

# my body in my hands

curated by Sam Lucas and Nick Grellier

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cover and book design Nick Grellier  
cover image Sam Lucas

#mybodyinmyhands

This exhibition catalogue follows the collaboration between artist curators Sam Lucas and Nick Grellier who were generously supported by Stroud Valleys Artspace with their exhibition *my body in my hands*, showing images and works by over 100 artists at John Street Gallery in May 2023.

The basis of the project was driven by Sam's practice-based PhD research in ceramics and wellbeing, exploring how creativity can act as a coping strategy through a phenomenological lens. The research has expanded from creativity in the singular material of clay, into whichever material or form the respondent has chosen.

It started, for Sam, as a eureka moment whilst holding an object in her hand, warm from the kiln, and wondering if others would join her in a kind of democratic, social media exhibition. The project became a sharing of highly personal experiences of 'being in the body' and has highlighted over 500 different ways of exploring how it feels. The only remit was that it should be revealed in the hand of the creator. The responses are documented in visual, tacit, sensorial, ethereal, tangible forms, imbued with powerful emotion. The number of participants is still growing daily.

The culmination, for those who agreed to participate beyond the social media call out, was the physical exhibition at SVA showing their image and text alongside a selection of the physical works.

This iteration was the seed from which others grew in different geographical locations, from the staff ceramics group affectionately known as 'Clay Club' at National Star Cheltenham, Curio at Bricks Bristol, ICF 2023 Aberystwyth, Airspace Gallery, Stoke on Trent, The Glasgow School of Art, University of Sunderland and on to Royal Holloway, University of London, Spring 2024.

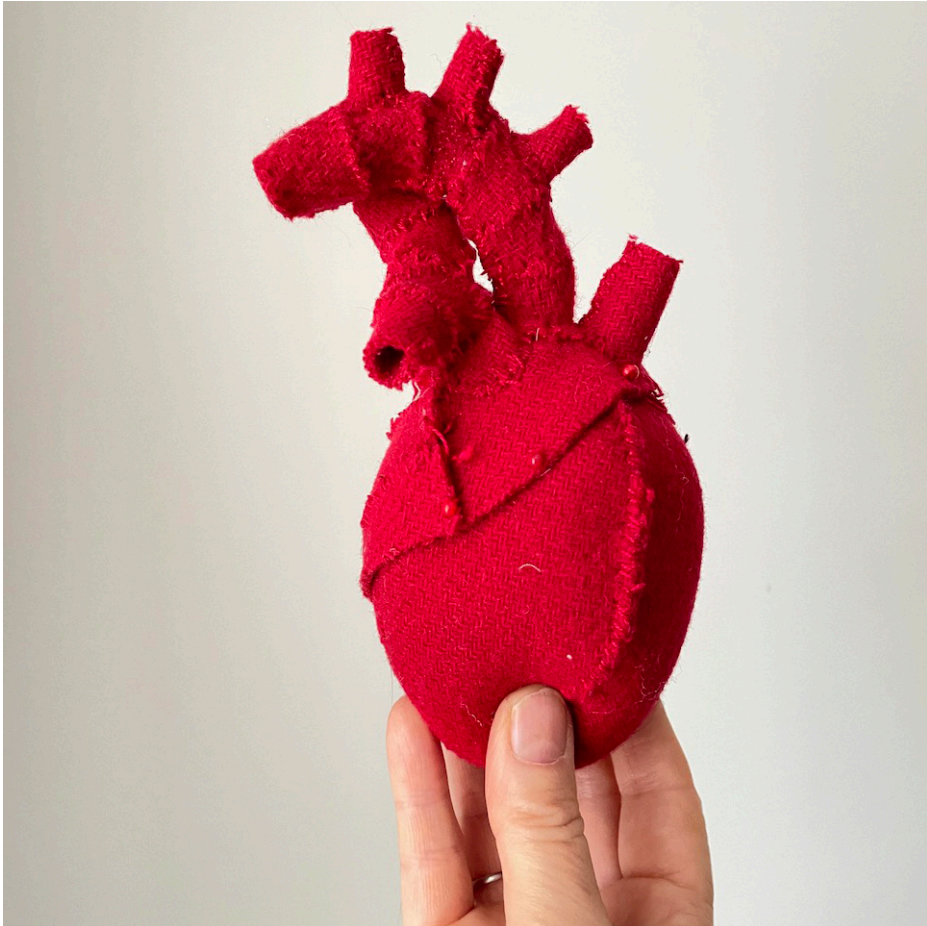
The catalogue includes 99 of the global interpretations of 'how it feels to be in your body', from the exhibition at SVA John Street Gallery.

*I would like to thank every one of you for taking the time to respond to my call out and adding a depth to my research that I could not have predicted.*

Sam Lucas 2024

*One could look specifically at self-narratives evoked and constructed through shared discussions of artefacts and objects. Also of interest is to explore, more specifically, the role of biographical objects as memory scaffolds and affective probes of autobiographical memory through their attachments to family histories and self-identity, offering perhaps a complementary pathway to non-verbal facilitation of communication, promotion of independence, and rediscovery of personal identity.*

Malafouris 2019



Maria Walker  
@mariawalkerart

*Red Heart*  
preloved woollen fabric

I am intrigued by the human body and the experience of being human. I use my art practice to articulate feelings and emotions which are difficult to express by using words alone. This work explores the fragility of the heart both in terms of its physicality as an organ which pumps blood around our body and its significance in the realm of love and emotions.



Ellie Shipman  
@ellieshipman

*Unheard*  
photographic scan

Connecting objects across generations, I hold my late father's scalpel which he used for cutting negatives in his photography studio, scanned as a photographic image - a technique he also used in his personal work. The scalpel in my hand repositions the control, or lack of it, I experienced with the birth of my son - my father's grandchild he will never know - reflecting on the medicalisation of the birth experience and the perceptions and contradictions of 'natural' and 'medical' birth journeys.



Ben Jenner  
@ben\_\_jenner

*Memories and Trauma*  
repurposed tea towel, sticks, cotton thread

Memories and trauma.



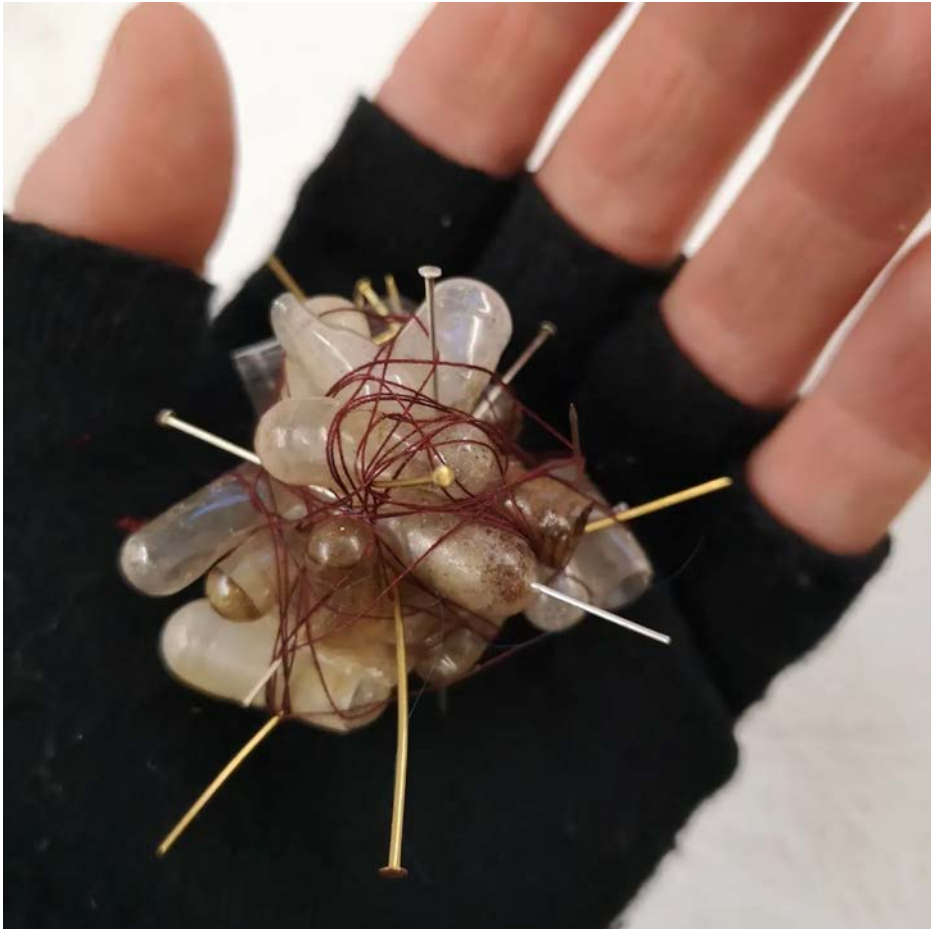
Alice Freeman  
@alicehfreeman

*Snare*  
polystyrene, cotton buds, wire, resin

“We stand at the base of our own spines  
and watch tree turn to bone and climb  
each vertebra to crawl back into our minds,  
we’ve been out of our minds all this time,  
our bodies saying no, we were not born for this,  
dragging the snare and the wire behind us”

*We are Coming*  
Kim Moore  
@kim\_moore\_poet





Tina Walton  
@tinjowalton

*Untitled*  
supplement shells, steel pins, cotton thread

Menopause. Body snatcher. Replaced. I don't know this body. Heavy, anxious, overwhelmed, angry, painful, exhausted. Held together by supplements and a fine thread of my former self. Fragile but not broken.



Eleanor Bedlow  
@eleanorbedlow

*Loops*  
fabric, acrylic

My thoughts seem to work in loops. I don't have a good short term memory so I often discover I am having similar ideas over and over again when looking through notebooks.



Nick Grellier  
@nick\_grellier

*Radio Head*  
radio body, farm twine

No off switch.



Sophie Meyer  
@sophiemeyer\_art

*Untitled*  
twine, plaster, soot

I'm fascinated by embodied experiences of neurodiversity and research around hypervigilant neuroception, felt safety, sensory processing issues and polyvagal theory. As I made this piece, using spare twine, leftover plaster and soot from my fireplace, I was thinking through making about the (my) body, entanglement, pressure, migraines, residues, inheritances, emotional weight and intergenerational trauma. It was me on that day.





Sarah Stanley  
@spikeynoodle1

*Perfectly Imperfect*  
plasticine

I wanted to create the tiniest image of myself to signify insignificance in this immense world in which I find myself navigating. I tried to exaggerate my lumps, bumps and scars, that in my own mind's eye, are ingrained as vast. The overall crude creation that materialised on a blob of plasticine that took no more than 30 minutes to create made me realise that, in the grand scheme of all things, I am perfectly perfect in my imperfections inside and out. All is as it should be, I am ME!



Juli Bharucha  
@julibharucha

*The Blurred Boundaries of Existence*  
porcelain, wire

Are you what you are or what they tell you you are? Our bodies hold our minds and thoughts. We are permeable beings absorbing so much we may be unaware of. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish where the edge of your body is.



Ruth Batham  
@ruthbatham

*Whole Bodies Changing*  
printed photograph of painting  
on water and paint soaked paper

I'm thinking about how my body felt after birth and in the early, foggy newborn days. Holding it in my hand makes me think about how it feels now to then. The huge, drastic changes - physical and mental. States of exhaustion and of contentment. The growing relationship of my body to my daughter's and our bodies and minds in relationship to the outside world.



Lorena Herrero  
@lorena.herrero

*Breaking the Mould*  
paper mache, rubber, wire

With this work I'm trying to study the tension between the rigidity of the social constraints around us which marks our place in the world and our capacity to still challenge those models and offer diversity and even a new social framework. This is a small celebration of everything colorful and different that breaks the mould.

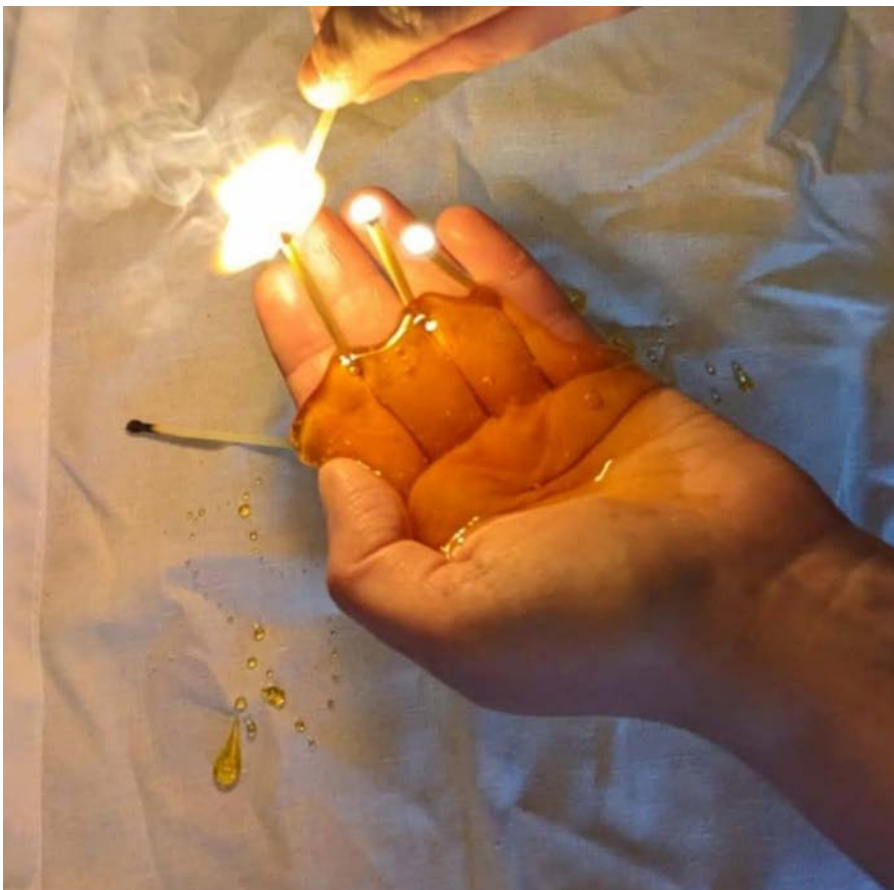




Emily Joy  
@emilyjoyartist

*Bouquet*  
digital photograph

Bouquet was made in response to the lush, verdant green growth of cleavers that had sprung up through the drizzly British Springtime. Carrying these bundles of sap and green into town felt like I was bringing an offering, later the apple smell of cleavers filled the small gallery. Bouquet sits in my hand as an offering, a cornucopia, its sap an extension of the blood in my veins; a deposition, a gift, even as it wilts.



Nicky Roscoe-Calvert  
@spells\_against\_civilisation

*Flare/Fog*  
syrup, matches, cotton fabric

I'm still learning about my fibromyalgia. I can relieve some of the pain and fatigue with CBD oil (and knowing when to rest), and I'm miles better than I was when I was diagnosed last year, but there probably won't be any days when I don't feel pain of some kind. Recently I also had the worst day so far for 'brain fog' and sluggishness, not so much pain, but feeling like every movement and thought was difficult, like moving through a viscous substance, with no apparent trigger. This work attempts to represent, to some degree, that sluggishness and the lack of control, as well as the sharper, more acute nerve pain.



Kazz Hollick

@kazz\_hollick\_ plaster, old pants, stickers, and other found objects

The exhaustion that comes with a disordered brain, plus caring for another disordered being, results in a mess of everything mangled together.

Trying to cover with colour, to smother the darkness. Constantly dysregulated, overloaded with sensory input, overwhelmed with tasks and being alive. But if it's all eventually bright and shiny, there's a momentary release.

This was a plaster cast of my hand holding my torso, then filled with some crap from my brain and the crap that is on or near my body every day. Made shiny.



Alice Sheppard Fidler  
@alicesheppardfidler

*Crap*  
velvet, rubble, copper nails

I know when I am truly in my body. When the pain is all consuming. There is a tension, like a stitch that runs its course, a wilful presence, repeating itself perfectly and endlessly. What holds me together turns me inside out. I am done up and un-done in equal measure. It's a messy affair, rendering me vulnerable, with my defences acting like pathetic spines that retract on touch. Nothing can soothe or comfort. I'm heavy, gravelly, bitty, lumpy, at its mercy. And then it's over, as if nothing had happened. This breezy attitude it mocks me with is the hardest part.



Sally Townsend  
@berriedtreasurestudio

*From Betrothed to Betrayed*  
Merino wool, walnut shell, cement

My work explores life and loss. This piece represents the harsh realities of divorce; the once happy memories of love and family, which bore two beautiful young women. The walnut shell which once held life, now empty, as the love ebbs away. The black cement as the unyielding reality of betrayal. From betrothed to betrayed.



Anna Simson  
@annasimsonceramics

*Hair and Nails*





Emma Gregory  
@emmagregorymakes

*The Weight of Things*  
photograph of the artist playing

The photograph was taken by the artist's daughter (aerialist Rachel Bea Raynes). The pocket springs are from Rachel's single bed which the artist 'unmade' during the first lockdown.



Ann Margreth Bohl  
@annmargrethbohl

*Rock Holding Hand*  
basalt, human

“Rocks are not a noun but a verb, visible evidence of processes.”

*Timefullness*  
Marcia Bjornerud

In touching this rock I am connecting with deep time and my human transience.

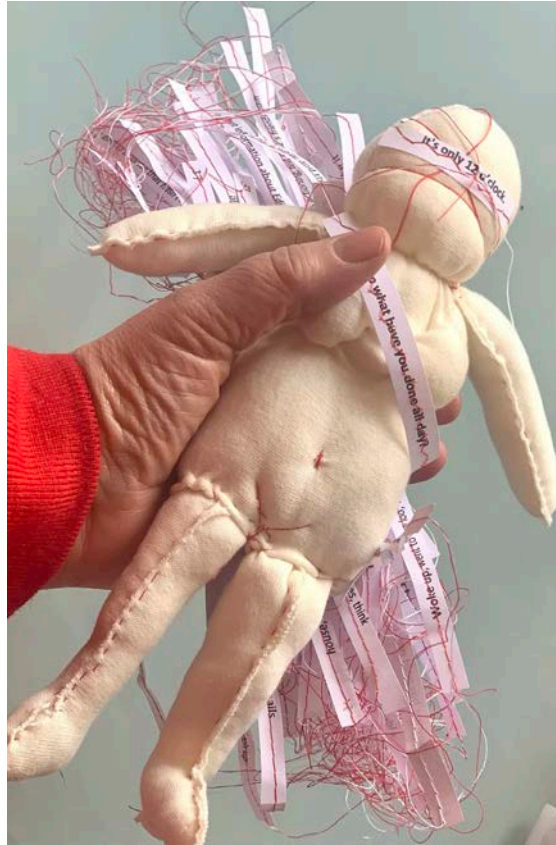




Laura Johanna König  
@joh.la.konig

*The Gesture*  
porcelain

There is a beautiful moment. Freshly cast porcelain, when the body is just strong enough to be taken out from the mould, is sensitive to your touch. Just for a few breaths. It responds. My imprints remain because porcelain remembers. These minutes are tacitly delicious, and I can't help myself from humanizing this object. When my fingers melt into its surface, and my eyes are closed, I hold something living in my hand. The meeting of fragility and responsibility is overwhelming. When the wish to care, caress, and protect this skin meets the wish to continue pressing, bending until the whole body breaks. Just because I can. Because it is so easy.



Siobain Drury  
@siobaindrury

*So, what have you done all day?*  
fabric, stuffing, paper, thread

so what have you done all day? - the abridged version.....  
and it's only 12 o'clock  
the soft body reminiscent of Louise Bourgeois soft sculptures  
the red thread  
threads that keep us together  
threads that bind us  
threads that tangle, intermingle

suffragette sash, pageant sash, bride to be sash, miss world sash, what  
have you done all day sash.



Bennett and McDermott  
@bennettandmcdermott

*Balance*  
self-inking stamp, paper stack, mdf  
video duration 2:58

Contemporary life can feel like a balancing act. What do we need to keep life in balance? We, the artists, invite you to collaborate with us to create your own signed limited edition QR code print to take home and keep. Each print is a unique collaboration between audience and artist.



Sarah Christie  
@saraheachristie

*Instrumental Objects*  
porcelain

In states of awkwardness, closing up, rolling and collapsing inwards, there is a kind of fog and numbness that blunts and stunts things. But it is also possible to resist, and open, and get clarity in the interludes. In thinking about the question of being in a body, and in a mind, I have found that there is more than one answer.



Zoe Darbyshire  
@darbyshirezoe

*Cuff*  
tree bark of *Betula pendula*,  
commonly known as silver or warty birch

Evolving from the inside.





Nikki Allford  
@nikkiallford\_art

*The Swan Maker*  
electrical tape, found ceramic lid



Rachel Barnard  
@rachelambarnard

*Unexpected Item*  
an assemblage of ultra fragile ultra thin  
walled hollow parian porcelain elements

It's strange to feel that my body is now incomplete. My breast was trying to kill me but it had to stay on me - an evil alien brooch - until it had been poisoned enough. The release I felt when I could finally throw it away was amazing.



Sharon Griffin  
@sharongriffinart

*Negativity Committee*  
ceramic

A while ago the parts of me were becoming a bit crowded. It became so noisy in my head I couldn't escape. A drowning overwhelming noise... one which affected my vision, my hearing, my sight.. my gut, my heart rate and my breathing.. like I was in a crowded room of shouty people all telling me something.

This feeling, sound, vision experience affected my ability. Simple things like: would I like a cup of tea or not. I couldn't hear myself think (my mother's words).

So instead of ignoring this, I drew them, I made them.. I manifested my noise into a tangible object. I call these my 'Negativity Committee'. They are part of me and are there to keep me safe, give me a different viewpoint.. take care of the 'whole'. Some of them are very very loud but others are frightened, so much fear. Others are hurting and some are itching for freedom and movement.





Emily Lucas  
@emilylucasart

Yes, No, Goodbye  
found plastic, metal, wood, twigs

Tiny self portrait sculpture made from found object fragments.



Janet Currier  
@janetdcourier

*Mini Microbe*  
textured scuba, flannel pyjama  
material, recycled hollow fibre

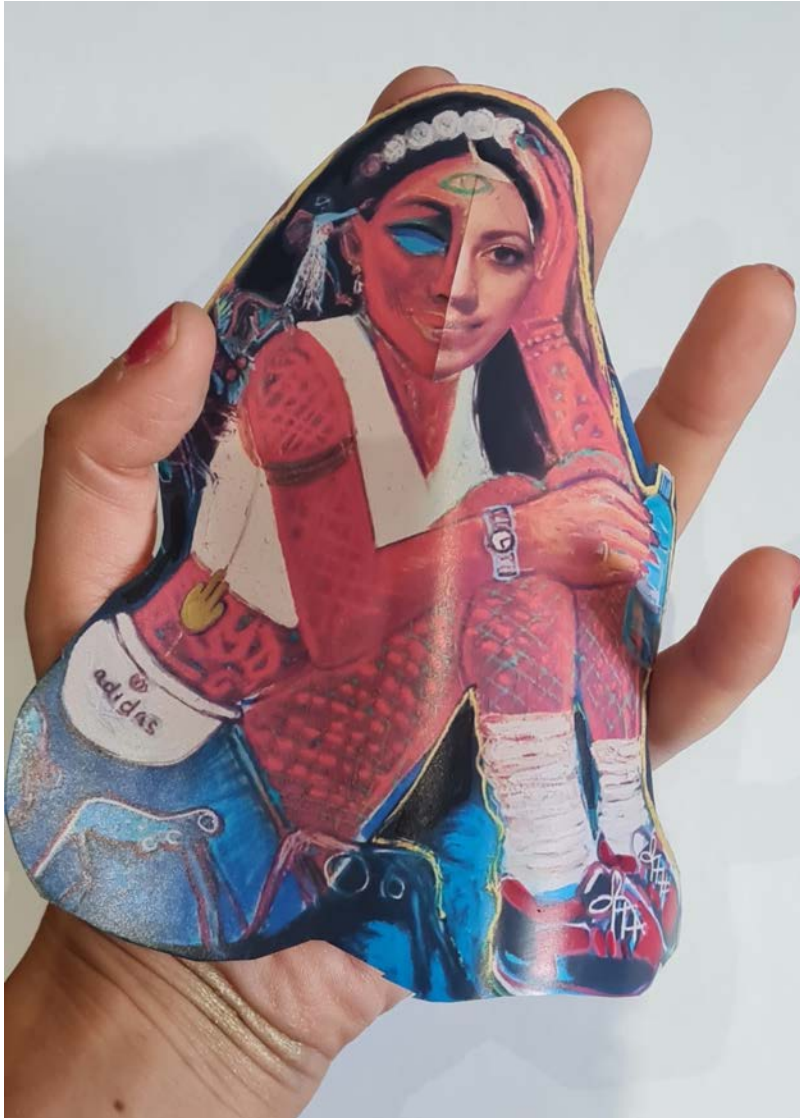
This piece is a kind of shout out to all the germs and microbes that are part of the multiverse that is my body and who help it all to work.



Sam Lucas  
@sam\_\_\_lucas  
@theweightofbeing

*Hidden in Plain Sight*  
high fired grogged terracotta

I learn so much from others' perspectives.



Latifah Alsaid Stranack

*Peace Love Freedom*

@latifah\_s\_art

paper, canvas, spray paint, oil paint, oil pastel, glitter

I imagine the women I paint as goddesses, symbolising and celebrating womanhood. My painted heroines explore my memories, mythology and contemporary issues in the modern world.

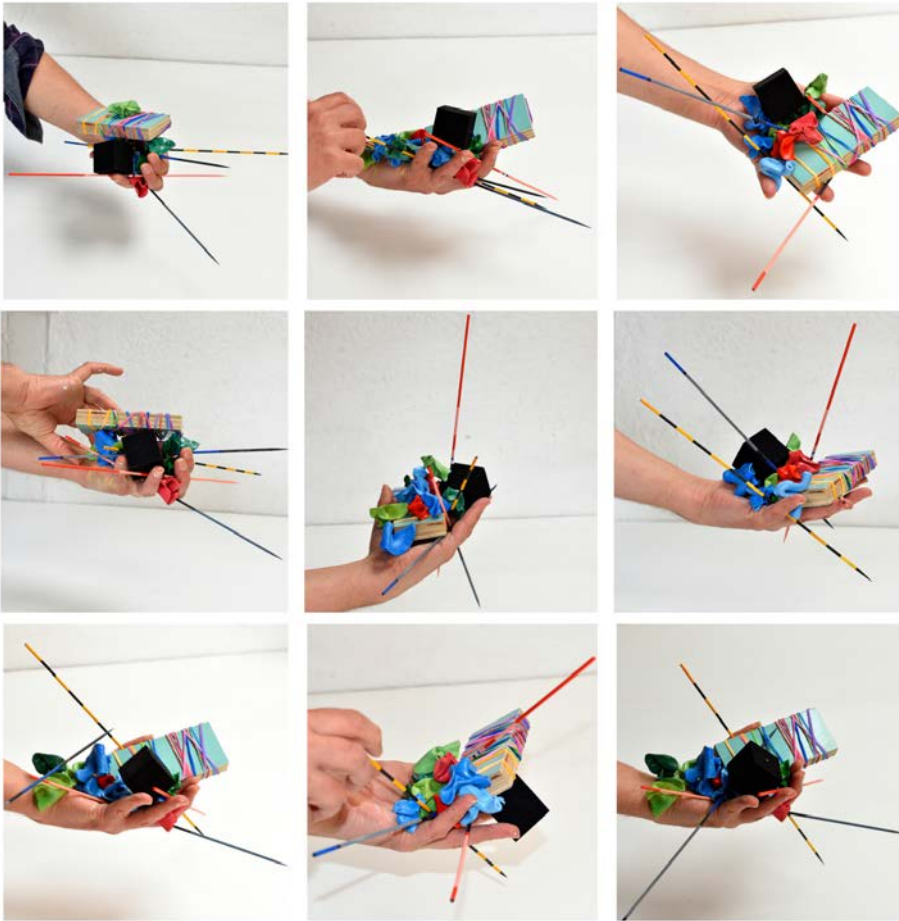




Jessica Stirling  
@jvs\_2017

*Of Course It's Personal*  
Wedgewood Etruria bone China  
cup with unfired porcelain, silver pen

A reflex response - a record of a particular moment. Erased,  
repeatable but never the same.



John Elliott  
@\_\_johnelliott

*Things you find at the bottom of the sea*  
wood, paint, rubber bands, polymer clay

People are things of many parts, constantly changing and rearranging making our own realities in our heads. When we are happy we are beautiful and the world is bright. When we are sad the world is grey and we are ugly. We change the world with the things we do and the world pushes back changing us.

Everyday the same person but a little bit different.



James Aldridge  
@jamesaldrigeart

*Wrestler Walking Bundle (Patney)*  
plastic wrestler doll, string, found materials

Bringing back memories of leg tickling summer grasses. My walking bundles bring together elements of my embodied experience and what I notice around me, and remind me that there's no boundary between my own body and the rest of Nature. Walking and bundling helps to empty my mind and bring me back down to Earth.





Nina Gerada  
@ninagerada

*Permeable*  
red stoneware clay

A small ceramic female torso that has been repeatedly pierced with a circular metal tube. A painful process. The body holds its form but is now extremely permeable.





Tracey Lamb  
@tracey\_d\_l

*Chaise*  
aluminium

My hand enfolding the smoothly tactile and voluptuous aluminium sculpture. I notice how its surface temperature increases with the warmth of my touch.

Made with my hands as part of a commission for 36 sculptures created a few years ago. The sculpture was designed as a hybrid of the body and a chaise.



Nicky O'Donnell  
@odonnell.nicky

*Untitled*  
porcelain paper clay, highlighted  
in locally sourced reclaimed clay

I have been working with grass and clay for a little while, concerned about the loss of plant species and the underfunding of conservation and preservation. Using grass as a metaphor for the everyday being ignored I endeavour to use its beauty to alert us to the issue and spark conversations. Recently when making sprigs I started folding the paper clay over my hand, thinking about the weight of responsibility we have to protect the plants of this planet. The grass is resilient but still gets ripped up, replaced with imitations or flooded with weedkiller. Our bodies and minds rely on plants for food and health but also for joy, happiness and beauty - these fragile fragments in my hand demonstrate the human relationship with the vegetal.



Sara Ulfsparre  
@saraulfsparre

*It Could Be Worse*  
pale pink yarn stitched on pale  
pink reclaimed fabric, then stuffed

It's a somewhat loaded phrase, and not always a comforting one, but I know many of us have heard it, spoken by others to console us in times of pain and hardship, and often used in self talk, when trying to comfort ourselves. People with chronic pain, like me, and/or other disabling conditions. It could always be worse. I hope this squishy sculpture is more comforting than the phrase repeatedly stitched on it.



K L Brown  
@klbrownstudio

*Untitled*  
wire, string, paper, wax crayon

Instinctively finding myself drawn, as ever, to wire, string and paper..  
finding some kind of malleable open structure, in conversation with my  
surroundings.





Viviana Rossi-Caffell  
@vivianarossicaffell

*With Every Tremble*  
mixed media

With every tremble she swims a little further.





Helen Barff  
@helenbarff

*Rope Swing Maquette*  
plaster, rope, painted wood

I remember the rope swing in the backyard of my childhood home, it broke and fell to the ground with a thud whilst I was on it. I cast this maquette from fabric of my son's worn out shirt. It spins in my hand with the weight of memory.



Phoebe Corker-Marin  
@miss.corkermarin

*Lean-to*  
polyurethane rubber, elastic cord

There is a disconnect between my body as I see it in my mind's eye and what everyone else sees. It is one of the reasons I don't like being photographed. I find it jarring when the two are forced to meet.



Penny Simons  
@penny\_simons

*Holding On*  
oiled/waxed paper, earth pigment

This piece is part of investigating a body ageing: what it feels like and how it looks; how it functions or doesn't. I'm using oiled or waxed paper and earth pigment from my home area with stitching, ripping and folding. This particular piece is arm-related.



Clare Stephens  
@claresceramics

*Body's Constant Balance and Realignment*

Our bodies are in constant balance, adjusting to emotions, others, and our surroundings. This vessel/pot has no real foot so finds its own balance with itself, environment, and others.



Demeter Dykes  
@demeterdykes

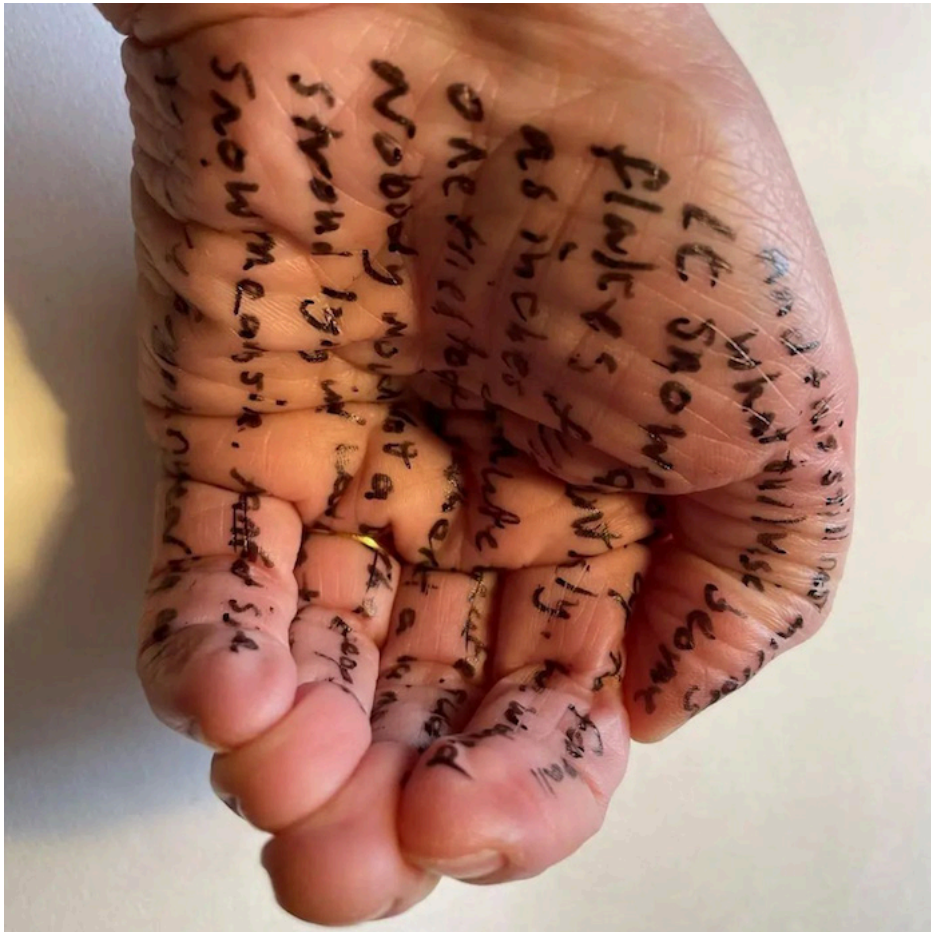
*Holding On*

The swirling farrago of sensations that is menopause slaps you in the face, hard, and lets you know, unequivocally, that you are on a one-way street with no turning circle at the end of it.

So, having less life ahead of me than there is behind compels my heels to dig into the earth so that the dizzying swiftness with which I am travelling along the one-way street, towards the exit from which there is no return, is at least decelerated.

Living an exaggerated version of myself, within my art practice, makes the ride more thrilling. There is absolute joy in discovering this other person who lives inside of me. She is powerful and loud and will not go quietly.





Anna Cady  
@annacadyartist

Hand Writing  
skin and ink

When I need to sort myself out I write. I do creative writing which comes from within (my body).

I don't know in advance what it will be, it emerges of itself, through my hand.



Gabrielle Eber  
@ana\_cryptic

*holding on 2012 - now  
glazed stoneware*

When I was at Central St Martins doing my BA in Fine Art one of the theoretical courses I took was called 'thinking through the body'. Somehow it later found its way into some of the ceramic work I made, and this is from that period.

What you see here is me holding a piece of glazed ceramic which came about totally intuitively, squeezing the clay in my fist and then firing it. I liked the effect, made a whole load, and left some unglazed. These hand imprints seem to convey so much emotively and yet despite their bodily reference and familiarity also manage to look very alien as objects. What is interesting to me now is that the different glazes and configurations really do confer different feelings and emotions on the object. I'd love to have the chance to show more of them together at a future date.



Helen Rogers  
@\_helenrogers

*Wounded*  
stoneware clay

Broken, battered, scarred .... but still functional in one way or another.



Su Bonfanti  
@subonfanti

*What Emerges*  
merino wool fibre, olive oil soap

A small piece of felt. Water, soap, warmth and the movement of my hands on the fibre create something soft, flexible but unbreakable. Fibres entangled, enmeshed, merged into something new. This piece is planned but then takes on its own form as I work. I always love the feeling of working on a piece of felt. It's a collaboration between me and the materials.



Clare Day  
@claredayceramics

*Found seed head*

It's a found seed head that's soft and enveloping and nice to hold in your hands and feels quite bodily and female. It puts an arm around you when you hold it. It's convoluted in a beautiful way like the endlessly convoluted experiences of neurodiversity. I found it on the seat of my mum's car at the time of her death and when I hold it I think of the nature of seeds and bodies, and the following unbelievable fact: the egg that makes us has not only been in our mother's body, but also in our grandmother's body, as all girl children are born with all the eggs of a lifetime's possible children. Relevant here as I was pregnant with my daughter whilst clearing out my mum's belongings after her death. I have been reading a lot about neurodiversity and am particularly fascinated by synaesthesia, something my mum and I shared and often spoke of (although not knowing the word for it at the time) and which many artists seem to have.





Robyn Phelan  
@robynphelan

*Healing Cuff*  
fired clay with terra sigillata

Always thinking about touch on clay, compressive actions and returning pressure of the hand back to the body.



Beverley Irving-Edwards  
@beverley\_irving\_illustrator

*Lost Decade*  
earthenware, underglaze, glaze,  
ceramic decals, wire, badge

\*\*\*Trigger warning ! eating disorder experience \*\*\*

First  
did as she was told.

Can it be a trick?

She stopped at last,  
she had sharpened her eyes



Julie Hutton  
@juliehuttonceramics

*Heads Up*  
white stoneware clay and coloured slip

Head, heart and hands holding hope (fully not heavily).



Dr Natasha Mayo  
@natashamayoceramics

*Where Flesh Forgets Our Bones Remember*  
three porcelain tea cups

These three cups my young daughter Evie bought a few years ago from a thrift shop, each one to represent one of my children - I get overwhelmed with the need to hold onto my children's emergent stories, it's like a panic I can never quite get on top of, and I found this phrase that perhaps explains why I feel it so deeply *where flesh forgets our bones remember, marbled into the marrow* by anthropologist Sue Black - and again in the film *Stories Are In Our Bones* by Janine Windolph, about reconnecting her sons with the stories of the earth. Our narrative threads are rhizomatic, to hold on too tight is to thwart a story being told. Still I feel the anxiety of not being awake, of not being alert enough to witness but I guess that's why I work in the way I do, always attempting to remain aware of relational narratives both within and beyond my body.



Kate McDonnell  
@katemcdonnellart

*Pull Yourself Together*  
discarded clothes,  
various yarns, threads, cord

This black, tight sculpture possesses the comforting heft of a lonely, lumpy teddy bear. Heavy and compressed, it's bound with a number of different kinds of threads – cord, cotton, woven tape – like the upturned contents of a sewing box. If the threads were cut, would it disintegrate hiding nothing within?





Camilla Stacey  
@camillastaceyart

10,000  
jesmonite

Today I went searching for some of the jesmonite pill packets I made several years ago, thinking of all the hundreds, thousands of tablets I've held in the palm of my hand.

Now I look at this photo and all I can concentrate on is my dirty thumb nail. An actual thumb nail, not one designed to grab your attention. I am focussed on that rather than all the packets perhaps because taking all these tablets is so second nature I can't see it anymore.



Sue Green  
@sue\_green\_art

*Squirm*  
used cloth, stitch, bindings, human hair

Making connections. Re-remembering embodied human traces.  
Exploring physical and emotional weight. A nod to the corporeal,  
tightly bound forms play with tension, memory and hoarding.

Why do we hold on to all this 'stuff'?



Simon Fell  
@sfellartworks

*Old Hand*

In this small piece I think I am evoking older and distant cultures. When I was a teenager I aspired to being a hippie although I was really just a bit too young. They seemed admirably different and interesting next to my parents. In the same way anything exotic or non-western seemed richer to my young mind and I think that is what is coming through here in *Old Hand* as a distant echo of those lost certainties.



Irit Shaltiel

The impulse for this work came from 25 years of experience living and working with young people with Autism, and my experience of their struggle with sensory impressions. The idea was to try to express how sensory impressions experienced in Autism can bring about a feeling of homelessness in the physical body, that houses the soul, and how this manifests when one is struggling to take hold of one's own body.





Jacqui Ramrayka  
@jacquiramraykaceramics

*Untitled*  
stoneware & porcelain  
multi glazed, multi fired

An exploration of how objects can embody concepts of memory, identity and grief.

These were made during a period of profound sadness when my dad was very ill, I think I was looking for a way of containing grief, time, myself? Maybe looking for a way of holding onto something totally intangible. My hands did the thinking - I found an odd comfort in the weight of these objects, something solid to ground me, but hollow to fill with the unwieldy stuff of grief.





Moon Rice  
@moonslies

To represent how it feels to be in my body, I chose a fidget toy slightly amended. I'm hoping that it conveys my feeling that I don't really have autonomy over my body - people will squish it and deform it however they deem fit according to their prejudice. The question mark on my underwear is also intended to convey certain people's fixation with what's in them. And the body being a fidget toy is intended to allude to me being on the spectrum (and it really helps me with my social anxiety). Too complex? But we are, aren't we! It's the idiots that try to simplify and dumb us down that spoil everything!



Emily Gibbard  
@totterdown\_potterdown

*Lady vase*  
stoneware, wheel thrown and altered



Helen Acklam  
@h.a.pics

*Lay Out*  
body of clay

the weight of my guilt  
the weight of my grief  
the weight of my longing



Charlotte Bracegirdle  
@charlotte\_bracegirdle

*The Tear Drainers*

If we could catch and bottle tears.

I once had a dream where I was captured by a man and held in a tower. Attached to my wrists were two metal cuffs covered in emerald glass. They were tear drainers, when I slept at night they drained me of my tears as they were worth a lot of money. I knew that one day I would be drained of all my tears and be left unable to ever cry again.



Ruth Richmond  
@ruthrichmond66

*My Mind in My Hands*  
found root, paint

Object representing the busy creative mind, with too many ideas and paths to go down creating a muddle head. Found in nature and decorated helping to induce flow.





Jess Skelton  
@jess.skelton.ceramics

*Cracked Actor*  
overfired earthenware,  
crackle glaze and breakage

Cracked, broken, held, missing parts - existing none the less.



Anya Keeley

@anyakeeley.artefacts

*Body*

river-found wood, steel wire, electrical transformers, beach-found plastic rope, pins

There's too much of it but also not enough. Too much flesh and fat and pain. Too sensitive and clumsy and awkward, not enough freedom of movement. I used to hate it, and its undeniable mass.

I recently began reclaiming my body autonomy, using the four universal healing selves: storytelling: marking it with tattoos, using my flesh as a living sketchbook. Dance: strengthening it using somatic movement and learning all of the awkwardness. Song: to find my voice. And silence.



Kate Cox  
@kate\_cox\_studio

*Hold My Hand*  
pipe cleaners

This subconscious pipe cleaner doodle came from a much deeper place than I realised - looking again I see stripey tentacles curling up my fingers, squeezing my circulation, making them unrecognisable, a little bit otherworldly.

My fingers feel and look more alien to me as Reynauds creeps into all of them - like they are being claimed by some unseen thing.



Linda Bloomfield  
@lindathepotter

*Dimpled Pot*  
porcelain

My pots look like me, small, soft and rounded, with dimples. Thrown porcelain with a satin matt glaze on the outside and glossy pink on the inside.





Janine Partington  
@janinepartington

*I am an apple  
card*

“I’m not sure who I am or what I am inside, but do I know that I am the ‘apple’ body shape on the outside.

Abdominal obesity is probably the most dangerous of all body types, The apple body shape and associated abdominal obesity is considered at the highest risk for health issues compared to the other body types. Larger waists can mean higher risk of heart disease. It also means I rarely allow someone to photograph me.

I know exactly what I need to do to go some way to remedying this, as I’ve done it before, but as with everything I do, why do today what I can put off until tomorrow.





Gill Roth  
@rothgill

*New Shoes*  
brown paper, tape

I made a paper shoe. It's a Clarks t-bar sandal. Childhood memories of a hugely exciting annual purchase. Glossy brown and conker shiny.



Julie Brixey-Williams  
@juliebrixeywilliams

*A Labour of Attentiveness*  
antique gilded picture  
frame fragment, driftwood

Driving my practice is a need to find that delicate yet dynamic balance between our sensing bodies and the objects/environments around us. This 'moment' of tender balanced care of fragile parts is a composite object crafted both by human hand (a fragment of fine art frame cast over 100 years ago) and by natural forces (driftwood tumbled over unknown time by the sea) that needs careful attentive handling.



Rosalind Barker  
@rosalinddrawing

*my hairy story*  
hair

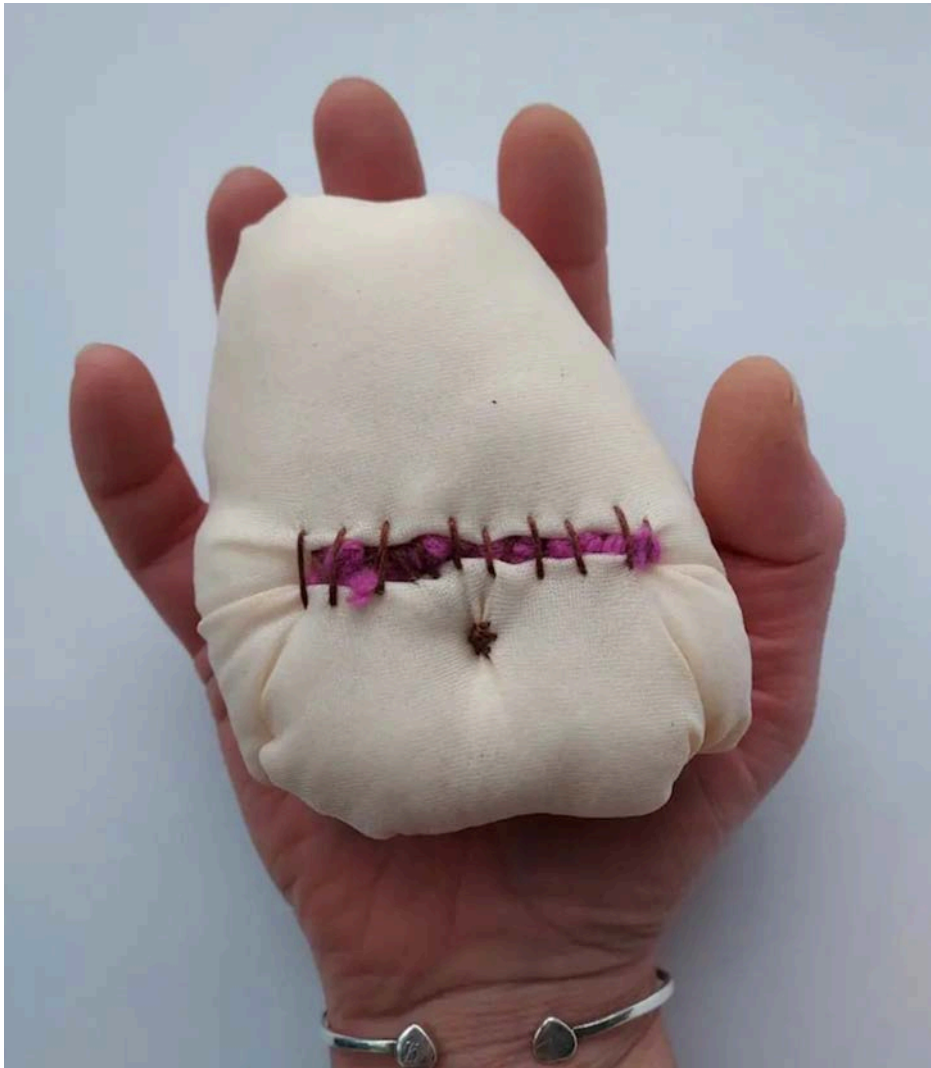
In 2011 a museum response project to objects/artefacts that 'cut' birthed my installation *A Hairy Story*. Exotic eggs of cut hair from local hairdressers became both my subject matter, medium and colour palette in creating my hairy treasures.

Hair is a defining characteristic of the mammalian class, embellished, designed and controlled in life it is one of the few human anatomical parts composed of dead tissue.

Historically a lock of hair could be a memorial, adult love token or a snip of childhood innocence. Twenty-first century hair is about image, group membership, culture, wealth, status, celebrity and science.

I still collect my own cut locks. A long diary, as colour, texture and volume fade. I then playfully resurrect the sweepings as individual hand sculptures.

If my hair is happy, I feel more confident in body and mind, good to get out there...my hairy story is perky!



Lois Meiklejohn  
@loiskarenmeiklejohn

My pieces come from a recent operation where I was left with an infected wound. Six months later I am still cradling and protecting my stomach, traumatised by what happened and trying to regain my physical and mental equilibrium.



Jenny Camp  
@jennyscamp\_

*Eggy Disaster Child*  
glazed porcelain

The idea of a normal healthy body is a myth. We are all too complex to be the same. We don't share an identical blueprint. And it wouldn't make sense if we did.

Our organs are distinct to us. They are not mass produced units but bespoke organic elements. Sometimes they do unexpected things, and we take our best, most educated guess as to why. And attempt to do something about it. Sometimes it seems to work.

I am an organ creature, fallible and unique, just like everyone else.





Julia Ellen Lancaster  
@juliaellenlancaster\_ceramics

Give me wings.



Carrie Sermon  
@carriesermoncreativeenabler

*Steatopygia Goddess*  
unfired clay

I have always been medically obese and called fat but I celebrate this and wear my plumpness as a defensive armour. I look to prehistoric female figurines for inspiration away from today's rigid panopticon of what is acceptable for my hag body to be!



Kim Norton  
@kimmortondesign

*Poena 2*  
hair with stitch

When pain erupts in the head. Its final settling place is right behind the eye. Pulsating for hours, sometimes days. Hyper sensitivity to light sets in and the descent into darkness begins.



Eleanor Rodwell  
@erodwellart

*The Holder*  
solid cast bronze

This sculpture was originally a wax model, moulded quickly and blindly one tired night whilst thinking about the strain of being caring. How sometimes you sacrifice your own well-being by prioritising holding others.

Whilst symbolising the emotional weight of empathy, and how debilitating it can be, I've also found it to be a comforting, heavy, warms-up-in-your-hands talisman. A reminder to carry on caring and to hug yourself as well.





Gabriela Ramirez

@gabriela\_ramirez\_michel

corn dough, leaves, red cotton thread,  
raw clay, from locations around Mexico

Sometimes I have my body in my hands, blooming, struggling, smiling,  
trapped, deformed, multiplied in many different faces... sometimes my  
body and my hands are just the sun and the light.





Iro Kaskani  
@irokaskani

*In My Hands*  
porcelain powder, sterling silver,  
dried prickly pear leaf, wood, stainless steel

How fragile I am.



Emma Barrow  
@em\_ma\_barrow

*Adherence*  
polystyrene, paint and glitter  
on a moulded pulp tray

The fruit from a tree, the apple of an eye, a vessel and beholder of matter.



Frances Lukins  
@felceramics

photo Jen Abell @ffotojenic

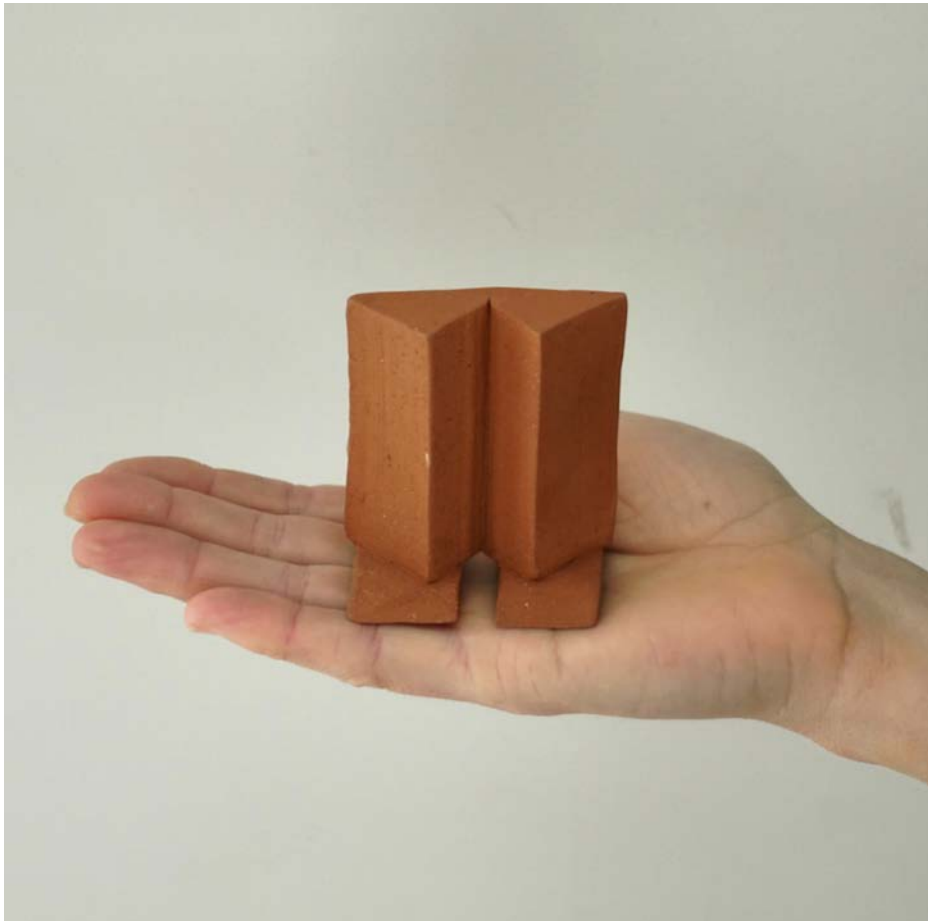
My body goes ahead of me  
Already reaching for a connection  
I don't have the words or language to explain  
No vocabulary to say  
What is in me to say  
My hands know to touch  
My hands know to touch



Johanna Bolton  
@johanna.bolton

*Hold Your Breath*  
air-drying clay

The work came about after several bouts of bronchitis — a kind of frustration at not being able to see what is going on inside my body.



Lisa Jones  
@c\_l\_a\_y\_d\_a\_y

*Trousers*





Sarah Hefferman  
@whatthehefferman

*Too Sides*  
reclaimed textiles, ink, rice filling

too much not enough too fat too loud too big too stupid too silly don't  
fit in mute strangled gagged no filter too honest shut up hush your  
mouth keep the noise down too emotional too sensitive.



Adam Faulkner  
@amuartfotra

*Grief*  
wire, feathers, fish hooks

I will never see you again.



Joann Millar  
@jomillarart

Rather reminds me of a plastic bag floating listlessly on the wind.



Anastassia Zamaraeva  
@a\_zama\_ceramics

*Trickster*  
stoneware clay

A piece I made today thinking about what my body feels like in this moment. It was insistent on wrapping around my fingers, trying to inextricably tie itself to my hand. The little trickster face grinning up at me.





Cristina Cerulli  
@cristinacerulli\_sculpture

*Open and Stuck*

A number of very thin small vessels stacked inside each other, curled up to form a whole when fired. Fragile yet strong. Open and stuck.





Chris Stoddard  
@chris.stoddart.art

*Constraint*

Current project about constraints of the body, the way bodily experiences of pain and limitation are ultimately universal but at the same time so specific, private and in many ways unknowable. My older brother has numerous neurological and physical disabilities that formed my understanding of the body as a child and what care looks like. As I think about caring for him as we age together, I've been waist deep - wading through memories and narratives about how we construct meaning out of what the body experiences.



Val O'Donnell  
@val.o.donnell

*Vessel as Laboratory*  
porcelain paperclay

As a scientist, my working life is spent in a laboratory using glassware that includes long necked vessels and flasks to perform experiments that aim to advance knowledge of how the human body works. This piece is inspired by the vessels in my lab that have played a central role in the work done by my team over the years. They are designed to measure, to mix, and to support reactions, and are indispensable. Painted on the vessel is a woman... our research team is mainly female.



Liz Workman

@liz\_workman\_

porcelain, cobalt, gold silk thread

My most recent mother pot represents the struggle I feel about how much your body changes after a couple of children (plus then the added bonus of menopause!) saggy, dimpled, spotty and rounded. Which I don't actually feel is that negative, it's just a change that you need to get used to, but it is a complicated shift while you do. I kind of feel like the little figure should live inside the pot - the pot being a celebration of how I feel about my external body and the figure is how I feel inside.



Rebekah Barnett  
@rbarnett.ceramics

Using my paper clay process gave me time to reflect on my body all the negative things, we all think about it some point of our lives to make the clay as those thoughts become physical when we bring that on ourselves. Porcelain is the clay body which I would say is a representation of our bodies, it holds memories of where we touched or scored it just like our bodies do. Our body is always changing, scars over the years, bruises, stretch marks lines it's all part of growth. The older I'm getting I am learning to love it as it's all part of what makes me. This image is one of a triptych representing the different ways we feel in our bodies.



Danielle Callahan  
@daniellecallahanart

*Corporeal*  
raw clay body

My body, post recent repairs. Sternum scar impression.





Cathy Mills  
@cathymills8814

*Broken Hand*

My hands like to touch, to build and to make things. They bring me down to earth, and take me into the clouds, away from my head. In 2022/23 I experienced chronic pain in my left wrist and hand after an injury.

Despite the pain, freedom through a restricted sense of touch was possible.

The poetry of these little things....a crabs claw picked up on a wild Irish beach....melted wax...the light feather...all these make a poem message to my hand speaking of bigger things and of healing.



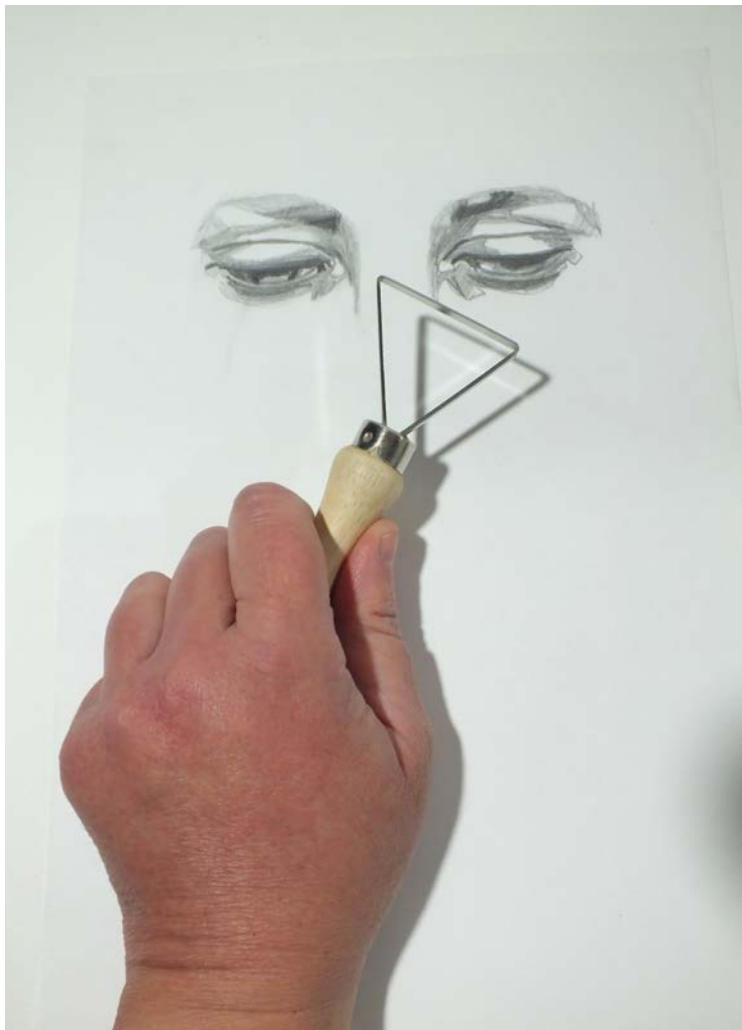
Rychel Therin  
@rychel\_therin

*Nature / Nurture*  
tumbled beach rock, modelling clay

Tossed rock - tumbled - worn - round edges formed. Silhouette pressed against the wall. Veins full of salt. Cooled magma. Fissures blown.

Clay moulded - nurtured by hand. Mirrored with / against stone. Reflection. Water evaporates - fissures form. Cross the palm with silver - flood each crack.

Silhouette drawn against the wall. Back to back. Belly to belly. Open - Close - Forms.



Elena Manali  
@elena\_manali

*Loving Hands*  
clay configuration tool, paper, 2B pencil

Having worked with clay for a long time, my hands have started to resemble my father's hands. They are no longer delicate, soft and slim, but rather, the hands of a worker. These hands are the very tools that I use to bring my creations to life. Through them, my thoughts and stories become tangible



*my body in my hands* John Street Gallery Stroud Valleys Artspace May 2023

#mybodyinmyhands forms part of Sam Lucas' doctoral study and demonstrates a contemporary approach to creative practice as research within an interdisciplinary framework. The artwork created as part of this project provides insight with regards to the creative practitioner and their individual responses to 'being in the body'.

Collectively, the insight is magnified, supported by a vast visual library of images that provide rich contextual material for an expanded research field. This publication contributes to current discourses across numerous disciplines and is testament to the relevance of this research and its future development.

We are delighted to be part of this research journey.

Prof Andrew Livingstone and Prof Yitka Graham







