



# RIASQuarterly

Summer 2023 Issue 54

£12.50

**Art + Building  
= Architecture**

**RIAS Awards 2023**





## A Freshly Broken Surface

**“Glasgow is a magnificent city,” said McAlpin. “Why do we hardly ever notice that?”**

**Because nobody imagines living here ... think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he’s already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn’t been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively.”**

**Alasdair Gray, Lanark**

For those who know this quote by Glasgow’s greatest polymath, it is immediately recognisable as a touchstone within the imaginative firmament of Scotland’s creative psyche. It is often quoted and referenced by the writers, artists, poets and musicians I know who, as denizens of Glasgow also acknowledge it’s rueful irony – that Glasgow’s rich collective imagination thrives, maybe more so than the artists struggling to find traction in the oversaturated cultural cities referenced by Gray. For those, the urban spaces designed for creative progression look a lot like expulsion, from the overpriced studios to gentrified ‘creative’ zoning, many are shunted into chilly winds of commuting to take shelter at a Starbucks for a power outlet, or to a shared studio in a flat-share or draughty unit in the outskirts.

In Glasgow, we are immersed in a city rife with closely overlapping proximities and where contradictions, cultures and palimpsests merge at times mercurial. I’ve often wondered, if like an orchid Glasgow perversely thrives on neglect (as I cling to this theory, dead orchids accumulate stark and withered on my windowsill). Such a Romantic sensibility is no doubt rooted in the problematic image of the flaneur, a drifting aesthete gobbling up dereliction as fuel for poetic excavations (a pastime for the wayward rebellions of those comfortable enough not to need a proper job) although the best flaneurs defy this definition – both de Quincy and Baudelaire were often impoverished, fleeing debtors and raddled with opium. Cities, for those paying attention to its textures are inhabited by imaginations every day yet somehow, it still evades design.

As an writer and artist, the cities streets are often a proxy for my studio, it is here that ideas percolate and city fragments offer compositions of colour and form that are fleeting iterations of the commonplace; spalling concrete and bared rebar, blousy trees and renegade weeds, belching doorways, abandoned phone booths, vinegared chip shops, burnt-out schools and pubs, foxes and gulls, derelict land and perforated facades. These endless configurations offer the sculptural imagination a freshly broken surface, arguably a more dynamic proposition than the blank page or canvas. This fluid and altered mode of experiencing the city is a negotiation between the interiority of the artist, bodies, other subjectivities, space, and place. As such it is a tool for understanding the city, from a material point of view that offers the imagination it’s surfaces, forms, volumes and every aberration in-between.

Punctuated throughout these material noticings are the temporal shifts, how shifting light shapes different aspects of the buildings and streets and with it our experience. Novelist William McIlvanney often refereed to the unique surface quality of Glasgow’s ‘sodden, greasy streets’ redolent of time when it was paved with Cumberland Slate flagstone. When we think about the temporal materiality of a city, it implicates an impressionistic role of memory. For example I cannot encounter a freshly spread tarmac street without conjuring my ‘New Town’ childhood home outside Glasgow where multiplying rapidly near our new Scottish Special Housing Association house, pavements were being poured daily during one hot summer. Transfixed by the process of black tar strewn with white chuckie stones (I’m convinced this material encounter awakened my artistic sensibility) best exposed in a teasing family tale. Exasperated by my physical ineptitude as newly minted ‘pedestrian’, my dad asked why I moved so slowly and never looked where I was going, with my eyes stuck firmly on the still warm tarmac I apparently replied ‘why would I need to look up when outer space and all its stars are right here, under my feet’. ■

**Rhona Warwick Paterson**

Rhona Warwick Paterson is an artist and poet. Using clay, she explores the territory of risk and the migration between state and thought. She is motivated by language as matter, using making and process to explore lived experience in relation to urban space. Warwick Paterson was awarded the Scottish Book Trust Prize for Poetry in 2018, appointed as Associate Artist Gallery of Modern Art (2019-2022) and Research Fellow Theatrum Mundi, London/Paris.



# Art + Building = Architecture

**Art is a necessary function of architecture that lends meaning to what we do as architects. Through our education, we are directed to invest conceptually in our work. I have been reflecting on the measure of this investment and how, to a lesser or greater extent, it affects our output- especially as many of us find the pressures of everyday procurement and business eclipse such folly. To remind us of the joy that art in architecture can inspire, arts curator Patricia Fleming and I have asked a few contemporary artists to make comment through their practice.**

**A short manifesto for art in architecture ...**

Art communicates aesthetically. This means it engages our senses. A celebration of aesthetic is surely more attractive than the opposite. The opposite of the word aesthetic is anaesthetic. If we are provided an aesthetic experience, it engages us. Buildings with no aesthetic ... dull us. The argument for art in architecture is therefore irrefutable. It is dumb culture that is the problem. Our procurement environment is more often fashioned by those who are indifferent to culture with no inherent understanding of value different from cost. This is the space where creative practice needs to lead by example and evidence art as necessity if we are to realise our national aims of becoming the most sustainable, successful, and beautiful small country in the world.

Thankfully, our cultural landscape presents incredible opportunities for architects to make more authentic, intelligent work if we go look for it. Critically, the profession needs to be more generous and open to this prospect. With

every one of us supposed “champions of placemaking”, helping right the wrongs of decades of zonal planning and expansive road construction, the agency that art offers to celebrate locality and distinctiveness is massive. For some architects, the involvement of artists or local makers in their project has become as fundamental as working with an engineer; for most, it remains the exception.

So, if we are agreed that an element of self-expression within an architect’s work is unavoidable, should be encouraged, and is necessary, then can we further curate the artistic input of others into our architectural production? Historically, it was a completely seamless experience where artists and artisans naturally embellished a buildings narrative through ornament, sculpture, mural and more. Sadly, the industrial modern program obliterated this means of making and professionally siloed people. The challenge now is one of curation. We must identify where art can interface with our systematic construction to be layered within our assemblages.

This edition of the RIAS *Quarterly* profiles a range of artists whose work explores diverse themes relating to architecture. We encouraged each artist to reflect on their relationship with the built environment whether through a spatial lens, the body, a formal language or even storytelling, in the hope that we might stimulate new thinking. The visual arts community is open for business. Please take some time to imagine what might be possible... Art + Building = Architecture. ■

Paul Stallan

**“The argument for art in architecture is therefore irrefutable. It is dumb culture that is the problem.”**



# Unbuilding

Throughout my career, I have had the pleasure to support, share and learn about the world from art and artists. Building curiosity and asking questions in a symbiotic and cumulative manner. According to a recent study by MIT<sup>1</sup> approximately 65% of the population are visual learners. Alongside an inbuilt spacial sensitivity, artists create thought provoking art using and recycling materials in imaginative ways. In Scotland we have an abundance of creative talent, working without support and disconnected from existing infrastructure.

Just imagine our small country if we could turn this around. Paid opportunities for artists and our talented creative young people better supported to set up in business. A small percentage are managing to contribute to the world in fresh and engaging ways, but we can do better. Artists are natural communicators; expert story tellers, they experiment, spend time listening, they investigate current debates and question structural systems. Scotland's artists contribute to international debates, pushing the history of art forward in all its forms. The visual arts in the UK, despite the erosion of funding, arts policy failures and the deepening crisis in arts education, is a resilient sector. Words and images are strengthened through dispersal. Like pollen in the wind, thoughts land and ideas continue to grow. I smile whenever I hear the term 'the power of the arts' because I know it's true.

I also know and experience power that suffocates and limits growth. Unlike the artist who strives to communicate complex ideas with infinite generosity. Or the writers who craft words on a page to accommodate the visual imagination of others. Why do we still have old out-dated systems that promote the opposite of transparency, kindness and engagement? One could be cynical and see current progress as just another way for business to increase profits; equality now captured in advertising or green washing to appear relevant. We are not fools but reading images deeply, is becoming less common. This is making it easier to look like you're on the side of change, but know it's still possible to get away with lip service. Our brains are learning to clip images and ignore words that don't tell us instantly what we want to hear. No wonder fake news and deepfakes have

taken hold. Specialists and many in the arts can see through these manipulated images in a second, the normalising of AI will make it harder.

It is safe to say we have all taken a degree of natural visual literacy for granted. Enjoyed even the skill of the advertising executive to say one thing but mean another. If we don't work together to protect and strengthen our ability to read, understand and question images, we may be relegating such aesthetic criticality to the history books or romantic flashbacks. Visual learning has to be the future.

In the 90's, I started to see audience push back in the arts. Lots of chat about 'education' and 'outreach' and 'social inclusion'. Did lots of good, but also generated a degree of 'active disengagement'. Communities being targeted and invited to art 'education' events, exhibition interpretation written for us to 'understand' the artists intention. The perception that an 'arts education' is required to enjoy an exhibition, signalled a 'that's not for me' response from many. Does anyone read about the history of music before turning on the radio or getting on the dance floor? Why then, does going to see something unique and thoughtful in a free, non-monetised space, require a session in the library first? A lot of what I experienced in such policies had the opposite effect from what started out as well intended. The hangover is an administration heavy system competing with individual artists for limited funds, it's just not fair. 'Quiet quitting' is now an act of empowerment used by the individual over the corporation. Backed by the power of social media, speaking your mind is becoming fraught with fear of being cancelled. The individual now has the power to make or break a business or career. Words and images are powerful and the way they land is important.

Words and images are expertly skewered by artist Mithu Sen in the current exhibition *MOTHERTONGUE*, at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne<sup>2</sup>. An article on the exhibition in *Art Review*, opens with the paragraph, 'Throughout the exhibition the artist confronts the Eurocentric modes of communication that shape our social, artistic, technological and political landscapes. It goes on to describe how Sen uses the prefix 'Un' across different mediums of film and text. As you enter the exhibition 'Un –

<sup>1</sup> Article 'In the blink of an eye, Anne Trafton, January 2014, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Senior Author of the study, Mary Potter MIT Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Mithu Sen (b.1971 West Bengal) is a conceptual artist. Extract from the article: 'Mithu Sen Subversion of the Violent Artifices of Language' Vyshnavee Wijekumas, *Art Review* July 2023

<sup>3</sup> Percent For Art initiatives which have take place in the Western world, may be credited to Norway, in 1937 artists succeeded in establishing the 2% rule for decoration purposes. Since 1966 Cultural Councils in the USA and across Europe have state funded the scheme ensuring 0.2-0.3% of construction costs of public buildings are spent on works of art.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the national spatial strategy for Scotland. [www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4](http://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4)

<sup>5</sup> Glasgow is the first city in the UK to adopt a feminist planning directive. GCC agrees that in order to create public spaces that are safe and inclusive for women, and accessible for all members of the community, it is fundamental that women are central to all aspects of planning, public realm design, policy development and budgets. Motion brought to GCC by Councillor Holly Bruce, 27 Oct 2022. Approved by Councillor Bruce and Wardrop, to be adopted as part of the City Development Plan.

<sup>6</sup> Tessa Lynch (b.1984 Surrey UK) is a Glasgow based sculptor often activating artworks with a socially engaged practice.

## Features

### Art + Building = Architecture

acknowledgement’ is projected on the gallery wall declaring the artist’s purpose to actively disengage from ‘the charades of inclusion and artifices of language.’

Artists like Sen inspire us to ask challenging questions and confront often difficult truths. It does the public a huge disservice to have such creativity restricted or watered down. Artists carve out spaces where we can think. Art is also a window on the world and where others can view us. If we agree on this, art has the ability to activate our response in contributing to these debates.

Increasing the opportunities for engagement will not only celebrate art, but also grow our potential to shape the world we want to live in. This way, we are all valued, in the journey towards positive change. Making space in our civic spaces for art; to dwell, contemplate or be inspired without the barriers often associated (rightly or wrongly) with entering an art gallery, makes art accessible to all.

The artists selected by Paul and myself for this edition of RIAS *Quarterly*, demonstrate working practices that shift between indoor/outdoor, sculpture, painting, poetry and public art. Using the tried and tested Percent for Art Policy<sup>3</sup> and engaging artists early is key. Percent for Art also supports novices to commission art with endless examples of good practice and step by step advice. Thanks partly to the instagram generation, Public Art or art in outdoor public spaces is in favour again. Following on from the Covid-19 Pandemic, open space is valued. Commissioning art and working with artists creates opportunities for people to work together, bringing joy to the task of re populating empty shopping streets. Creative solutions are required and there are plenty of artists who can rise to these challenges.

The Scottish Government’s NPF4 Policy 31 – Culture and Creativity<sup>4</sup> spells out the requirements for development proposals to ‘reflect and support our diverse culture and creativity’, with a specific mention of public art. Glasgow City Council’s progressive Feminist Planning Policy<sup>5</sup> also signals real progress towards genuine inclusivity. I am interested in what art and culture can do to shape these policies. However, they require embedded legislation, a toolbox and visual engagement to get the message across to every client, architect, developer and contractor. Hope is building across

many sectors that you can no longer bring a scheme to the table if it does not demonstrate an understanding of our diverse society and the lived experiences of others. Meaning if the design team is all white, or all men, then don’t bother. Go back to the drawing board and look closely at who is missing and get them in.

Like many before, contemporary artists continue to offer unique readings of such subjects. Glasgow based artist Tessa Lynch<sup>6</sup> in the solo exhibition ‘Gardener’ 2019, introduced me to feminist readings of the city and the writer Christine de Pizan, (c.1364-c.1430). Pizan’s most celebrated work, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), depicts Pizan on the cover resplendent in her elaborate medieval dress welding a trowel aloft. The book celebrated women’s accomplishments and pointed to their equal abilities to men’s.

Making it easier for our collective voices to be heard and support for artists and writers to get involved in shaping our lives, can happen immediately without additional funds. Un – complicate procurement, un – build the structures that block those who have been kept out of the decision making process and be creative about the un – managed decline of empty commercial properties in our towns and cities. Over six hundred years ago Pizan brought forth a collection of worthy heroines in her book representing, Reason, Rectitude and Justice to ask each other for help to throw the city’s first cornerstone into place; where it lands is where the city begins. ■

#### Patricia Fleming

Patricia Fleming is an independent curator, art consultant and gallerist based in Glasgow. She represents some of Scotland’s leading contemporary artists including; Christine Borland, Turner Prize nominee (1997), Jacqueline Donachie, winner of the inaugural Freelands Award (2016) and Sekai Machache, who’s work is in the Scottish Parliament Art Collection. Alongside the annual programme of exhibitions and events, Fleming also advises clients on commissioning art in architecture and public art. She has been guest lecturer at Strathclyde University Dept of Architecture, Manchester School of Art, Bergen National Academy of the Arts and L’Ecole Des Beaux Arts, Rennes.

#### Previous page

Sara Barker –  
Reenactment, 2023;  
Patricia Fleming Gallery

Photo: Keith Hunter

Courtesy of the artist and  
Patricia Fleming Gallery,  
Glasgow.



Tessa Lynch works with sculpture, print and performance. Her work offers a feminist reading of the city. She describes her practice as work and life held in one place, intermingling and blurred. With an interest in the politics that shape the world and how they're reflected in what we see and experience. The emotional impact of the environment, specifically the built environment and urban settings, how they're shaped and controlled and, how they shape us.



This page

Raising Tessa Lynch 2014

© Keith Hunter, courtesy Jupiter Artland



# Materials and Disciplines



I have worked on several commissions integrating art and architecture, in varied scales and situations, and find it an exciting and fruitful context to work in. I like it when the art can be seen as an integral part, woven throughout all design aspects – not simply just sprinkled on as a finishing touch. From my perspective, this is a way to sneak meaning into different surfaces and situations; to allow opportunities for the users of the building, and/or the passing public, to notice and interpret these moments on a level that's meaningful – rather than functional or decorative (although it can be both these things too.)

I would love to see artists commissioned on all architecture projects – even to input into and influence the process – I would advocate a 'percent for art' equivalent (or improvement). I think artists have a unique way of bringing the bespoke. For example, making a pattern that adapts and responds to the architecture rather than being applied uniformly across a surface. I also think the organic non-uniformity of any handmade surface brings quality anywhere. As an artist, I notice, appreciate and enjoy these touches, and I believe these qualities are legible to everyone.

What I enjoy about working on architecture or public realm projects is channeling my artistic sensibilities into different techniques, materials and disciplines – using paving as a material in the same way I might use paper in the studio. I relish the idea of my contribution having a longer life than usual, fading into familiarity, or taking on different patinas or resonances over time. By the same token, I also always love how artworks/architecture change depending on your position, the weather, the light, time of day/year etc, and these considerations come in to play in my practice, whether it's in the gallery or outside.

Existentially, the idea that something I have thought of has become part of the fabric of a building or a city, is deeply satisfying – especially for a practice such as mine which mostly comprises of one-off temporary exhibitions which are site specific, short lived, labour intensive, hard to photograph and sometimes self-destructive! ■

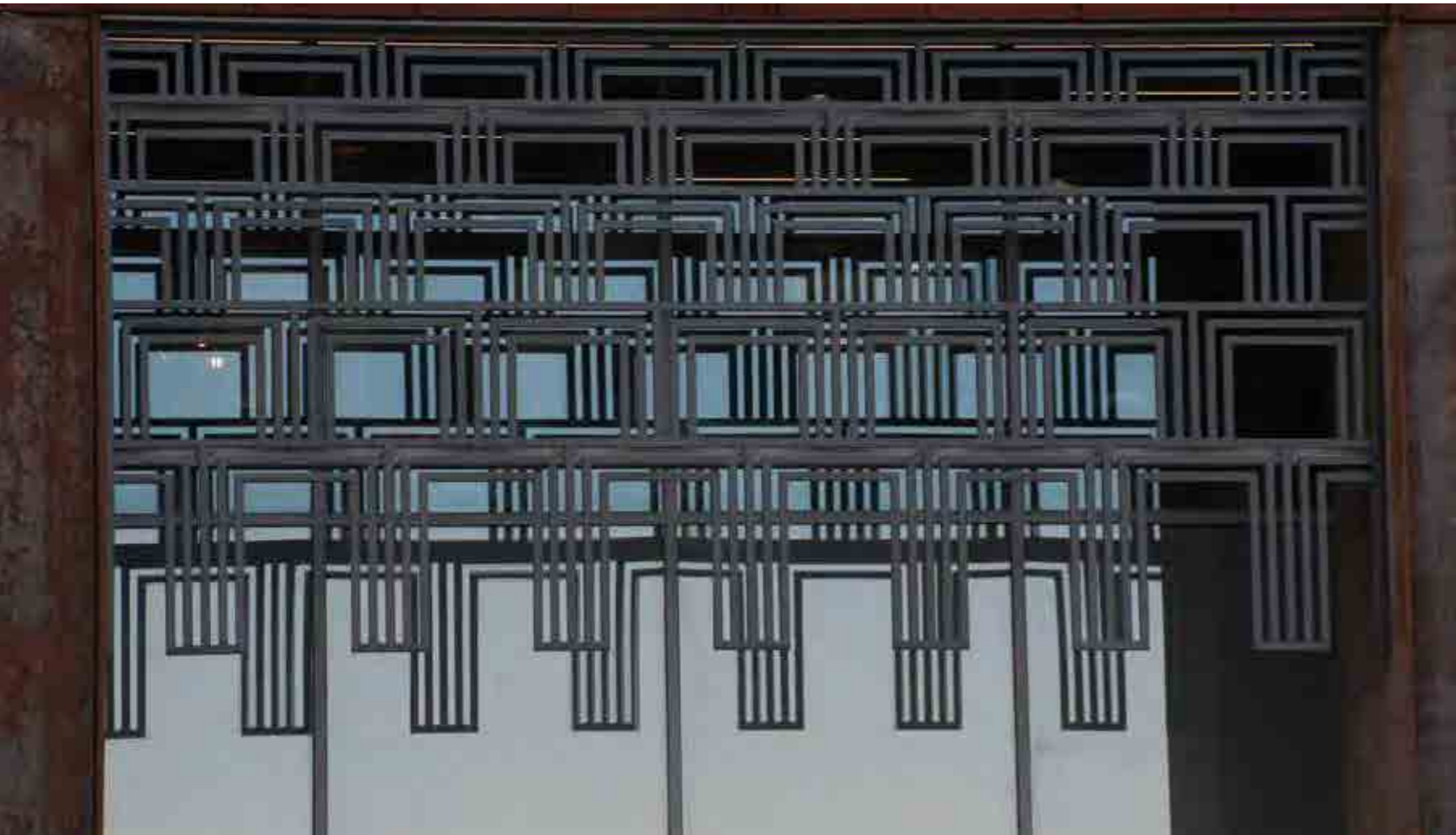
**Kate V Robertson**

All images in this article are courtesy of the artist and Patricia Fleming Gallery

Kate V Robertson works in print, sculpture and installation, with a focus on materials and processes. She selects materials based on their associative connotations, often employing strategies of minimalism, Surrealism and conceptual art. Representational systems of technology, advertising and print media are all explored and tested by the materiality of Robertson's work alongside the dysfunctional nature of obsolescence and its impact on the environment.







**Previous page**

*Semper Solum*, 2016.  
Cast Concrete. Oxford  
House for Glasgow  
International.

© Ruth Clark

*Rainbow Pavilion*, 2021.  
Outdoor classroom.  
Collaboration with  
O'DonnellBrown  
Architects for  
Strathclyde Country  
Park.

© Keith Hunter



**Above**

Fenestration  
commission, Clyde  
Place, Glasgow, 2019.  
Comissioned by Drum  
Property Group.

© Kate Robertson

**Left**

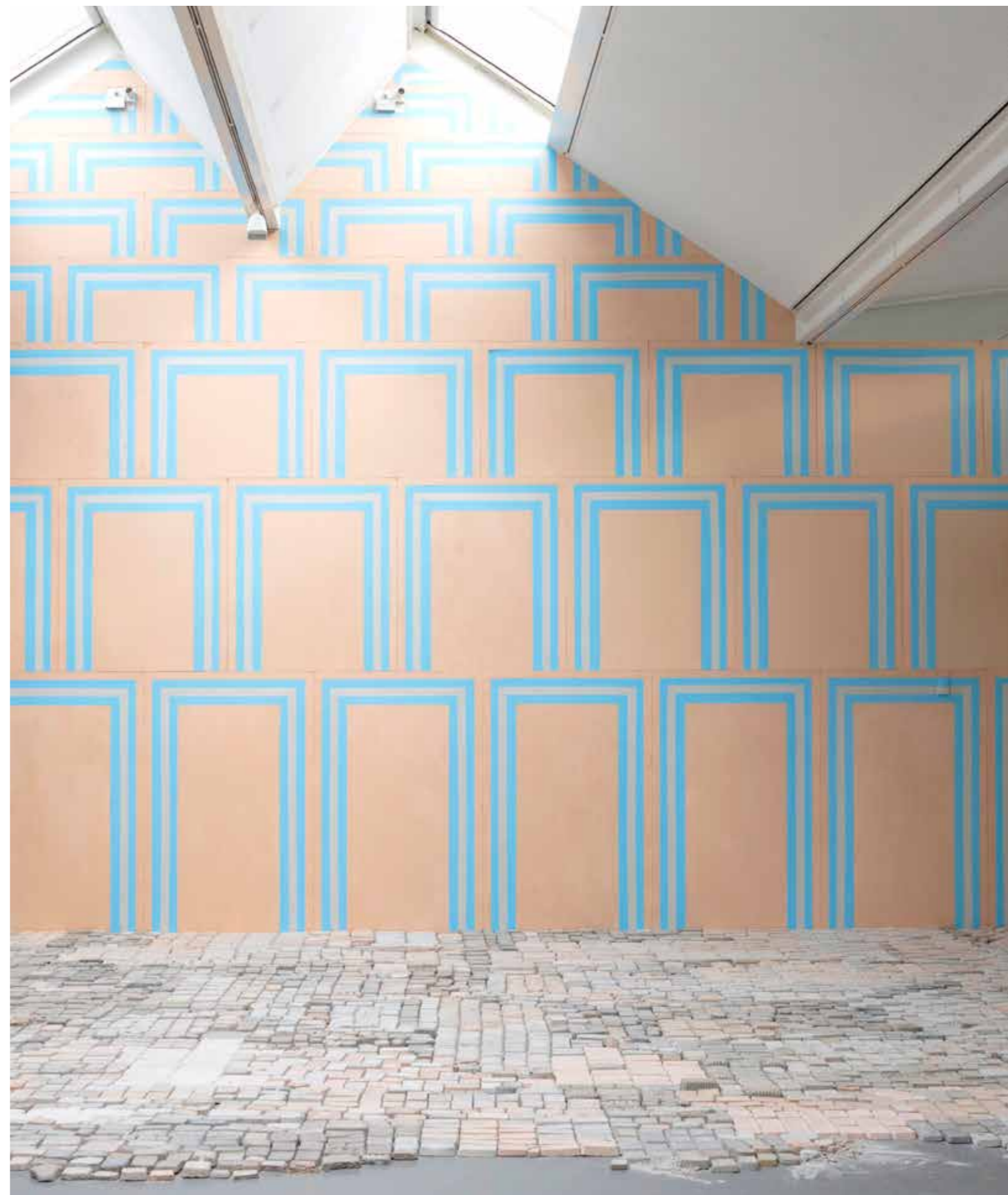
*Semper Solum*, 2016.  
Artist Portrait. Oxford  
House for Glasgow  
International.

© Ruth Clark

**Right**

*This Mess is Kept Afloat*,  
2017. Installation View.  
DCA, Dundee.

© Ruth Clark





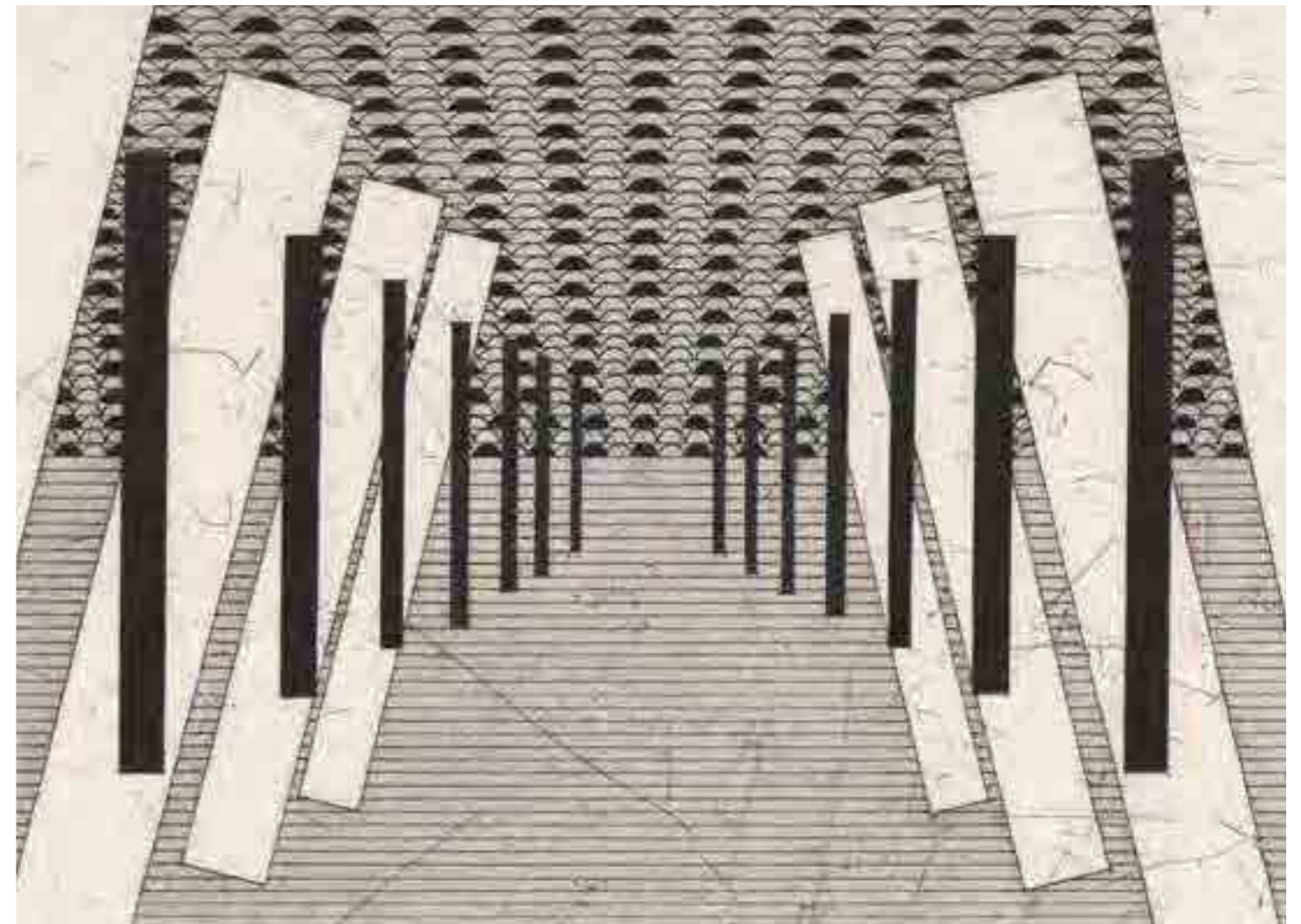
Kate V Robertson  
*Rainbow Pavilion*, 2021.  
Outdoor classroom.  
Curated by Patricia  
Fleming. A collaboration  
with O'DonnellBrown  
Architects for  
Strathclyde Country  
Park commissioned  
by North Lanarkshire  
Council.

© Keith Hunter





# Architecture in Everything



Rachel Duckhouse draws architecture from everything. Rachel deconstructs and reconstructs her whole world into relative visual orders that reveal relationships and connections between all things on a journey of continuous learning. I am reminded that children learn language and social skills by recognising patterns in their environment. They learn statistically through occurrence and reoccurrence. Learning by pattern sensing is surely a feature of one's development as an architect.

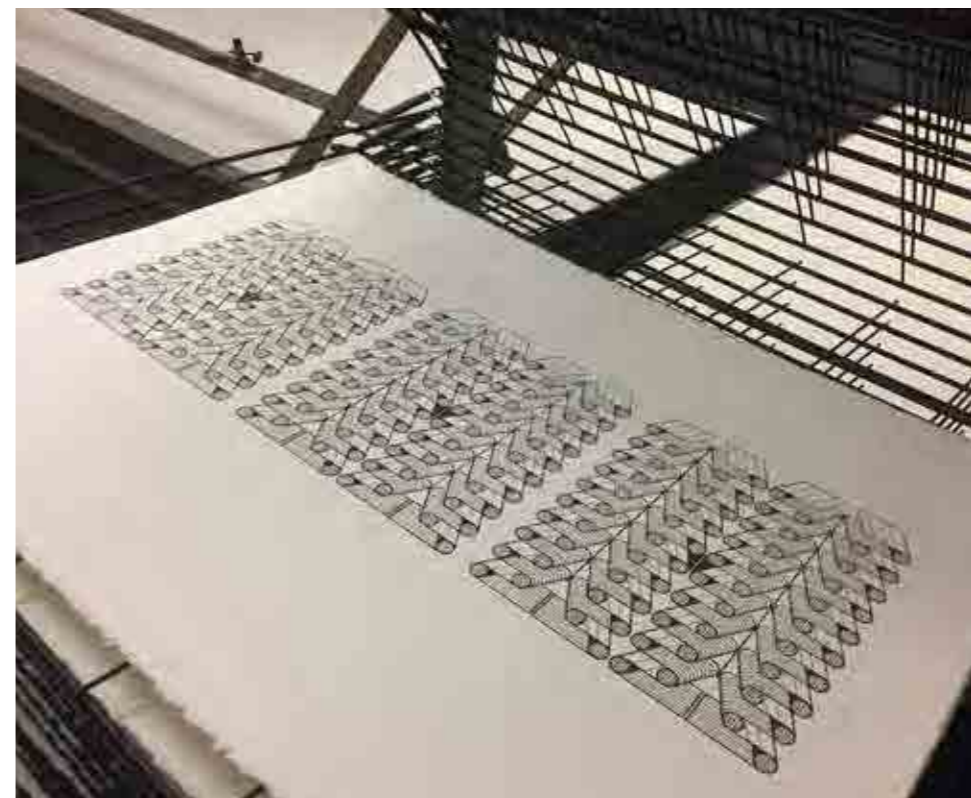
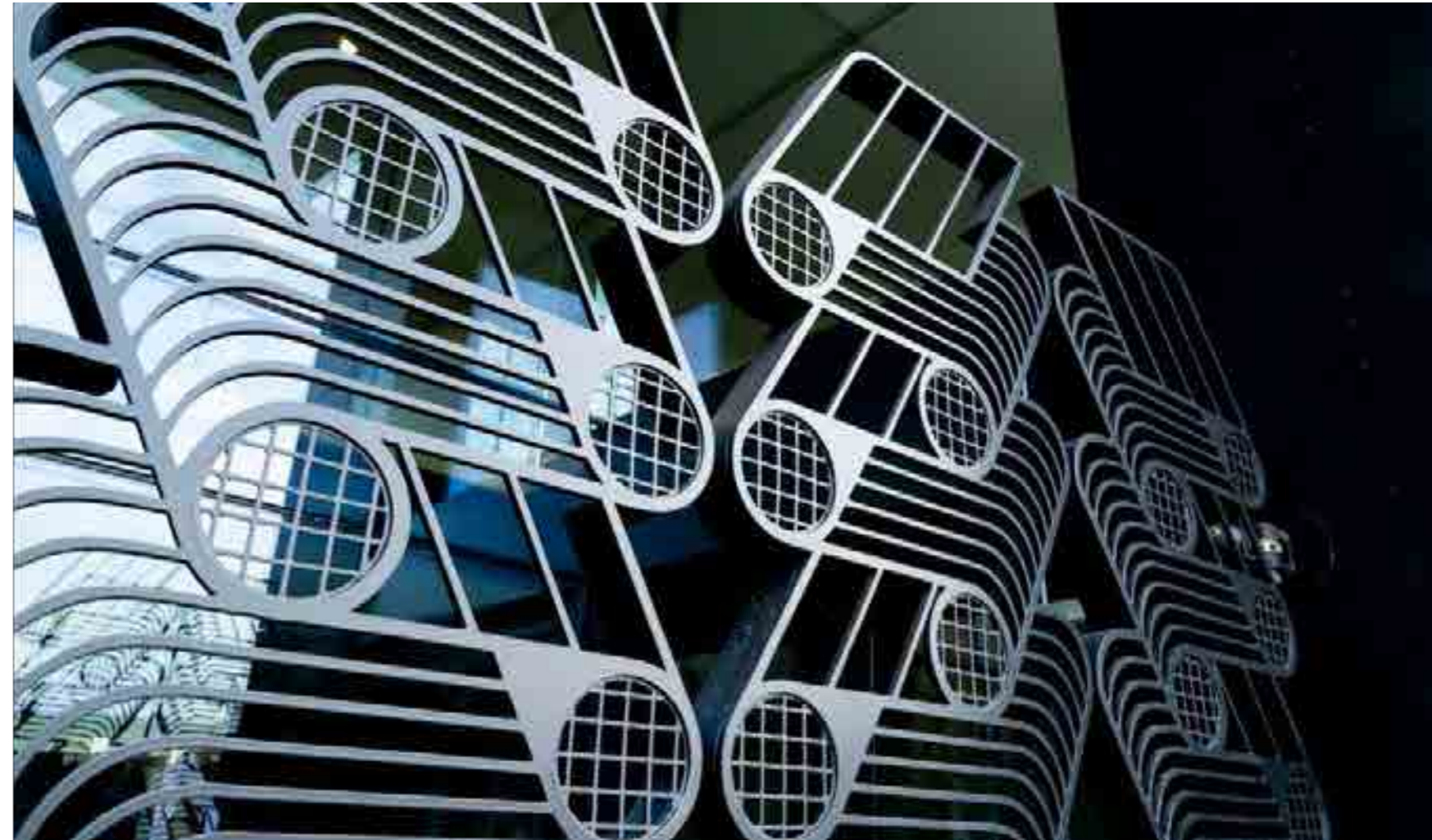
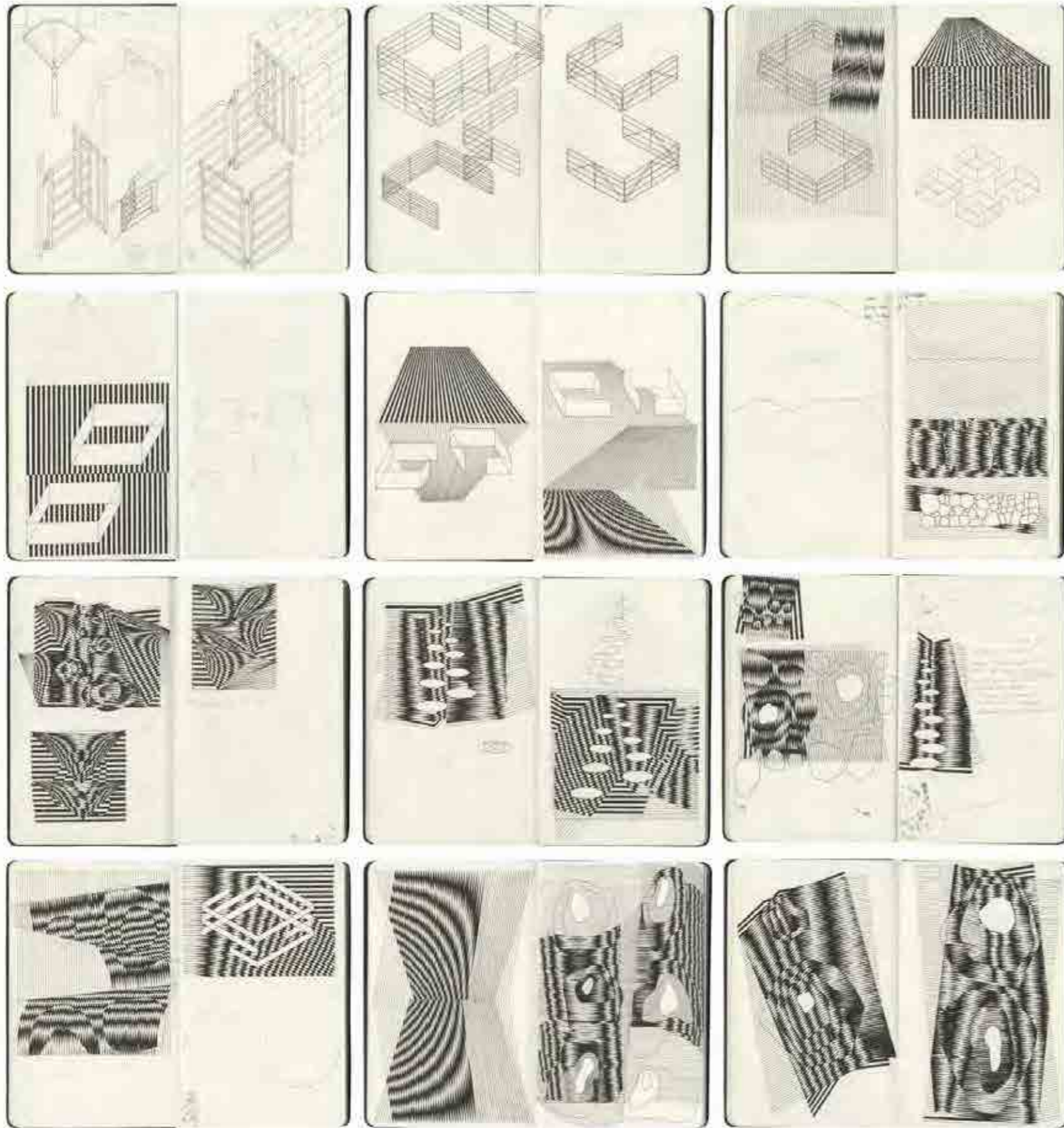
Rachel draws as if trying to decode some existential mystery. Elements of her drawing appear almost Islamic where geometry unites you with Heaven. However, Rachel goes further than mere line compositions to embrace narratives detailing an object caught in a Futurist transition- like Cubism on speed. The work is meticulous, but just less than perfect, reminding you that they are hand drawn- the endeavour awe inspiring.

I look at Rachel's work in envy of her commitment to draughting (a bygone architectur-

al art). Her work seems familiar to me as an architect. Her linear instruction is a form of construction camouflage. Rachel was recently commissioned to design gates for the Edinburgh Print Studio, a successful warehouse remodelling project by Page Park. Her stunning yet understated artwork fundamentally set the tone for the building's cultural function. ■

Paul Stallan

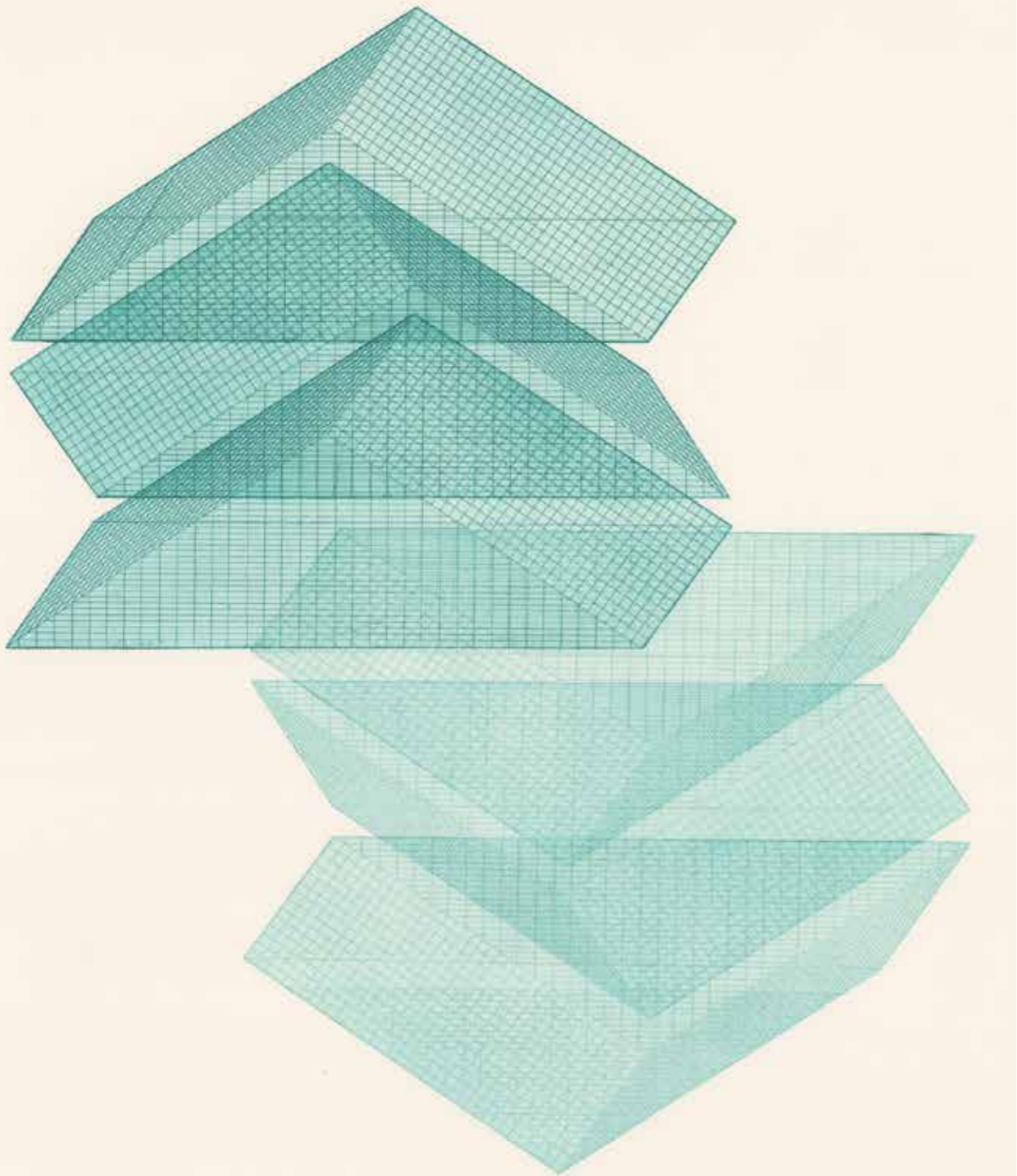




“Rachel Duckhouse uses drawing to explore the dynamic flow and movement of things in relation to each other (sea and wind, buildings and time, walking and looking) and to think about how these things connect to social history, personal experience and memory. She seeks out flows and forms that can be investigated through walking, conversation, observation and sketchbook drawing, and developed into larger scale pen and ink drawings and/or etchings. Her drawings are made in response to places; looking backwards and forwards from one time and space to another, allowing experiences of different landscapes and architectures to overlap on etching plates and paper.”

*The Royal Scottish Academy*





**Left**

The St Enoch Centre  
and its Ghost, 2022

© Rachel Duckhouse

**Previous page**

Taig Chearsabghagh  
Sketchbooks II, 2022

© Royal Scottish Academy /  
Rachel Duckhouse

**Sketch**

© Rachel Duckhouse

Gates, Edinburgh Print  
Studio

© Rachel Duckhouse

Rachel Duckhouse makes drawings about the structure and movement of things in relation to each other (sea and sun, cells and surfaces, architecture and memory). She's interested in how things connect to landscapes, social histories, and imagined futures, and how pattern seems to underpin most things. Her works are inspired by physical experience, conversation and observation. She has worked on several public art commissions, including the entrance gates to Edinburgh Printmakers.



# Joy, Beauty and the Built Environment

In many cultures across Africa women create abstract murals often on earth buildings. They turn everyday spaces, such as their homes, into beautiful works of art. These arts are communal and temporary. They are refreshed and renewed for celebrations such as festivals, weddings and ceremonies. Through my art I remember my foremother's practices. My maternal foremothers practiced uli. Uli is the ancient wall and body painting tradition of the Igbo women of Southeastern Nigeria.

I love that uli is created purely for joy.

*"Uli makes me happy and I am happy today"*

- Mrs. Alebechukwu Nwedi, uli artist

*The Legendary Uli Women of Nigeria by Ambassador (Dr.)*

Robin Renee Sanders

What would it be like if we brought more joy into our built environment? What could that look like? What collective conditions would be needed? How would this affect our sense of being: individually, collectively, spatially, relationally with the earth?

*joy (n.)*

*c. 1200, "feeling of pleasure and delight"*

*c. 1300, "source of pleasure or happiness"*

My explorations have led me to the wisest teacher, nature. The pause, the starting point.

There is so much beauty.

A chorus of hundreds of small brown birds, gathered, singing in unison on a cold morning. The joy of a dog bounding across the river to say hello. The laughter and high pitched screams of children playing. A magpie smacking a dog's tail. The smell of earth after it rains.

There is brutality too.

Two crows eating a bird's egg. A bird pecking at a dead squirrel. A worm lying squashed on the pavement. A pigeon hobbling with one foot. An uprooted tree felled by strong winds. The earth slowly swallowing human trash.

*"Ife kwulu, ife akwudebe ya,"*

*"when one thing stands, something else stands beside it"*

– Igbo proverb

The more I pause, the more I notice that everything is in constant motion. The bud that's here today, may be a flower tomorrow, or carried by the wind the day after.

I'm learning to accept that all is temporary. All is passing. All is dual.

*"But time is life, and life exists in our hearts,*

*and the more of it that the people saved, the less they actually*

*had."*

– Michael Ende, Momo

If we accept, truly accept, that all is transient how would that change what we bring into being? How would we create if we remembered that everything comes from the earth and to the earth everything returns?

I love that Igbo women's response to this transience is to come together to create art in celebration of life's moments.

To let the paintings be washed away in the rain creating space for the new.

To create beauty for no other purpose than joy.

*"Beauty is the signal of the good ...*

*We, deep in ourselves,*

*if we start listening to that cellular truth,*

*which used to keep us alive,*

*we will create beautiful things in beautiful ways ...*

*And so when we see something in the natural world,*

*it's not just its ratio or its form that's beautiful.*

*It's beautiful because it's healthy."*

– Janine Benyus, biologist,

author and innovation consultant

*On Being* podcast ■

Grace Browne

Grace Brown is a Glasgow based Nigerian-British artist with a background in community development and architecture. Her research focuses on African women's communal arts with embodied practices of rest and joy. Grace is currently exploring natural materials to reimagine relationships with ecology, ancestry and the body.

In 2021, she was commissioned by Sustrans to make a public art work at Glasgow Green. She has exhibited at New Glasgow Society and internationally with community organisations.

## Overleaf

Mural Triptych by Grace Browne. Public art in Glasgow Green. 2021. Commissioned by Sustrans.

© Colin Howden







This page,  
clockwise from top

Sea of Tears

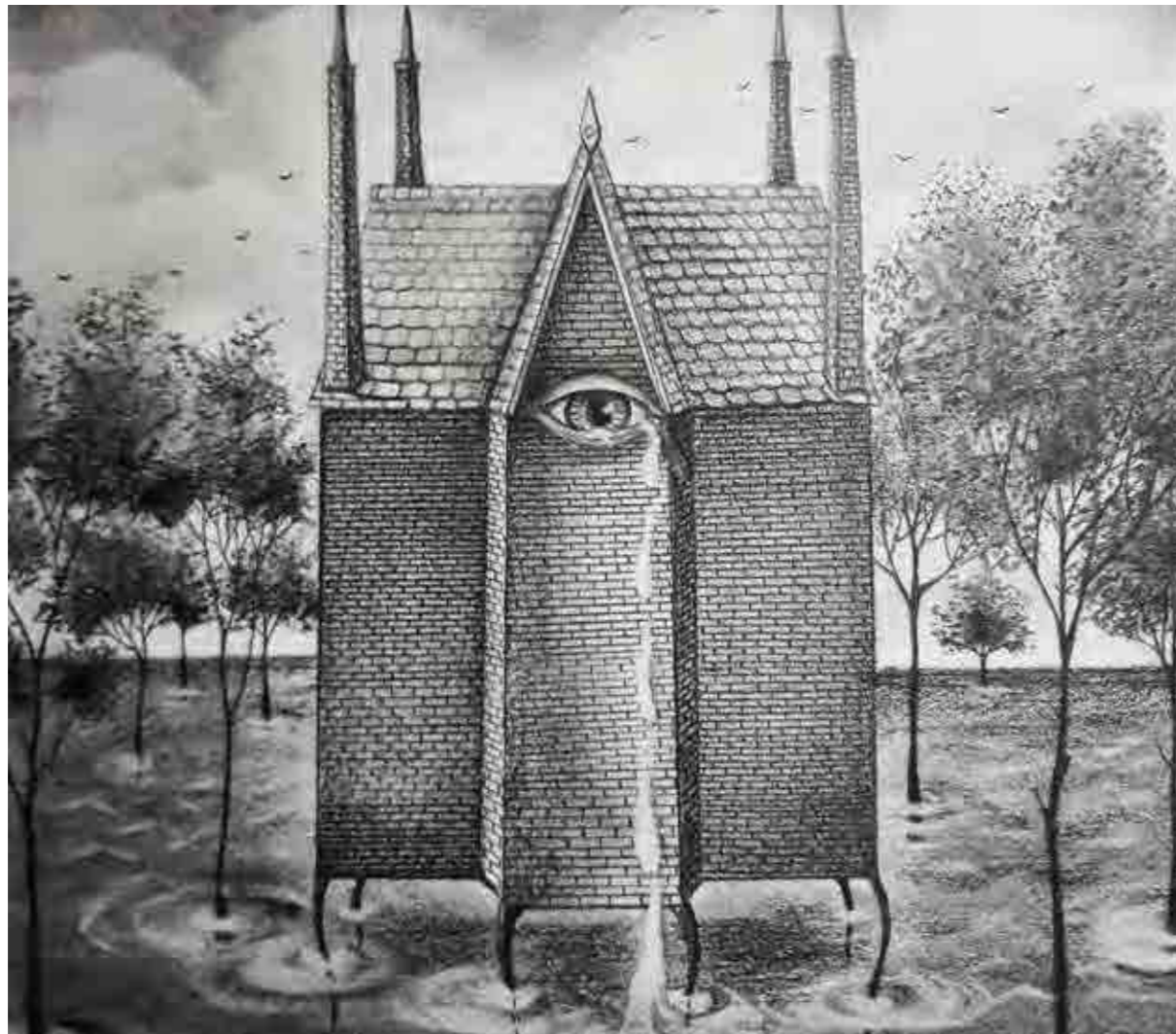
© Heather Nevay

The Tower

© Heather Nevay

Imagined town in the  
Landscape

© Heather Nevay



## Rooms within Rooms

I have been painting professionally for over 30 years and from the start have been directly influenced by the beauty of the landscapes and exquisite townscapes of Cranach, Breugel, Bellini and Bosch. The scale, palette and form of their paintings has seeped into my mind's eye, making me reach for the timeless quality I find so beguiling in their work. To create atmosphere is equally as important to me as narrative in my practice, whether that is tension, fear or just a vague feeling of disquiet.

My paintings are an imaginative and figurative reflection of the ideas and thoughts forming in my head, all made up primarily in response to words and phrases heard or read, or to aspects of life around me which can stimulate visually responsive imagery.

Over many years I have developed a process and iconography to allow me to explore how to represent something as ephemeral as a feeling or emotion figuratively and literally on the canvas. Part of this iconography is placing imagined structures, or even just indications of rooms, within a landscape or interiors.

I use these architectural spaces or structures within my paintings for two purposes. Firstly, as a literal depiction of an imagined space – a doll's house, a hospital ward or as in my latest work, a ghostly box like tonal structure which represents a meeting room. They are places in which to set the scene.

Whether by intention or as a shorthand image, they all tend to form the basic child's idea of a doll's house, open fronted and elevated on "legs" like a wardrobe or Balayaga's Hut from the Russian folktale, with ladders propped to allow access into the space. Frequently the house structure morphs and begins to resemble a theatre stage, the obvious place in which I can create the narrative as tableaux.

The simple representation of such ubiquitous imagery allows me to play with ideas knowing they will be universally recognised and understood.

The second use of a physical space or "room" within my paintings is purely as a representation of something difficult to envisage – a thought, a mood or feeling.

So, the feeling of guilt could be indicated by a burnt-out house (dollhouse structure) placed behind a figure in the

My paintings are an imaginative and figurative reflection of the ideas and thoughts forming in my head, all made up primarily in response to words and phrases heard or read, or to aspects of life around me which can stimulate visually responsive imagery.

landscape. The burnt-out structure is a vestige of the crime committed and represents the guilt of the figure in the painting. It also creates an atmosphere of tension.

When I was exploring the notion of modern tribalism, I painted a ghost-shape box of a room structure using tone to indicate the space rather than line. There are three figures within this room-form which "holds" their thoughts and opinions within its "walls". It is both a literal indication of space and a simple visualisation of a meeting of minds. Thus, it represents the commonplace Meeting Room where the tribe or likeminded gather, my authentic interpretation of thoughts in an echo chamber.

Domestic room-scape compositions offer a rich source of storytelling possibilities and scene setting through the familiarity of the contents – beds, chairs etc – and through placing the unfamiliar within this visual shorthand of everyday interiors, tensions can be raised or a sense of discomfort felt.

I enjoy the relaxation of leaving behind the rules of real life and creating these architectural spaces and forms to help me to open up the imagery of the painting, thus expanding the scope of the viewer's interpretation. ■

Heather Nevay

Heather Nevay was born in Glasgow, Scotland on 13th January 1965. She studied at Glasgow School of Art and graduated with BA Hons., Art and Design (Printed Textiles) in 1988. Heather exhibits regularly at the Compass Gallery and Cyril Gerber Fine Art, Glasgow, and the Portal Gallery, London. Heather has also exhibited many times in important mixed shows at The Royal Scottish Academy, The Society of Scottish Artists, The Royal Glasgow Institute, and at the London and Glasgow Art Fairs. Heather uses symbolism to express ideas of heroism, weakness, fear and the shifting balance of human relationships. Her paintings are mostly figurative with characters framed within scenic architecture and landscapes.





# For What is an Empty Hoose but a Body Without Organs

'I am the space where I am'<sup>1</sup> claims the poet Noël Arnaud. Our experience of the build environment is defined by the tectonic language of the surrounding spaces we inhabit. We confront the world with our bodies; we touch, trace, taste, hear everything around us with our senses. We are in a constant tectonic dialogue with the world which revolves around our personal universe spiraling from the centre of our bodies. Architecture gets activated through us. As Juhani Pallasmaa put it 'The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.'<sup>2</sup>

As a practicing architect and multimedia visual artist I am interested in the intrinsic relationship between the spaces we inhabit and our bodies, the ways architecture and ourselves could coalesce through the medium of photography and painting and the tangible and intangible parallels that could be drawn between the morphology of both.

My artistic practice embraces the potential transactions between the body, imagination and its surrounding environment through various photographic methods including slow and double exposure, use of slow shutter speed, deliberate light bleaching and blurring which creates various types of digital or analog layering of the subject on top of itself or the surrounding spaces in an ephemeral, ethereal and ghostly manner that aims to merge body with space and space with body.

This allows for the recording of an evanescent moment that is happening in a fraction of a second, to become imprinted and remembered within its environment with its temporary geometrical arrangement inevitably defined by its surrounding context. Fundamentally, this record of movement aims to provoke the imagination and speculate a story about the temporary nature of inhabitation, a certain tale of contained existence.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that 'our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive; it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system'.<sup>3</sup> Made of a skeleton, organs, the biggest of which being our envelope, the skin, our bodies are like a piece of architecture – with a structural frame, interior and façade. We are living systems, perfect machines and like our built surroundings, we are subject to the natural aging processes and weathering, bearing the traces of time and the elements. The interior and exterior of both buildings and bodies have surfaces onto which experiences, emotions, relationships and histories inscribe themselves. The skin and the façade are an interface to the world, a sensory storehouse of memory.

The gradually accumulated patina onto the surface of our skin or the façade of a building in the form of wrinkles, cracks, scars, scratches, marks, tattoos, graffiti is a carrier of remembrance. "All matter exists in the continuum of time; the patina of wear adds the enriching experience of time to the materials of construction."<sup>4</sup> Similar to ourselves, architecture is something transient and everchanging, it is a 'verb rather than noun as it is active, not a static moment in time'.<sup>5</sup> This constant ageing defines an aesthetic based on the "inevitability of transience"<sup>6</sup> whilst engraving traces of impermanence and solidifying an identity onto an ever-changing haptic canvas.

My recent practice reimagines this process of patina accumulation in the form of paintings and fabric installations through an abstract but highly haptic method of representation that aims to reinterpret the surface of the body (or a façade) and its interaction with its surroundings. This tangible type of representation needs to be investigated closely and is expressed through creating series of 'distortions' or 'scars' onto the multi layered fabric surfaces with varying transparencies such as burn marks, wax stains, ripped edges, folded and sown surfaces, dips and troughs caused by pulling of the canvas, crawling sown stitches, layered oil paint or bleached sections onto delicate semi-transparent or solid patchwork of sown fabric pieces. On top of this expressive distortion is a layer of oil paint with occasional suggestive figurative shapes forming an

1. Noël Arnaud, L'État d'ébauche (Paris: Le Messenger Boiteux de Paris, 1950).

2. Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter MacKeith, and Steven Holl, The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses, Third edition. (Wiley, 2013).

3. Maurice-Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London Routledge, 1945).

4. Pallasmaa, The Eyes of the Skin.

5. Roisin Tinnerly, Fingerprints of the Mac (Dissertation), (Glasgow School of Art, 2015-2016).

6. Stewart Brand, How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built, (London: W&N, 1997).

## Opposite page

Portrait of a Woman in Black (2021); Slow Exposure Digital Photograph

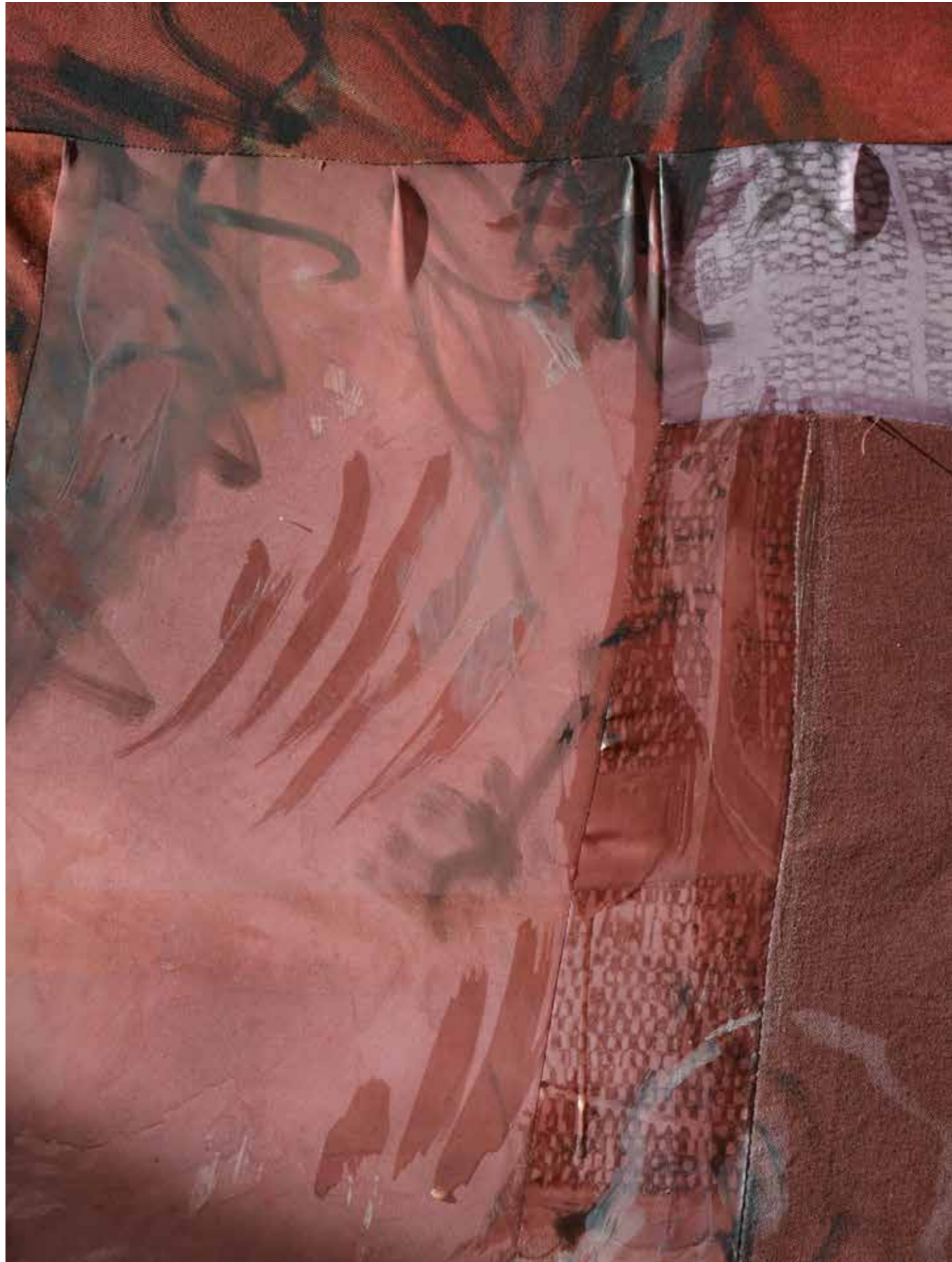
© Veronika Desova



Right

*Division* (2022) - Detail; oil and wax on canvas, dyed chiffon, satin; 122cm x 92cm

© Veronika Desova



Opposite page from top

*Division* (2022); oil and wax on canvas, dyed chiffon, satin; 122cm x 92cm

© Veronika Desova

*Residual Scars* (2022); oil and wax on chiffon, canvas, plastic; 168cm x 135cm

© Veronika Desova



abstract but complimentary narrative further expressing the individual presence and intimate story of each work whilst recording a memory of brush action. Wax 'stains' are often instinctively placed by hand causing burns. They leave traces of touch with a ghostly presence. The sensation of touch is defined by its ephemeral nature leaving invisible, delicate and temporary marks whilst in the paintings it is permanently cemented through wax. Its memory is visually recorded. Furthermore, the act of stretching of the dyed and sown fabric onto the frame often rips the fragile semi-transparent fabric causing 'scars' and open holes through the stitches from the created tension. The crawling stitches deform the fabric mimicking the waving skin surrounding crust of the scars and burn marks expose the inner layers of surfaces.

My interest in creating a palimpsest of textures through the various described methods aims to embrace and amplify the accidental or deliberate imperfections of the fabric surfaces with its deformations whilst reinforcing the narrational potency that the process of ageing might bring. The patina is a symbol of life itself and has the potency to create an identity, a voice, an atmosphere.

These strange, elusive skins present a paradoxical combination of forms that are sturdy yet fragile, transitory yet perpetual, solid yet flexible; they are echoes of time. ■

Veronika Desova

Veronika is an artist and architect from Bulgaria, based in Glasgow. Her practice explores the fields of painting, photography, sculpture and architecture. She is interested in the relationship between the body and the spaces we inhabit. Veronika uses photography to focus on the ephemeral and ethereal aspects of the human body in movement, architecture, nature and light, through the use of slow and double exposure, blurring and various other methods of image distortion. Recent works have been included in 'A Fragile Correspondence', Scotland at the Venice Biennale 2023. She won the RSA Gold Medal for Architecture at the 196th Annual Exhibition, Edinburgh (2023).



# Through Forms



I love the subtle and hidden beauty that can be found within architecture, particularly Brutalism. By distilling and highlighting these sublime architectural elements, this documentation is a tactical way of archiving this dying, and almost extinct movement.

My interest in architecture is something which I have continuously been captivated by, the powerful structures and materials of buildings has always fascinated me. Although the styles I have focused on over the years have changed, the rudimental elements have stayed the same and I continuously push the boundaries of two- and three-dimensional forms. My practice examines the notion of space and how we experience and re-represent it.

My paintings are multifaceted representations of Brutalist and Modernist architecture with composition, form and structure playing an integral part. Developed from my

photographs, the compositions are built up from multiple viewpoints. Creating countless drawings on tracing paper allows me to refine the places I want to portray, before translating them into paintings.

The refined compositions highlight the hidden beauty of these buildings that are often overlooked, presenting the structure through a different lens, my own lens. Deconstructing these spaces allows me to give a nod to what already exists, changing it to be viewed differently and refining them to simple forms that only hint at architecture, creating new revised blueprints of these influential structures that are slowly disappearing from society. Although they are slowly fighting back, within the pieces the buildings persist and refuse to fade. The titles are a reflection on their inspiration and although they may exist in real life, they will only hint back to the real starting point.

**Above**  
Olivia Turner and her work  
© Martin Shields



Although I am primarily a painter the outcomes which I produce can vary from each opportunity I am faced with. Where possible I like to create site specific work that fully immerses the viewer into a space. My larger painterly installations focus strongly on perspective and the viewer's physical interaction with the piece. It relies on them trying to find the sole point where the installation comes together and all the perspectives meet. Much of the meaning behind the larger works became very clear through the process of making.

Collaborating recently with other artists has been a really interesting and enjoyable process. These projects have really challenged my way of working and have pushed me out of my comfort zone. It has given me the confidence to investigate other ideas which may never have come to fruition otherwise.

Up until now painting has been the main medium which I have continuously been refining and experimenting with as a final outcome. Whilst this has provided me with a strong visual foundation, I feel by shifting my practice into the third-dimension, I can really bring the viewer closer to how I visually perceive space and perspective. By translating and shifting my output it allows the viewer to have a more physical interaction with these structures. This is my main aim for a new body of work I am currently working on for an upcoming exhibition in September. The new plaster works will include fragments of architectural forms which will be manipulated by the light; these pieces could sit within architecture but could also be integrated within it. ■

Olivia Turner

**Above**  
S86 5EY – 63 x 93cm;  
acrylic on board in a  
concrete frame  
© Olivia Turner

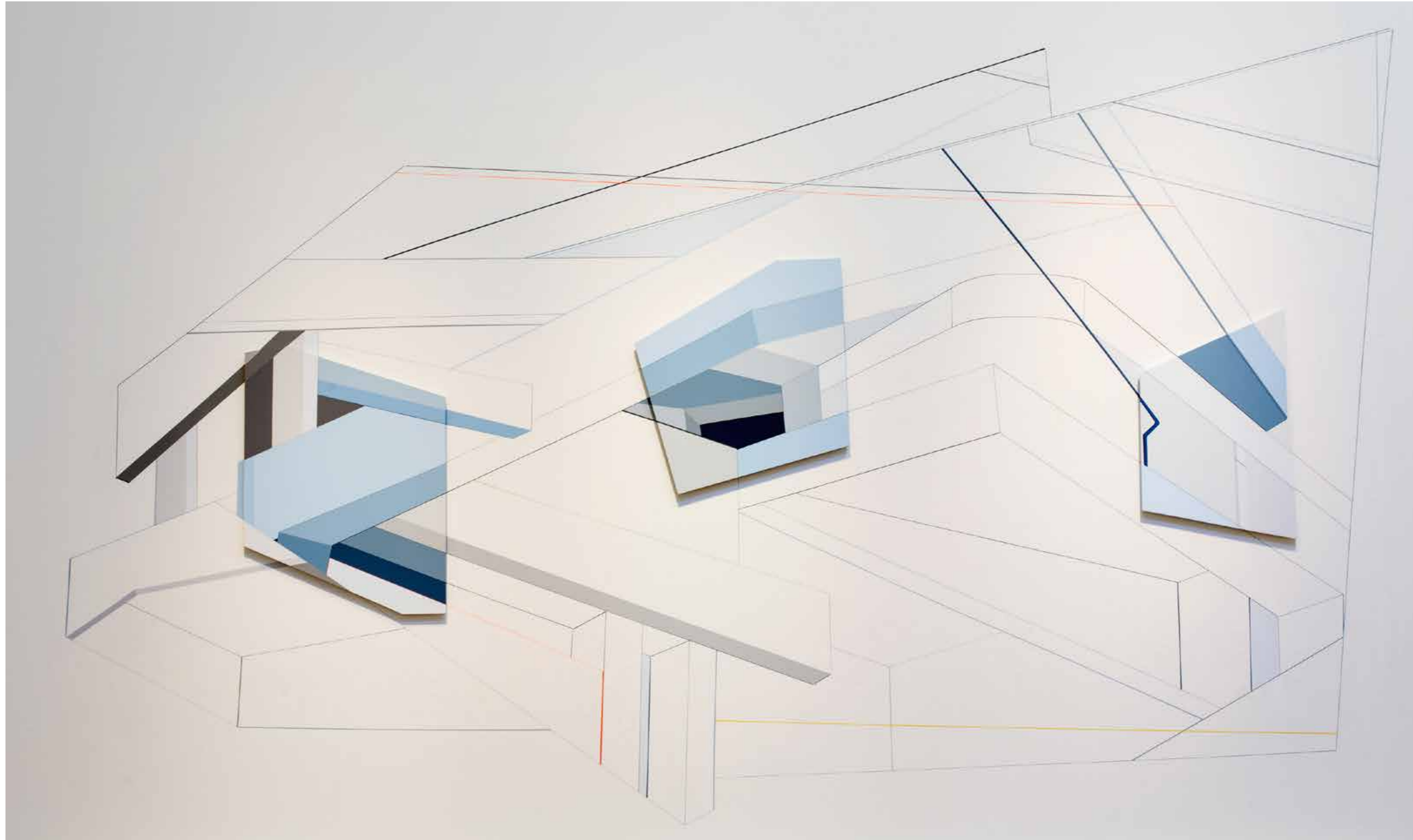


Right

New Contemporaries

© Olivia Turner

Olivia Turner is an Edinburgh-based artist. Olivia's work focuses on manipulating spaces to create two/ three dimensional outcomes. In 2015 she co-founded DOK Artist Space, a grass-roots contemporary exhibition and studio space in Edinburgh. She has been a recipient of several Awards: including RSA Latimer Award; RSA Sir William Gillies Bequest Award; Open Contemporary Young Artist Award. In 2018 she co-produced the Architecture Fringe Festival in Scotland and has recently finished a term as the President of Society of Scottish Artists.





# Architecture Needs More Lovers

James Baldwin said that the role of the artist is exactly the same as the role of the lover. 'If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't see.'

Architecture needs more lovers.

In my long career as an artist I have plenty of experience of working in the public realm. Much of that insight comes from the length of time I have been able to spend learning about space, both actual and conceptual. Where the artworks are going to be, who walks past, hangs around, kicks a ball, smokes a joint. Not so much working with the communities but watching them. Sitting in cafes, having a chat. Often these experiences come as the result of a short residency that enlightened funding enabled, in tandem with studio research, and reading. Listening is good. Watching is better. Why do women walk there/ not go there. Where is the shelter? Is that safe? Desire Lines are great teachers.

My time at GSA Environmental Art in the 1980s was exemplary in the deconstruction of my perceived ideas about art and the world at large (via politics, fashion and beer) and the learning I was given access to in libraries, shared studios and through compulsory public art assignments that had high demands. Plan it, make it, stand next to it in the street and talk about it. That process informs my working practice still, whether that be in the public realm or in a gallery. The use of materials is key, what works for you to say what you want to say, and the research is both theoretical and material

based – the joy of an art school Fine Art degree. Think and make.

That use of materials – from film to concrete to chalk – has enabled me to articulate lived experience – my own and that of others close to me – in ways that amplify gaps in civic society. How do you navigate a city with a pram, or a wheelchair? What happens when you want to ride a bike safely? Where do we gather without spending money? This process informed a recent commission that was part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art in 2021. STEP was created as a response to the often challenging access for buildings and venues that we love, by using inventive research based on the simple structure of a step and how it both limits and provides access, exercising an overlay of the temporary solutions we often see when adapting old buildings for public use. It considered how we might get to them, both physically and conceptually.

STEP itself was a modular work cast from pigmented concrete covering 20 square metres, sited at Govan Graving Docks. The location situated you at the edge of Glasgow city centre, visible to the east looking across the vast and vacant contested space that itself is weighed down by the demands of heritage, the restrictions of civic funds and the need for restoration and development. The piece is based on imaginary and unfeasible overlay ramps for two of the buildings originally surveyed – Civic House (built 1920's) and

## Above

STEP Govan Graving Docks, Glasgow International Festival of Visual Arts 2021. Commissioned by Govan Project Space.

Image: Matthew Barnes, courtesy of the artist.

The Royal Faculty of Procurators building (built 1850's). The concrete access ramps combined act as a visualisation of something awkward and cumbersome that is the standard response where steps make an entrance inaccessible; broken up, they create a place to commune and begin a much-needed discussion about new ways for everyone to access their city. There were more works in the gallery, made in response to the borderline absurd idea, due to the number of steps, of producing a ramp for the low-level Queens Park railway station, a place which is also home to the cherished arts space Queens Park Railway Club. Like many older railway stations in Scotland, including most of the Glasgow subway system, Queens Park was built with many stairs and no lifts. Our ambitious Victorian infrastructure, designed by ambitious Victorian men, yet again catching out every pram, limp, stick or wheel that approaches it.

The work set out to challenge our built environment and its effect on those marginalised by its incoherent nature but it also question the role that temporary large scale public art has in addressing civic issues, without the work itself becoming a burden after the event. It drew attention to a vacant, contested site and provided somewhere to sit as you contemplated the view, and the conundrum of heritage that was raised. STEP solved nothing and was on site for two weeks, before being moved to a new permanent home in the garden at SWG3, in a partnership facilitated by Sculpture

Placement Group to address the after-life of temporary large scale sculpture. It was the sculptural equivalent of a Short Life Working Group, to borrow some business terminology, prompting conversation, providing a reason to go, and demonstrating one of the rules I set myself in in engaging people with a site. If you want them to tell you what they think, you need to open the gates.

Nobody lives in my work or has to shelter from rain or wind. My artwork is a gesture, something that can look odd, or beautiful, cheering or still. More often than not it is made in response to something that isn't there. Architecture does not quite have that luxury of a simple conceptual or sensual provision, but it does have a vast building industry underpinning its processes, and long lead in times as plans are made. Here is when artists should come in, to question each stage. Do some watching, perhaps spend time with the site and adjacent communities in quiet ways that are not timed, or that are timed differently. A slower approach than the public charette of a paper plan on a board in the school or the library, boards that excel in attracting the retired local inquisitors because everyone else is at work or taking their kids to football or swimming. Slowness brings different insight than a desk or a meeting, making architecture conscious of the things outside the remit.

Artists make good lovers. ■  
Dr. Jacqueline Donachie

Dr. Jacqueline Donachie is an award-winning Scottish artist known for her socially engaged art. Her practice is rooted in the exploration of the individual, family and collective identity, questioning the structures, platforms and spaces (both actual and conceptual) where this is constructed and supported. She is Baxter Fellow in Creative Economies at DJCAD University of Dundee. Her work is held in many national and international public collections, including Tate, Glasgow Museums and the Arts Council of Great Britain.





Left and overleaf

Lack of Light

© Paul Stallan

## Lack of Light

Paul's arts practice has been evolving in parallel with his architectural career, spanning some thirty years. There is no hierarchy between the two. The importance of drawing; the immediacy and agency over a single line leads him through art to architecture and back again.

The sketchbook is undoubtedly Paul's primary site, here he is free to test and experiment with light and shade, with colour and humour. Memory shapes us, it plays a critical role in our development. It conveys our identity and points to where we come from. Our experiences create the story, formed over time by our sense of self and mingles with others. In Paul's work, place becomes the stage where our memories play out. We in turn are shaped by these places. Collage enables Paul to recreate these scenes through borrowed images,

fragments, flashes of colours and text. It makes sense to switch it around, try things upside down. Dimensions are tested, architectural discipline and parameters questioned.

The new paintings in *Lack of Light* are views through a landscape of memories, to where lights pulse in the dark, barely seen through black facades. The large canvases read as over-scaled windows. They evoke remnants of a former building, a single facade still standing after all else has been flattened.

Paul's early memories of growing up in Glasgow are tangled in his imagery. A period of significant change in the city's shape and character, the soundtrack, the culture, and its people are omnipresent in his challenging *mise en scène*. ■

Patricia Fleming

"As a counter to the dislocation I experienced growing up in urban Glasgow, I have been driven to value the art of place. My lived experience has encouraged me to posit a vernacular and civic architecture that celebrates our 'here', our 'genius loci' our situation, through art. I am certain that our unique climates and our actual place on earth influences and shapes how we engage with the world. I am interested in championing architectural projects in Scotland that do not look to sunny climates for inspiration but instead our own Sublime tradition. I am interested in promoting architecture for our unique location for lack of a blue sky. The late Andy MacMillan beautifully articulated the necessary function of 'local variation' and the importance of art in architecture different from mere building."

Paul Stallan





Paul Stallan's arts practice is borne from his architectural process. He is the design principal of Stallan-Brand, a studio that he established with architect Alistair Brand. He has designed award-winning education, urban regeneration and cultural projects locally and internationally, including the 2014 Commonwealth Games Village. He was a member of the team who delivered the new Scottish Parliament.

Stallan has received awards including Architect of the Year; the RSA Gold Medal for Architecture; and international, RIBA and RIAS design awards. He was formerly a Royal Fine Art Commissioner, and former Scottish Education Design Champion.