

***The Matter of Circulation: Research Conference, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2021***



Rana Begum, No.1054 Arpeggio, 2021. Photograph by Tom Bishop Photography

Welcome to Folkestone and to the Public Programme of Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021 *The Plot*. ***The Matter of Circulation*** is a new initiative within the Public Programme and has been devised by Liv Pennington in response to the changed conditions of the pandemic as a way to encourage cross-fertilisation between existing areas of research within the opportunity presented by *The Plot* as a fertile ground for the exchange of perspectives. I hope you will find the context of *The Plot* stimulating in thinking about the significance of materiality and the mechanisms of circulation in the production and reproduction of cultural goods.

– Lewis Biggs, Triennial Curator



## Keynote presentation

### **Figure and Ground in Folkestone's Urbanism**

Professor Lewis Biggs

***The Plot*** explores the relation between narrative and materiality, with reference to the analogue contexts both of place making and of art making. The three plots fore-grounded in the exhibition are drawn from the medieval, enlightenment and industrial/post-industrial moments in Folkestone's history, and carry within them the contemporary assumptions of those historic mind-sets. Narrative and materiality can be seen as figure and ground respectively, and much if not most cultural production in the present moment tends to emphasise the figure over the ground. The proposal here is that the greatest success in art and urbanism in all historic periods has given equal emphasis to figure and ground, and that this strategic approach allows maximum circulation in the emergence of a successful ecology.

Please find each of the abstracts and accompany images from the conference presenters below, by group running order.



## Programme

10.15 Registration at Creative Folkestone Quarterhouse

10.30 Keynote: Figure and Ground in Folkestone's Urbanism, Professor Lewis Biggs

Group	Name	Title	College
<b>11.00</b>			
1. Free Flow	Stav B	Triple Exposures	Westminster
1. Free Flow	Ase Vikse	The Coastal Map	Middlesex
1. Free Flow	Simon Olmetti	Queer Land	UCA
1. Free Flow	Ralph Overill	Straying from the path	UEL
<b>12.00</b>			
2. Im/Material Labour	Elizabeth Ransom	Visualising Transnationality	UCA
2. Im/Material Labour	Denise Ackerl	Liquid Institution	UoA London
2. Im/Material Labour	Christian Tighe	Health Inequality	RCA/Imperial
2. Im/Material Labour	Sue Withers	(Un)necessary labours	UEL

### **13.15–15.20 Lunch and Guided Tours of Creative Folkestone Triennial**

<b>15.30</b>			
3. Light Materials	Seungjo Jeong	Painting-Canvas as Sensuous	RCA
3. Light Materials	Lucy Renton	Reframing Decoration	Kingston
3. Light Materials	Amanda Lavis	Woven Language	Cambridge
3. Light Materials	Sohaila Baluch	Thinking Difference	RCA

16.30 Film Screening: Fiona MacDonald (Feral Practice)

17.15 Event Closes



## Free Flow

### **Stav B**

Institutional affiliation University of Westminster/ CREAM School of Arts

**Title:** *Triple Exposures*

**Category contribution:** A filmed performance up to 7 minutes long

**Abstract:** I am plotting a resurrection, a new discovery and I am changing the narrative with my pink triangle: My own passage to ash, blood and water.

I am trailing, I am wandering, looking for the legend of Eanswythe, the princess who became a nun, as she refused to get married and founded a nunnery for women in Folkestone.

Where are her bones resting?

Channelling her grandiose heritage with a crown, looking for her soul in the fish, sensing her blue bloodied veins among the ash trees, listening to her whispers, her directions on to my road of discovery, being an outsider in a small seaside town, somewhere in Kent.

It is Sunday 12 September, her own day of remembrance and celebration and I shall honour this mysterious soul with a triple, triangular, actual/imaginary walk and with that, I hope to detect a slither of her aura and be grateful for her legacy. After all, how many princesses does one know who made the water run uphill?

Since my main theme and focus, is embodiment, women and mapping, I shall be translating the matter of circulation with a short performance, which I shall document for its final presentation.

The plan is to travel to Folkestone on Sunday 12 September and trace Eanswythe's footsteps with my footsteps (a long triangular walk) from Foorde Road, the watercourse and the Ash Forest.

A separate description of the reasons behind the presentation format: My work is placed at the junctions of visual art and performance and deals with the ongoing theme of (sexual) identity, love, the politics of the female gaze, the aesthetics of beauty, obsession and transformation, nature and evolution. The linear progress of my body of work (from sketches to sound) has shaped my direction and focus.

Drawing from an endless wordplay and cerebral conceptions, music and sounds, nature, mathematics, the subversion of the domestic and engaging in body movement, I create storytelling and a solitary voyage.

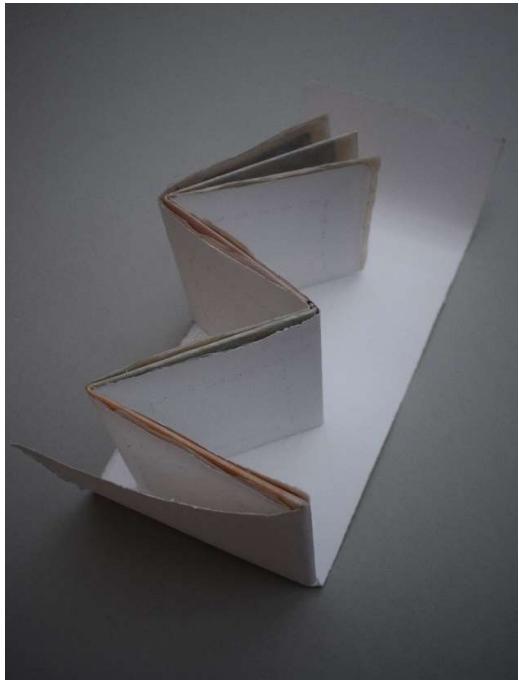
I am narrating a story with my lived experience, I am creating an imaginative dialogue from a myth, a legend, and a distant reality and with this embodiment, and I introduce an alternative version: real, imagined? This is left to the others' perceptions and understandings.

**Åse Vikse**

*Institutional affiliation: Middlesex University*

**Title:** *The coastal map*

**Contribution category:** Presentation of academic paper, 7 minutes, research



**Abstract:** In my current practice, walking has been one of the methodologies for conducting the artwork which I refer to as artist's maps. Based on 'this bandstand' – a coastal map I created in response to a circular walk in Folkestone & Hythe, and the text that accompanied it – this written paper seeks to formulate themes such as the so-called roadmap out of lockdown. A non-existing map that nonetheless guided me to where I am currently positioned in my artist process.

The circular walk can be seen both literally and symbolically as a never-ending cycle in plural areas, with one the most important being the significance of the coast and the subsequent conversation with the coast person – a dialogue between generations of inhabitants of rugged coastlines anywhere – in my case the south-west of Norway. A method I utilised to create was the technique of Frottage –

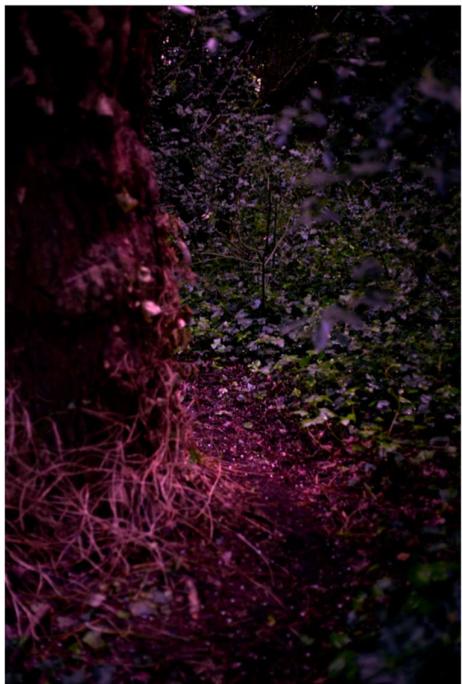
the rubbing of a surface in order to document it – which lend its name to the 'frottage walk maps' I produce. In the coastal map, I observed surfaces of static objects that occupy this area. As I moved through this landscape, I encountered the products of both the folk and the artists that inhabit Folkestone. In this paper, I discuss how 'this bandstand' became a manifestation of a somewhat demolition of hierarchical rules, and how a circular route can be seen as both an activity and a point of reflection.

**Simon Olmetti**

Institutional affiliation: University for the Creative Arts

**Title:** *Queer Land: cruising Land Art, Queer Spirit and camp new worlds*

**Category contribution:** Academic paper/presentation, 15 minutes, research



**Abstract:** My practice-based PhD focuses on nature and its queering, particularly through alternative spirituality. For centuries, questions of nature/natural have been used against queerness, idealising nature as a heteronormative space. New strategies need to be found to reframe and free nature from patriarchal and oppressive ties. Furthermore, in these times of ecological crisis, new engagements with natural spaces are needed, and queer processes might disclose new forms of relationships beneficial for all.

Through walking, photography, painted found rocks and installations, my aim is to reclaim the land, a space often hostile or denied to queer people, expanding notions and perspectives of how we understand ourselves in relation to nature, a connection in which spirituality becomes central in this activity of reappropriation. Building on Karen Barad and Donna Haraway, with the help of José E. Muñoz, Susan Sontag

and Sarah Ahmed, I will show how through my art practice nature is revealed as vibrant matter, a form of energy we constantly exchange and interact with, and as a space where new worlds can be imagined and disclosed.

Through a methodology based on cruising, together with post-natural and camp aesthetics, I reveal the intrinsic queerness of matter; at the same time, alternative (queer) uses create new forms of living nature which can be called or framed as queer commons, creating spaces that embody Muñoz's utopic vision of queerness. Through this framework, queering becomes a spiritual force and endeavour, an encounter of energies, at times erotic, between human and non-human to form new forms of kinship.

## Ralph Overill

Institutional affiliation: University of East London

**Title:** *Straying from the path: 1980s Sci-Fi on the Southend Arterial Road*

**Category contribution:** 15 minutes [in person/recording] artist film presentation with introduction by the artist



**Abstract:** The artist will introduce and present a film developed from a 10-mile walk taken along the A127 Southend Arterial Road where he spray-painted stencils of the cyborg from James Cameron's 1984 film 'The Terminator' onto bridge supports along the route. The piece explores the psycho-geographical space between the dystopian carriageway landscape (the road's history of fostering the first cases of the 2002 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak) and the author's personal memories, influenced by his recollections of the cult 1980s film. Through photography, on-location sound recording and reflective writing, an imagined hybrid narrative is created where the boundaries of fiction and reality are blurred.

As barren horizons, Brentwood abattoirs and the Brutalist architecture of the motorway merge with aching knees and remembered cyborg futures, themes of temporal disruption and material degradation are revealed. The work functions as an exploration of marginal landscapes and their ability to foster both personal and cultural stories – and everything in between.

## Im/Material Labour

**Elizabeth Ransom**

Institutional affiliation: University for the Creative Arts

**Title:** *Migrant Women: Visualising transnationality*

**Contribution category:** Academic paper, 7 minutes, research



**Abstract:** This paper explores how women map their lived experience of migration through the use of alternative photographic processes. The migratory experience is complex, personal and includes a myriad of circumstances, encounters and events. As society becomes increasingly interconnected through globalization, transnational identity has become a more frequently used term among immigrant populations.

Recently there has been research into the impact of gender on this experience. Academics such as Patricia Pessar, Sarah Mahler and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo are investigating

the role of gender on migration. In addition, art historian T.J. Demos believes there is a specific migrant aesthetic in contemporary art that has been generated as a response to the complicated realms of the transnational condition. This research considers how these two areas intersect. There is more research to be done on gender's inherent effects on migration and how that is visualised in the contemporary art practice.

This paper explores how women's experience of migration is uniquely transcribed using alternative photographic practices. Against this background, this paper takes an autobiographical approach drawing on examples from the author's own art practice. She provides the key strategies used in her work to explore themes of place attachment, mapping, memory, and time in relation to the transnational experience. As a migrant woman the author uses the light-sensitive chromatography process in her new body of work *The Woods* to explore ideas of place attachment she herself has experienced after living abroad for fifteen years.

**Denise Ackerl**

Institutional affiliation: University of the Arts London

**Title:** *The liquid institution: living the DENISEUM fantasy*

**Category contribution:** Academic/performative paper



**Abstract:** In my academic paper/performance I want present the notion of liquid institution which I am currently developing through the perspective of a feminist performer and researcher and my own selfinstitutionalisation called 'DENISEUM' (founded in 2020, available at [deniseum.org](http://deniseum.org)).

Theoretically, I build the liquid institution on the concept of

the zero institution which according to political philosopher Jodi Dean 'has no determinate meaning but instead signifies the presence of meaning' (2005). It was first developed by Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss to explain how 'people with radically different descriptions of their collectivity nevertheless understand themselves as members of the same tribe' (in Dean, 2005) resulting in a fantasy of collectivity. Through the notion of the liquid institution I explore how the fantasy might translate into a bridge between fantasy and actuality through the performing (online) body, which despite its virtuality requires materiality and produces collectivity in its online presence. The DENISEUM displays my own paintings presented in online guided tours, recorded via Green Screen Technique in my living room; occupying a space that is located in a fantasy and actuality. The DENISEUM's visual identity is taken from a design draft for the Guggenheim Helsinki Museum, initiated in 2010 which to this day remains a fantasy as it was rejected by the Helsinki city council in an alleged dispute over funding with the Solomon Guggenheim foundation



## Christian Tighe

Institutional affiliation: Royal College of Art

**Title:** *Health Inequality Research*

**Contribution category:** 10-minute presentation

**Abstract:** Although the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed health inequalities into the public spotlight, the 'health gap' is still a major problem in the UK. Life expectancy in the most deprived areas of the country is significantly shorter than that of the most affluent areas. Worryingly, digital-health and public health initiatives aimed at boosting outcomes can, if not deployed equitably, worsen existing inequalities. My MRes, conducted as part of the Royal College of Art and Imperial College's Healthcare & Design Course, used a combination of desk research, expert interviews, participatory action research and speculative design to explore ways in which the public and the healthcare system can be involved and empowered by the design of innovative new products and systems to reduce health inequality.

Facebook adverts using simple images and statistics were used as a means of prompting the public to complete an online questionnaire and comment or interact with adverts. The responses to these adverts have ranged from helpful and expected, to dangerous and bizarre. Interactions have been used to create a number of 'target user' personas. In turn, these personas were used to inform iteration of the advertising campaign and messaging, alongside the creation of a rapidly prototyped online calculator. Additionally, usage analytics and discussion with a select number of experts has been used to refine a set of desirable future use-cases for a multivariate SODH health-risk score and associated campaign. Despite limitations the research outlines the practicalities and politics of applying PAR and speculative design to healthcare-related challenges.

**Sue Withers**

Institutional affiliation: University of East London

**Title:** *(Un)Necessary Labours: I (The Bubble Maker)*

**Contribution Category:** Film/Video Art – 15 minutes



**Abstract:** Despite the fact that for many people in the world, clean water can be almost impossible to access, the bubble bath remains a favo urite trope of Hollywood films, advertising and Instagram, and is often presented as a guilt free indulgence, an almost essential ritual of feminine self-care. *(Un)Necessary Labours: I (The Bubble Maker)* is a 13 minute

video which invites the viewer to consider the marginal, hidden nature of female labour. From her position at the edge of the frame, the bubble maker's absurd attempt to fill a tranquil, rural expanse of water with bubbles evokes the labour of a less industrialised time or place. Echoing the cycle of accumulation and disposal, of grooming and housekeeping, where capitalism has positioned women as consumers of the world's resources to adorn, beautify and decorate, her repetitive actions seem almost comic. The ridiculous and extravagant futility of her endeavour alludes to the psychological and environmental costs of consumerism. And yet the hypnotic quality of the drifting, dissipating bubbles, like shifting landmasses, seems to offer space for contemplation.

Link to low resolution version on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/391467043>

## Light Materials

**Seungjo Jeong**

Institutional affiliation: Royal College of Art

**Title:** *The painting-canvas as a sensuous interface*

**Contribution category:** 15-minute presentation



**Abstract:** This practice-based research asks how the physicality of the painting-canvas functions as a sensuous interface for today's painting practice. I use the term 'painting-canvas' to mean a physical object made of wooden stretcher bars and canvas for a painting support. I consider the sensuous interface as an interface that is linked to its user's physical feelings and that provides pleasure to the user's physical senses. I suggest that a sensuous experience with the interface acts both as a creative catalyst for painting practice and as a timely reinterpretation of the sustainability of painting in this ever increasingly digital world.

I am redefining the painting-canvas using three languages - conversational, painting and programming. This is to include 'rhythmic unity of the senses' as a

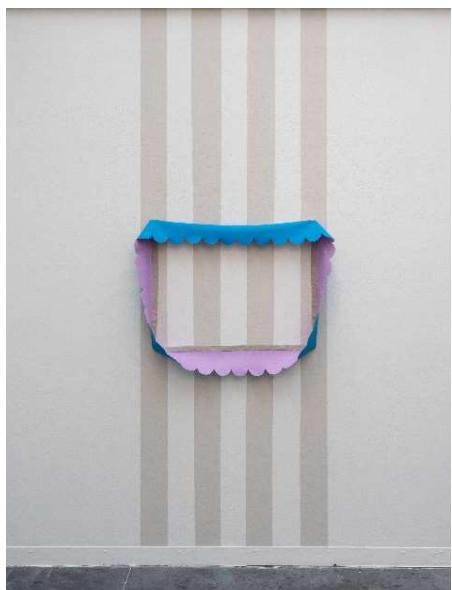
structural property of the redefinition, which Deleuze (2003) describes as 'a vital power that exceeds every [sensory] domain and traverses them all'. I manage these disparate languages informed by Haraway (1991), who proposes that 'proper code' can be constructed in 'a common language' in such a way that 'any component can be interfaced with any other'. Filtered through theories of painting, new media and the interface, my physical interaction with the painting-canvas is transformed into plain texts to deduce the tacit knowledge of how the painting-canvas can be reconfigured to further support its user's sensuous experience. My painting language is used to test my re-definition of the painting-canvas through making paintings. A programming language is adopted to map my experience of programming onto painting.

**Dr. Lucy Renton**

Institutional affiliation: Professional Doctorate in Fine Art at University of East London 2014 - 2019 ECR at Kingston School of Art, Kingston University

**Title:** *Reframing Decoration: on “Liveness” in Staging*

**Category contribution:** Powerpoint presentation – can be live or with recorded audio, 15 minutes



**Abstract:** A presentation of doctoral practice-led research on the idea of decoration in contemporary art, examined through a methodology of improvised installation exhibition and reflection. Key words include; Staging and Making, Colour, Decadence, Camp, Home and the Interior, Feminism, Archives, and Craft.

During my DFA I came to see the activity of installing and exhibiting as the central component of my research on pattern and decoration, realising that the pressure of staging art work in public could bring new ideas to objects created in the studio. The research always begins in the studio, but the exhibition is not just the display of a finished outcome.

Exhibition forces a deeper resolution onto the work that extends and develops understanding of studio

production. I frequently prepare elements or fragments to form a new work in response to the place of exhibition. Even in situations where I have installed a more or less planned work, my apprehension of its meaning and its future staging changes radically once it has been publicly displayed.

My Postdoctoral research has continued a thematic exploration of the decorative whilst extending this approach to exhibition installation collaboratively as a ‘live’ process ‘in situ’ with other women artists, e.g., upcoming ‘Cluster’ at Broadway Studio, Letchworth in October 2021.

Image: *Richard & Judy (3)*, 2019

**Amanda Lavis**

Institutional affiliation: Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University

**Title:** *Woven Language: a Practice Research Investigation Exploring Textile Praxis as Medium and Theme in Children's Picturebooks*

**Category contribution:** 7-minute research presentation



**Abstract:** Through practice research, this project intends to address how the narratives of craft and textile materials can synthesise in the context of picturebook illustration. The methods of reflection-in-action and thinking through making are integral to the approach, aiming to give insight to the tacit processes of practice and illuminate a creative poeisis that would otherwise remain imperceptible. In a cyclical process, the maker utilises materials with an existing narrative, such as recycled fabrics bearing the indexical marks of a previous life. These individual threads can then be woven into a symbiotic illustrative language, the potential of which is currently being explored by the development of practical, experimental samples. The utilisation of tactile, haptic visuals, unite with the palpable joy of the maker through the use of ornament, decoration and play to cultivate interest

in making and mending. The intention is to increase exposure and awareness, exploring how craftsmanship and craft techniques can be made more visible to children through picturebooks, whilst empowering and presenting making as attainable. This increased dialogue and relationship with used materials and their possibilities aims to inspire thought around the longevity of these relationships, the value of time and materials in a society of consumerism, and the consequential value to the environment. This will be conceptualised through the creation of a children's picturebook that aims to encompass these tenets.

**Sohaila Baluch**

Institutional affiliation: Royal College of Art

**Title:** *Thinking Difference: a reimagination of British South Asian identity*

**Contribution category:** Research 7-minute presentation



**Abstract:** Driven by Audre Lorde's theory of *difference* my research project seeks to communicate and articulate the embodied experiences of discomfort that arise from being differenced. By existing in the discomfort of difference like Lorde this project engages with methods that resist the violent production of difference that permeates our way of life and is 'used against us in the service of separation and

confusion' (Lorde A. 2009). This project affirms differences as that which empowers and is about creating works that develop ways in which differences can lie together.

In reimagining perceptions of self and belonging in British South Asian communities this project also activates Luce Irigaray's assertion to think things through difference (Irigaray L., 1994, 1996). I think from a position of *difference*, and through feminist activist practices to develop a methodology that inserts the voices and experiences of those bodies that are devalued, silenced, rejected and excluded because of difference. The heart of this research project is an urgent desire to drive change and expands on concepts that can build on and through difference to create spaces of affiliation and alliance. Through means of an agential practice, I unify various quotidian materials with textiles. This practice intentionally thinks with these materials in connecting to real forms of human differences, race, sex, age, class to disrupt the ways cultural, social, political and racial differences are used to suppress marginalized bodies. The subject of this presentation will be a performative reading of a text in front of a video projection of an artwork.