including Willow Rowlands *A Way of Organising a Pig*, also on display here.

The work exists in three possible configurations each with different titles. As *The Intern* it sits patiently in separately wrapped packages around the art store – surrounded by more established 'colleagues'. *The Mixer*, presented here, protrudes from the wall into public space, more aware of itself but not fully sure of its place and purpose. The final iteration, *The Awkward Ambassador*, will be realised when the work is on loan to other galleries – an 'ambassador' for the University of Salford Art Collection. As a floor based construction, 'he will wave a confusion of flags, splendid on his own terms – there to represent nobody but himself' (Nixon). Forever uneasy and unresolved in its identity, the installation will eventually repeat the cycle and return to *Intern* in the art store.

*The Awkward Ambassador* was the first commission with Mark Devereux's *StudioBook* artist development programme (2015/2016). Sheffield-based painter and printmaker Mandy Payne was recently awarded the 2017/2018 commission.

Willow Rowlands similarly plays with form and function; *A Way of Organising a Pig* is a terracotta clay object reminiscent of a 'pile of sausages, a succulent plant, a hairstyle or a cephalopod' (a squid or octopus). The artist describes the sculpture as a 'tonal stimulant for further thought, rather than a puzzle to be solved...' In which the playful title hints at a possible previous life-form '...the most important word in the title is **organising**'.

The piece is from a series of works in sculpture, image and film, which are confused in their state of being and intention. The process of 're-making' and 're-using' is an important gesture in the artist's ongoing work, considering the very existence, value and purpose of different materials.

Rowlands graduated from BA Visual Arts in 2014 and was awarded a place on the Graduate Scholarship Scheme, ran by the University of Salford Art Collection with the School of Arts & Media.

Kong Chun Hei's video *Hand Practice* presents a diligently repeated exercise, which may be used to warm up for creating heavily detailed drawings which form part of his multi-disciplinary practice; revealing a previously unseen physical performance.

The exercise looks deceptively simple but is hard to enact for any duration - let alone the 40+ minute endurance of this video. As co-ordination falters, fingers become tired, and concentration wanes: *Hand Practice* makes visible the physicality and dedication behind an artists' working practice.

*"Keep practicing. Left thumb, right tail.  
Keep exchanging. Left tail, right thumb.  
Self-improvement.  
Usual expectation.  
Smoothly.  
Keep practicing. Keep exchanging.  
Wither and done."* (Kong Chun Hei).

A version of *Hand Practice* was first exhibited at the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA), during Hong Kong based Kong Chun Hei's artist residency and as part of *From Ocean to Horizon*, (7 July - 29 October 2017). Supported by the University of Salford Art Collection and co-curated by Ying Kwok (Independent curator, Hong Kong) and Lindsay Taylor (Art Curator, University of Salford) with CFCCA.

Both Brass Art and Liam Young use laser-scanning technology in innovative ways. Manchester and Glasgow based trio Brass Art use Kinect motion-scanning lasers - usually utilised with PCs or Xboxes - to explore the 'uncanny' in *Freud's House: The Double*. Intimate-scaled performances were enacted and captured throughout the rooms and hallways of Sigmund Freud's former London home; creating a pixelated and seemingly fragmented re-imagining of the space. Both the seen and 'unseen' experience of domestic space is revealed, as the footage appears to bisect and peel back the very architecture that the figures and furniture inhabits.

*Freud's House: The Double* was commissioned through The International 3 Gallery, Salford, as part of our Commission to Collect programme.

Liam Young's fiction film *Where the City Can't See* is captured entirely using LIDAR scanning technology, which is used in self-driving vehicles. The ghostly effect is re-presented here in still images using a unique dichroic printing process on aluminium. Set in a not-too-distant future of CCTV surveillance, facial recognition systems and technology-led urban management and navigation, the project considers how we might evade the ever-increasing electronic gaze of the autonomous city. Underground communities journey through '*stealth buildings, ruinous landscapes, ghost architectures, anomalies, glitches and sprites*' in search of spaces *where the city can't see*.

Commissioned by University of Salford Art Collection, Abandon Normal Devices, and St Helens Heart of Glass with support from Forestry Commission England and Arts Council England.

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#### See more from the collection:

Further works from the University of Salford Art Collection are also currently on display at *What's In Store?* at the Salford Museum & Art Gallery, until 19<sup>th</sup> November.

For details, further events, and to join our mailing list, please visit: [artcollection.salford.ac.uk](http://artcollection.salford.ac.uk)

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