Photography and the Gallery

 with the School of Arts & Creative Industries  
at Copeland gallery// Peckham,  South -East London

***Order and Harmony***

*Luke S Reynolds*

A black studio, red colour of a silky cloth, studio light breaking down as it travels through each layer of silk. A formation of petals integrating to form a flower. The petals are created by throwing, whipping and waving in the air. This forms a ‘cosmos’ – the name of a flower that represents “order and harmony” by embodying peacefulness and love. This is the significance of the flower in Mexico, which is where these flowers originate.

Examining the work, it is described as “metaphysical.” An abstract as in painting, not a photograph, the layers of silk and lighting make a smooth brush stroke on a canvas, with a bold red fading out after each stroke of the brush. ‘Metaphysical’ is defined as concerning the “nature of reality, including the relationship between mind and matter”.

***Show Your Face***

*Bobbie-Louise Burton*

Why are we afraid to show our true faces? How can we realise our true worth? Is it possible to for someone to truly let go of their insecurities?

This series revolves around the feeling of being trapped and controlled by small, inanimate objects. So many women feel obligated to wear make up every day, they are unable to show their bare faces to the world for fear of being judged and their imperfections prominently displayed. Burton views the beauty and cosmetic industry as psychologically destructive to women who it sees as vulnerable, encouraging these damaging insecurities. By photographing the cosmetic products in this broken, useless, and submissive state, the roles have been reversed. The woman in the scenario has aggressively taken back her control and regained her self-confidence through the violent, forced disintegration of these products. This series is Burton’s response to the cause of the disintegration of some women’s self-confidence.

***The Forgotten Houses***

***“The Georgians”***

*Elizabeth Player*

London photographer Elizabeth Player immortalizes “The Georgians” - a mansion located in East Finchley on the second richest road in London. This property was previously owned by members of the Saudi royal family. The building having been left derelict for an extensive time, Elizabeth’s eerie yet astonishing gaze captures a glimpse into the past and takes a closer look at the rooms once furnished with the finest upholstery and fabrics, now taken over with weeds, peeling wallpaper and a deafening silence.

Looking through the window into the decayed houses of London’s ‘Billionaire's Row’ Player archives some of the most intriguing architecture from the 19th century, encapsulating it before it gets demolished. “The Georgians,” like the many of the other houses that line Bishop's Avenue, lie vacant and decayed, ready to be used for new development. Elizabeth gives a rare view into these once liveable properties left to disintegrate into a state beyond habitability.

***Red Poverty***  *Jean Emma Jane Johnston*

This series demonstrates the hardship that many women who live in poverty go through when dealing with their period. The items shown are things that would be used as a cheap alternative to menstrual products, along with a photo of a hand holding coins, representing the cost of period poverty.

Women make up half of the population of the world, and 2.7 billion are at the menstrual age. There are many women and children who face poverty due to social inequality and low income, because of gender discrimination and the patriarchal gender roles that depend on men being the bread winners. Girls in many countries and cultures are also torn from education and placed into the role of motherhood without any choice of their own. Period poverty has been linked to period stigma, which has left women and girls alienated, and stops many girls and women asking for help to get access to menstrual products. The LGBTQ+ community is also disproportionately affected by period poverty due to discrimination that could lead them to be kicked out of their home and disowned, leaving them to support themselves.

Yet, even today, many people struggle to afford sanitary products because they continue to be expensive and taxed in many countries. This makes it harder for many people to have access to this basic need.

***Disintegration in Nature.****Ewan Ewan Coleman*

Ewan’s work is an ethereal, comprehensive study of leaves in which the artist has experimented with a variety of techniques and compositions to show the beauty of decay in nature. One of the key questions that was the inspiration behind this project was ‘How do leaves change form during the autumn season?’

In the larger image, Ewan has effectively isolated the subject so that the viewer can immediately focus on it. The vibrancy of the leaves also makes this image an effective response. The monochrome styled images respond to Ansel Adams because the mid-tones of the image gives the subject a bioluminescent effect. The fungal spores on the leaves can be clearly seen and the background gives the subject a distinct contrast which is a key characteristic seen in Adams’s close-up work.  Andy Goldsworthy was another key inspiration.

This extensive study of leaves spreads the awareness of the beauty of nature and that we should not take it for granted. This work shows, in a literal sense, how humans manipulate nature to suit our needs. This work also captures a process that is part of the life cycle. One question that Ewan hopes will be clearly conveyed to the viewer is ‘What is the hidden beauty in nature?’

***F****l****uck*** *it****!***

*Gertruda Semasko A.K.A Gėrik*

Can we exercise our demons and find a way of turning a negative into a positive?

What are the factors that mentally disintegrate us?

How can we stay mentally healthy in the 21st century?

**F**L**UCK** IT**!** - is an opportunity for the viewers to get emotional relief. They are instructed to write or draw their biggest annoyances on the hanging toilet paper and throw it in the toilet to watch it disintegrate. The whole installation gives the viewers an immersive experience that they can employ for their personal use in the future.

For Gertruda, capitalism is problematic because of mass-manipulation. The world is spinning in a vicious circle where everyone is pushed to fight for a better future which implies seeking fortune. In her work, she demonstrates her feelings about the constant problems most of us experience daily, such as addiction and consumerism. The disintegration of mental health is a very current and relevant subject that effects the majority of people. This project presents viewers with a more complex understanding of the world we live in now and introduces a new, healthier method of discharging negative feelings and thoughts.

All still images are taken in the shared flat in which Gertruda lives to show how the domestic environment is contributing to the disintegration of her mental health. Gertruda used an innovative procedure to print the photographs on toilet paper. The project’s main component is the toilet, an object often associated with germs, uncleanliness and disgust, where annoying things from the artist’s personal life are metaphorically and physically disintegrated for the purpose of gaining emotional relief.

“**F**l**uck** it**!** = fuck it + flush it”

 ***Use the installation in order to get a full experience.***

***JUICES*** *Blu Blu*

*JUICES* is an audio-visual piece responding to the philosophies of Julia Kristeva and Georges Bataille – in particular Kristeva’s theory of abjection and Bataille’s thoughts about formlessness (informed) and limit experiences. The work creates a space in which the boundaries between pleasure and discomfort are obscured by a lust for pure sensation. *JUICES* forces the audience, willingly or otherwise, to become the voyeur, gazing upon this masturbatory food-play like some kind of fruity skin-flick.

Blu Ball is a multimedia artist working predominantly with video and photography. Drawing on a range of practices – such as performance, abstraction and surrealism, as well as influences from sociology, psychology and philosophy – their work explores various cultural and social phenomena and attempts to disrupt and challenge traditionally accepted ways of viewing the world.

***Disintegration of Culture***

*Veselina Ninova*

Veselina’s project ‘Disintegration of Culture’ is a combination of visible architectural disintegration and metaphorical cultural disintegration. Her initial inspiration came from the Notre Dame fire of April this year, which resulted in an array of mixed opinions, not only from the French people but from the whole world. As Notre Dame was burning and people were mourning for the iconic cathedral, the Earth’s lungs - the Amazon rainforest - was burning too but fewer people knew or were concerned. Whilst politicians, celebrities, billionaires and other generous donors raised far more money than the amount needed to restore the cathedral in just two days, the people participating in the Yellow Vests Movement were protesting for economic justice and equality.

Veselina’s project had further progressed with the inclusion of the Elizabeth Tower, famously known as Big Ben. The clock tower has been silenced due to its restoration which began in the late summer of 2017, just a few short months after the process of Brexit had also officially started. Over two years later, both the restoration and Brexit are still going strong and are nowhere close to an end.

Veselina’s photographed both cultural symbols while gathering information about the restorations and the current cultural situations in those two countries. Her work presents the physical process of disintegration of Notre Dame and Big Ben as a visible sign of the cultural disintegration that is happening in these two countries.

***“Visions of the blue-collar worker”*** *Kajus Kajus Kerušauskas*

“Visions of the blue-collar worker” is a personal project about the author’s personal experience in the modern hospitality industry. This work explores items and things which are associated with problems in the service industry, from an all seeing 360o CCTV camera, to an overworked workers eye, to a tissue thrown by a drunken customer and more.

This work was created in response to frustration with part time jobs and the issues workers have to deal everyday, while being paid a wage which is too little. The overall vision was to isolate everyday objects which are implicated in the abuse of blue-collar workers, or the visible results of such abuse, and put them on a pedestal. Everything that the artist photographed was located at his work, and the majority of the resulting photos were printed on receipt paper. In this work Kajus is presenting not only images of objects which frustrate him but also the final product of his work represented by receipts. Other receipts tell real stories from blue collar workers, taken from REDDIT by the artist asking people about their work horror stories or gripes. The pictures move from human to non-human: every picture takes away something from the worker, whether it’s their health, privacy, or other factors, representing everyday objects at the workplace which cause isolation and dehumanization. The work was inspired by Malu Cabellos.

***Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones,***

***But Words Will Forever Haunt Me.***

*Connie Mullins*

Bullying has become an epidemic in the UK with more than half of school children having to deal with it as a part of everyday life and 30% of adults being bullied in the workplace. The extent of the bullying crisis has recently been brought to light by the award-winning BBC documentary *‘Jesy Nelson: Odd One Out.’* This documentary influenced the photographer to share her own story as she believes it is time to stop accepting bullying and verbal abuse as a part of everyday life.

It is an old fashioned and unhealthy belief that words cause less damage than fists: physical injuries can heal without a trace whilst emotional scars can last a lifetime. In this vulnerable series of self-portraits, the photographer shows the breakdown of her own confidence and self-esteem as a result of the bullying and verbal abuse she has endured. The photographer has used her own negative experiences to highlight the impact that words have, in the hope that it will bring about a positive change in the way others are treated. The vulnerability of both the topic and the photographer’s self-confidence is reflected in the use of silk as a printing medium, whilst the content of the series shows an element of both strength and bravery.

***Butchery***

*Jess Miller*

In my set of three groups of images, I have created a narrative sequence which shows the journey animals go through: living animal to a consumer product via the terror of the slaughterhouse. Not only do millions of animals suffer to feed our flesh-lust but the meat industry is having a devastating impact on climate change too. We need to start to think about where our food is coming from and to think about the lives these animals could have had if they were not treated with such barbarity.

The use of red thread sewn onto these images represents the loss of life. The threads hang long and loose to create the idea of dripping blood from slaughter and how cuts are made to animal flesh to break the animal down into cuts of meat. The complex stitching connotes how the animals are cooped up in small areas before slaughter and invites us to imagine their psychological distress. Overall the machine needle stabbing the images reminds us of how these animals suffer and are exploited.

***Quiet Decay***

*Anna Freeman*

Quiet Decay looks into the breakdown and decay of architecture that sits in plain sight alongside the rest of modern society. This project looks into subtle details that show the breakdown of a building and the attempts to conceal these imperfections rather than fixing them.

Often overlooked, Anna pushes everyday decay into the spotlight. The project addresses why we choose to ignore less obvious decay in favour of creating new architecture which will in time decay itself. By photographing such details, Anna presents a feeling of abandonment and neglect as well as exploring the psychological impact surroundings have on the mind, influenced by Jane Rendell’s book, The Architecture of Psychoanalysis.’ ‘Quiet Decay’ looks at how this discrete decay makes people feel when they see it, in the knowledge that this happens all around them. The work is presented using fragile materials in an asymmetrical grid to create a sense of imperfection, the decay in the images juxtaposed against pure white.

***This is how THEY felt***  *Swapnil Patil*

About 14 million tons of plastic enters the ocean every year, 40% of which is single-use plastic. Some scientists estimate that there are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in oceans worldwide. Most of the plastic ends up in forming giant garbage patches in the ocean. At least 1400 marine species are affected by this non-biodegradable matter, which is a reason for apprehension.

The series consists of 4 stages of suffocation, the Struggle, the Collapse, the Paralysis, and Death.

Stage I:

The Struggle – The subject starts to panic and begins to find its way out of the plastic bag, having a motive to escape the situation.

Stage II:

The Collapse – The subject starts to lose its energy and starts to give up, as it cannot breathe, its energy drains quickly.

Stage III:

The Paralysis – The subject has lost its control all over its body because the oxygen can’t reach the brain any longer, thus leading to body paralysis.

Final Stage:

Death – The subject has drowned and died.

The artist has tried to put himself as a HUMAN and the model as a FISH. He is suffocating the Human to show the Human how suffocation feels.

Models: Gertruda Semasko, Swapnil Patil.

***Boris’ Broken Britain***

*Jon Howard*

We live in an era dominated by power, in all forms of poison from the manipulation of the British Media by politics - Newspapers, TV, artists and musicians, and more currently social media. This political jigsaw puzzle of news articles was created from over twenty newspapers, from News International papers, the Evening Standard and many more.  The collages are printed on newspaper, denoting disintegration and adding context to the selected ‘news.’  The work follows ‘news’ coverage over recent months, ripping out headlines and articles, creating a series of sinister collages aimed at current PM Boris Johnson.

The VHS video visually portrays the lost strength of Britain via the grainy aesthetic of television, and shows the backlash we’re having as a divided nation.

Following the uproar, and present state of Britain we’re overdue an election for change needed to ensure we as people come closer together, not further apart. The general election on December 12th ties in perfectly with our Exhibition at the Copeland Gallery. We’re not the laughing stock of the world, we’re Great Britain and I aim to suggest if one has a view, get out, talk about improvements and vote wisely.

***Copy & Paste***

*Mae Black*

‘Copy & Paste’ touches upon themes of millennial culture. The artist challenges apps such as Facetune and Instagram, manipulating a digital process into a meticulous handcrafted one. Piercing the faces and prints with torturous brutality – a brutality hidden behind the subtly of apps - reveals an inhuman hybrid of faces. Mae draws on feelings of discomfort and repulsion to make the viewer think more carefully about their online identity.

The addiction, personal desire and in some cases need to heavily edit one’s photos is consistently visible in Instagram’s highlight reel, forcing unconventional pressures on users to look a certain way. However any mistakes can lead to demoralizing coverage online with trends such as ‘Instagram vs Reality’. The series portrays the disintegration of the user’s sense of self, chipping away at the reality of modern portraiture and thus the believability of photography, when appearance can be so carelessly faked by using a device in the palm of your hand.

***Spread Thin***

*Alma Gaina*

Alma observed how people keep track of everything, like pictures in photo albums, without realizing this preserves traces of what has been and isn’t anymore, producing either constant painful reminders or wordless messages of empowerment to keep going despite the challenges that are faced in daily life. Having been born in a country different from the one where her family is and different from the one where she currently lives, the artist has begun feeling like she has spread thin by belonging to many places where she left her mark or had had a mark on her while growing up. This project became a process of being able to accept and let go of this loss

As we grow and move on, leave friends, change schools, move cities and even countries, home disintegrates as both concept and location, leaving us often lost and confused. At the same time we reintegrate ourselves into new friendship groups, communities, schools, and cities. In all the places we stay we make memories, which remain in our hearts forever, and people make us happy but break our hearts little by little every time we become strangers or part ways.

The artist invites you to take away (literally) the pictures that remind you of your own stories, or that you like, and to participate in this process. All the files have been deleted making these unique and original copies of the moments captured.

Just like that. The artist remembers being labelled as an immigrant in all countries by a 7th year Geography teacher for having dual nationality while living in one of those two countries. Something like this forever sticks with someone, especially if it happens at such a young age.

***The Argument***

Sophia El-Khatib

These images capture the moment of explosion, shards of glass frozen in motion. The work depicts an argument taking place between two people. The artist wanted to show the chaos and disintegration of a relationship presenting an idea of domestic abuse and the dysfunction of these people in their household.

Flowers, representing peace and love in a household setting, become a revelation of how quickly a situation can change from peaceful to violent and the tension this creates. The artist used a domestic background to give a feeling of homeliness. Paint peels off the wall to represent the imperfect features of a relationship, and mundane household objects, like wine glasses and vases, are broken to symbolise a violent broken home.