



# Seren Metcalfe

Portfolio 2025

# Hard Drives, Soft Walks

Duo show; *Seren Metcalfe & Martina O'Shea*



19 January – 19 February 2023  
Chemist Gallery, 57 Loampit Hill, London SE13 7SZ





*Sculpture, Soundtrack, Programmed Lighting,  
Animatronics, Performance*





For the inaugural exhibition at 'Chemist', Martina O'Shea and Seren Metcalfe debut new work alongside a collaborative sound and light installation. 'Hard Drives, Soft Walks' is a mashed up journey of the two artists, from night clubs, to mud larking, glitching landscape, tv soaps, late night walks and half remembered dreams. The centre of the installation is a collaborative sound piece: two voices telling tales through radio static, located in an ever changing vista of London, Ireland and Yorkshire. Fields, birdsong hit against traffic jams and sirens, mummers and echos from tv sets counter to techno beats transformed into the bodhrans. City remains and construction materials, pop memorabilia and programmed lights are forming a ghostly, theatrical set of the ever in flux space between body place and time.

*Full Video*  
*Soundtrack*





**SM** Recently I've been working with found materials. I want the work in the show to feel suspended in memory and time - memories and objects feeling trapped and also free and exploding like stars. I want to use more found materials - space junk. I like the idea of you using car aerials, especially in terms of music. There's also something interesting about cars and transport and cars being private moving karaoke booths.

**MOS** Yes, a car aerial campfire. Radio and aerials as a symbol of collective consciousness. There's a certain quality to the type of conversation that happens while driving. Memories, materials, space, time is present in both of our practices. At the end of a show I installed and deconstructed this summer I took this photo of the stud wall being knocked down. Why does it seem like such a joyous thing to me? Maybe the breaking of any wall triggers some kind of excitement about what's coming next! Making way for the new!

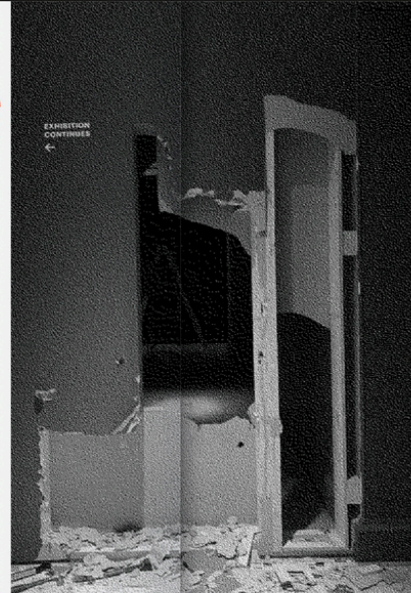
**SM** The idea of a divider from the window of the gallery with some kind of entrance hole could work well - a change in atmosphere. Stud walls form the bones of television, film sets and artist studios - the illusion of an environment - The evidence of.

**SM** We could create an environment where inside the stud wall feels dark - encapsulating the audience and the outside feels like behind the scenes. I want to create a contrast between light and dark or artificial light and natural light.

**MOS** Yeah, the stud wall definitely is reminiscent of tv sets and artists' studios. Back in 2003 I worked behind the scenes in the art department for the national broadcaster RTE in Dublin for a couple of years on shows like the Den and Fair City. There was always a sense of being blinded by the set lights when you entered the set from behind the stud walls. For me stud walls also give off a sense of impermanence/ change/time. Maybe this was the attraction to working in TV.

**SM** It reminds me of a nightclub. Social rules are so strange. We can enter a certain room and suddenly the purpose is to dance and jump around and as soon as we exit the door of the nightclub and continue dancing or singing everyone looks at us like we are crazy.

**SM** Music and Television are important elements I want to reference in my work; nostalgic feelings of hope and belonging, and relatability.



**MOS** I'm thinking a lot about sound lately. I got a book today called Quantum Listening by Pauline Oliveros "a manifesto for listening as activism, blending technology and spirituality" forward by Laurie Anderson!

*"As I listen I remember  
"As I write and listen, hidden sounds emerge"  
"Can you imagine listening beyond the edge  
of your own imagination"  
"Can you imagine the tuning of the world?"  
"As you listen, the particles of sound decide to  
be heard. Listening affects what is sounding"*

**MOS** When Pauline and a couple of others descended into the Dan Harpole Cistern, along. Empty receptacle for water fourteen feet underground, built by the US military near Seattle. In the depths, they listened intently as their sounds returned to them with an extraordinary delay of forty-five seconds.



The Publication is Available to purchase in:  
Presse Books  
Claire De Rouen

The Hard Drives, soft walks Publication is an edited version of a google doc made prior and during the show. Starting off as complete strangers, they used the document as a means to form greater understanding of each other's practices. This conversation evolved into monologues, poetry and eventually a 12 minute soundtrack.

Publication  
Publication Insert



# PHASE 1

*Seren Metcalfe*

2021

Slade School of Fine Art, BA Degree Show  
University College London, Gower St, London WC1E 6BT



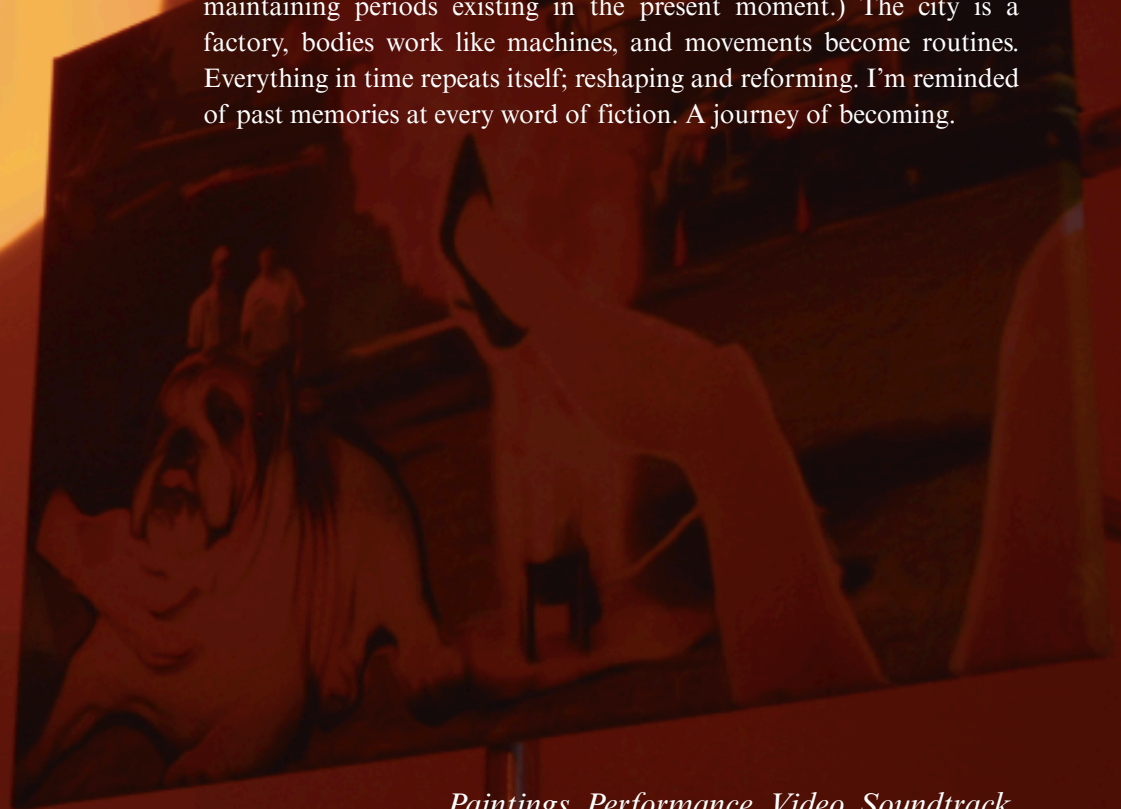


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Video  
Soundtrack

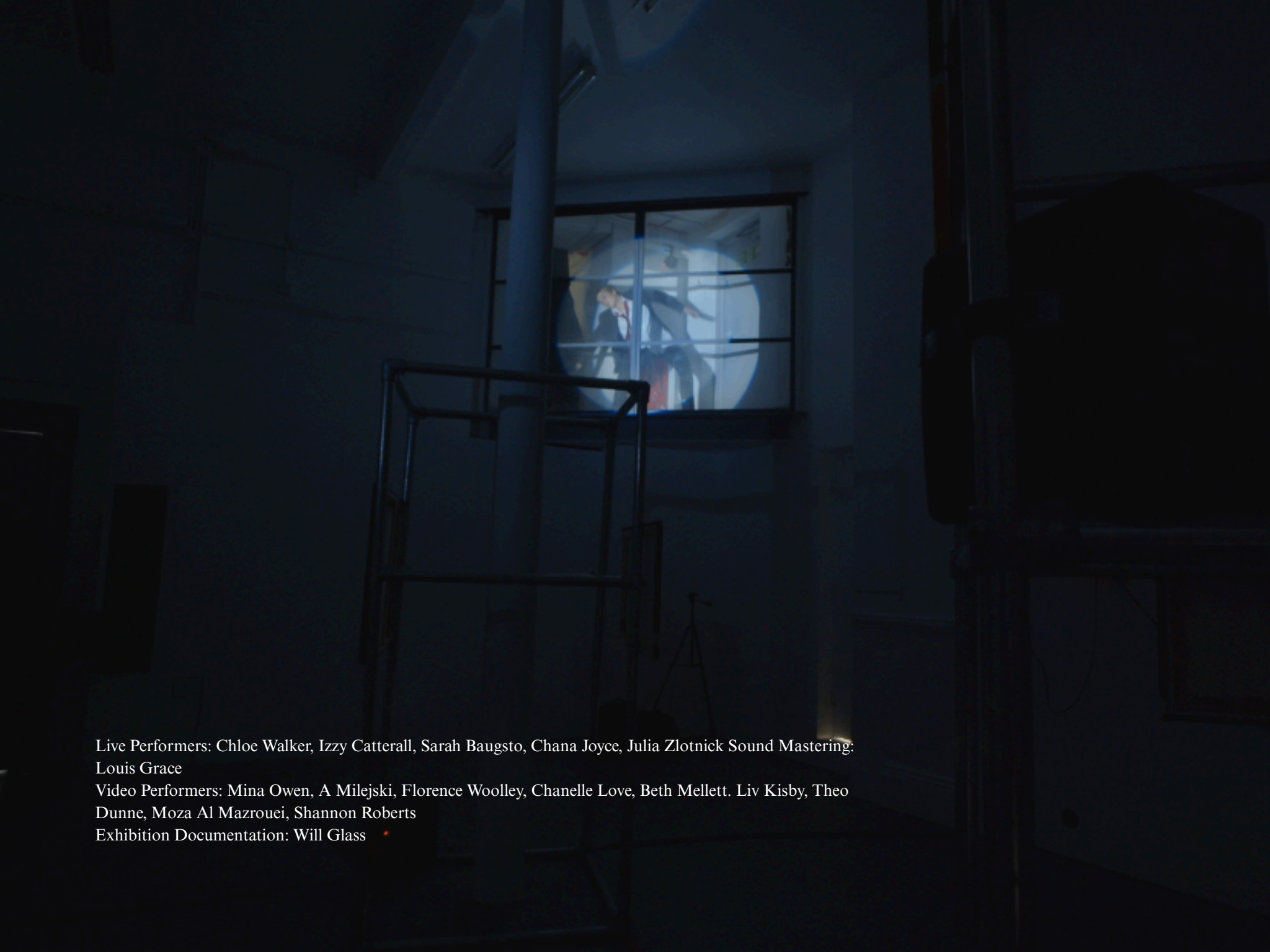


Sublime vast Yorkshire Landscapes, Microorganisms Multiplying, Bodies moving as one entity to the shape of the green hills; the curvature mimicking the human figure. A constant exchange of energy through space, thoughts, and all living things. This is a journey of energy and the existence of time. Transport becomes a place of timelessness - where past, present, and future can exist on the same plane. (Our traditional sense of time is on a timeline and moves forward but the brain thinks back and forward and back again; I go out to drink a coffee and think about a memory of my first coffee whilst imagining a story where a character drinks coffee in the future. Whilst appearing to the crowd; the many, that I've just gone to a coffee shop, Me; the singular person has travelled back and forward in time whilst also maintaining periods existing in the present moment.) The city is a factory, bodies work like machines, and movements become routines. Everything in time repeats itself; reshaping and reforming. I'm reminded of past memories at every word of fiction. A journey of becoming.



*Paintings, Performance, Video, Soundtrack,  
programmed lighting, Animatronic eye.*





Live Performers: Chloe Walker, Izzy Catterall, Sarah Baugsto, Chana Joyce, Julia Zlotnick Sound Mastering:  
Louis Grace

Video Performers: Mina Owen, A Milejski, Florence Woolley, Chanelle Love, Beth Mellett. Liv Kisby, Theo  
Dunne, Moza Al Mazrouei, Shannon Roberts

Exhibition Documentation: Will Glass •

**Fish Interlude**

*shown as part of 'Dream Weavers'*

*A Group Exhibition featuring Seren Metcalfe, Jesse Pollock, Ernesto Renda, and Amba Sayal-Bennett*

10th March - 9th April 2022  
GROVE, 9B Battersea Sq. London, SW11 3RA

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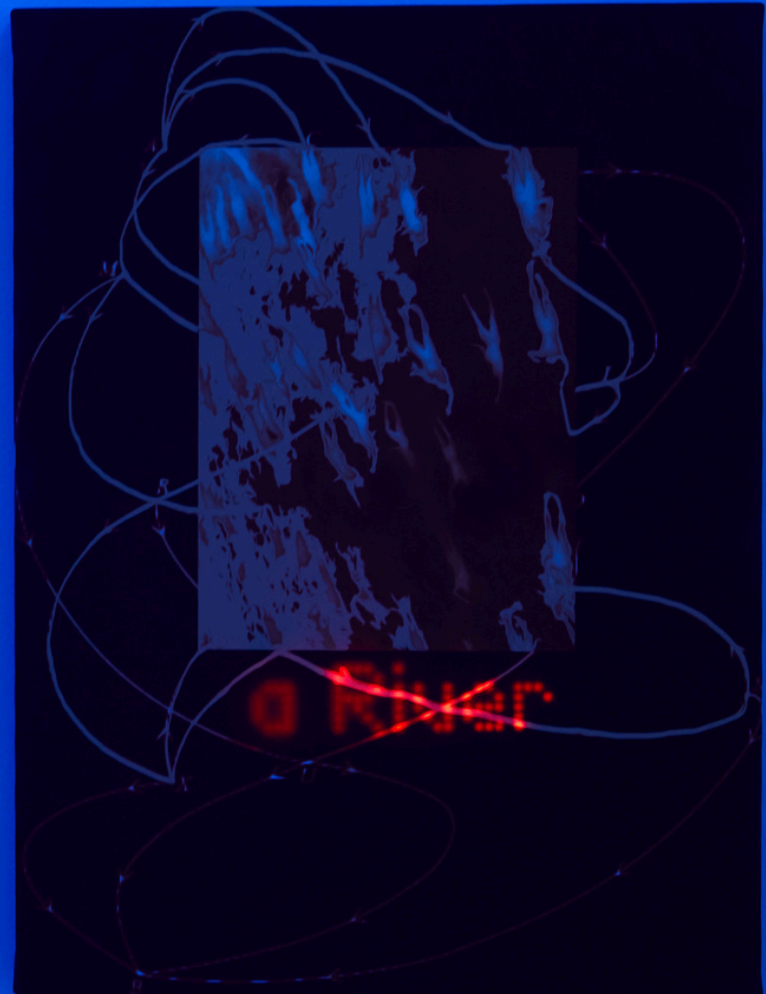
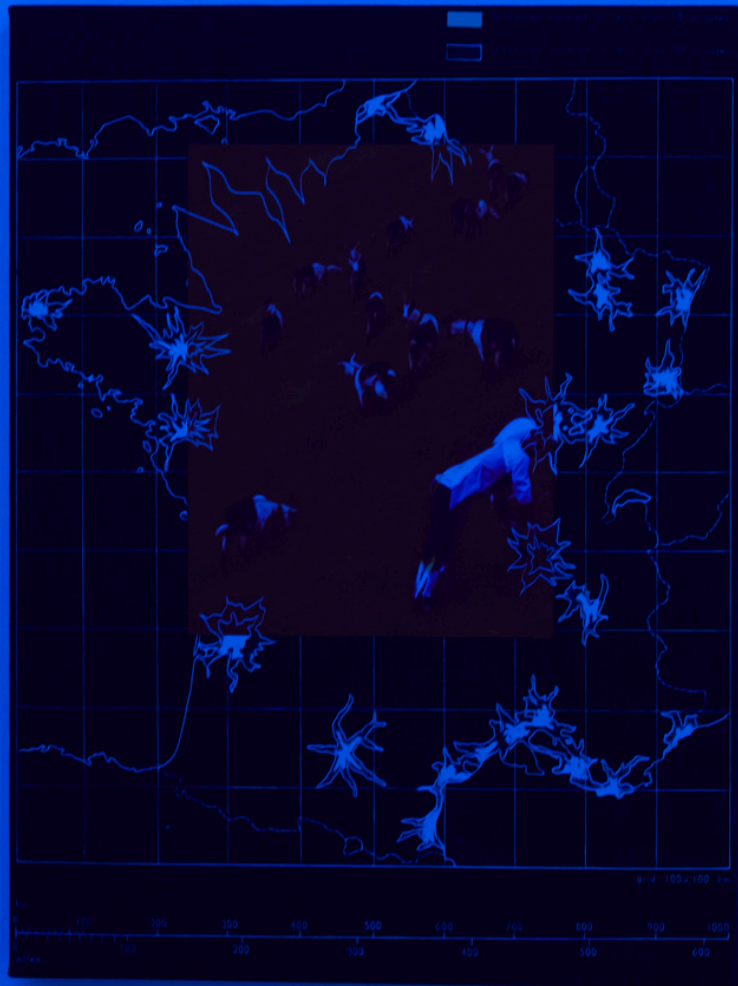




*'Fish Interlude' is a conversation formed between 3 Fish; a conversation of rhythm, nature, and bodies, an exploration of existence, time, and Spotify algorithms.*

*The fish are symbolic of movement, labour, and industry. In the past, the waterways and train lines were both used to connect cities and as a way to transport goods. The movement of fish across rivers felt parallel to my movements back and forth on the railway from North to South. The fish also brings back childhood memories of going to the trout farm or playing with the plastic fish my Grandad gave me that would sing Elvis on command. It wasn't until my teens that I discovered there was more than just pop music and the Top 40 UK charts. I'd search endless hours on Wikipedia going through different genres; obsessing over 50's rock and roll, neo-soul, and Riot Grrrls. Songs began to signify moments of my own history. Whilst writing the script I was working as an usher on Saturday Night Fever. My days were filled with research and learning how to wire electronics and my evenings were filled with a room of dreams, desires, and disco. I began reading a book that's been on my reading list for a while, Songs in the factory: Pop music, Culture, and Resistance. In a strange twist of fate, a full chapter is dedicated to Saturday Night Fever and the culture of 'Stayin' Alive'. It reminded me that the more you notice in the world, the more these networks of energy and time begin to connect and be in sync with each other. The Paintings that accompany the work were produced from the research of movement and networks. The music provides freedom for the fish similar to that of factory workers who used radios as means of escape from the repetitive labour. Music forms a reflection of rhythms and histories. Their robotic elements are a constant reminder that everything is constructed and structured and a mere program of time. A journey of feeling, memories, getting lost and found again.*

*Paintings, Fish Sculptures, Animatronic eyes and mouth,  
Soundtrack*

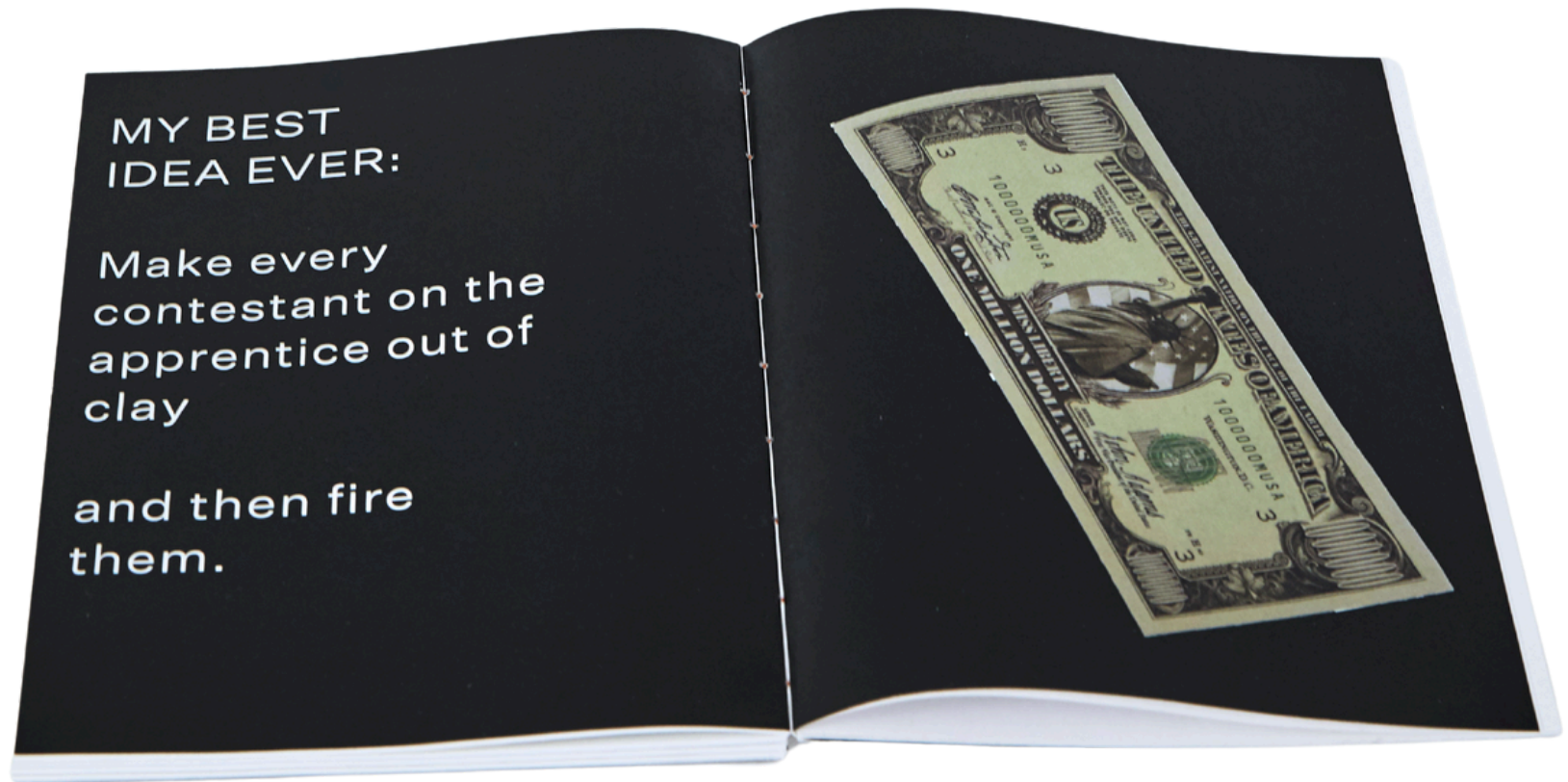


Video



# Half Truths

*Seren Metcalfe*



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

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# HALF TRUTHS

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SEREN METCALFE



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

Limited 2nd & 3rd editions available to buy via:

Kindred Ldn

Goodpress Glasgow

South London Gallery

Village Books Leeds

Presse Books

Hausman Books



## 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.<sup>1</sup> God forbid they go for the triple kiss.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> To make a ring they say you must saw with the pressure of a handshake

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

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

<sup>4</sup> See Character

<sup>5</sup> See boundaries







# Coronation Street of Contemporary Dance



*Seren Metcalfe*  
*Featuring Tough Boys Dance Collective*  
*2024*



A live choreographed performance with a projection. The Video is a Montage of moments from the first episode of Coronation Street to Current episodes. The Montage depicts a timeline of working class northern history from the 1960's till our current time through the eye of a TV screen. These moments are turned into a chain of movements to create choreography for two dancers to perform live next to the video. The movements were devised by Tough Boys Dance Collective.





Video

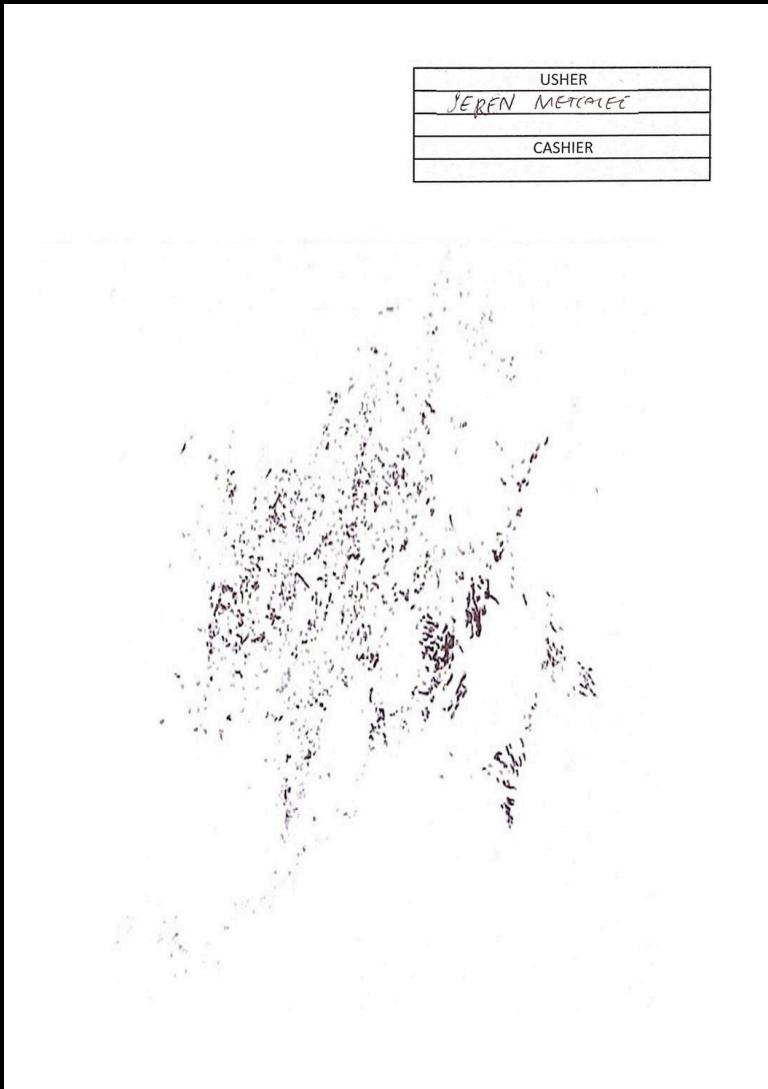
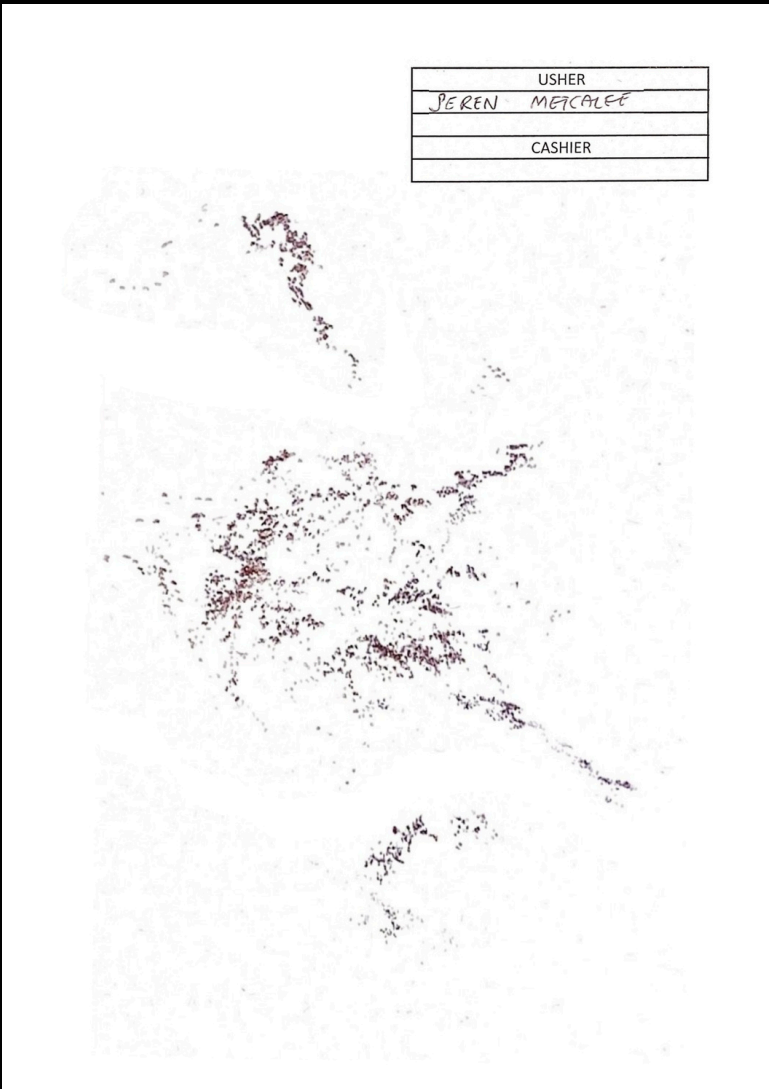


The depiction of time within soaps is of interest to me and how we can witness these highs and lows of emotions of an entire street within a 30 minute time frame summing up some kind of human experience throughout time. The television screen acts as a window into those moments of time where fictional narratives are formed from real life experiences. This performance is about dancing through time.





ART THAT MAKES ME FEEL SOMETHING 2024  
funeral flowers



USHER 2024  
Biro on Paper



# Rush Hour

*Seren Metcalfe*



*Performance  
2017*



In the Factories the women would tap their steel toe boots to the sound of the machinery transferring rhythm from machine to body and body to machine. The dancers tap through the space of The Crypt Gallery. The corridors mimic the underground tube tunnels focusing on the systematic, structured movements of the city. The dancers become more and more erratic, repeating routines and movements until they reach their final destination.

### Video

Dancers: Chloe Walker, Beckie Callow and Sophie Alstead.



# The Go Fuck Yourself Choir



Performance  
2020

**THE  
GO FUCK YOURSELF  
CHOIR.**

*Lit up by smartphone torches, a Choir of voices repeat the words 'Go Fuck Yourself'*



# Television Studio



Performance  
*2020*

The stage is arranged like a series of stations, reminiscent of a television studio. I imagine a talk show where the camera pans from the host's desk to the band's setup, or a game show where each challenge sits on its own platform. The action is revealed one station at a time, allowing the audience to experience everything as part of a continuous timeline.

The layout forms a clock face: the drummer sits at 12 o'clock, the dancer at 3 o'clock, and the actor-cold caller at 9 o'clock. At 6 o'clock, the audience completes the circle, becoming part of the performance itself.





# Applause



Performance  
2020



I walk home at night and can't help but peer into the windows of the houses I pass. Their televisions and bedroom lights spill onto the street, pulling me in. I feel compelled to watch, indulging in micro-moments of strangers' and neighbours' lives. At home, I sit by the window and watch the flats opposite. I read the random codes of lights switching on and off. I watch hands rise as goals are scored, candles being blown out, arguments erupting and dissolving into laughter. Each moment feels like a scene, part of a never-ending performance.

The street becomes a theatre, the windows its screens. The applause is silent but constant - the rhythm of lights, the flicker of TV screens, the subtle choreography of everyday life. It is voyeuristic and mutual: I watch them, they watch me, and together we create this continuous loop of performance and witness.



# FELT



Performance  
2018



Eight dancers moved slowly and deliberately through the empty car park, accompanied by a low, droning soundtrack that seemed to stretch time. The performance unfolded over the course of a day, turning the disused building into a site of quiet focus.

Each dancer repeated small, meditative actions, bending, reaching, walking; creating subtle rhythms between their bodies and the space. Together, they mapped the car park through movement, tracing its cracks and columns, its stillness and echoes.

It wasn't about spectacle, but about presence: bodies holding space in a place on the edge of collapse, transforming it for a moment into something alive.



# A Large Scale Print of the Yorkshire Moors



Performance  
2019

My ideas feel endless, but time and money often stand in the way of realising them. When that happens, I return to this spirit of “making do.” I wanted a sweeping Yorkshire landscape but couldn’t travel home, so the writing on the wall became my view. I wanted a professional dancer but instead worked with a friend’s movements — and by calling her a dancer, she became one. I wanted a pianist, so I played myself, discovering the black keys always sound good together.

# Were All Just Trying To Get By

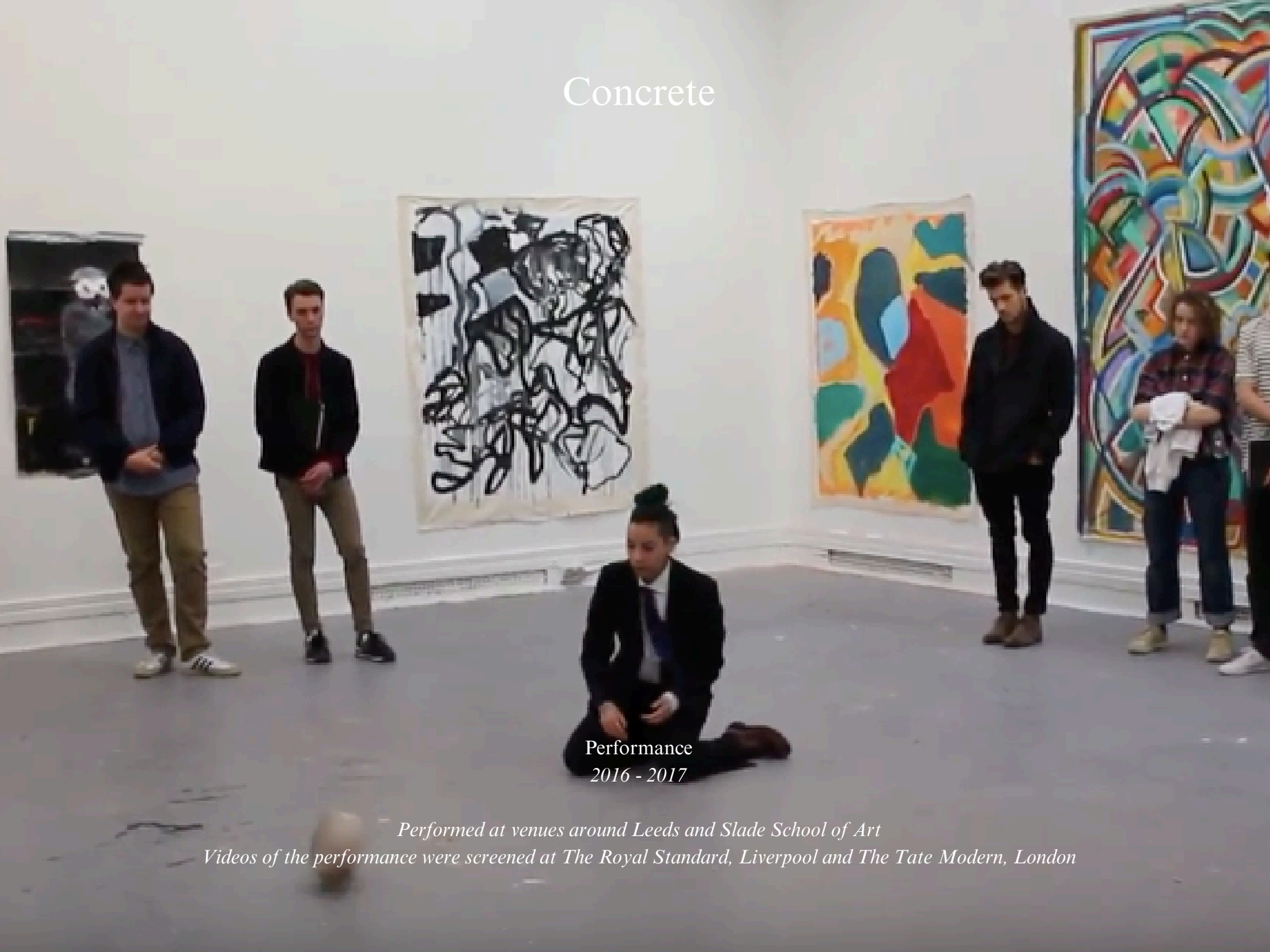


Performance - Featuring in the audience of Tv Shows to spell out 'Were all just trying to get by'.

*2017 - 2024*



# Concrete



Performance  
2016 - 2017

*Performed at venues around Leeds and Slade School of Art  
Videos of the performance were screened at The Royal Standard, Liverpool and The Tate Modern, London*

A group of six people are captured in a crawling pose on a light-colored, paved surface. They are arranged in a loose line, moving away from the camera. The person on the far left is wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants. Next to them is a person in a black jacket and dark pants. In the center, a person in a blue long-sleeved shirt and dark pants is crawling. To their right is a person in a black jacket and dark pants. Further right is a person in a black and white striped shirt and dark pants. On the far right, a person in a black jacket and dark pants is crawling. The ground is made of large, light-colored rectangular tiles. A small pigeon is visible on the ground near the person in the blue shirt. The scene is brightly lit, casting long shadows. The text "The Crawl" is written in a white, serif font at the top center. The text "Performance 2016" is written in a white, serif font at the bottom center. The text "Performed at venues around Leeds" is written in a white, serif font at the bottom center.

# *The Crawl*

Performance  
2016

*Performed at venues around Leeds*



[illegible]

Departure 9:50 AM  
 Arrival 9:56 AM  
 Left side  
 4 rows from the back  
 Window seat

Golden Gate 09:30 AM  
 Spaulding Avenue 09:37 AM  
 Traffic lights  
 Randolph Avenue 09:33 AM  
 9:37 AM  
 9:38 AM  
 9:39 AM  
 9:40 AM  
 9:41 AM  
 9:42 AM  
 9:43 AM  
 9:44 AM  
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 10:00 AM

Golden Gate  
 Spaulding Avenue  
 Randolph Avenue  
 Broadway  
 Market Street  
 Embarcadero  
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 9:31 AM  
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[seren\\_metcalfe@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:seren_metcalfe@hotmail.co.uk)