

I NEVER LEAVE MY HOME AND  
WATCH THE SAME SHOWS ON REPEAT  
SO WHY AM I CREATIVELY STAGNANT?



Madshorwath



madshorwath

# The DODO



Issue #3

The RCA Student Newspaper

Thursday, 1st February 2024



**NEWS |** Upcoming events from the Students' Union, and details about the Students' Union Elections, updates on student-run projects and a lecture series.

**CULTURE |** Poetry by Sally Button, an interview with Imon Phukan, an exhibition review by Yuna Goda, and reflections on veganism by Nicole Moore.

**GLOBAL |** A performance piece on Taiwanese heritage by Jeremy Chuang Chih-Hao, and UK life drawings by YO Shuan.

**GALLERY |** A sculpture installation by Margaux Halloran, digital still-life 3D sculptures by Madhavi Bhagwat, and a Metaverse project by Junyi Huang.

**SATIRE |** A cartoon strip by Madeline Horwath

With special thanks to:

Andrew Sviridov,  
MA Visual Communication

Margaux Halloran,  
MA Sculpture

Indra Țincoca,  
MA Writing

Cover by: Andrew Sviridov, MA Visual Communication



# Upcoming SU Events...

**6th February -  
LGBTQ+ History Month  
presents Reading Group**  
1-2 pm, Artlounge

The RCASU proudly presents an LGBTQ Reading Group and afternoon tea looking at Akwaeke Emezi's acclaimed work, *Freshwater*. This session will explore the complexities of identity and self-discovery.

Participants will have the opportunity to share their thoughts, insights, and personal reflections in a supportive and open-minded environment. Secure your spot early by registering via our website and receive one of the 10 free physical copies of *Freshwater*.

**12th February -  
Lunar New Year Social**

Join us at the ArtBar from 5pm! There will be free snacks, craft works and drinks deals.

**13th February -  
LGBTQ+ History Month  
presents Pancake Day ...**

Join us for a delicious and community-oriented session to celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month and Pancake Day! You'll get the chance to add your own identity and flare by decorating your pancakes!

**14th February -  
LGBTQ+ History Month  
presents Anti-Valentine's  
Party**

Join us at the ArtBar from 5pm! There will be free snacks, drinks deals, activities and a DJ.

**21st February -  
Clothes Swap**

Join us at the DesignBar from 12pm.

**21st February -  
LGBTQ+ History Month  
presents film screening of *Pride*.**

Experience *Pride* (2014) on the 21st of February, at the Battersea Gorvy Lecture Theatre from 5.30-7pm.

*Pride* is a film about London LGBTQ+ activists supporting Welsh miners in the 80's and the power of solidarity.

**1st March -  
St David's Day Social**

Join us at the ArtBar from 5pm! There will be free snacks, activities and drinks deals.


## <NEBU-FORNIA> Junyi Huang, MA Digital Direction

As an East Asian scholar examining post-colonial dynamics, I identified an urgent need to rejuvenate the East Asian community through innovative avenues. To this end, I conceptualised a Metaverse—<NEBU-FORNIA>—anchored in East Asian interests. This initiative draws from three foundational research projects. The first explored “outliers” in the Web3 landscape, targeting individuals with a shared enthusiasm for cryptographic technologies. The second scrutinised centralised control and sustainability in digital ecosystems. The third delved into the multifaceted issue of self-identity in both analog and digital spheres. Together, these previous endeavours provided the intellectual scaffolding for the development of <NEBU-FORNIA>, a project aimed at empowering the East Asian community via the Metaverse.

<NEBU-FORNIA> intertwines Web3 principles and post-colonial smart contracts in a video game artwork symbolising the ‘nebula’ of future East Asian societies. Invoking AI+ Web3 memes, it sparks collective contemplation of underlying digital infrastructures. The artwork, highlighting digital sustainability, draws the audience into the Web3 frontier, fostering thoughtfulness about blockchain's potential.

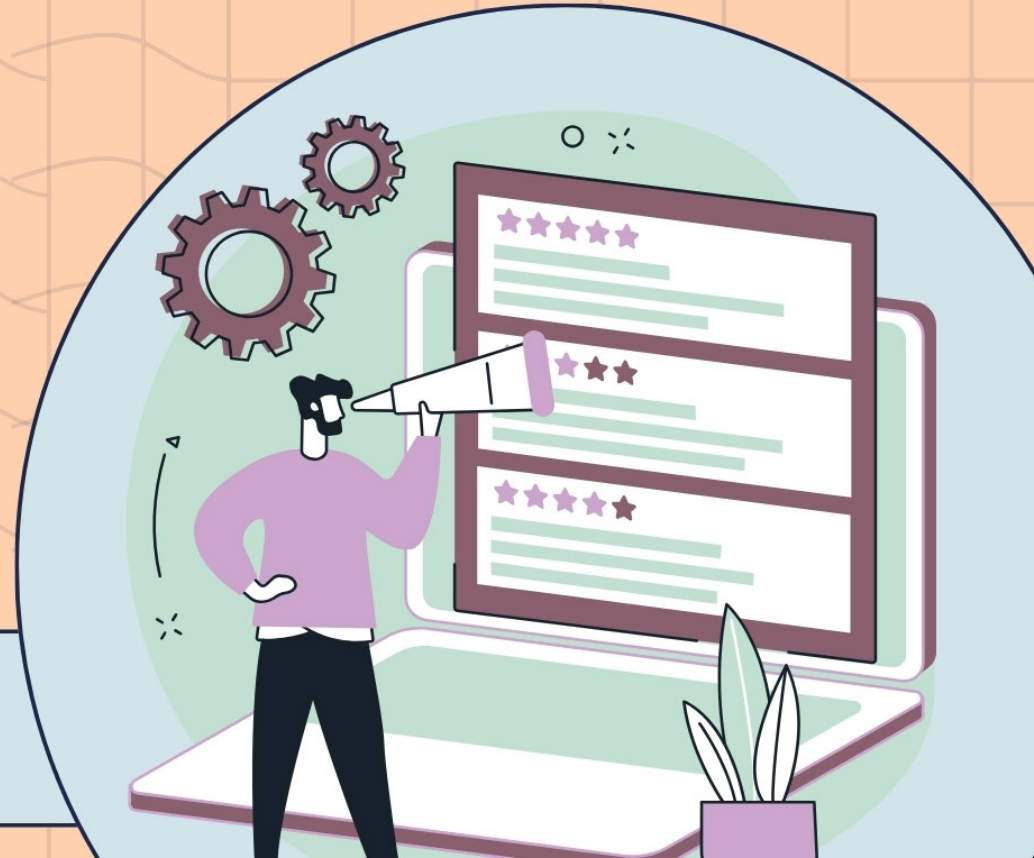


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**SU SURVEY 2024**

**We Value Your  
♣ FEEDBACK ♣**



**£300 WORTH OF VOUCHERS  
TO BE WON BY 3 STUDENTS**



# Sunlight (Still Life)

Madhavi Bhagwat  
MA Digital Direction



The RCASU is a democratic organisation, and each year we elect two students to become paid RCASU Officers for one year. RCASU Officers lead what we do as a Union, and represent all of our students at the RCA. It could be you!

**Key Elections Dates:**

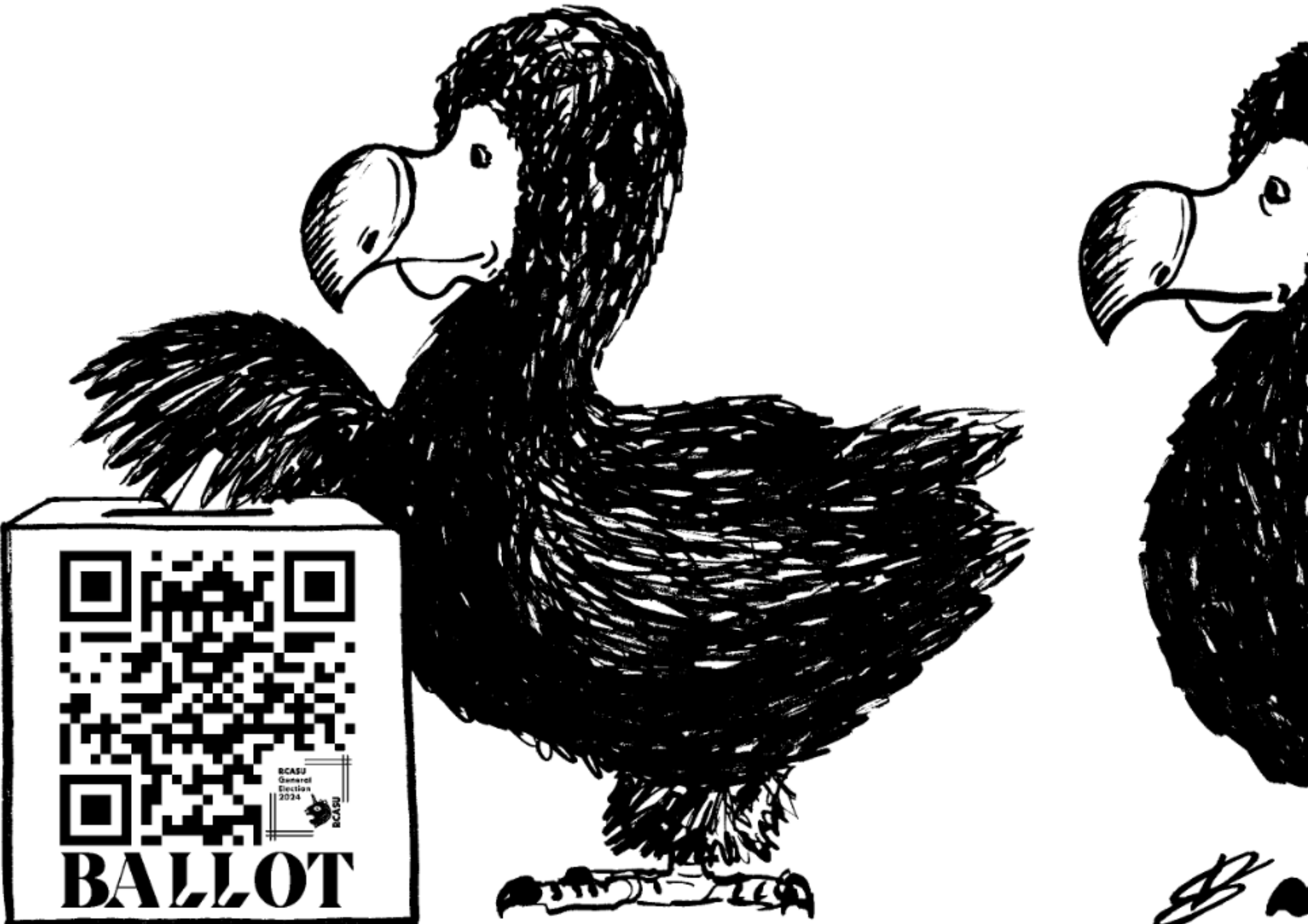
**Monday 19 February 2023, 2pm**  
Nominations Open

**Friday 01 March 2023, 2pm**  
Nominations Close

**Monday 18 March 2023, 2pm**  
Ballot opens

**Thursday 21 March 2023, 2pm**  
Ballot closes

**Friday 22 March 2023, 6pm**  
Election results announced at the ArtBar







# ‘A Simpler Place’: Sound x Olfaction

Yati Sharma  
MFA Communication

*A Simpler Place* is a participatory installation that explores the integration of sound and olfaction, and engages participants by evoking personal memories of their past. Studies suggest that sound and smell can all evoke emotionally-charged memories, because the same part of the brain that is in charge of processing our senses is also responsible for storing emotional memories.

Based on this research, this installation aims to explore the cross-modal integration of auditory and olfactory stimuli, allowing a single sound piece to evoke distinct memories when paired with different smell compositions. The soundscape follows a transition from a simpler world where sounds were created by accidental interaction of objects and natural phenomena to the

introduction of music where humans started creating pleasant sounds for entertainment purposes that later evolved into more technical sounds, making sound a material being used for various practical purposes.

The installation diffuses two different fragrance compositions from each side providing different experiences when paired with the same sound. The first smellscape is composed of warm oriental scents from the kitchen conveying a comforting experience and often triggering memories from our dreams. It can be described as a winter night at home.

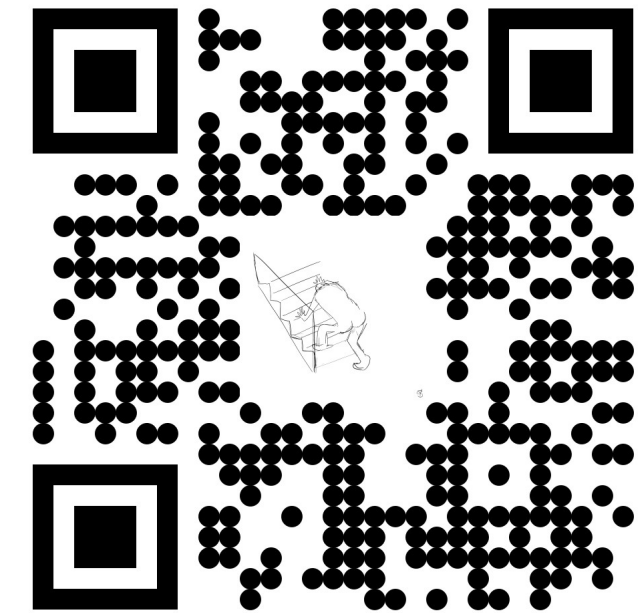
The second smellscape has more energy and is composed of fresh tropical scents that can be described as a summer walk in the garden. It is composed of fruity fragrances and herbs that often trigger memories from our childhood. Through this installation, participants engaged in a multisensory journey, delving into their personal memories woven by the fusion of sound and smell allowing the soundscape to acquire a personal emotional meaning.

The form of the installation was designed to make it more intuitive using a form that asks the audience to hear and smell at the same time as it takes inspi-

ration from a vintage gramophone and a flower. To minimise any visual cues, I used natural material to blend in with the physical space which also delivers a sweet scent from leaves that acts as a base and helps the audience concentrate on the sensory experience.

In the exhibition, as the name suggests, each participant was able to experience a simpler time away from the hustle-bustle of life with scents throughout the duration of the soundscape.

*The project was exhibited at St. John's on Bethnal Green on 11th December as a part of a group exhibit by RCA students from sound elective titled "Sonic Alchemy".*







# Casual Weaponry, America's Favorite Pastime

Margaux Halloran  
MA Sculpture

My installation Casual Weaponry, America's Favourite Pastime demonstrates my participation in the ongoing and violent debate of America's lack of gun control, and the corrupt system of safety. As an American, and originally from Florida—I have grown up with these casual weapons spoken about, and carried around public spaces—a nonchalant, and terrifying practice. I have been aware of the silent and violent presence of these machines that are masked by 'safety.' I have been investigating the passive presence of guns in both public and private spaces, the lenient treatment of firearms, and who has access to this system of 'safety.' What is the circle between harm and safety?

Within my installation, the wood sculptures, with detailing adjacent to curves and straightness of a gun, are displayed leaning against the white exhibition space walls. Their stances are relaxed, and at ease—representational of the leaning gun which can be found in a family living room. They cast empty shadows that are hard and allude to the presence of a weapons power

to ricochet—both mechanically and personally. My research process begins with the media—cultural images, commercials, political headlines, newspaper clippings, specific objects that embody a phenomenon, system, sport, or social conversation in this case—American imagery. I do believe there is an inherent presence of my own experiences and biography embedded within my work. My writing, inclusion of process within installation, and fictive auto-biographical moments act as my stamp. Object dissection, and material undoing uncover the words and thoughts that frame the narrative of my installations. Cultural context, historical assumptions—the words embedded within material. I am interested in the politics of objects, and the layers of justice, social commentary, ignorance, and innocence that lay embedded within object and user.

The method of my making practice is grounded assemblage through the utilization of wooden offcuts and found objects. I prefer materials that are left, dismembered, the original origin

unknown, or lack ownership. They hold no responsibility to the fulfillment of a larger agenda. They are functionless. The specificity of using offcuts mimics the process of the assembly line—small objects coming together to build a consumerist model, or device. Instead, I am mimicking this labour as if I am following a guided blueprint.

On a technical level, I work quickly and instinctually with the materials. I find that to pause and stop the vomit-like flow creates an incoherent and taints the instinctually flow of material attachment. I prefer informal binding techniques such as wood glue, and simple clamp tools to ensure that I still have control over their forms having the possibility to change. I choose to not work within technical constraints. They are fixed yet are fluid. Through studying their curves and lines, a methodology unfolds between myself and the objects on how the pieces seem to fit together. The act of studying and dissecting their physical beings coincides with the words and meaning.

## Inside / Out Lecture Series

Inside / Out is the only fully student-led lecture series in our college, organised by a team of students from the MA Interior Design programme. The team is dedicated to organising monthly lectures and conversations between industry experts, students, and design enthusiasts in Interior Design & Architecture. The series is a continuous source of inspiration and open to RCA students, as well as architecture and design enthusiasts.

This year's theme is ***Emerge***, aiming to give students an opportunity to gain information from the professional world about emerging technologies and mindsets in the industry. The series was kicked off by **Oskar Kohnen Studio**, on November 23rd, discussing the theme of architectural and design “reuse” as an emerging practice and growing mindset to be encouraged.

The second lecture was hosted by **Po-Fu Yang** from **Foster + Partners** on January 23rd, covering the introduction of robots as an emerging method to lead architectural surveys and building techniques to improve sustainability and building fatalities.

The next exciting lecture will be hosted by **Barbara Bischoff Giusti**, Project Designer at **WATG & Wimberly Interiors**, who will let the audience in on the use of AI within a large scale Interior Design & Architecture company such as the one she is working for.

Our Inside/Out team promotes each event on social media platforms, RCA website, and Eventbrite a week before the event. The 45-60 min lecture usually takes place at 6:30PM at the RCA Kensington Lecture Theatre, followed by a Q&A and drinks at the ArtBar. Follow us on Instagram @rca\_interiordesign for updates on future events or keep an eye out for the weekly RCA Newsletter!



Inside / Out team and Po-Fu Yang after the second lecture on January 23rd 2024  
Inside Out Lecture Theatre 2023/24 Edition.



Inside / Out team and Oskar Kohnen after the first lecture on November 23rd 2023  
Inside Out Lecture Theatre 2023/24 Edition.



# Udah Makan Belum?

Elaine Silas

MA Information

Experience Design

My project emerged from a question my mom asks me everyday: "have you eaten?". It's a simple phrase that embodies care and goes beyond the act of sustenance. It's a gesture of warmth and love.

As part of an ongoing project, this zine is a result of a collage workshop where I asked people to portray foods that reminded them of home. Collage, as a medium, was chosen for its symbolic mirroring of piecing together memories. The zine also includes stories about family histories and their ties to food. The physical format was inspired by *From Form's* 'Museum Night Campaign'. By mixing and matching the different panels, the zine itself becomes a collage.

In its commonality, food is a vessel and springboard, allowing us to navigate topics that we might not be familiar or comfortable with. This project aims to explore the intersection of food, migration, and identity through the lens of commensal relations: the social practice of eating together. We ourselves serve as unofficial archives for the cherished recipes of our past. Our collection acknowledges the dynamic nature of recipes: those that are passed down, often devoid of precise measurements, serve as living entities, carrying nostalgic reflections on the sensations and experiences of crafting dishes with loved ones.

Through collaborative practice, guided by conversations and shared meals, the project delves into concepts of care and co-creating, utilising the act of eating together as a powerful catalyst for understanding and connection.



YO Shuan  
MA Animation

TATE  
MODERN  
24.9.2023



ST. PAUL'S  
CATHEDRAL



23 12 23

Sally Button  
MA Writing Alumni

When I ran towards the river — the water's slick conviction feeding my own, those fair sisters — Hope and Trust — looked on from a distance, just wide of this grasp — or so it felt — for they as I am are forgotten bodies waiting with grace for the one in need: the one who runs a perpetual path of arduous neglect and desperate recollection — as steady and sure as tides bear the earth and tend the shoreline and soak the grasslands — All the while and steady do those sisters wait: those who laced her with love once before and who darned the weft of grief once before and who will turn the violent mind into movement and who will run this gaping hole into something strong — once more — that is — if she could just open her palm, lay her hand down, let her pain spill from her finger beds, let a moment, let a moment stumble on certainty

Maybe she finds herself! a body of still water again — and perhaps she does not — but breath slows, tides lower and those steady sisters seem to get closer with age: Time enticing their watchful eye to become her own



EDINBURGH  
GALTON HILL  
25 OCTOBER, 2023



KING'S  
CROSS  
23 OCT. 2023

# Life Drawings: Observations of Architectures in the UK





# Morning

Sally Button

MA Writing Alumni

Solitude is the only thing in the world that I can control. Love will still fill the day if I want it to, as love starts in the morning. Morning is a small secret, a hopeful shade of blue — the clear turquoise of a shallow sea in the sun. Morning makes my body feel vulnerable: a welcome, lonely feeling. Light is completely insistent. It fills every room, and the birds always notice it before I do.

As the day moves on and we work into darkness, I lose that gentle morning. I lose it to the chaos and the buses and the deadlines and the money. I lose it to the selfish edge of the city.

Like solitude, rhythm is control when you have none — certainty in a storm. Every morning, the morning proves that another beat will come.

/

This is not something I want to rush. No, I do not rush it. I want to spend slow days peeling through layers of card, loops of culture. In the early morning the sun would stream in through blinds in lines across the cabinets and carpeted floors, and I would leave when the low vibrations of dusk arrive.

The collections at the Warburg Institute follow a distinct system of organic relations, allowing chronological distance to fold in on itself. Time, after all, doesn't go forwards and backwards, it goes round and round, in overlapping loops, and I learn that the Warburg is governed by that cyclical notion of time, so becoming a microcosm of the very culture contained in its library, archive and photo collections. Cycles of culture reverberate and rhythm dwells in paper folds and high shelves.

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Henri Lefebvre defines rhythm as any interaction of time, space and energy, never without repetition and difference. Looking at the Warburg with this in mind allows me to understand, a little, the cyclical connotations that the institute embodies, by recognising them as interactions of time, space and energy. Time, in the system of organic relations that allows this archive to weave through it — time as distinct from chronology. Space, in the physicality of the space that holds an archive, from Aby Warburg's elliptical reading room to the current towering building in Bloomsbury. Energy, in the people moving through the archive, interacting with these strands of time.

Rhythm might be a mode of research, and using this as its very system of organisation, the archive itself becomes a rhythm: a self-sustaining organon, beating with a life force. The archive becomes more than an object or a collection of ideas, it becomes an insistent force: an engine for thinking, for research and for moving through time.

/

Often, in the morning, I think of Anni Albers and the pulse of her weavings; of Hilma af Klint and her elliptical visions; of Ruth Asawa and her seed-like sculptures, fertile moments held together with wire.

/

The warm half of my attention lands on a loose paper file: Times of day / cycles. Morning for the Warburg means air, figure, landscape, limb, slip, stir. Images of art depicting bodies, mostly women, are still or dancing through and with the seas or hills. Some are bleak: lost in their morning; lost in their mourning.

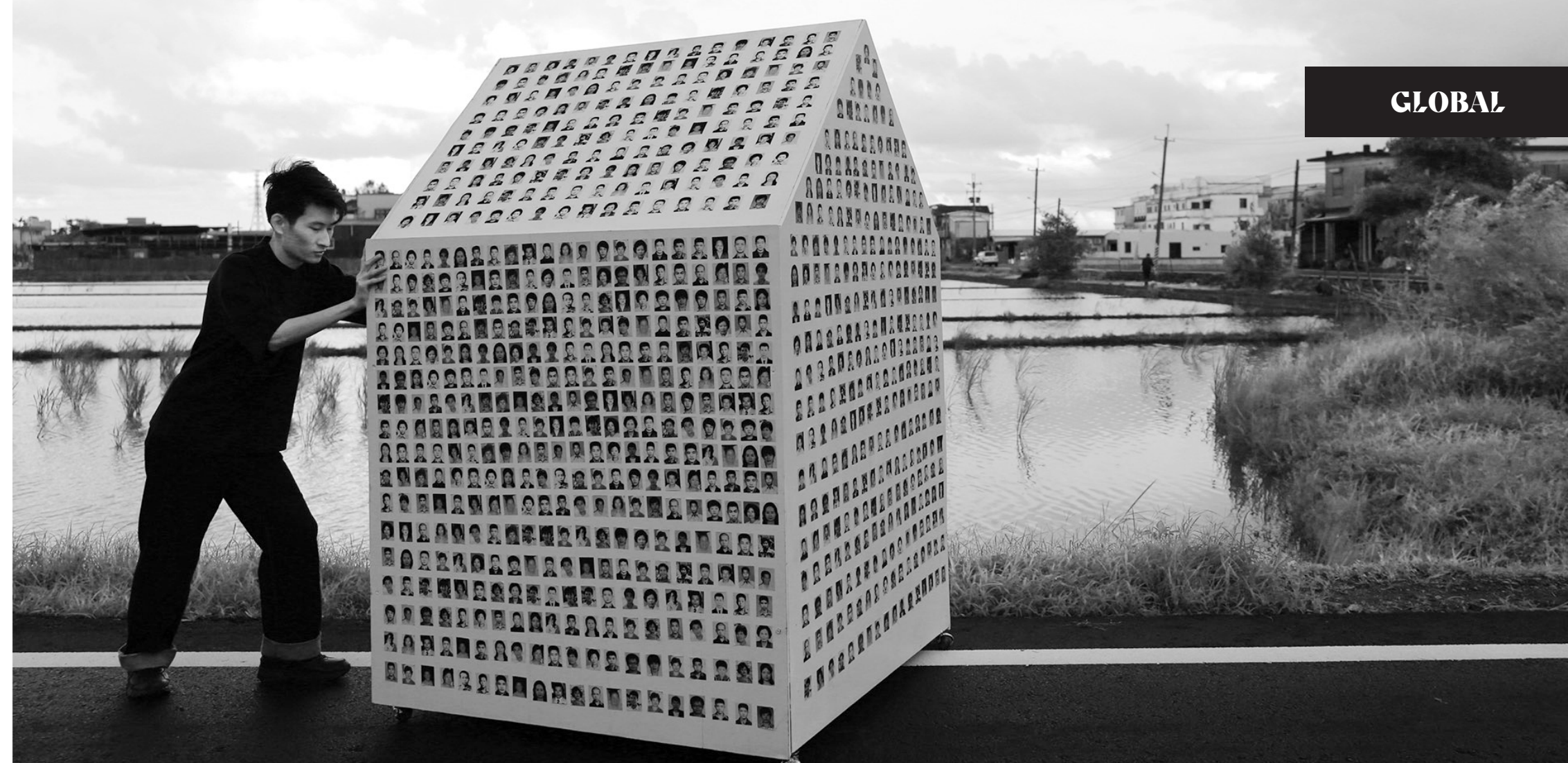
Colour is used sparingly, although a painting by Henri Lebasque does, in clustered bodies of paint, hold the clarity of morning light. And there are bodies breaking out of the sea, their flesh filling the waves and the air as they gaze up at soldiers in the sky. And a seated porcelain statue of a woman, alone but not lonely. She folds peacefully over her own body; she reaches down towards her bare feet. The body in the morning must be a desirable one, and I find the intimacy of this moment disrupted by the gaze that has her cast in marble. Morning is a rare secret, and I have intruded on this one.

Morning here means bodies of water, bodies of land, bodies of pillowing flesh. I think of drapery — of gravity pulling the fabric corners of these bodies down to earth, through stars and cycles of time.

/

I see it: solitude is the only thing in the world that I can control. Love will still fill the day if I want it to, as love starts in the morning. Morning is a small secret, a hopeful shade of blue — the clear turquoise of a shallow sea in the sun. Morning makes my body feel vulnerable: a welcome, lonely feeling. Light is completely insistent. It fills every room, and the birds always notice it before I do.

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GLOBAL

## We Used to Live Here

Jeremy Chuang Chih-Hao

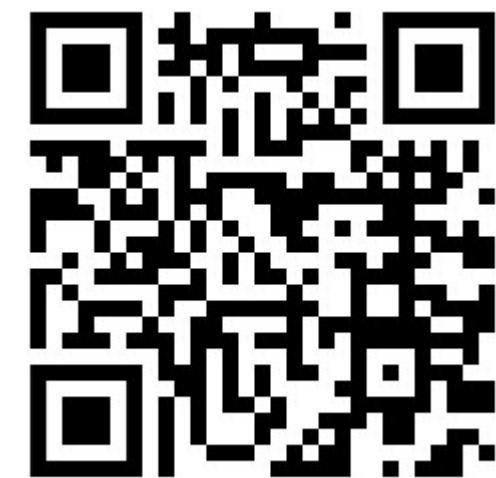
MA Photography

Performance, Mixed Media Installation, Video | Dimensions Variable | 1 min 33 sec. | 2022

As time passes, the places that people live are constantly changing. During the Japanese colonial period, the Taiwanese Plains Aboriginal Peoples had to move their residences to seek a safe place to survive.

By conducting field research of my family history, I learnt that Han settlers initially implemented policies that took advantage of aboriginal people. While aboriginal peoples were tax-paying citizens, they were at risk of being clamped down by armed forces. To conceal our aboriginal identity, my family name was changed to protect ourselves from governmental policies. This aboriginal name still survives in the family tree, which is how I was able to trace where my family used to live, and construct a house with all the family portraits. In this video, I push them around the path to intertwine a physical performance with the environmental location.

*Chuang Chih-Hao is a Taiwanese artist based in London. He focuses extensively on the interrelationship between home and self-identity from an autobiographical perspective, which he derived into a subjective language that uses photography to engage in visual contemplation. With his studies and art, he predominately concentrates on the integration of interdisciplinary media, sculpture and installations, specific bodies, and spaces with photography.*





# Veganuary

## Nicole Moore MA Writing

My journey towards a vegan diet started twelve years prior, although back then the idea never entered my consciousness. I certainly didn't like meat as a child and as an adult hardly ate red meat, believing chicken or fish was a healthier option at the time. The catalyst to considering a vegetarian diet stemmed from living in Jamaica for three months in 2007, an excellent opportunity to embrace not just the island's vibrant culture, but the perfect time and place to experiment with a vast range of fresh fruits and vegetables, cooked by a Rastafarian food guide called Greg. I discovered that there was good reason to shun additives, preservatives, processed foods and all that is generally eaten which has no direct root in nature. Eating fresh fruits and vegetable dishes for three months was enough for me to commit to a vegetarian diet. I even wrote about the veggie journey for *Jamaican Eats Magazine*<sup>1</sup>.

So, I became a 'vegetarian', or should I say a pescatarian because I did eat fish occasionally but after those rare occasions when I did eat fish, mostly salmon, I noticed digestion issues which caused me to stop cooking it at home. The larger the gap between eating fish, the more acute I felt its digestion and I especially didn't like the bloatedness that seemed to hang around after. You could say I was becoming more tuned into my body, enabling, rather than hindering, its functionality. You really are what you eat.

Transitioning towards a vegan diet was a no-brainer. Initially, I was curious; I wanted to experiment. I felt

the need to carry out some research which I knew would help develop not just an awareness of eating in this way but a growing confidence in what I was embarking upon. I started my vegan diet on 1 September 2019, embracing a plant-based way of eating, avoiding all animal foods — meat, fish, dairy, eggs, and honey.

I watched numerous YouTube videos e.g., 'Foods for Protecting the Body and Mind' by Dr Neal Barnard, which led me to taking a twenty-one-day Vegan Kickstart. I made lists of the vegan foods that I was interested in, which consisted of most fruit and vegetables, grains, (love porridge made with Oatly whole) smoothies made with coconut milk, frozen fruits —



strawberries, blueberries, cherries — a sprinkling or two of cinnamon, and matcha tea, cucumber slices, a handful of spinach, a tablespoon of flax seeds, a tablespoon of Whole Earth Smooth peanut butter, two cubes of ice and a teaspoon or two of Splenda, a low calorie sweetener. My most favourite is a watermelon and grape smoothie, a wonderful, delicious snack, packed with nutrients.

What about supplements you may ask? A good and important question. More research led me to read *WHOLE — Rethinking the Science of Nutrition* by T. Colin Campbell & Howard Jacobson, (2013) who advocated that: "The whole is greater than the

individual parts. Nutrients in whole food work together like a symphony." I settled on taking vitamins B12 and D.

There's never a better time than the start of a new year to take the plunge and try out something new, even just for one month, especially as January is when Veganuary, a non-profit organisation, that started in 2014, promotes a move to a plant-based way of eating. Veganuary encourages awareness of how a plant-based diet protects the environment, making for a greener planet. They also work to prevent animal suffering thereby improving the health of millions of us. For example, research shows that "vegan diets resulted in 75% less climate-heating emissions, water pollution and land use than diets in which more than 100g of meat a day was eaten. Vegan diets also cut the destruction of wildlife by 66% and water use by 54%."<sup>2</sup>

I don't know about you, but studying makes me hungry, which is why I usually start my college day with lunch at the RCA Refectory, along with many students, judging by how packed it is during opening times: Monday to Friday 12pm - 2.30pm. On offer is a range of meal choices, including vegan

options. My favourite is the 'soup of the day', a wholesome home-made recipe that never disappoints, an ideal choice during the cold winter months. There's always a plant-based salad option and a variety of daily vegan meals to choose from.

<sup>1</sup>Moore, N. (2008/2009) 'How I Became a "Veggie"' in *Jamaican Eats Magazine*, December 2008-February 2009, Vol 2, No.3

<sup>2</sup>Carrington, D. (2023) 'Vegan diet massively cuts environmental damage, study shows' *The Guardian*.

Picture credit: *Fruit 'n Veg Basket*, Nicole Moore, 2018

# Madona George in conversation with Imon Phukan

*Imon Chetia Phukan would like to be known as a girl from the hills. She is an artist and a member of the 2023 MA Sculpture Department. Her creative journey took a turn from painting into sculpture. The mix of cultures she holds and her ambition to dive into different practices and languages provides a broad band for her work process. She has participated in various group exhibitions in India, her country of birth. In her most recent installation, she worked with intertwined strings, where every space broadens to a mandala.*

**Maddy:** As a painter, do you feel translating your works and yourself to sculpture was challenging?

**Imon:** Curious is the best way to describe it, I think. I've always wanted to live inside my paintings. I was finding out how sight can be tangible, but in a true sense my current installations bought me the experience I was looking for. Yes! It was challenging: I felt lost, but it was interesting for me as well to touch my paintings in the form of sculpture.

**Maddy:** What are the techniques you use to keep producing works in your practice? How do you connect your work to the contemporary context?

**Imon:** I guess I produce works as a reaction to my current experiences. As a distanced viewer, present circumstances remind me of history, loss, separation, melancholy, and pain. The loss of my father was a firsthand experience that always made me produce my paintings as love letters, and now as installations. I see my works as poetry: they can't be read verbally, but can be felt. It's not important to understand; I don't want them to be read and remembered. I want them to carry a feeling that makes us nostalgic on a rainy evening.

**Maddy:** Do you feel your installations are critically placed and hence it is sometimes difficult to put in an open space or gallery?



**Imon:** Yes, sometimes I do get overwhelmed due to the size and complexity of my installations. But I think my works are projections of my inner self, and projecting that is hard yet empowering. I do face difficulty while placing my installations in a particular space; the process is always a combination of sweat and tears, but it is intriguing for me to observe how my installations are moulded into a space that demands adjustments. I feel that's what every human goes through. Striving to survive irrespective of every life challenge. Like in the 2016 motored installation by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, Can't Help Myself.

**Maddy:** Do you have any tips for other students who might share similar interests and are coming from other creative backgrounds about how

interdisciplinary practice like the AcrossRCA module provides space for new ideas?

**Imon:** I think it's always interesting to see where contemporary art is travelling. Learning from each other is always the best key to bring up varied cultural practices under one roof, and the RCA is an umbrella that is making it happen with collaborative modules like AcrossRCA and the Urgency of the Arts. There is no thin line between any practice. I think all practices are linked to each other in many ways; it is up to us how we channel our ideas.

**Madona George (MA Sculpture) in conversation with Imon Phukan (MA Sculpture).**



# ‘No Man’s Land’

Yuna Goda  
MA Writing

When I saw the title “No Man’s Land”, I was suddenly unsure if the apostrophe should be there. I was thinking about the word “mujin-tou”, the Japanese word meaning “uninhabited island”, directly translating to “no-human-island”. The characters only imply the absence of humans on the island. I found it unfamiliar that the English phrase, “no man’s land”, involves a notion of ownership. After a short browse on Google, though, I confirmed that “no man’s land” is spelled with an apostrophe.

“No Man’s Land – Terra Nullius” was the title of a group exhibition that took place at the RCA Battersea Campus in November, 2023. Within the limited space of the Dyson Building lounge area, 22 RCA students from various courses exhibited works that respond to the title through their own, unique perspectives. Here, I reflect on a few of the works that left strong impressions on me.

Walking inside the Dyson building entrance, I was immediately intrigued by the pentagonal panel-like structure that stuck out of the glass wall. It took me a few moments to recognize it as an artwork: Mathijs Hunfield’s *TADA (store sign) – black* (2023), spilling out of the dedicated exhibition space in the lounge area.

Then the rest of the hallway came into view. I realised that more parts of the show extended outside of the lounge. From there I could see the exhibition space, packed with objects and people. I gulped as I imagined the mass of information I was about to dive into.

As soon as I stepped into the lounge area, I felt surrounded by artworks. A printed panel with a vivid pink rim, Suzi Bratt’s *Ocean of Dust*



*Isle of Reverie*, Betty C Fan & Stephanie Teng

(*Terra Nullius*); a tower of seven magpies, Cameron Jarvie’s *Seven for a Secret*; a sewn tree branch, Simona Racheva’s *Rescue Mission 300*.

“No Man’s Land” was explored through a range of themes; for example, as the unacknowledged space in between binaries, the secret never to be told in a folktale, and environmental dystopia. The methods also varied among the artists. Despite being one of the most important and interesting characteristics of this exhibition, this range wore my brain very quickly. I soon started looking for a refuge from the congestion of thoughts.

Throughout the time I had been looking at the works—probably from the moment I had stepped into the exhibition space—I heard a ripple of sounds. It played at a rather demanding volume, strangely without disturbing my thoughts. Perhaps it was the soothing texture of sound; the human voice, water, and fireworks.

Slowly stepping towards its source, I reached in front of a large sculpture about the height of my waist.

It consisted of a white, fluid-like object and a steel structure merged together. It looked like a giant, white leech trapped in a modernist jungle-gym, or a cloud rising from the bones of a city.

The white object has been made from plastic remains, according to the artists. It is an imaginary “fossil” of life today, if it would ever be discovered in the far future. This sculpture imagines “No Man’s Land” as the world after humans have gone.

The structure produced sound when I tapped on the wires entangled on its steel frames. The touch, a temporary connection between the visitor and the fossil, echoes the memory of the soothing soundscapes.

I later found out that the sculpture was called the *Isle of Reverie*, a collaborative work between Betty C Fan, the sculptor, and Stephanie Teng, the sound producer and writer.

By then, my thoughts cleared again, with more space to see. I walked towards the further end of the lounge, where the boxed tables and seating



*Rescue Mission 300*, Simona Racheva

were. More moving image works were placed on this side of the show.

There I recognized Elina Yumasheva’s work, *Nothingness?* located near the further end wall. Knowing the artist mainly for her paintings, the medium of this work—silk, velvet and AR— intrigued me.

I was introduced to the work through her beautifully worded description, originally written by Shahmir Hussain, Elina’s friend and curator:

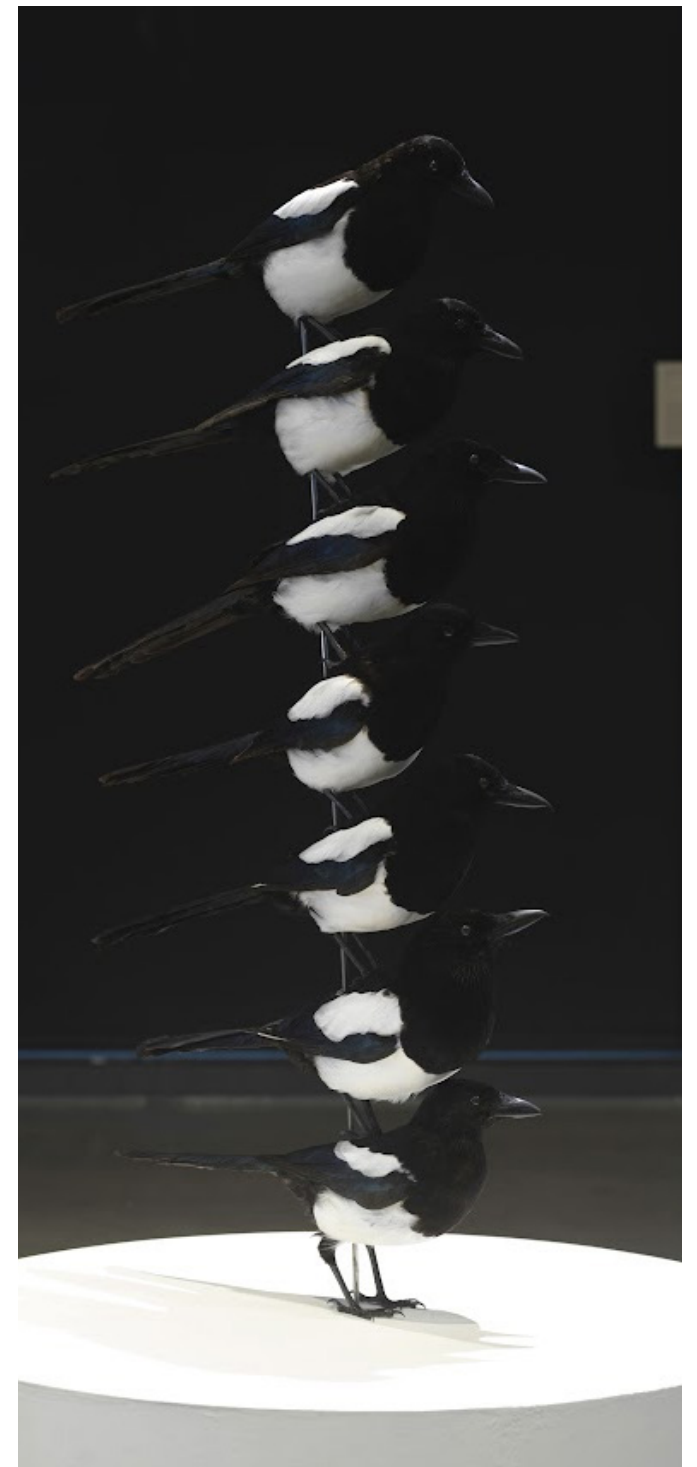
*“Before light, before colour, before light there was darkness, primordial void say ancient scripts [...]. Before the big bang there was nothing—an infinite darkness says science. [...] Black is not necessarily evil. Light is not necessarily good. But what is one without the other?”*

Elina’s installation imagines “No Man’s Land” as the world before anything started. She materialised a soft, tender and ambient world of nothingness,

something in contrary to the devastating impression of the black hole.

Whilst the silk and velvet render the “spiritual” nothingness, the AR piece projects a “scientific” visualisation before the Big Bang. Although these two mediums appear to differ, both parts of the work convey a very similar experience to the viewer; a warm and comfortable silence, as if inside the womb.

“No Man’s Land” introduced me to a range of talented artists, including many who remain unnamed in this text. I walked home from the Dyson building, wondering if I would see the artists’ works in a larger space in the near future. Although the artists and curators probably attempted this to the best of their abilities, many times during the show, I found myself wishing: if only the works breathe more. However, I am comforted by the thought that these practitioners’ talents might soon find their venues outside the RCA, perhaps even before I finish writing this review.



*Seven For a Secret*, Cameron Jarvie