

S1 ARTSPACE

Press Release:

An Elastic Continuum

Opening Night: June 16 (18:00–21:00)

Exhibition: June 17–22

Symposium: June 22 (13:00–17:00)

The 'New Materialist Reading Group' (NMRG) presents: *An Elastic Continuum*, an international exhibition & symposium featuring the work of 17 contemporary artists at S1 Artspace, curated by NMRG co-leads Rebecca Howard & Victoria Sharples.

EXHIBITION

Simon Carter
Grace Clifford
Craig Fisher
Helen Hamilton
Rebecca Howard
Sinéad Kempley
Victoria Sharples
Emily Speed
Rose Hedy Squires
Rachel Stanley
Lucy Vann
Henriette Von Muenchhausen
Nathan Walker

SYMPOSIUM

Ellie Barrett
Bethan Hughes
Sinéad Kempley
Victoria Lucas
Stephanie Rushton

Arriving from the proposition of 'skin', *An Elastic Continuum* offers an interface with *skinnings*: surfaces, architectural structures, organisms, membranes and embalmings. The works on show present a plethora of intersectional readings that transect ontologies of animacy and the sensorial, biotechnical interventions (birth, growth, ailment, and death), human, animal and plant bodies, and spaces of *transition*, whether *-gender*, *-species* or interior-exterior relations). In *An Elastic Continuum*, the premise of 'skin' is purposefully layered, aggregated and poriferous, as with epidermal and geological stratum, as seen in the work of Simon Carter, Sinéad Kempley and Victoria Lucas. Grace Clifford and Lucy Vann's practices centre on protection and exposure of the soft body: PPE and chronic dermatological conditions. With a focus on façade, veneer and construction, the work of Craig Fisher, Rebecca Howard and Emily Speed invite thought on the parallels between skin and built spaces through folds, pattern, and costume. Victoria Sharples, Rachel Stanley, and Nathan Walker account for the liminality of skin and the body as a transitory site, whether that be in relation to buildings that temporarily store human bodies (as with mortuaries), or through interior-exterior relations (as with the mouth or uterus). In place of the subject-object binary, the practice of Helen Hamilton, Henriette Von Munchhausen and Ellie Barrett provide a more permeable and participatory account of matter, where material affordances yield questions of autonomy and the sensible. And the work of Bethan Hughes, Rose Hedy Squires, and Stephanie Robinson signal the ways in which human and plant matters are intimately connected through physiology, sexuality, and the military-industrial complex. Through expansive readings of 'skin', *An Elastic Continuum* provides a public mediation and sensory interface with the noun, organ, and material.

The exhibition opens June 16 (18:00–21:00) and runs from June 17–22. The symposium closes the event on June 22 opening at 13:00 and running till 17:00. Refreshments will be provided.

The symposium's proceedings

13:00 Welcome

13:15 Welcome address (Dr. Rebecca Howard & Victoria Sharples)

13:30 Victoria Lucas Screening, *Entanglement*, Artist Video, 2021, 09:00.

13.40 Victoria Lucas, *Working Through the Matter: Technological Conspirators and Methods of Entanglement*

14.00 Ellie Barrett, *The "Non-Expert"*

14.30 Break

14:45 Bethan Hughes, *An Elastic Continuum*

15:15 Sinéad Kempley, *A build-up of moisture*

15:45 Stephanie Rushton, *Making \$~kin*

16:15 Q&A

16.45 Close address (Dr. Rebecca Howard & Victoria Sharples)

The exhibiting artists

SIMON CARTER

Stratum 1, 2023

video, projector screen, 5 minutes.

Stratum 2, 2023

video, projector screen, 16 minutes 30 seconds.

About: Simon Carter is a visual artist who works in the space between still and the moving image, graduating from Manchester School of Art with a master's degree in photography, concentrating primarily on moving image and sound. The final MA work was an installation that investigated the relationship of landscape and the stages of the 'Brexit' outcome. His research work has been centred around the use of allegory in image making to explore concepts of political and societal movement through the environment. Carter is an Associate Arts Lecturer in still and moving image at the University of Derby.

Work: *Stratum (1 & 2)* is located around two Derbyshire limestone quarries, immersing itself in the general day to day activity, displaying the process and logistics that encompass the operation. Shown consecutively, the two videos explore the changing nature of the surface, texture, colours and sounds whilst monumentalising the scale of the operation. The work examines and reflects the notion of 'skin' and 'abraded surface' when the top layer comes away to be used as an overlay elsewhere the surface left behind becomes the new skin. The cycle repeats itself, the notion of geological skin as a dermis or layer, which can be cut and renewed, placed elsewhere. Organic materials that had 'skin', made stone over time, being remade.

@simon__carter

GRACE CLIFFORD

The Meaning of Hard Work, 2022– aluminium.

About: Grace Clifford is an artist from Birmingham and the Black Country. She is led by her intuition and lived experiences. Clifford likes to use everyday objects to consider their purpose and the personal associations we may have with them. She is particularly interested in exploring working-class identity and understanding why certain objects and experiences can be attached to class.

Work: Whilst often working with readymade objects as a starting point, Clifford finds metal work and casting to be an important technical and contextual process, being raised in a key industrial area and her dad being a factory worker. The artist feels that popular culture is often more willing to accept the glamourised idea and spectacle of labour and working-class culture rather than face the consequences and reality of such: the emotional and physical toll of environment and upbringing. The original idea for the work was to cast and then reassemble the overalls (given to the artist by her dad after she began learning to weld). Through the long and laborious process of casting, Clifford realised that the

complete object would do no justice to the ritual and skill within the making-process. The work is never done.

@ratattaxx

CRAIG FISHER

Façade (balcony), 2023

acrylic paint, canvas and thread, dimensions variable.

About: Craig Fisher is an artist, Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader BA (Hons) Fine Art at University of Derby. Fisher exhibits his work nationally and internationally, most recently commissioned by Garth Gratrix to create work for a solo exhibition, FLAT SPACE, Abingdon Studios Project Space, Blackpool (2022). Recent group exhibitions include Unfolding Spaces, 50MV project space, Liverpool (2022); A Generous Space, Hastings Contemporary, Hastings (2021); Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize 2021, Trinity Buoy Wharf, London (2021); FORMAT21: Control, International Photography Festival, Derby, UK (2021); Dimensions of Publicness: 24 Gabrovo Biennial of Humour & Satire, Museum of Humour and Satire, Gabrovo, Bulgaria (2019); Gestures of Resistance, Romantso Cultural Centre, Athens (2017) and Gettin' the Heart Ready, The Royal Standard, Liverpool (2016). Fisher was also invited by Neil Walker to have a solo exhibition, a space in a space in a space at Lakeside Arts Centre, Nottingham (2022).

Work: *Façade (balcony)* is a painted textile wall hanging that draws on Fisher's interest in the architectural, employing a formal abstract visual language to explore ideas of pictorial disruption, interruption, and spatial collapse through an investigation of abandoned spaces and the architectural ruin. Fisher's recent works are stage-like, acting as architectural facades (skins) which are made in response to specific spaces and/or locations. For *An Elastic Continuum*, Fisher has made work in response to the location of S1 Artspace within Park Hill Estate. Fisher explores the pictorial, sculptural, and 'site specific' boundaries of art practice. The work situates itself by exploiting and employing contradictory methods, referencing both figuration and abstraction; juxtaposing the pictorial with the sculptural as potential spaces of slippage, which allow for discoveries beyond confined and referenced fields of art production.

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HELEN HAMILTON

Baby Blonde, 2022

faux leather, nylon hair extensions, polyester wadding, MDF. 125 x 100 x 45cm.

About: Helen Hamilton (b.1991, Sheffield) is a contemporary artist based in Leeds, UK. Her work investigates questions of objecthood, animacy, and bodiliness. Much of her research is based in material culture studies and object-oriented ontology, with a particular interest in the role of objects within our mental and physical lives, the importance, and feelings we attach to them, and their capability to act upon us in return. She works across sculpture, writing, and photography, often using soft sculpture and tactile materials alongside found or made objects reminiscent of domestic items and those relating to the body.

Work: The skin of an art object is not only the site of interaction between a piece and its viewer, both physically through touch and visually through sight, but potentially a place of porosity and slippage between the positions of 'subject' and 'object'; questioning what can exist in the space between these dualities. This piece seeks to occupy the area between known and unknown, referencing elements of the body in a way which takes them out of their usual contexts and into a position in which they become unfamiliar or uncanny. The work originates from thinking around the possibilities of non-human actors and encounters, and the traditional language of sculpture – in particular inherited mediums and forms such as the body/the nude. By using materials which reference the human or animal (specifically skin, flesh, and hair) it seeks to investigate whether the materiality of a work has an effect on its perceived potential for animacy, as well as what feelings of kinship or revulsion can be evoked when we recognise facets of our own physicality removed from their familiar arrangement.

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REBECCA HOWARD

How to Make, 2023–
digital prints mounted, 22 x 22 inches,
digital prints, 20 x 20 cm, audio work, 1 minute 50 seconds.

About: Rebecca Howard is an artist, academic, and educator (based at University of Derby). Her creative practice engages with photography, installation, model-making, and sculpture to investigate the ways in which photographs, as both images and material objects, shape perceptions of place and space. Her doctoral research *Manifold* (Manchester School of Art, 2016-2022) draws from theories of folding and the Baroque to interrogate the spatial and dimensional properties of the photographic paper-print and its capacity to generate form, reconfigure interior space, and draw critical attention to 'banal' architecture. Howard is part of an artist/research group called Proximity Collective and co-founder of NMRG (New Materialist Reading Group) at University of Derby with Dr. Victoria Sharples.

Work: *How to Make* is part of a larger, on-going enquiry into the generative and emergent qualities of the photograph, and how it can be transformed and acted upon, as both an image and a material. Inspired by a broader cultural context of how-to-videos, step-by-step artificial intelligence, and algorithms, the work brings together photography, origami instructions, AI, and a participatory element, to playfully explore tensions between input and output, and notions of (mis)translation and (mis)interpretation. The work invites participants to listen to the audio and follow the origami instructions, encouraging tactile interactions with the photographs provided. Forms and spatial compositions are generated by our individual responses to the instructions, the application of the fold and the handling of the print, as well as the specific material properties of the paper-print itself, including its weight, density, and pliability. Participants are also encouraged to share photographs of their origami creations on Instagram (details of which are provided next to the work).

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SINEAD KEMPLEY

visually stunning, durable, non-slip, weather-resistant, UV-resistant, low maintenance, 2023
slumped glass sheet, pulp-formed cardboard packaging, resin-bonded aggregate chunks, approx.
40(w)x70(l)x20(h)cm.

grind to a halt, 2023
digital print on acetate, 59.4 x 84.1 cm.

About: Sinéad Kempley is a visual artist currently working between Northumberland and Edinburgh. Through provisional assemblages of human and more-than-human remnants, her practice engages with the depletion and transformation of matter. These assemblages inhabit multiple temporalities, through a residue, a material life-span, a fossilisation. She uses photogrammetry and repetitive casting to fix transitory material in stasis: fused kelp roots are soap-cast; a discarded piece of synthetic rubber doormat produces slip-cast ceramic copies; hot glass fills a sand mould of a digitally enlarged tubeworm fossil. Through duplicating and multiplying, casts become made-strange substitutes, reconfigured for divergent uses across subsequent installations.

Work: *visually stunning...* A slumped glass sheet sits on a pulp-formed cardboard platform with chunks of resin-bonded aggregate slotted into the segmented gaps. Three reconfigured chunks balance against a wall to form a refuge, a shelter, a nest. This aggregate (bonded with resin, a synthetic, fossil-fuel-derived chemical compound) was collected over many months from a tree lined street, with each tree filled at its base to contain soil, manage wetness, suppress weeds, to only permit solitary growth in an allotted square meter. As the roots shift under the earth, the resin-bonded skin bulges, and splits, with chunks of aggregate spat out.

grind to a halt... The abstracted image shows a window of a homework centre located on the South Circular Road in Southeast London. This window has accumulated a fine layer of black dust, a mixture of diesel fumes and synthetic rubber particles from braking vehicles. The window, mimicked in the acetate surface, appears to act as a momentary barrier, a skin, between those inside and the particles in the surrounding air.

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VICTORIA SHARPLES

Soft-Shell, 2023

translucent silicone rubber, condensation cure silicone, white pigment, tiles, adhesive, plywood & snails.

About: Dr. Victoria Sharples is an artist-researcher from South Yorkshire, UK. Their practice operates in the milieu of new materialism, mediating on the performativity of matter with a focus on (non)human microperformativity, forensic architecture, technoscientific apparatus and necro-ecologies & economies. Sharples is co-curator of GLOAM (gallery & studios) in Sheffield's Cultural Industries Conservation Area (CIQ) and co-leads NMRG with Dr. Rebecca Howard. Sharples is a lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Derby.

Work: *Soft-Shell* is a site-specific work that takes casts of architectural features (a sink and gutter-way/wet-room cove skirting) in an empty chapel and mortuary. The piece functions as a relic, embalming or *skinning* of the space, which was used for the storage and preservation of human bodies before their disposal. The use of silicon rubber is purposeful in *Soft-Shell*: a material used for medical implants, procedures, and funereal practices. The tiled structure (inferring both autopsy and tomb) offers an interface with cooling temperatures, as analogous with the process of algor mortis. It also provides a seemingly impermeable barrier, one which is water-tight as to contain seepage. Here, parallels can be made between the plumbing of the mortuary (the basins and pipes), and the body which, after death, becomes liquescent, as 'slippage' of our skin begins, and tissues percolate from our orifices. Once passed, we collectively drain and pool, participating in a hermaphroditic condition that sees no separation of matter: no partition of the human and non-human, along with other reductive binaries. In recognition, Sharples co-operates with a walk of snails, hermaphroditic animals, in support of this *trans*-formation and material exchange. In nod of the scalloped shell symbolising re-birth in Christianity, Sharples offers another emblem of the shelled gastropod as to signify our transfused constitution.

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EMILY SPEED

Foundation Garment, 2019

hand-dyed cotton, linen and wool, wadding, foam, bag strapping, artificial moss, lead curtain weight tape, utility hooks, dimensions variable.

About: Known for her work examining the relationship between the body and architecture, Speed's practice considers how a person is shaped by the buildings they have occupied and how a person occupies their own psychological space. Working in sculpture, performance, drawing and film, Speed's work looks at the relationship between people and buildings and in particular the power dynamics at play in built space. Her work plays with scale and creates layers around the body, often hybrid forms of clothing and architecture.

Work: Underneath a woven and brickish collar, intestine-like coils descend towards the floor, their sheer material giving the viewer a glimpse inside to flashes of bile-yellow and dark spots. Once they hit the floor, the innards become outers and trace a floorplan in some ruined and moss-covered form.

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ROSE HEDY SQUIRES

Where have I been?

On the wind like pollen, 2023

ink on paper, sheet wood, emulsion, pewter charms

About: Rose Hedy Squires is a multidisciplinary artist and poet working in Sheffield. Squires' practice explores the depth of human emotion attached to the minutia of day-to-day occurrences. Intimate moments that transport you to something much larger. Squires explores the natural world and the divine. Drawing from experiences of uprootedness and transit, collective and personal symbology. Squires also co-directs GLOAM gallery in Sheffield City Centre and is a member of BLOAT Collective.

Work: *'Where have I been?'*

On the wind like pollen is part poem, part stream of consciousness writing. The text takes snippets of thought loops experienced by the artist over the months of April and May 2023, when thinking specifically of their skin. The work meanders through how Squires views their skin and their body in varying surroundings, amongst different groups of people, and recounting the skins history over their lifetime. The poem is a collection of diary entries, of considering the space taken up by a body. Of being a body that is so ready to apologise. The artist gives thanks to Janus, Ram Dass, Carl Jung, Clarice Lispector, The Knife, Marnie Stern, Hella, the Prunus species, Tropaeolum majus, Priscila & Frank Cusco, Bruce Franchi, Flavia Franchi, LAL vs DEN Western Conference Finals game 1.

@rosehedysquires

RACHEL STANLEY

Look (Under, Over, Through, In-between IV), 2022 oil and marble dust on calico, 30x30cm.

About: Rachel Stanley is a painter whose practice speculates on the possibilities between abstraction and figuration. The works perform a shifting of perspectives – looking across, over, under and through – in order to obscure and undo the landscape. Existing in a grey 'between' area, they suggest double meanings and require multiple visits. They employ a playful consideration of materiality and surface, utilising burlap, calico, and muslin in place of canvas, and painting in varying degrees of thickness – gently staining, thickly layering, and using gestural mark-making more akin to drawing. This is an intuitive and sensory process, whereby paintings reveal themselves over time.

Work: This painting is the fourth in a series of works depicting ways of looking – under, over, through and in-between. Here the artist offers a seamlessness between the body and landscape, suggesting parallels between a valley and an ultrasound scan. This painting is also an iteration of a 2021 work, *Knee*, which depicts a similar shape inversed.

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LUCY VANN

You've Come in From the Cold (You're Standing Too Close to a Radiator), 2022

audio work, 7 minutes 11 seconds.

About: Lucy Vann is an artist working in writing, video, performance, and sound. She studied at the Manchester School of Art and The Royal College of Art. Vann has exhibited internationally and screened and performed nationwide. In 2019 she was selected for The Freelands Artist Programme and Platform Residency at Site Gallery. Alongside group exhibitions she led a series of moving image workshops and published writings via The Freelands Foundation. In 2019, Vann created a music video for the band Dry Cleaning. Recently she broadcasted sound work on No Bounds Radio. Vann has a studio at Yorkshire Artspace and lectures at the Manchester School of Art.

Work: Vann's practice explores the relationship between the inner and outer self through contemporary platforms of self-expression. Her works references popular music, dreams, therapeutic methods, and social media. Vann gathers material incidentally: found fragments of text and imagery

are used and re-edited to create works of writing, video, performance, and sound. Her contradictory feelings about the desire to share and present oneself publicly informs her performative practice. Vann plays with humour and authenticity, mistakes, slippages, and failed attempts at communication. Her practice reflects on how identity and emotion are constructed, hidden, revealed, and performed. *'You've Come in From the Cold (You're Standing Too Close to a Radiator)'* considers stress and its cyclical relationship to chronic skin conditions. A social gathering becomes tense as inner obsessions about skin and environmental stressors find their way into small talk. Exposure is the state of having no protection to something harmful, as well as the act of revealing something.

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HENRIETTE VON MUENCHHAUSEN

Virtuous Circle, 2023 watercolour on paper, 35 x 27cm.

About: The individual pieces of Henriette Von Muenchhausen's work often come together in an installation. The animistic idea that they are alive and hang out together plays an important role in her process. Together with the underlying relation between the parts, oscillating between attraction and repulsion, it is the main driving force. Von Muenchhausen (NL/DE) graduated in 2017 in Fine Arts at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, NL. Recently, her work was on view at Hyperbien, Paris, FR, Galerie Mellies, Detmold, DE and Kunstpodium T, Tilburg, NL. She is based in The Hague.

Work: Von Muenchhausen's work *Virtuous Circle* is an ode to the skin as an organ sensible to touch and at the same time a fantasy of infinity. The vibrant watercolour functions as an incubator of corporeal poetry, as a pars pro toto floating between abstraction and figuration. The artist's choice for watercolour as a medium is a very conscious one: As soon as the filled brush touches the paper, there is no way back. Every movement implicates a mark, and the paper absorbs water and pigments like the skin absorbs the sensation of being touched. Stemming from the idea of an arch that closes itself, the shape of two interconnected green arms forming a circle through touching each other is a virtuous rather than a vicious cycle. The movement captured in the form is a simple way to provide us with comfort, as the possibility of holding oneself is always available once we become aware of it. Von Muenchhausen's use of the colour green – a colour that does not exclude any real-world skin tones – expresses the inclusive utopianism of the extra-terrestrial, which may be a source of hope in difficult, divisive times.

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NATHAN WALKER

Clench, 2020

single-channel video, 20 minutes.

About: Nathan Walker is an artist and writer from West Cumbria, UK. Walker works across and between performance art and poetry, exploring both the body and the page as sites for vocal exploration and the manipulation of sound and speech. They often describe their work as 'action poetry', reviving the term associated with sound poetry to consider experiments with language as physical, material, and embodied. Walker is senior lecturer of time-based practices in Fine Art & Photography at York St John University.

Work: *Clench* is a single-channel video (20mins) of a performance for camera. The work explores the space of the lips and mouth as transitional sites, the skin made for the purpose, to be both interior and exterior. In *Clench*, the artist forces their hand into their mouth and holds it there until the body gags and rejects it. The hand is a taste and a plug, a gag, and a punch. The mouth is a site and a cavity, a bridge, and a shutter. In the performance the mouth becomes a space where language can reside and the hand creates a shape that alters speech, when the hand is removed it is covered in a gloss of saliva and the skin shines like a fish. The performance repeats itself, each hand takes its turn holding the skin inside the mouth and outside the hand, like a sink with fingers, speech pushes into and around the body, with a gentle force and a tough sip.

The presenting artists

ELLIE BARRETT

The “Non-Expert”

About: Ellie Barrett is a sculptor and practice-based researcher exploring the impact of material on critical meaning in visual art. Barrett’s studio practice adopts an investigative approach to materials which are not associated with existing fine art methods, including salt-dough and tin-foil. They represent uncharted experimental territory and implicate sculpture’s position as inhabiting the same dimension as our bodies. Her research identifies new methodologies towards attuning ourselves – as artists and audiences – to material’s vital creative affordances. She approaches material as having an active social and political role, which illuminates sculpture’s potential to widen participation in making, viewing, and critiquing visual art.

Abstract: The “Non-Expert” is a perspective which may be adopted in order to access concealed, unexpected, or undiscovered information about a material, object, or environment. Stepping into this persona permits us to not know, placing value on unbound sensory experimentation towards producing artworks and widening participation in visual art. The impact that tactile material experience has on our cognitive, creative, and linguistic development has been broadly acknowledged by artists, critics, and researchers. Exploring their properties directly through our skin enables us to fully comprehend language (Lehmann 2016); gather information about our environment (Contini 2018); and gain confidence about our place in the world (Albers 1965). Free experimentation with a variety of materials which highlighted their constructive potential has enabled artists to navigate significant shifts in visual art, expanding the myriad of forms an artwork might take (Krauss 1979, Morris 1968, Serra 1967).

The Non-Expert acts upon these critical hypotheses, locating them in the universal lived experience of our infancy: Barrett has developed this research from observing her baby daughter undergo a process of testing a variety of objects and materials in order to acquire new knowledge about their properties. With no prior assumptions of their use, she is liberated to discover affordances which may be otherwise concealed by familiarity and intended purpose. Tested in the field on residencies and in the studio, the Non-Expert has generated a practical toolkit which can facilitate artistic experimentation, offering a methodology which prioritises sensory exploration. In doing so it opens up new possibilities for democratising art production, placing it in the context of our early encounters with our material environment.

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BETHAN HUGHES

An Elastic Continuum

About: Bethan Hughes (1989, Wigan) is an artist and researcher who creates installations that combine moving-image, sound, sculpture, and text. She studied Fine Art at the Glasgow School of Art and Media Art at the Bauhaus-University Weimar. In 2020, she received a PhD from the University of Leeds for her thesis *Against Immateriality: 3D CGI and Contemporary Art*. In 2020, she was a Braunschweig Projects fellow. Her current project, *Hevea Act 6*, will premiere at LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón, Spain, as part of the European Media Art Platform’s 2023 programme.

Abstract: A lecture-performance situating the ancient biotechnology natural rubber as a skin that both connects and separates human and plant bodies, nature and culture, ritual, and function. In this presentation, Hughes will primarily draw on their artistic-research project *Hevea*, an ongoing exploration of how rubber – an organic substance bound up with the rise of capitalism, imperialist and modernity – reveals the ways in which humans and non-humans are intimately entangled with the

military-industrial complex. Latex, the fluid substance within which rubber particles are suspended, flows through an estimated 20,000 different plant species. Largely understood by botanists as a self-defence mechanism, latex is capable of forming a flexible barrier between plant and world.

As early as 1600 BC, ancient Mesoamerican societies used latex from *Castilla Elastica* trees to craft objects that had an intimate connection to the human body: waterproof shoes, over-garments, figurines, and balls that were central to a ceremonial game. With the 1844 invention of vulcanisation, rubber became a globally ubiquitous commodity. Transformed on both a chemical and symbolic level, rubber assumed its role as the ‘flexing muscles and sinews’ in the body of the industrial structure. The modern human – one magically transported on pneumatic tyres, protected by latex gloves, and sexually liberated by condoms – cannot be conceived of without rubber, a vegetative substance transformed by human intervention that simultaneously isolates, extends, and augments the body. By bringing together extracts of visual and textual material from the *Hevea* project and further examples of the use of natural rubber in artistic practice, Hughes asks: how does this transformed and transformative material create an elastic continuum between humans and the world(s) they inhabit?

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SINÉAD KEMPLEY

A build-up of moisture

About: Sinéad Kempley is a visual artist and practice-based PhD student at Edinburgh College of Art, funded by the University of Edinburgh College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Award. Her research examines how a particular form of contemporary art practice, *fictioning* (Burrows and O’Sullivan, 2019), can be used in the study of waste and wasting, with a focus on by-products of industry and fossil-fuel-derived materials. In her practice, particular attention is given to how these materials disintegrate, leak, merge, soak, and seep. She uses *fictioning* to focus on incomplete processes, dead ends, and a ‘composting’ and ‘dredging’ of materials and meaning.

Abstract: The vapour barrier tarp, made from polyethylene, the most commonly produced plastic, used in Kempley’s installation *temporary sediment storage* (2022) and *no longer viable* (2023), is wasted through surplus: a disposable leftover of the fast-paced construction industry. It is used as a modern, cheap method to deal with damp that relies on an understanding of water as containable. It bypasses historic construction methods that understood that buildings needed to ‘breathe’ to allow water absorbed through porous materials to disperse back out.

In the UK, exasperated by the cost of living and rising energy bills, cold, damp, condensation and mould are common, particularly in low-income households, with significant effect on health and well-being. In a recent study, it was found that increased energy efficiency in housing increased the risk of current asthma of residents, due to the lack of ventilation or insufficient heating, which shows the ‘complex interaction between health, behaviour and the built environment’ that is not factored into energy efficiency funding schemes (Boomsma, Pahl, Jones, Fuertes, 2017). In Kempley’s installation *no longer viable* (2023) the tarp becomes a transparent skin, seductive in its vibrant colour, it acts as mediator between the audience and the supposedly contained yet leaking, seeping assemblage behind.

In this presentation, Kempley draws from the writing of architects Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha to think through attempts to contain water through membranes, barriers, and synthetic skin. Concurrently, Kempley traces fossil fuel extraction and production of derived materials that infiltrate waterways through acid mine drainage, underground leeching, and dredged sediment with inherited pasts re-emerging through coastal erosion, underground cave networks, and ocean currents.

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VICTORIA LUCAS

Working Through the Matter: Technological Conspirators and Methods of Entanglement.

About: Victoria Lucas (b. 1982, UK) is an artistic researcher based in the North of England. Recent projects include the curation of *PostNatures* at Graves Gallery, Sheffield, which explores the connections that exist between the histories of women and natural landscapes as colonised subjects. She is one third of the art collective *Heavy Water*, alongside Maud Haya-Baviera and Joanna Whittle, a project that draws from archives and collections to create artworks. She has recently exhibited her work with Site Gallery, Sheffield (2021), Freelands Foundation, London (2022), and The Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield (2021). She is 0.5 Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at UCLan and part-time PhD Candidate at SHU.

Abstract: With specific reference to Lucas' single channel video work *Entanglement* (2021), this presentation focuses on photogrammetry as a technological method that works to deconstruct and reconstitute digital images of a disused quarry into a 3D virtual 'skin'. With this work, the viewer is guided through a construction of aggregated materiality, via the porous surface of pixelated rocks and watery hues of vegetal matter, towards a radical connection with the non-human. Can the destabilisation of earthly matter, using digital technology, generate new ways of thinking about how we synthesise with the natural environment, in the context of capitalism and the resulting climate crisis? Can the language of extraction and reclamation, in the place of the disused quarry, reveal ways of subverting harmful practices in order to further understand female subjectivity?

In contemporary feminist theory, the term subjectivity, as the social process that constitutes individuals as subjects, is often viewed as a singular construct that binds one to humanism within capitalist, patriarchal culture. Lucas' research seeks to agitate this notion, specifically in relation to the female body and in the context of an ecological crisis. It is her intention to reclaim notions of female subjectivity through bodily engagements with site, using an imaginative approach to thinking through the connectivity of nature, women, and technology. In this presentation, Lucas argues through the methods that technology has the potential to become a conduit that reconnects and re-entangles the currently hegemonic nature / culture binary, in a way that also dispels the woman / nature problematic, as a way of rethinking what subjectivity means in a postnatural context.

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STEPHANIE RUSHTON

Making §~kin

About: Stephanie Rushton is an artist, researcher, PhD candidate & Senior Lecturer in Photography at the University of Derby, UK. Her research and lens-based practice imagines other worlds and possibilities of existence in the critical field of Posthumanism. Past exhibitions include Format International Photography Festival (What Photography Can Be (2023), Forever Now (2019) & Habitat (2017); *Container City* at The Hamburg Triennale (2015), *Archaea* a solo show at Campbell Works, Hackney (2015), *Woman's Work*, residency at Airspace Gallery in collaboration with Potteries Museum & Gallery (2014), *Journey's Pathways Trackplans*, a group show at Spode, Stoke on Trent (2013).

Abstract: Stephanie Rushton's research and practice seek to co-evolve the human relationship with the often-neglected plant world by reconsidering 'nature', its representation, and our feelings towards it through exploration of other ways of being. Questioning myths of human supremacy, she interweaves ecological, surrealist, and dystopian narratives with a diffractive approach, recognising the entanglement of matter and meaning (Barad, 2007). Recent discoveries in botany and plant physiology are urging expanded philosophical and ethical engagement with other than human worlds. Connecting what we know about plant biology and experiencing what it might be like to be a plant seems an almost impossible leap. Inspired by the legacy of Surrealist visual art and the study of methodologies of automatism, Stephanie is currently working with plants, offering them an opportunity to communicate, express their 'aliveness' and command a measure of autonomy through the co-creation of an artwork. Deprivileging the human creator acknowledges the plants as living performers in their own right. A recent lens-based project focuses on time-lapse footage featuring growing plants (and fungi) filmed over extended periods in the controlled environment of a photographic studio. Technology allows us, in some small way, to enter the private lives of plants by making the invisible, visible, by condensing the time scale of their growth, to recording the imperceptible sounds of their communication; all the while remaining mindful of the fact that this is still an anthropomorphic perspective. We are a galaxy away from truly understanding what it is to be a plant, our last common ancestor dating back six hundred

million years, but ironically, it is only through anthropomorphism that we are able to identify with them.

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About NMRG

The 'New Materialist Reading Group' (NMRG) is an interdisciplinary initiative co-lead by Dr. Rebecca Howard & Dr. Victoria Sharples, the curators of *An Elastic Continuum*. NMRG is for artists, academics, technicians, researchers, and students to come together to discuss texts relevant to contemporary thought and practice. All welcome to join. For more, follow @nmrg.uod

About S1 Artspace

Founded in 1995, S1 Artspace is a gallery & studio organisation based in Sheffield that actively supports the production and presentation of new work and ideas. S1 Artspace's mission is to enable artists to develop new work through support, resources, and opportunities to exhibit, and to educate and inspire a new generation of artists. S1 Artspace's aim is to deliver a programme that connects with a broad audience both nationally and internationally through a programme that supports the production, presentation, and debate of contemporary art.

Acknowledgements

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Thank you to GUT Level (the current users of the chapel and mortuary) for giving Sharples access to the site. GUT Level is a not-for-profit community space and collective providing social and creative opportunities for underrepresented groups in Sheffield, with a particular focus on LGBTQIA+ people and marginalised genders.

This event is made possible through the support of S1 Artspace, the University of Derby's Early-Career Researcher Development Fund, and all of the presenting artists. *An Elastic Continuum*'s title is used with kind permission from presenting artist Bethan Hughes whose performance-lecture asks: 'how does this transformed and transformative material create an elastic continuum between humans and the world(s) they inhabit?' It is with this question, Howard & Sharples selected the contributing works.

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