

15 September - 27 September 2022
Opening: 14 September 6-9pm

curated by **HAZE**

49 Staffordshire Street, London SE15 5TJ

PRESS RELEASE



Saelia Aparicio, Carl Anderson, Robert Aberdein, Solanne Bernard, Camilla Bliss, Rob Branigan, Šimon Chovan, William Darrell, Jane Hayes Greenwood, Oisín O'Brien, Alicia Reyes McNamara, Emily Stapleton Jefferis, Amy Steel, Becky Tucker, Georg Wilson

Staffordshire St and *HAZE* present *Destructive Mollusc* inviting sixteen artists to investigate the idea of a skin or membrane as both protective and restrictive.

Poet and philosopher Paul Valéry states in his book *Sea Shells* 'a crystal, a flower or a shell stands out from the usual disorder that characterises most perceptible things' - he is taking solace in the geometrical structure in these natural forms as a secure point in nature to meditate on. This shell however, also has the ability to feel more like a pressure cooker than a refuge. Both acting as the intimate cocoon we try to maintain around our own personal chaos, as well as a protection from outside turmoil - the protective skin doesn't necessarily get crushed, but the pressure it endures around it is palpable.

The exhibition is curated by *HAZE*, an artist-led curatorial project co-founded by Camilla Bliss and Solanne Bernard. As galleries and exhibition spaces closed down during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, and art slowly migrated online, *HAZE* was set up to enable an approach to exhibiting work which is more adaptive and fluid, without being tied down to one particular location.

Recent exhibitions include *Peach Fuzz* at the Factory Project produced by THORP STAVRI and *Fertile Laziness* at Platform Southwark.

For further information please contact: info@staffordshirest.com

Events

25 September: Darning workshop hosted by GOING, 11.30 am - 1.30pm

1 October: Plate painting workshop hosted by Eliza Hopewell, 11am - 1pm

Artist Biographies:

Saelia Aparicio works in sculpture, animation, large scale free-hand drawings and glass blowing, creating hybrid bodies, where the human and non human blur together into their own ecosystem of characters, merging both humour and horror.

Carl Anderson is a London-based artist working predominantly in ceramics. He creates sculptural forms that are playful and curious introspections of his own experiences and combines them with a visual language reminiscent of relic and artifact. They attempt to create objects that function as totemic signals for the deities of ancient civilizations that are both foreign and familiar to the viewer. They are also a means of investigating how specific belief systems connect to contemporary culture.

Robert Aberdein's sculptures come from the classical tradition, however their intent is not to portray strength, beauty and immortality, but rather vulnerability, weakness and fragility. The human form is there but not fully realised. Listening, motionless, fleshy hand-formed bodies are posed, many appearing to be suffering from the passage of time. It is unclear if the forms are complete, in a state of growth or decay. They stand on the verge alluding to our basic need of protection, a safe refuge, either physically or, at times, mentally.

Solanne Bernard lives and works in London. She works predominantly on large-scale installations merging the imagery of abstracted body parts and plants into hybrid sculptural forms. The hybridity of her works helps highlight the roles the fluidity and intertwinement of things together have in constructing a sense of unease and visceral displacement. In this way, the work explores how subjectivity can oscillate between human/animal/plant and object, pushing the material to see what it can do as subject and finding ways to act out the complexities between desire, violence and disgust.

Camilla Bliss regularly draws on motifs found in historical craftsmanship, myth and folklore to communicate ideas about the modern world, placing an importance on the handmade, yet at the same time referencing our relationship to digital technology. Bliss is interested in how we navigate the world through alternate states of being. The work is playful, and she often creates characters which have different personalities exploring the transitory nature of these states. They act as deities that build a relationship between the world we know and ruptured states between consciousness or the unfamiliar.

Rob Branigan is an artist living and working in London. In his practice, Rob uses the motif of the vessel, the support structure, within his work as a means of providing a receptacle for the viewer, to engage them to discuss ideas surrounding the objects they find themselves looking at, whether holding matter or information, exploring passages of time, inclinations of memory, ideas of knowledge and power structures.

Šimon Chovan is a designer and visual artist. His disruptive poetics connecting product design, pop-culture, technologies and natural materials is simultaneously deceptive and reflective. His work is based on the stimulation of our emotional responses by intentional presentation and anthropomorphism of extra-human world that is being evoked. Yet, Chovan does not forcefully equip the non-human agents with human features, but rather accentuates the mutual attributes.

William Darrell is a kinetic artist working between London and Paris.

His creatures draw from botanical and animal forms reinterpreted mechanically to explore the psychological effect motion. William's work aims to confront the viewer with a hypnotic novelty that the brain struggles to rationalise. Like a cuttlefish that stuns its prey with a mesmerising display the role of the artist becomes that of a predator feeding on the attention of the viewer.

Jane Hayes Greenwood works across painting, sculptural installation and CGI video. Beginning in personal experience, her work explores issues around the body, sexuality and reproduction. Underpinned by research, recent works investigate the use of plants in relation to fertility, midwifery (a history that is intertwined with witches and persecution) and the experience of pregnancy. Infused with a dreamlike sensibility, the paintings explore the powerful connections between the human and un/natural world as well as our attempts to appropriate, rationalise and control it.

Oisín O'Brien's practice is a way to extend the absurdity of our participation to being in, and of the world, both socially and culturally. He is particularly drawn to the anxiety of having to deal with the emotional transitions of swirling through a variety of prescribed and chosen roles. Furthermore, he is curious to the ways people maintain buoyancy in these shifts, through objects, gestures and rituals such as the hat his grandfather would put on to engage with his woodwork hobby. This occurs through a quest for sensemaking that is paralleled by a need to be emancipated from it.

Alicia Reyes McNamara makes paintings, drawings, moving-image and sculptures that meditate on issues of displacement, particularly within a double diaspora. They draw upon both Mexican and Irish (their parents' cultural heritages) mythology and folklore in order to make work that speaks of navigating gendered and cultural identities and questions how to negotiate the idea of cultural authenticity. Instead of the notion of a fixed, essential identity, Reyes McNamara's works insist on bicultural existence and a fluid concept of identity where cultures and languages overlap and intersect.

Emily Stapleton Jefferis works between drawing and making, with a particular focus on the use of ceramics. Craft skills remain integral to Emily's practice as she pushes her material knowledge to pursue an excellence of making. Her sculptural work primarily involves clay which she is drawn to as a result of its plasticity, tactility and intimacy within our daily lives. Emily's current work draws upon the materiality of clay to explore states of flux and growth.

Amy Steel combines painting and performance to create expansive, sensual environments where women unravel and explore themes such as sexuality, our relationship to nature and the desire to be part of something bigger. Fascinated by the complex relationships humans have with nature, Steel's dream-like paintings often feature animals and female body parts, which meld into the mysterious and luminous landscapes. This luminosity is translated through Steel's specific use of colour, through which she creates an atmosphere that is charged with emotion. The paintings are pointedly ambiguous, enabling the viewer to sense the work and react emotionally rather than by responding to an overly prescriptive narrative.

Becky Tucker's sculptural practice explores duality and storytelling through making objects from an imagined history or future. Themes of opposition and mimicry are a recurring language in her work, repeatedly creating objects that reference the human or animal body, blurring the line between animate character and object.

Georg Kitty's practice is directed by the cyclical change of the English seasons, from equinox to equinox. Each tiny fluctuation in the landscape, from wildlife, food, to quality of light informs the content of my work. England is a porous land of seeping, oozing layers, where many stories and temporalities can overlap, coexist and touch, all in one place. Her paintings peer between these

intertwined layers of England's folklore, history, landscape and custom, searching for a way to a strange new home, where this murky mess of weird narratives can intertwine and live together.

Notes

Staffordshire St <http://www.staffordshirest.com>

Staffordshire St is an independent project space in Peckham, South East London. The venue facilitates arts and cultural events and provides affordable studios for artists, makers and designers. The venue was recently established as an art gallery, before then it was for many years a community centre and originally it was built as a Methodist Hall. Staffordshire St will build on the established record of these histories, opening up again to the neighbourhood and developing a welcoming interdisciplinary arts space. More information on upcoming events at : info@staffordshirest.com or [@staffordshirest](https://www.instagram.com/staffordshirest)

Admission: FREE

Thursday–Friday 12-8pm

Saturday - Sunday 12–6pm or by appointment

Address:

49 Staffordshire Street, London SE15 5TJ

Transport (TFL stations):

12 minute walk from **Queens Road Peckham** or **Peckham Rye**

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