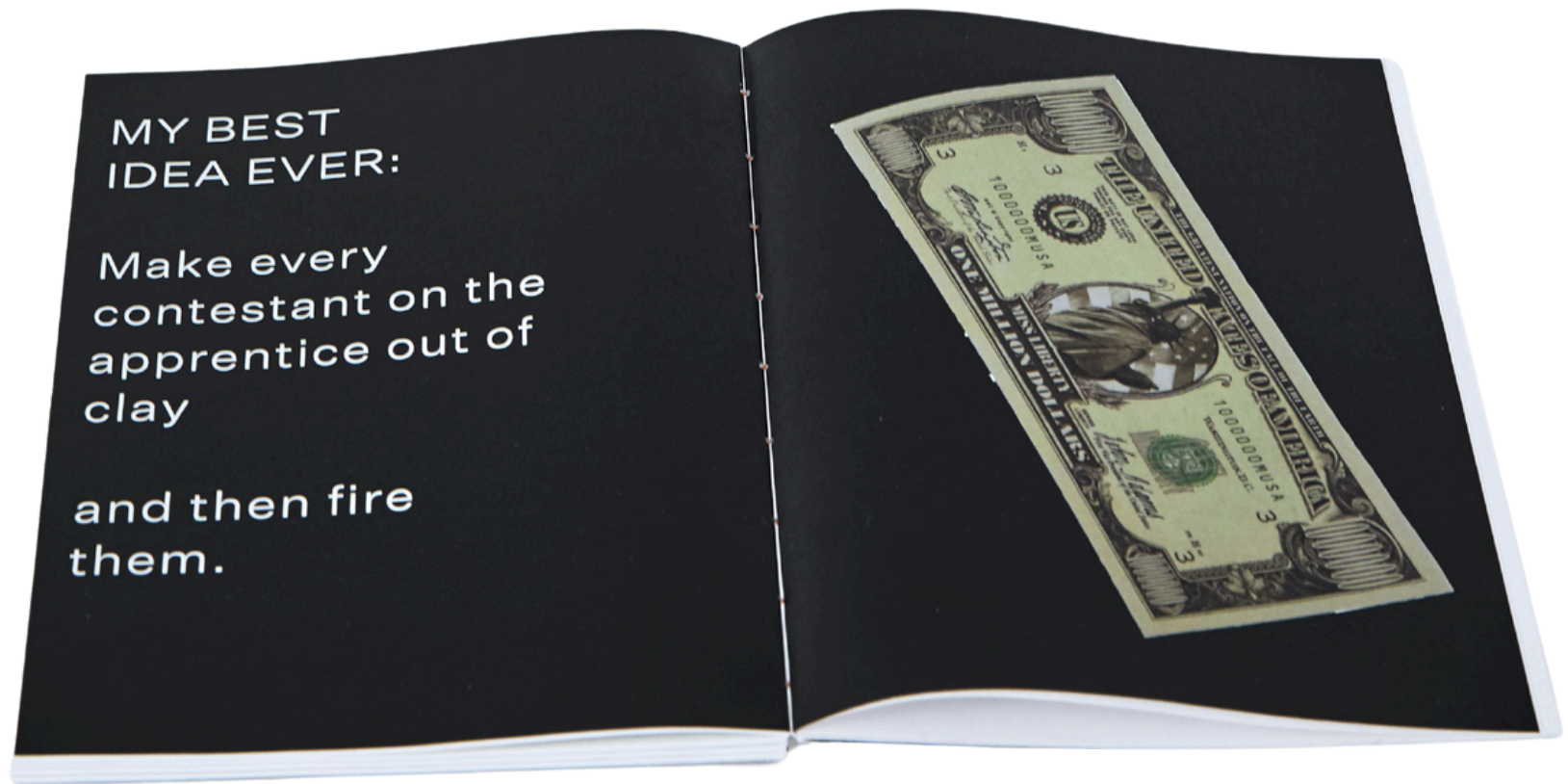


Half Truths

Seren Metcalfe



This book was selected for New Contemporaries 2021 and displayed at First Site, Colchester and South London Gallery.

HALF SEREN METCALFE TRUTHS



HALF TRUTHS is a Publication housing a collection of daily passings - a mixture of daily strolls and daily scrolls gathered into an autobiographical archive. It attempts to be research; to explain things, and act as a navigation system for my thought processes as well as being a directory of current artworks. All thoughts within the book are placed within categories such as time, labour, body language, and fame.

Book Design: Matthew Clark and Veronika Marxer

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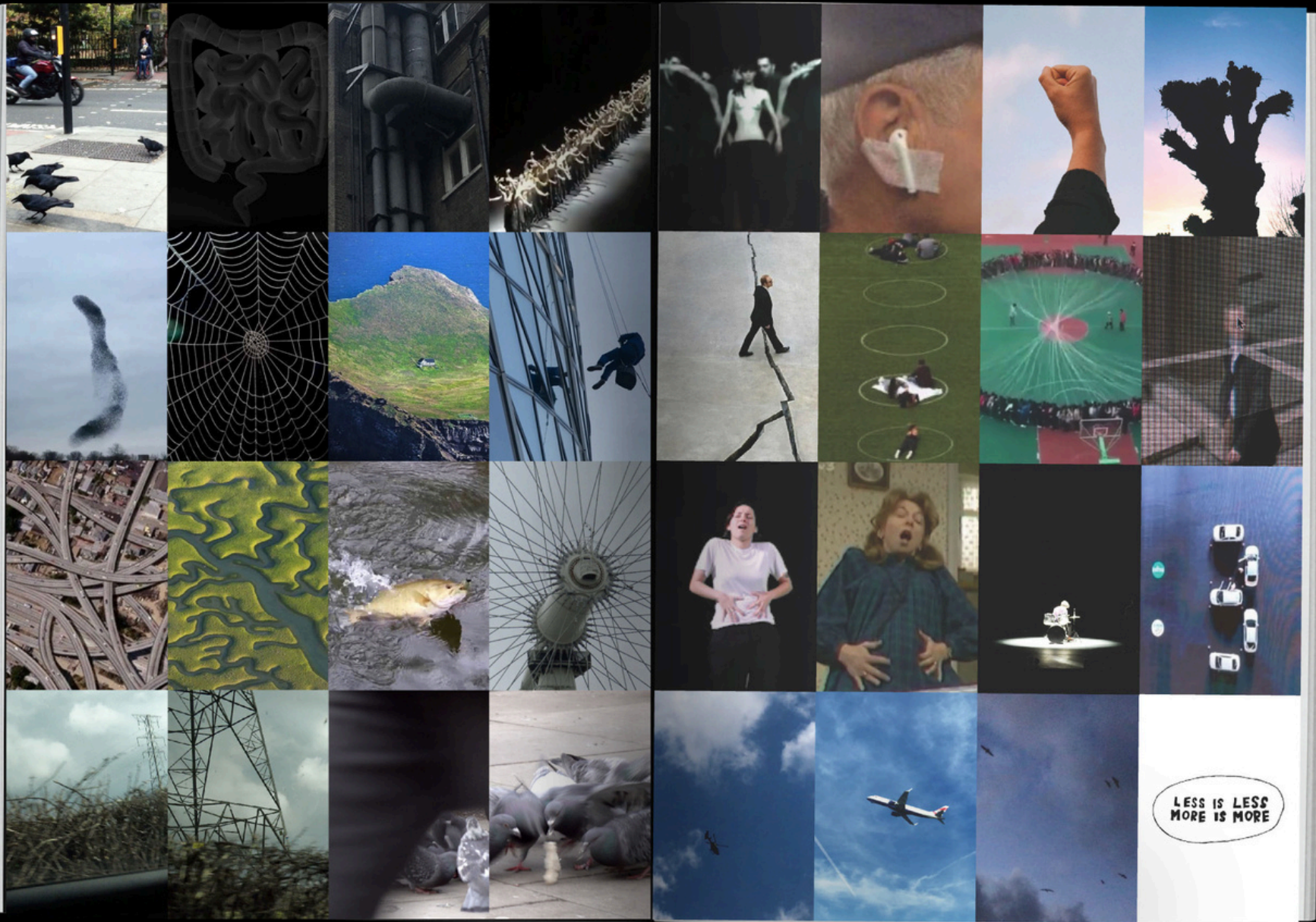
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INTRODUCTION

This publication will act as a directory to go alongside work related to themes that create *Phase 1* and *Phase 2*.¹ It may also be some kind of manifesto, or some kind of autobiography. It will attempt to be research; to explain things, and act as a navigation system for my thought processes.² Not everything will be introduced or driven to a point of conclusion. It will be a place to store and archive ideas and soothe the anxiety of forgetting. This publication signifies a new beginning but not an ending.³

I wanted to begin with some sort of artist statement.⁴ Although fond of artist statements.⁵ Since graduating art school and completing another cycle in my life there's been a feeling of having to be a complete circle or to round something off, but my concepts feel so ingrained within myself and who I am that it would be impossible to complete a single cycle. In consequence the text below is how I'm feeling about my work at this current moment. I expect this to change a lot in the coming years. I also feel like I need to acknowledge that I've always seen a book as something that sits in a shop and is there to be bought and written for others, but I'm not sure how much I'm writing this book for someone else. There are moments like the below one where I write to organise my thoughts and clear my head but also to inform you on the place⁶ I am beginning to write from.

*

"I am a Multidisciplinary Artist currently based in London but born and bred in Yorkshire (1997). I currently work in Video, Performance, Painting, Sculpture, Writing and Choreography.

My research covers themes of Time, Labour, Energy, Routine and Structure. I'm interested in the ways the body navigates through spaces, and find myself obsessively forming parallels between Cityscape and Landscape, or the 'Natural' vs the Mechanical. I also have key interests in Fame, Television, Consumerism and Class. Within my work I attempt to interconnect these themes with personal memories, childhood narratives and anecdotes - creating a language that is more palatable for myself to speak about personal experience and understanding of current existence.

Growing up in the suburbs of a 'train set city' in a time of rising neoliberalism and mass media, I spent the majority of my childhood in front of the television absorbing endless talent shows, make-over

¹ Hold on you'll find out about these in a second.

² I am my own undercover detective and these are my findings.

³ This book will be made up of writing within categories split up by photos, scripts and longer texts. Some Capitals will be used to emphasize words, others will be a mistake.

⁴ a conventional way within the art world to let people know you're the real deal.

⁵ They give me the ability to pull out a prepared script when someone asks me what the hell I'm doing with my life.

⁶ mental

BOUNDARIES

Geographical boundaries.¹ I remember in school learning about formations of land and rocks and coastal landscapes and thinking what kind of home insurance those who live at the edges of cliffs have.

In the countryside private properties set geographical boundaries. Sheep are gated into the 'owners' land to stop the neighbouring land engulfing the sheep, avoiding angry letters of something along the lines of, "get your bloody sheep off my property". In the City these restrictions are put in place to stop human bodies from passing onto land² that isn't theirs. Only those who signed their lives away to Santander may have the passcode to open the secret turnstiles at the Santander canary wharf branch that allows them access to nothing more than an office with a few expensive chairs and a name badge that proves their worth³. There's no walking through walls here.

It's 2018 and I open a letter from the council asking me if I object to the removal of a large blossom tree towards the back of the neighbours garden. I'd never really thought about that tree; where it's positioned or how many years it must have been there and never did I think that a letter would get me thinking about the feelings I have for a tree. I really felt sorry for this guy - the way his roots had pushed through the tarmac showed me he was fighting for his place in this city. He was stubborn and I wasn't going to get in the way of that.

It was only those who were in a certain radius of the tree or filled the space around the tree that got their say.⁴ But only if those in the vicinity called that place home; You only get a say if it's within the radius of you eating, sleeping and shitting.

It's 2020 and I'm home in Yorkshire suburbia. - a place where crows tell me to look down at the wild chives that grow through the cracks of the pavement breaking their way through the surface along with the dandelions and nettles.

It's 2020 and I'm too far away to have a say on that blossom tree. I've got my say on a new bit of land now.⁵ I watch out my window as workers in fluorescent jackets build the foundations of proposed high rise flats. And I can't help but think how many hands it took to build mine.⁶

¹ There's a point where we have to stop; Where our brain forms a mental boundary When running towards an edge of land that stops us jumping.

² (concrete)

³ The Restriction on buildings and who can enter

⁴ Body having a vicinity around it. - Body meaning human body, body of nature, body of object

⁵ Less of a say

⁶ Mine for now





BODY LANGUAGE

As bodies dance like boxes, Their movements almost always appear robotic. They're uptight and anxious. They don't know how to greet one another. Do they go for the double kiss? The hug or the handshake.¹ God forbid they go for the triple kiss.²

It's 2007 and I pick up a body language book and put it on as a disguise; Unaware this would set me up for years of pretending I was a really confident person. I'd spread my arms and legs as far out as possible; going to job interviews with the wingspan of an eagle and the leg span of a man spreader and walking down school corridors like catwalks.

Private schooled politicians are taught how to hold their hands in forced positions to convey certain meanings. The 'popular fist with thumb held firm into the palm' apparently shows precision, as this action is recognised by our brains as a gesture used when writing, eating and drawing. My brain recognises it as an action used when turning on the Telly. When opening their palm it suggests handing over money to the crowd; an action used to cover up the lack of.³

It's 2008 and I'm trying to erase the fear in my head of people who stand behind counters or desks or who wear fluorescent jackets and uniforms with hats.⁴ Obstacles between body to body seem to be an element of fear or suggestive of hierarchy. I'm scared of the girl behind the counter in topshop and the guy asking if I want a bag in tesco. I'm scared of the security guard in the shopping centre and the policeman who rides his bike past me most mornings.

It's 2020 and I still do that thing of introducing myself to myself in the mirror or repetitively counting the coins in my hands when in a que even though I know I've got enough or repeating the words 'erm hi can I have a large veggie deluxe meal until it becomes a long string of nonsensical words and something completely different comes out my mouth.

The obstacles still form barriers,⁵ and create the choreography of social intervention. The objects that split a room such as a desk or bar create a differentiation and box in the worker from the customer. The worker may enter the customer area when commanded but the customer rarely enters the workers box; This box is for staff only.

¹ To make a ring they say you must saw with the pressure of a handshake

² It's 2020 and I can only imagine the level of awkwardness gained from having to greet people from a distance.

³ I can't say my brain recognises an open palm as handing over money but I'm sure many private school scholars would disagree.

⁴ See Character

⁵ See boundaries





In Cyprus everyone pairs their hand movements with their voices like wine - A sophisticated act of aided communication - both voice and action form equal importance within the conversation.

It's 2017 and I'm learning British sign language and thinking why the hell isn't this compulsory? I think often about how it relies on how visible you are, it will always be face to face (or face to screen to face). It is the language where everything becomes four dimensional; the amount of personal space around you seems smaller and there is no room for British⁶ awkwardness. Signs come with facial expressions; if something is bad you could just use your hands but if something is very bad you have to show it on your face too. Everything becomes hyper expressed. British Sign language is also on a linear timeline where events happen in the order they occur.

Labourers on Building sites have similar communal signals that break the barriers of vocal language - the bodies language can sometimes be a lot more universal.

It's still 2017 and I notice similarities between my body and the nature that surrounds it. I manically raise my fist to the sky next to the freshly stubbed trees. And continue to move my hips mirroring the flow of the starlings murmurations, helping them paint the sky. I think about experiencing two separate moments that share the same energy - whether that's visual or emotional.

It's 2018 and I'm getting my first ever massage and a lady touches me more than a tap on the shoulder. She asks me if I'd like it hard, medium, soft or lemon and herb. I choose soft. She begins by lifting up my leg and carefully positioning my heel on her collarbone and then reaches into her pocket revealing a bow. She begins to play my leg - using the fine hairs as higher notes and the thicker hairs as the lower notes.⁷

She proceeds to my back, moving more of a medium than a soft. As she progresses to hard, a spotlight shines above her head and the walls of the massage room turn to curtains and open as if an episode of Michael McIntyre's unexpected stars. The crowd is watching and she begins to slap one hand after the other creating epicentres for the fat on my body to ripple around. She moves her way down my shoulder to my bum cheeks. Her drum solo is about to begin.⁸

It's 2006 and mum takes us to The Range for our monthly treat of a sausage roll and a good go on all of the massage chairs. We take our time choosing which one we want to 'buy' and then come back the following month still undecided. "Oh no! It looks like we will have to try them all again."⁹

⁶ Hearing

⁷ (insert violin music here)

⁸ (insert drum solo here)

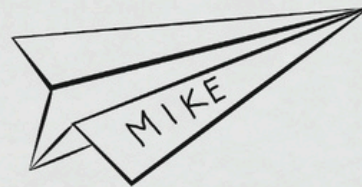
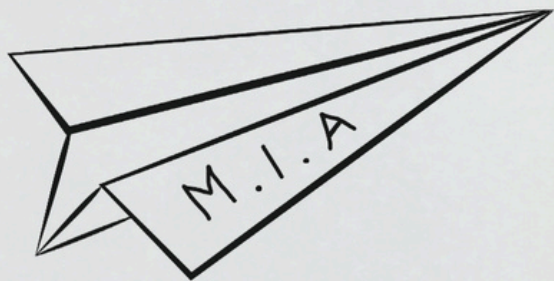
⁹ Mechanical movements > human movements robots don't judgement whether you shaved your legs or not, no guilt over strangers touching your body

2018 and my girlfriend holds hands with a pickpocket instead of mine. He pulls away when he realises her hand is attached to her body. If he takes the hand he will have to take her too and he knew I wouldn't allow that. He did manage to take a bit of pocket lint which we watched being passed from one suspicious man to the next like balls under cups.¹⁰

The restriction of placing ideas into the four sided box creates contained space within the box and free space around the box. The box creates inside *and* outside space.

¹⁰ Knowing the movement of people in a city so well you can manipulate it.





MY BEST
IDEA EVER:

Make every
contestant on the
apprentice out of
clay

and then fire
them.

