

## Still Life: Things Devouring Time Exhibition

## Exhibition

Still Life: Things Devouring Time (group exhibition) The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018 - 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2019 (co-curated by Dr Dawn Woolley and Dr Katie J. T. Herrington (Curator, The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds).

Things made from non-biodegradable materials and the human inclination to collect possessions contradict the concept of tempus edax rerum, time as devourer of all things. Today, issues of sustainability are at the forefront of discussions about consumer practices, environmental concerns and social inequality. However, we continue to rely on and desire cheap disposable commodities, fossil fuels and plastic packaging. This exhibition presents artworks that contribute to the discussion about consumption and also express sense of urgency for action. The artworks challenge the values championed in consumer culture.

The exhibition Still Life: Things Devouring Time focuses on the visual representation of vanitas, symbolic objects that warn against excess and the shortness of time. It explores how those ideas inform the practice of contemporary artists, working in diverse media, who respond to consumer culture and the social, environmental and sustainability issues it produces today.

The evolution and enduring relevance of the genre of still life is highlighted in this exhibition by the variety of contemporary art displayed alongside *Still Life with Drinking Horn* by Willem Kalf, an example of Dutch still life painting from the 17th century. The show includes photographs and objects by Nicole Keeley, Caroline McCarthy, Simon Ward and Dawn Woolley.

## Exhibition Images (courtesy of the University of Leeds)







Willem Kalf, Still Life with the Drinking Horn of the Saint Sebastian Archers' Guild, Lobster and Glasses c.1653, [painting] Lent by The National Gallery, London.



Dawn Woolley, *Memorials (banana and strawberries)* 2016, [photographic prints mounted on MDF board with balloons].



Nicole Keeley, *Tide Mark*, 2017, [photographs].



Caroline McCarthy, Vanitas, 2007, [canvas, bin bag and metal brackets].

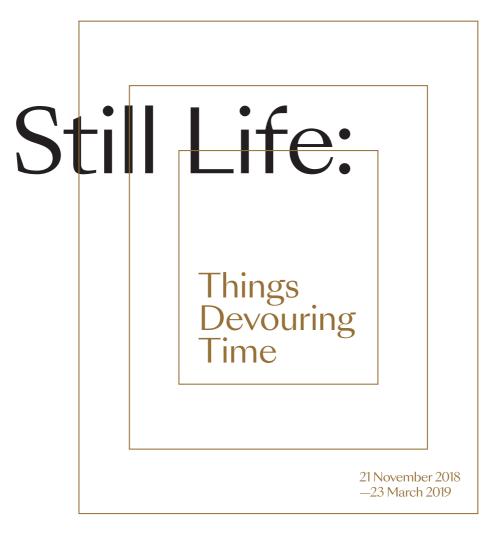


Simon Ward, Ghost in the Machine 2013, [E-paper display screens].



Caroline McCarthy, Humbrol, 2009, [Found packaging, Humbrol enamel paint and shelving].





An exhibition exploring consumerism through historical & contemporary still life artworks





## Press Release

New art exhibition explores consumer culture, sustainability and still life -University of Leeds news



Nicole Keeley, Tide Mark (detail), 2017. Digital photographic prints, framed: 387 x 508 x 33 mm. © The artist.

Images are downloadable from this Google Drive (please note captions and credits in the Word file in the folder).

Press previews will be available on 20 November. Dr Katie Herrington, exhibition curator, will be available for interview. Please contact Laura Beare, Marketing & Galleries Assistant Manager, on L.J.Beare@leeds.ac.uk or 0113 343 9267.

**Opening Reception:** Tuesday, 20 November 2018, 6-8pm. Free, all welcome.

A new exhibition at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds, explores the notion of consumerism through the lens of historical and contemporary still life artworks.

Opening on 21 November, **Still Life: Things Devouring Time** brings together a historic Dutch still life painting alongside works by contemporary artists, Simon Ward, Dawn Woolley, Caroline McCarthy and Nicole Keeley.

Dr Katie Herrington, the University's Art Curator, said:

"Still life is an enduring genre in which objects take centre stage. It became an important element of a burgeoning art market in the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century. It allowed painters to rapidly reflect the transformation in the culture around them, and therefore the paintings communicate a

shifting relation to consumption – as consumer culture changed, the type of objects in the paintings also changed."

The exhibition builds on this historical exploration of consumerisation by displaying the still life works of four contemporary artists. Each artist refreshes this historical genre, for instance 'Ghost in the Machine' by Simon Ward replaces the book, used in some Dutch still life to symbolise knowledge and intelligence, with a kindle.

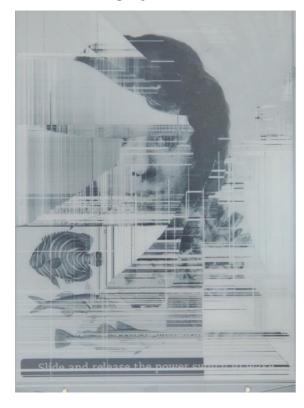
Another element the contemporary still life artworks focus on is the issue of environmental pollution. Contemporary consumer society is characterised by an overabundance of plastic material. Nicole Keeley's 'Tide Mark' photographs remind us that these consumer habits are extremely detrimental to the planet we live on.

Dawn Woolley, exhibiting artist and exhibition co-curator, said:

"Dutch vanitas paintings warn their viewers of the damage to the soul that greed, excess and waste may cause. Today, vanitas might warn us about irreversible environmental consequences, caused by our unsustainable consumer habits. Indelible stains on the soul are replaced by materials that do not biodegrade. The artworks in this exhibition contain contradictions, unexpected use of materials and unusual combinations of objects to challenge the values championed in consumer culture. Objects are given centre stage in order to foreground the wasteful, destructive consequences of our insatiable appetite for things."

Still Life: Things Devouring Time opens on Wednesday 21 November at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery and runs until 23 March 2019. Entry is free. For more details and opening times, visit https://library.leeds.ac.uk/galleries

Works on display include:





Dawn Woolley, **Memorials series** (detail), 2016. Digital photographic prints mounted on MDF board and balloons, each work: 700 x 700mm. © The artist.

#### Simon Ward, Ghost in the Machine series (detail), 2013. E-

paper display screens, each work 100 x 140 mm. © The

artist.



Caroline McCarthy, **Humbrol series** (detail), 2009. Found packaging, Humbrol enamel paint, shelving, 4880 x 1370 x 370 mm. © The artist.

#### -ENDS-

#### **Further information**

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#### **ADMISSION/ HOURS:**

13.00 - 17.00, Monday

10.00 - 17.00, Tuesday -Saturday

Admission: FREE

#### **VENUE INFORMATION:**

The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT http://library.leeds.ac.uk/galleries

Tel: +44 (0)113 3432778 E-mail: gallery@leeds.ac.uk

Find us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Read our blog.

#### **Exhibition Catalogue**

An accompanying exhibition catalogue will be available to purchase. The catalogue is edited by Dr Katie Herrington and Dr Dawn Woolley, and features an essay from Dr Sergio Fava.

#### The Artists

Dawn Woolley

Dawn Woolley completed an MA in Photography (2008) and PhD by project in Fine Art (2017) at the Royal College of Art.

Recent exhibitions include; "Self/Selfie" Ballarat International Foto Biennale, Australia (2017), "Le Féminin" Circulation(s), Arles (2017), "From Selfie to Self-Expression" Saatchi Gallery, London (2017) and "Basically. Forever" Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (2014). Solo exhibitions include; "Consumed: Stilled Lives" Blyth Gallery, London (2018), Ffotogallery, Cardiff (2018), Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge (2017) and Dyson Gallery, London (2016); "Visual Pleasure", Hippolyte Photography Gallery, Helsinki, Finland (2013), Vilniaus Fotografijos Galerija, Lithuania (2012) and Ffotogallery, Cardiff (2011).

#### Caroline McCarthy

Caroline McCarthy was born in Dublin and studied at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin; and Goldsmiths College, London.

Her work has been exhibited widely, with solo shows including Green on Red, Dublin; Gimpel Fils, London; Hoet Bekaert, Ghent; Parker's Box Gallery, New York; Limerick City Art Gallery; Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin; Gasworks, London; Void Gallery, Derry; and Bugdahn und Kaimer, Dusseldorf.

#### Simon Ward

Simon Ward was born in London and studied at Nottingham Trent University and the Royal College of Art, London.

His worked has been exhibited in group shows including Natur Blink, The Koppel Project, London; Café Society, Seoul Museum, Seoul; Hidden, Royal College of Art, London; Phoenix Gallery, Brighton Photo Fringe. Brighton; Iconoclasts, Curated by Katie Heller. Lloyds Club, London; Wild Things, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Wales

#### Nicole Keeley

Following a BTEC diploma in photography at City College Norwich, Keeley gained her Bachelor of Arts degree at Anglia Ruskin University.

She currently works as a commercial photographer to fund her experimental artistic practice. She has exhibited work at the Free Range exhibition, Truman Brewery, Cambridge.

#### The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery

**The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery** is an accredited art museum at the heart of the University of Leeds campus, refurbished in 2008 with funds from the Audrey & Stanley Burton Charitable Trust. The Gallery offers both a programme of temporary exhibitions and a display of selected treasures from the University Art Collection, in its main gallery. An Education Room houses the University's collection of drawings and works on paper, while also offering space for private study, research and teaching.

#### University of Leeds

The University of Leeds is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK, with more than 33,000 students from more than 150 different countries, and a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities.

We are a top ten university for research and impact power in the UK, according to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, and are in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings 2019. Additionally, the University was awarded a Gold rating by the Government's Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017, recognising its 'consistently outstanding' teaching and learning provision. Twenty-six of our academics have been awarded National Teaching Fellowships – more than any other institution in England, Northern Ireland and Wales – reflecting the excellence of our teaching. www.leeds.ac.uk

#### **Exhibition Reviews**

#### NATHALIE TOLMIE-THOMSON - Culture Vulture 11th February 2019

*'Still Life: Things Devouring Time* at the Stanley Burton Gallery [sic] proved an education. Still life is an artistic genre I'd previously not really appreciated, but this ongoing exhibition's powerful message about consumerism knocked me for six.'

#### **ROBERT KILNER - Culture Vulture 8th February 2019**

'As I left the gallery, the litter, and bulging wheelie bins on the paths looked different, more appealing than when I came in. It was as if art really was overflowing out into the street.'



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ORKSHIRE EVENING

**ARTS &** Art show explores EVEN consumer culture through still life works with YVETTE HUDDLESTON istainability and the mpact of unfettered con

**EXHIBITION** 

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Dawn Woolley's Memorials Series 2016 in Still Life: Th ouring Tim

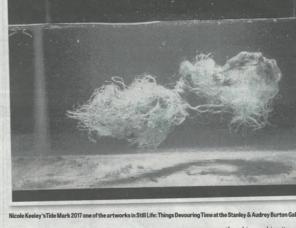
waste, all of which could ea silv be als waste all of which could easily be mistaken for forms of marine life. All the waste objects depicted in Keeley's work were gathered by the artist forolk over the course of a baeach in Norfolk over the course of a two-month period last year. Also featured in the exhibition is Caro-line McCarthy, an artist whose work incorporates the most basic of everyday materi-

such as bin bags or di

he stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery. Ihought-provoking, it makes the fast glance the viewer may dismiss the binas of little worth, without the humble bin bag the canvas statt fafallout of rampant of con-sumerism and its vietums. Taking the small agins made by homeless-people with messages such as Hum-ray Please Help if You Can', which and blows them up to bill-board sizes of that the status of the status statter and the vietums. Taking and blows them up to bill-board sizes of that they can no long-ray solution the street. Ward scans hourd size of the street. Ward scans that fail allows them up to bill-board sizes of that they can no long-ray society can enjoy the pleasures of consumption. Some of the works in commercial advertising drums and Leeds eity cent. The shuge anount of hocked into a relatively small space this nich and rewarding exhi-bition. All the works take con-set of the works take con-set of the they con-take Structive conservents the structive conservents the structive conservents the structive conservents the structive conservents they conservent and be appending for the structive conservents the struc

At the Stanley & Audrey Bur-ton Gallery, University of Leeds until March 23, 2019. Free entry.

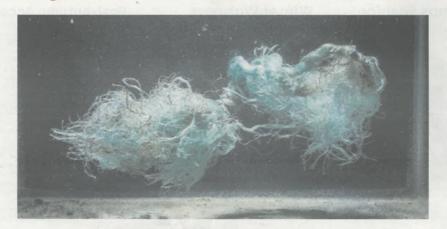
Yorkshire Evening Post 13th Dec 2018.



In The Middle

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# Still Life: Things Devouring Time at The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery



artists have recently finished Four artists have recently finished installing their works at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery in the University's Parkinson building. The free exhibition is a transformed space that emphasizes the sheer implication of society's current modes of unsustainability, buoying its message to the fore through intricate, striking imagery and photography. The entire exhibition is incredibly evocative, almost haunting in its prophetic realisation of human waste and degeneration. An undercurrent of tension stems throughout each artist, linking each work together into a seemingly endless narrative of human waste and carelessness. With the University's recent pledge to cut down its plastic waste by 2023, the Still Life exhibition could not have arrived at a more opportune time for a statement about ecology and environment. It was a privilege to witness and a pleasure to interview Dr Dawn Wooley, one of the around the concept of memorialisation, artists on display and a research fellow at yet another facet of our current society. the Leeds Arts University.

museum relics from the waste that would have otherwise been thrown away. "We almost have a compulsiveness to collect things and packaging is only a small part of consumer culture. A lot of this was based on the anthropology material in the Cambridge museum, and it reflects a lot of the issues that we struggle with today.

be a statement about plastic, waste and sustainability. I love the anthropological side of museums, but what remains and what is preserved and why? This relates to our use of plastic. Our society has an inbuilt obsolescence. Our plastic waste is permanent and can be reflected in this sense of preservation found in museums. I wanted them to look rarefied, when in actuality each piece would only last long enough for me to photograph.

The exhibition, when it's finished, will

As Dr Wooley explained, some of the work has two faces or sides, like the Greek deity Janus, god of doorways and paths. Simultaneously beautiful and ugly, Wooley's work requires more than a quick glance to understand the depth of her message. On her other photographic pieces, displayed on sand-filled balloons, Dr Wooley explained that their significance revolves around the concept of memorialisation,

The party is over, but the problem still pr Wooley's work is an examination of society's connections with sustainability, glutony and the rise of consumer culture. complicated, and so by a process of Wooley gathered packaging and recreated elimination I simplified the objects within." Wooley's work harks back somewhat to the work of a Dutch artist from the 17th century's concept of still-life painting. Still life was originally called 'dead nature' and it evokes a significance of decay and waste. Lincluded objects like the food and the benchestere growth the thickness foot the tombstones, even the chicken foot, because it has this sense of lasting decay

and of rot and mould. The p last long, but the punishment does."

Dr Wooley also explained a little about the other artists and their work. It is not difficult to discern the ultimately penetrating and humbling message about human waste and the atrophy of nature. Nicole Keery's work is almost dreamlike, verging slightly into the realm of the fantastical through her work's resemblance to the grotesque. The creature is, in fact, made up of polystyrene cups, nylon ropes and water bottles; the emulation of a carcass-like husk suggests the damage being wrought on our oceans and ecology systems. Suspended in water, it is evident that our plastic waste is far more damaging than many tend to expect. Poignant to the point of shame, Keery's work is a disturbing insight into the damage we have wrought and our blindness to it.

Caroline McCarthy's work 'Vanitas' is an extremely clever working of materials and juxtapositions. The canvas displayed was created from the hole-punched plastic bin bag from the corresponding object below. McCarthy's work reconstructs the below. McCarthy's work reconstructs the famous, eponymous painting of a still and snuffed candle, symbolising the transience of human life. The paradox, however, is that since it is made of plastic, the material itself will continue, even though its depiction is one of fleeting time. Similarly, the bag is now rendered useless through the holes, and both literally and empelicially represente a factination with symbolically represents a fascination with commodification and waste that Wooley's

own work depicts. McCarthy's other work, 'Humbrol', can be encapsulated by Wooley's witticism: "ominous, made anonymous," The domestic is transformed into the pollutant through mundane items painted with blacks and greys, and the useful containers are rendered as nothing more than an unsustainable luxury.

Wooley described Simon Ward's work as a simple, raw and humanistic appeal to society. Ward's use of posters detailing the struggles of homelessness turn the temporary into the contemporary. "Art is good to speak to people!" Wooley exclaims. With Ward's work to be displayed in the city early next year, it can only be agreed that art is a medium that can both evoke and provoke; both mimic commercial advertising, but also put it to shame as an excess of consumption.

Still Life: Things Devouring Time is a visceral, transformative paradox of an exhibition, and can only be described as a credit to all of those who contributed - both artists and staff. While we cannot be proud of the pollution and damage of society's waste, the University can, however, consider this exhibition to be an achievement of the highest standard. Things Devouring Time foregrounds destruction and our gluttonous appetite for luxury as permanent, but simultaneously highlights our own morality and begs the question: what legacy will we leave after we have left this brief mortal coil?

Stephanie Bennett

The Gryphon 30th Nov 2018.

#### Visitor Comments

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'An interesting mix of art. Some of which is awe inspiring, but some of which I find insulting [Bin bag - 'Vanitas' in Still Life exhibition]'

'Nice space. Well curated exhibition'

'Still Life: Illuminating and thought provoking - amazing to see everyday objects transformed into art'

'Never encountered such a dense stimulation in an exhibition'

'Caroline McCarthy's work is beautiful with a sense of stillness'

'I found the exhibition very interesting and thought provoking. I love this gallery - I am really glad we have it in Leeds!'

## Talks / Group Visits

The exhibition launch event was one of the gallery's most popular launches with approximately 123 visitors. Throughout the duration the exhibition received 3487 visitors including 216 event participants. Events included:

- Friends of The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, preview and curator's introductory talk, 20th November 2018.
- Expanding communities of Sustainable Practice symposium organised by Leeds Arts University, 16th November 2018.
- Facebook Live Interview, 16th January 2019 (6 shares and 425 views). https://www.facebook.com/LULGalleries/videos/343439469831973/
- Still Life: Things Devouring Time Symposium, The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, 24th January 2019 (see symposium pdf appendices).
- Interdisciplinary Food Waste Research workshop organised by the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council, 28th February 2019.

## Poster Campaign

In addition to the gallery-based exhibition, Still Life: Things Devouring Time takes artwork outside the Gallery, to the general public. Reproductions of artworks are exhibited in the form of posters in commercial advertising spaces around the city of Leeds. This display of contemporary still life art interrupts the promotion of consumerism that usually occupies advertising spaces. Instead, commenting on consumer culture and sustainability, including pollution and homelessness.

This part of the project was supported by a grant from the Lipmann-Milliband Trust.



Nicole Keeley, Tide Mark, 2017, Kirkgate Market, Leeds 2018.



Simon Ward, Signs, 2008, Leeds 2018.



Nicole Keeley, Tide Mark, 2017, Leeds 2019.



Dawn Woolley, Relics, 2017, Leeds 2019.



Sculptures by Participants of the National Saturday Art and Design Club workshop, The University of Leeds, 19th January 2019.



Sculptures by Participants of a workshop at The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, 9th February 2019

## **Workshops**

- Relics Art Club workshop, Still Life: Things Devouring Time exhibition, The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds. 19th January 2019.
- Relics Art Club workshop, Still Life: Things Devouring Time exhibition, The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds. 9th February 2019.

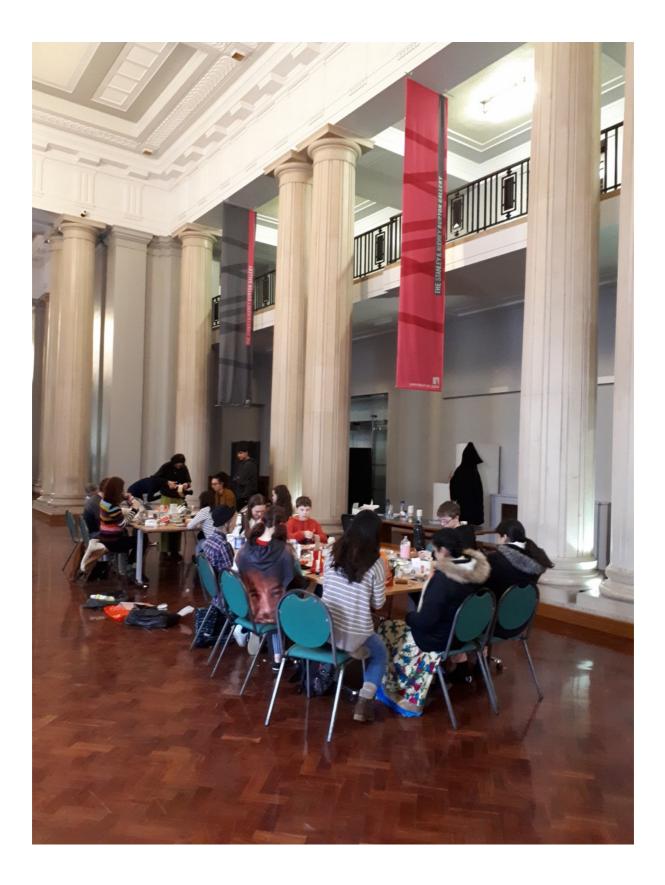
### Workshop Outline

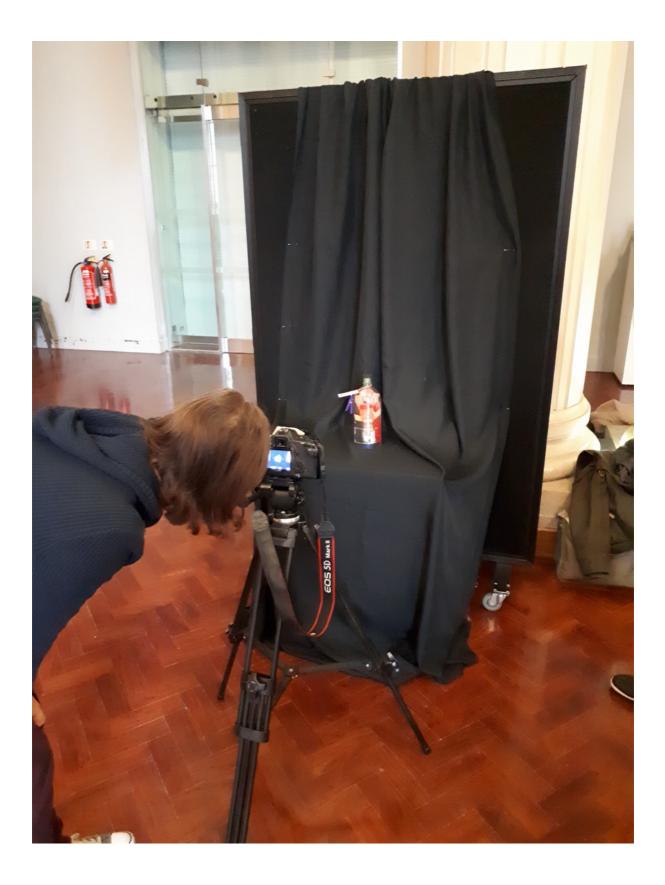
The objects in Relics resemble devotional artefacts and ceremonial figures: totems, votive candles, and janus-figures. They allude to objects used in worship by a range of faiths that are preserved and exhibited in museum collections. Woolley's relics suggest that commodities are also powerful objects to be worshipped by consumers. The commodities from which they are made show their branding and are named with human qualities such as strength and beauty. Those advertising statements suggest that a particular attribute will be transferred to the consumer when the product is used. However, the objects in this artwork do not belong in a museum, they are not preserved due to their cultural significance but due to their non-biodegradable materials. Once recognised in this way the objects reveal themselves as waste products that are routinely discarded in today's society.

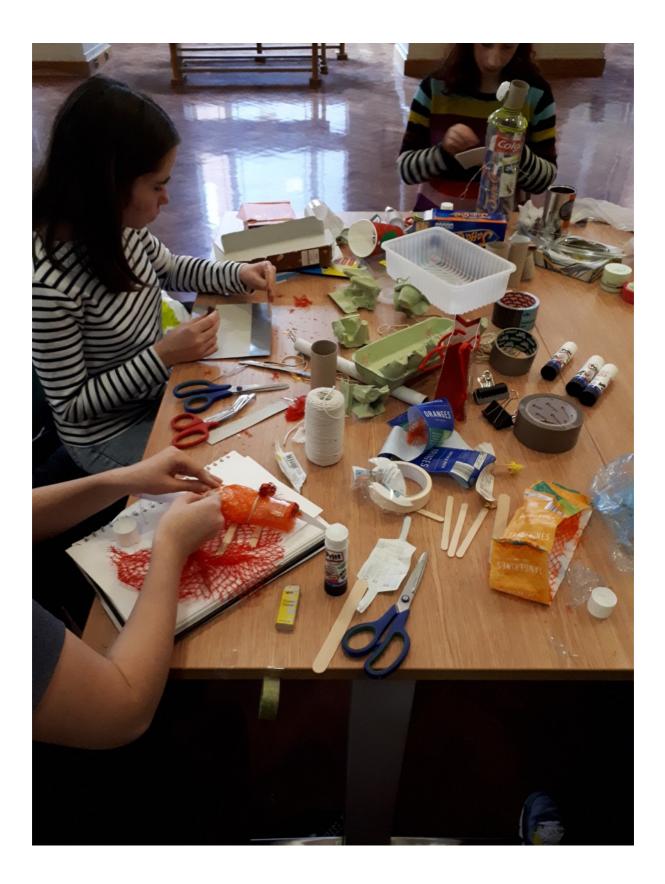
During the workshop participants will produce sculptures that explore the ideas behind the Relics series and other artworks in the exhibition Still Life: Things Devouring Time. The sculptures could be fetishes that warn against waste, or totem figures that celebrate the things that are valued by in our society. Participants will explore their world through objects and will present their ideas using sculptural assemblage techniques. The objects will be professionally photographed by Woolley and each participant will receive a photograph. National Saturday Art and Design Club, The University of Leeds, 19th January 2019, photographs by Sarah Richardson.

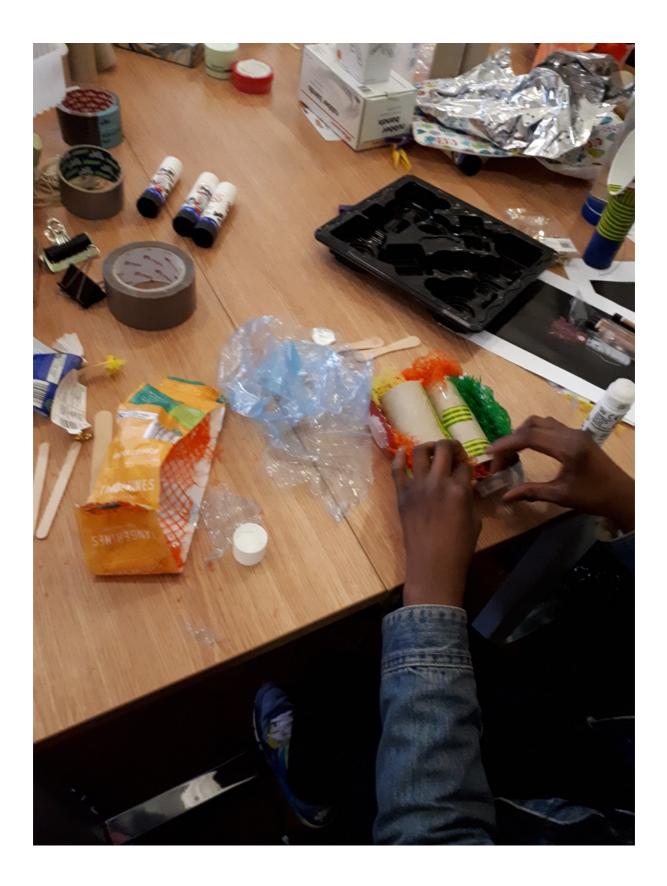








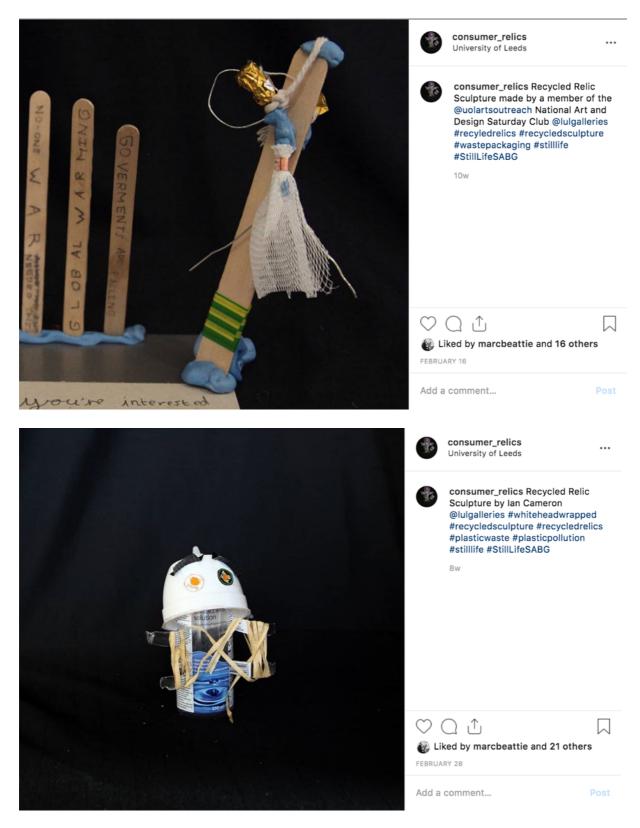


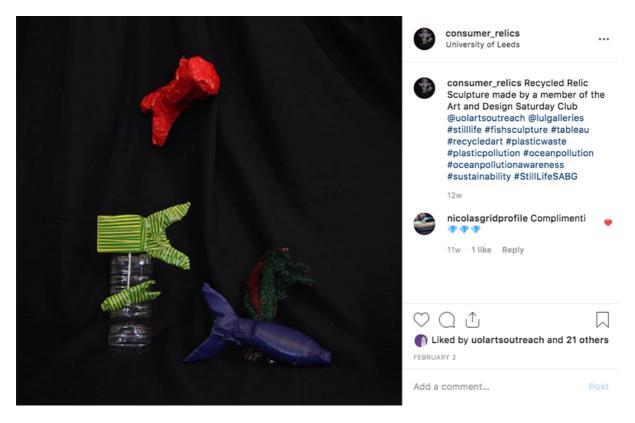




The poster produced as a result of the workshop and displayed around commercial advertising spaces in Leeds will be on display in Summerset House from 8th - 16th June 2019, as part of the National Art and Design Club summer exhibition.

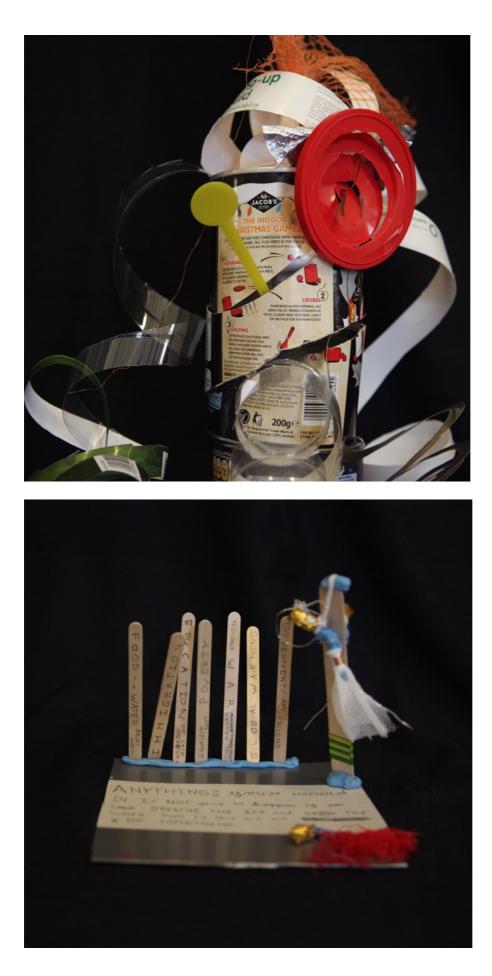
## Workshop Sculptures and Social Media Posts

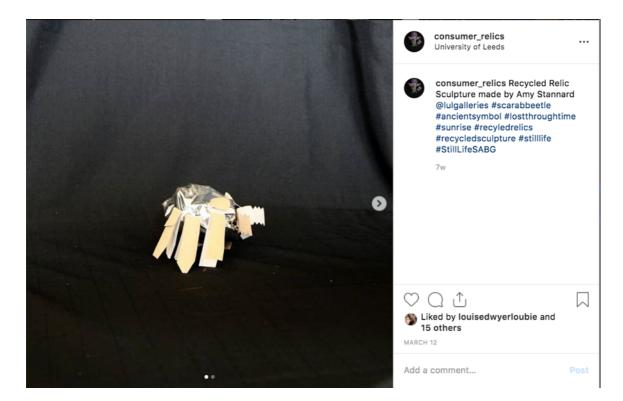




Sculptures by member of the National Art and Design Saturday Club, Recycled Relics Workshop, 19th January 2019.









Sculpture by Ian Cameron, Recycled Relics Workshop, 9th February 2019.



Climate Change Insect by Louise Dwyer, Recycled Relics Workshop, 9th February 2019.

