

Class Matters

List of Works, Artist Statements & Biographies

An Introduction

Elizabeth A. Hodson & Deborah Jackson

1

Hayley Dawson

Hell Mend Ye, Dinna Let Yer Modesty Wrang Ye, Tell The Truth and Shame The Devil and Pan Loafie

These hangings feature handmade tiles with Scots sayings on them and some drawings from my research into tiled tenement closes. Closes have long been associated with working class life and for me, hold many personal memories. They are the spaces my own and many other people's ancestors inhabited And much life took place in them. I want the tile pieces to reflect the echoes of life, conversations, secret trysts and much more that undoubtedly takes place in these spaces.

Hayley Jane Dawson (b.1987) is a working-class artist from Glasgow. Their practice is interdisciplinary, working mainly with ceramics, installation and text. Their work has been published by Pilot Press and shown at Generator Projects and Tate St Ives. Dawson was commissioned by Glasgow Zine Library to make a Scots Language zine in 2023 featuring drawings, writing and ceramics depicting their experiences of working-class life. They will graduate from the MLitt Art Writing course at Glasgow School of Art in 2024.

2

Megan Devenny

Crucified cherub on a skateboard; I was ruined before I even began

Framed upon an abandoned skateboard (found on the street, it was pink, I could not resist) my wax cherub (+nailed) melted upon the surface (melted being also slang for accidentally on purpose becoming incapacitated) my work despite been impractical looking, is constantly salvaged recycled + repurposed. (wax being old candle ends) just like how we live, making do and doing what we can to survive. It's often messy + dirty whilst remaining cheap + cheerful. We become our own martyrs.

Now I am poor , burnt out & sometimes articulate as I throw paint on shit with the knowledge I come from the same crop as Turner Prize Wannabes.

(*‘ ‘)→

Fight your bougie morals & buy my paintings so I can feed my cats.

My subjects generally represent my fears and vulnerabilities. As a disabled adult I am terrified of being infantilised , feeling like a large baby being so sensitive. It's turning my fears into (com)passions, Virgin Mary strap ons and drag queens to combat the Catholic guilt pressed on to my living ancestors. A defunct Furby represents a mixture of cold unfeeling robots mixed with the horror of gremlins from the 80s. I reclaim their power in collecting, creating and nurturing them. The monstrous mothers & inner children, finding out there barks are worse than their bites. I can be a big baby and still a magical genderless angelic being. Power in care and absurdity.←(o_O)

I am a Masters Graduate of GSA working towards a PhD and becoming a full-time passionate artist practitioner, researcher and facilitator.

A practice in hijacking the norm, blurring the lines between what is considered the normative and abnormal, whilst edging on parodying of the typical expectations, and exploring the public and social engagement. Expressions and impressions of the curated self and the strive to find meaning and validation, and the desire to be seen, which does not always translate simply. With an elaborated focus on the concept, utilizing the handmade, the analogue and the repurposed as a playful rejection of the minimal clean- cut.

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3

Graham Fagen

Lawn (1999)

When I was younger, I can remember seeing a comedy sketch on TV about working class, middle class and upper class.

A few years on, I read in a newspaper an article about class, again it outlined the three types.

I thought hard about my own situation.

Being working class was not considered. I'm not sure why. These were poor people who you felt sorry for, tramps and dirty people.

We had a nice house in a new council scheme with an up-stairs and a back and front garden, so we couldn't be in the middle of the class categories.

So, I thought, we must be in the only category that was left, upper class.

Graham Fagen (born 1966) is a Scottish artist living and working in Glasgow, Scotland. He studied sculpture at The Glasgow School of Art (1984-1988, BA(Hons)) and Art & Architecture at the Kent Institute of Art and Design (1989-1990, MA). He is Professor of Fine Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design at the University of Dundee.

Working across mediums, he is interested in how history and culture is created and how in turn this shapes and forms who we are or who we become and how we relate to others. He is represented by Matt's Gallery, London and has exhibited extensively throughout the UK and internationally, with works in public collections such as Tate and National Galleries Scotland. In 1999 he was invited by the Imperial War Museum, London to work as the Official War Artist for Kosovo. In 2015, he represented Scotland at the 56th Venice Biennale.

4

Laurie Figgis

For the *Class Matters* exhibition, I am exhibiting a dye-sublimation print on canvas. This work is the outcome of research into the ancien-regime aristocracy in France, as it is portrayed: firstly, in films conforming to the genre of romantic historical fiction (such as Patrice Chereau's *La Reine Margot*, 1994 and Sophia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*, 2006); secondly in a series of contes de fées (fairy tales) written by aristocratic intellectuals (notably Marie Catherine d'Aunloy) in Paris salons of the late seventeenth century. In the "scenes" depicted in the paintings a member of the ruling elite is shown having "lunch" with two deities or fairies (spirits of modernity, whose names recall the goddesses of Greek mythology). The deities are dressed in costumes inspired by modernist art works, including a gown and wig shaped like Robert Morris's *Untitled L Beams* (1965).

Laurence Figgis is an artist, writer and lecturer in Fine Art Painting and Printmaking at the Glasgow School of Art. He has previously exhibited work both locally and internationally in solo and group exhibitions. He has disseminated his writing through a number of publications as well as through live public readings.

He makes paintings and drawings (that often convey literary narratives), alongside works of poetry, fiction and art writing. His accompanying research into art-writing practice, narrative painting, literary fiction and narrative cinema explores how the aesthetic forms through which stories are conveyed shape our understanding and enjoyment of particular narratives. He is especially concerned with genres such as the fairy tale, gothic literature or surrealist art that make their fictional status (their exaggeration and transformation of reality) conspicuous to the reader/viewer.

5

Victoria Haley

A list of events from my life, with questions at the bottom that invite the GSA community to respond/comment on the canvas. I would like to try and isolate specific elements of my life that are seemingly contradictory in terms of class—or at least could be seen as being prescriptive of a certain class according to popular culture—and then ask some questions. Below are some ideas of questions that could be posed.

What class am I?

Do any one of these elements preclude me from being part of a specific class?

Can we transition from one class to another during the course of our lives?
Or can class identity be fluid throughout our lives?
Does class identity impact the choices we make?
Or is class defined by the choices we make?
Do we have to belong to a specific class?
Can we identify as classless when living in a society so defined by class?

Victoria Haley:

Part-time Admin Officer at GSA.

Part-time Psychology and Counselling student.

Full-time Mother.

Constantly curious.

I have no idea what I'm doing here, next to these actual artists.

6

Michelle Hannah

The pieces shown are informed by a performance from the Class Matters symposium last year. The entire text of the performance 'Burnout' was used as a DALLE image prompt, printed onto silk and now worn often. To accompany this, the collage is made from an exhibition poster of the installation 'House of Embers' produced at GOMA in 2022. The deer pictured was spotted and captured on Buchanan Street during the first lockdown. Both are offered as remnants of a speculative and queer Glaswegian dystopia.

Michelle Hannah, born in Glasgow, is an artist and lecturer in SEA and MLitt Fine Art Practice. At the core of their practice is an excavation into queer presence within photomontage, digital imagery, disembodied sound, speculative text, moving image and vocal performances. They currently interested in what (and where) queer consciousness could be, the limits of cosmic pessimism, non human intelligence and parapsychology. Most recently they performed at the British Art Network symposium and have an upcoming residency at Take Me Somewhere.

7

Laura Haynes

I Know No Riddles (2024)

Chronicling 'impeded, lessened and partial' literary work, writer and activist Tillie Olsen surveyed the tragic dimensions of social silencings. Highlighting the silences imposed upon working class people by physical and intellectual deprivation, isolation, and routinised work, Olsen's work demanded that time (and its scarcity) is an object of politics. Her project, published as *Silences* in 1978, chronicles disenfranchised literary foremothers and the forces of silence, and notes 'how much it takes to become a writer [...] how much conviction as to the importance of what one has to say, one's right to say it.' This work heretically profiles the where and how you are born that determines the where and how you work. In acknowledgment of her own perceived failure Olsen writes, 'the habits of a lifetime, when everything else had come before writing, are not easily broken.'

These habits are compulsive: the repetitive strain of unused powers, the hijacked mind, thwarted energies, starved hopes, and the unmet hunger for a life more abundant than one's sanctioned sphere permits. In 'Tell Me a Riddle', her novella first published in 1962, Olsen narrates the interrelatedness of the 'private sphere' and the 'public' to consider the location of the family within a larger set of

social relations. 'I know no riddles,' answers disillusioned Eva to her grandchildren's request for her to tell them a riddle.

Laura Haynes is a writer, editor and academic based in Glasgow. She is co-director of MAP magazine and at The Glasgow School of Art is leader of the studio-based interdisciplinary MLitt Art Writing postgraduate programme, where she also edits *The Yellow Paper: Journal for Art Writing*

8

Mandy McIntosh

Dear Duty (2018) & *Bronze Babies* (2024)

For *Class Matters*, Mandy is showing a first version of her May Donoghue monument *Dear Duty* 2018, accompanied by a new piece of text called *Bronze Babies*. Mandy McIntosh replaced this version with an alternate bronze work about four weeks prior to install on September 12th 2018. Both sculptures share the same characteristics in their making, but the second version is augmented by car paint and concrete, she is taller and wearing a hat. The circumstances around this work were contested and required intricate planning permissions. The site of the sculpture is adjacent to the former location of The Wellmeadow café on a triangle of grass which was recovered from a demolished public toilet and a derelict cable box. There is no formal landscaping. For this public sharing, May Donoghue is universalised as a symbol of the many harms inflicted on working class people in contemporary life.

Mandy McIntosh is an artist from Glasgow. Her inter disciplinary practice includes animation, expanded documentary, community arts and sculpture. For the last ten years she has worked almost exclusively in areas most severely impacted by inadequate social and economic infrastructure, post-industrial blight and the outcomes of long-term hostile ideologies such as "Austerity". Her work seeks to address conditions through collaboration with people and place in modes which act as counter narratives within areas of hegemony. Works include *Dear Duty* 2018, a monument to May Donoghue, FECS URNY MUGS 2019, *The Tale O' the Feegie Flood* 2022, *REPEAT PATTERNS* 2023 at Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, and *Each for All and All for Each* 2024, a community project on the history of The Cooperative Movement in Springburn, enabled through Imperial War Museum and the Hunterian Museum outreach funding and the support of Cathy Wilkes.

9

Trackie McLeod

Hair cut / Hair dye (2020-2024)

Me and my mammy have done each others hair on and off since I was a wee guy. My school photos act as proof of questionable hair cuts. Her towels sorry 'every fucking towel in her house' stained with box dye, highlight questionable skill level. But what they document is a bond between a mother and son. Though Cathy's stint as an actual hairdresser was short lived, she caught the gift of the gab - which is now inherently mines. She'll tell you that herself.

Generation Wealth (2024)

This is for 97% of people I went to Art School with.

Trackie McLeod is a Scottish artist based in Glasgow. Best known for his text-based work, Trackie recontextualises our relationship with everyday colloquialisms. His punchy take on sculpture, textiles

and print mixed with his love of Scottish patter creates a visual best described as ‘one part tongue-in-cheek, an ounce of sarcasm and a pint of Tennent’s Lager’.

Hair cut / Hair dye shows the bond between a single working class mum and her son.

Generational Wealth is a tongue and cheek comment on class and how we differ.

10

Michael Mercinis

In criminology, the ‘Broken Windows Theory’, introduced in 1982 by social scientists Wilson and Kelling, proposes that visible signs of disorder create an urban environment that encourages further disorder. There is an implication that the urban landscape allows a communication of lack of authority and this, in turn, proliferates a disregard for social norms and law. A new social geography emerges leading to a continuous deterioration of culture and community, as disorder becomes more common. The works scrutinize the nuanced relationship between causality and correlation and advocate a complex response to how the urban landscape ultimately can become a site of resistance of marginalised communities and how disorder reflects the complexities of class dynamics. Disorder is reframed as a complex phenomenon, imbued with transformative potential and latent opportunities for societal renewal and magical opportunities.

Michael Mersinis is an artist from Greece, teaching in the Fine Art Photography Department at The Glasgow School of Art. By using photography’s uncertain indexical relationship with reality, he makes work that superimposes the projected qualities of places with the Real. Geography, history, storytelling and hearsay form the basic material from which contemporary hybrid notions of place emerge. By utilising travelling and picture-making as methods to examine and comment on senses of place, he works with and against notions of place as ‘Evental Site’ of encounters and consequences and the ontology of the photographic image. Current projects include a long project on the history, locality and imagination of fundamental typologies of place that are historically present and liminal and the pursuit of a political dimension in the photograph in areas of geopolitical tensions along the tectonic plates in the Mediterranean Region, where current events unfold and encounter past histories.

11

Fiona Robertson

The sculptures are made from the detritus of the everyday; half-forgotten conversations, malformed impressions, shards of clothing, broken mobile phones. Here is the ugliness of the mundane; the farce of modern consumer culture. This ugliness binds the work to a long lineage of the grotesque in art, a lineage that, Mikhail Bakhtin observed, possesses a critical dimension wherever it appears. In its ability to parody and debase, the grotesque can reverse hierarchical structures and subvert the value systems of the society from which it emerges – a process that Bakhtin saw at work in the carnivalesque, where the grotesque was employed by popular culture - or where, perhaps, popular culture was employed by the grotesque.

Fiona Robertson is an artist based in Glasgow. She studied at Chelsea School of Art, London, Glasgow School of Art and Warsaw Academy of the Arts. She has been a Lecturer in the Painting and Printmaking Department at the Glasgow School of Art since the late 1990’s. Their work has been selected for international film competitions at acclaimed festivals such as Oberhausen and Go Short. They have exhibited locally most recent solo exhibitions include 'tit-bits' at Glasgow South Block 2023 and 'SALTHOUSE' Reid Corridor Glasgow School of Art 2024. Active in the local art’s community they

have have curated exhibitions and events (see beggars.teeth.com). Her site-specific sculpture 'Green Man' is located in Glasgow's Necropolis. Fiona regularly collaborates with, and is commissioned by, performance and theatre makers. In 2017, my site-specific sculpture and film 'Bad Sheep' was screened as part of a touring performance promenade.

12

Son&Son

Power Dressing

Collaborative duo Son&Son explore 'future making and future faking' by coopting and subverting the strategies of conformity embedded in hierarchies, institutions, and corporations. Son&Son's work includes a collection of apparel, which conflates the visual vocabularies of, for example, 1980 and '90s shell suits, florescent hi-vis rave wear, athleisure, liturgical vestments, personal protective equipment (PPE), and police restraint garments. The habiliments (clothing, especially for professional, ceremonial, or other special purposes), they create are used in their work to explore the rituals of maintaining and challenging power relations within society.

Bio

Son&Son are Deborah Jackson and Steven Anderson.

13

Jane Topping

All teenage bedrooms are sites of cultural production. In mine I dressed in the costumes of the men I admired – the Ray-ban Wayfarers of Queen's drummer Roger (Meadows) Taylor, the brown raglan-sleeved coat and turned-up Levis of Judd Nelson in *The Breakfast Club*, black suit jacket collars covered in enamel badges bought in the Savoy Centre, just like Robert Lindsay in *Citizen Smith* and Rik Mayall in *The Young Ones*. Though a limited budget meant compromise, I reproduced these looks as best as I could, transforming myself into the objects of my ill-defined desire. Better that than being the object of someone else's.

I bought white cotton pants directly from the Queen Fanclub, of which I was a paid-up member. Printed on the crotch was the Queen crest, designed by Freddie Mercury in 1973. The pants' version was a later design that retained the zodiac signs of the four members of the band - two lions for Leos John Deacon and Roger Taylor, a crab for Cancerian Brian May (and for me!) and two fairies for Virgo Freddie. In 1984 I sent a drawing I'd made of Brian May to Jackie, the president of the fanclub. Eighteen months later it was returned, signed by Brian, but by then I'd finished with Queen, and the pants had been thrown away. I'd left the bedroom to drink cokes with grown-up boys who listened to heavy metal in long-gone bars in Glasgow. Out there was the possibility, both tantalising and terrifying, of being enveloped by the red quilted satin lining of a black leather biker jacket, placed over my shoulders while its owner walked me to the bus stop.

Jane Topping (she/her) is a Scottish artist and Lecturer on the MLitt Fine Art Practice programme at Glasgow School of Art. Her interdisciplinary practice meddles with science fiction and horror, the archive and the screen, sometimes meandering towards autofiction or delving into the literature and lives of writers, including Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999). Recent outings for her practice and research include solo exhibition *Drew Barrymore's Island Hotel from Hell* (Patricia Fleming, Glasgow 2023), *Queereal Secretions* (Annex Gallery, GSA, 2023), *Fiction Machines IV*, *Bath School of Art, Film & Media*, 20 July 2023, *Feminist Histories of the Future* (Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2023), *Murky*

Waters (Edinburgh, 2022), *The Immaterial Salon* (Marseilles, 2022), Gothic Nature Journal III: Haunted Shores (<https://gothicnaturejournal.com/>) and *The Influencing Machine* (nGbK, Berlin, 2018). Topping gained her PhD in Fine Art Practice in 2021 with the thesis: *The Peter & nou Handbook: A Field Guide to an SF Practice (So Far)*.

In 2022 curator Francesca Zappia wrote *The Hypnotised Machine* as a response to Topping's online work www.rabbitcottontoothcottonrabbit.com. Topping's video *Peter* won Best PKD Short at The Fifth Annual Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Film Festival, New York, 2017. Topping was a recipient of the summer residency (2017) at Hospitalfield, Arbroath and was on the jury of the No Budget Competition at the 32nd Hamburg International Short Film Festival (2016).