

### Consumed: Stilled Lives Exhibition

*Consumed: Stilled Lives* plays with the traditional concept of still-life painting, which grew in popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Often featuring silver plates, ornate glassware and expensive foodstuffs such as shellfish and exotic fruit, still life paintings became a fashionable way for the Dutch and Flemish to illustrate their wealth. When interpreted using emblematic symbolism the paintings represent a conflicting relation with material wealth. In response to this reading Woolley produces still-life objects that suggest contradictory relationships to contemporary consumer culture. Drawing on both definitions of the term 'consume' (to ingest and to purchase) she uses food still-life photography to represent different characters and positions in relation to capitalist society. What we eat and how we eat are symbols of our wider consumer habits. We are what we consume.

*Relics*, a new series of photographs made for this exhibition, is a threatening counterpoint to the bright glossy appeal of *Lure*. Reminiscent of devotional artefacts and ceremonial figures such as totems, votive candles, and janus figures, these relics connote an overvaluation of commodities and the ideological social values disseminated by product packaging. They seem powerful. Made from different types of packing material, and beginning to show signs of age, these relics are not sacred objects that are preserved for centuries because they are considered to be important, rather they are waste that cannot be destroyed. They suggest the non-biodegradable nature of our consumer society. They simultaneously show themselves as commodities to be worshipped and rubbish to be discarded. Like janus figures they reveal both sides of their nature. They conflate ideas of the sacred and profane.



*Relics* (11 & 15), 2017



*Relics (19 & 20), 2017*



*Relics (26 & 51), 2017*

### Artworks

Celebrate 2012-15

Lure 2014

Pacifier 2014

Hysterical Selfies 2015

Wish Book 2015

Sirens 2015-16

Nature Morte 2016

Relics 2017

### Exhibition

**Consumed: Stilled Lives** (solo exhibition) Ruskin Gallery, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, 21<sup>st</sup> September – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

### Artist Talks and In-Conversations

In conversation with Dr Paul Marris, Deputy Head of School, Cambridge School of Art, 21<sup>st</sup> Sept 2017.

Still Life, Vanitas, and Ironic Objects paper, Animate Objects: Encounters Between People and Things Symposium, Anglia Ruskin University, co-convened with Dr Ellen Sampson, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

Still Life, Vanitas, the Fetishes of Commodity Culture paper, Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

Exhibition Poster



Anglia Ruskin  
University

**Ruskin Gallery**



## Consumed: Stilled Lives

Dawn Woolley

**Thursday 21 September -  
Saturday 14 October**

**Ruskin Gallery**

Anglia Ruskin University  
East Road  
Cambridge CB1 1PT  
[www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskingallery](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskingallery)

**Opening times:**

Monday - Saturday  
10.00am - 4.30pm  
Private View:  
Thursday 28 September, 5.00pm



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### **Exhibition shows shocking side of consumption**

#### **‘Consumer: Stilled Lives’ goes on show at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge**

Extraordinary, and at times shocking, still life images connecting the consumer and the act of consuming will go on show in Cambridge this week.

The exhibition, at Anglia Ruskin University’s Ruskin Gallery, runs from Thursday, 21 September until Saturday, 14 October and showcases the work of Anglia Ruskin lecturer Dr Dawn Woolley.

Dr Woolley is a visual artist who uses photography, video, installation, performance and sound. Earlier this year she [beat over 14,000 entries to win the #SAATCHISELFIE competition](#).

Titled “Consumed: Stilled Lives”, the exhibition plays with the traditional concept of still life painting, which grew in popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Often featuring silver plates, ornate glassware and expensive foodstuffs such as shellfish and exotic fruit, still life paintings became a fashionable way for the Dutch and Flemish to illustrate their wealth.



[Dr Woolley, a Senior Lecturer in Photography at Anglia Ruskin](#), said: “The term ‘consume’ describes the act of eating as well as purchasing a commodity. The still life table expresses this dual meaning because the objects on display are edible and indicate an individual’s social position.

“I therefore approach the still life table as a portrait of a particular type of consumer. This allows me to view food in a still life as an expression of a relation between an individual and consumer society, and a symbol of the effect commodity consumption has on the consumer’s body.”

The exhibition comprises of six series of mounted and framed still life photographs, two artist books, online projects on Instagram and Twitter, and a sound piece.

And some photographs, such as the Memorials series, are not for the faint-hearted. Dr Woolley added: “Memorials are neither still life nor portrait but represent the subject becoming nature morte. Rotting flesh is arranged among the paraphernalia of celebration, signalling the end of the consumer party.”

An accompanying symposium, Animate Objects: Encounters between People and Things, will take place on 13 October. More information is [available here](#).

“Consumed: Stilled Lives” runs from 21 September until 14 October at the Ruskin Gallery at Anglia Ruskin’s Cambridge campus. The exhibition is open to the public, from 10am-4.30pm Monday to Saturday, and entry is free. Further information is [available here](#).

Ends

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Anglia Ruskin University**

Anglia Ruskin is an innovative global university, brimming with ambition. Students from 177 countries gain qualifications with us in four continents. Students, academics, businesses and partners all benefit from our outstanding facilities; we’ve

invested £100 million over the last five years and plan to invest a further £91 million over the next five years.

Anglia Ruskin's Research Institutes and five faculties bridge scientific, technical and creative fields. We deliver impactful research which tackles pressing issues and makes a real difference, from saving lives to conserving water. Our academic excellence has been recognised by the UK's Higher Education funding bodies, with 12 areas classed as generating world-leading research.

In 2016 we featured in a list of the 20 "rising stars" in global Higher Education compiled by strategy consultants Firetail, and were named as one of the top 20 UK universities for teaching quality in The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide.

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*Celebrate (Blancmange Dentata diptych)*, 2012, 2 x 50cm x 62cm

## Gallery Leaflet

### CONSUMED: STILLED LIVES

Dates: 21 September – 14 October

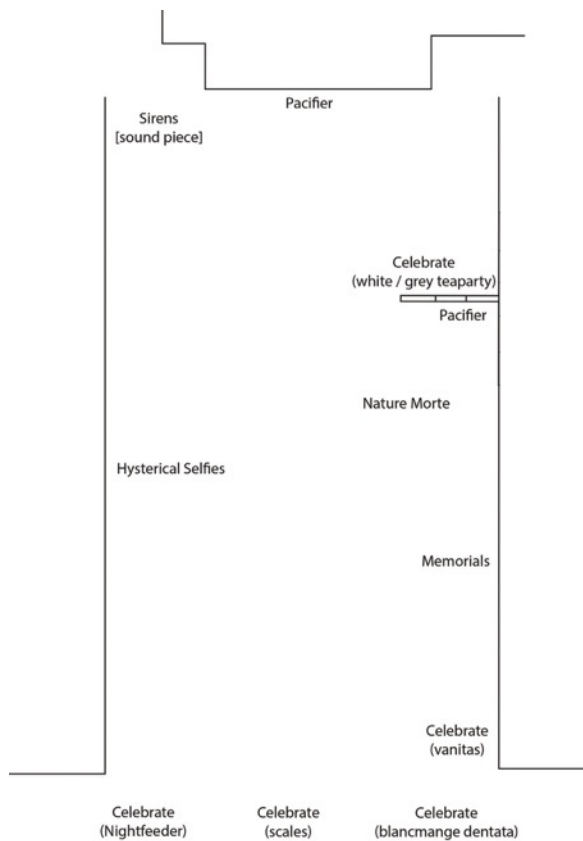
Private View: Thursday 28 September, 5.00pm

I am what I consume,

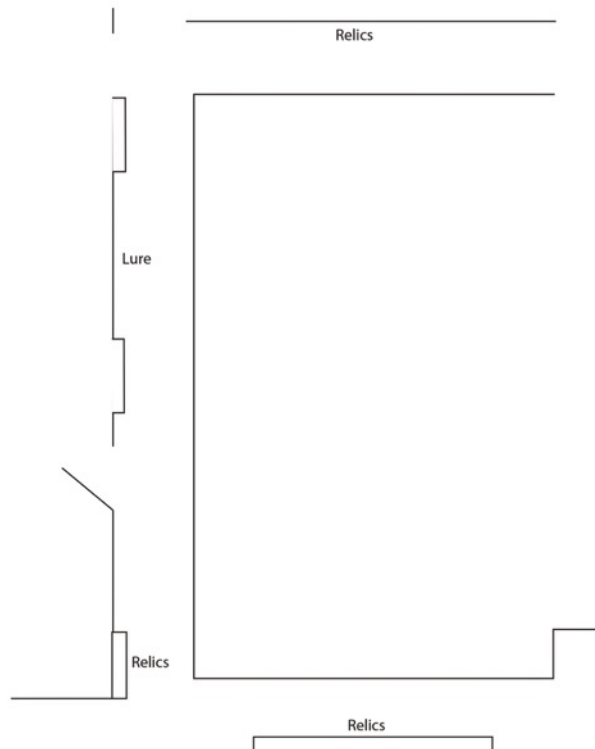
I am an advert for the commodities I consume.

'Consume' describes the act of eating as well as purchasing a commodity. The still-life table expresses this dual meaning because the objects on display are edible and indicate an individual's social position through the ability to buy prestigious objects. Artist Dawn Woolley views the still-life table as a portrait of a particular type of consumer. This allows her to view the objects in still-life as an expression of a relation between consumer, commodity, and society. The exhibition encompasses a variety of approaches to the genre to explore the contradictions of capitalism.

An accompanying symposium, Animate Objects: Encounters between People and Things, will take place on 13 October. You can find out more information, including how to book tickets, here: [www.anglia.ac.uk/arts-law-and-social-sciences/cambridge-school-of-art/animate-objects](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/arts-law-and-social-sciences/cambridge-school-of-art/animate-objects)



#### Balcony





## Installation Photographs



In conversation with Paul Marris

















Animate Objects explores our diverse relationships to things, and the values and meanings that we attribute to them. Positioning artefacts as active and powerful agents in human relations it asks how consumer and consumed relate to one another in contemporary commodity culture. Over the course of the symposium, three panels will present three theoretical approaches to object relations, exploring the object as a thing of social value, a locus of emotional experience and an agent capable of disrupting dominant discourses.



#### GUEST WIFI LOGIN:

user ID : camguest19  
password : Friday13  
Guest Wifi PIN: 397345

#AnimateObjects

## **Animate Objects: Encounters between People and Things**

## Still Life, Vanitas, and Ironic Objects

Dr Dawn Woolley  
Photography, Anglia Ruskin University

The function of vanitas is to bring to our attention the finite nature of life, to remind us that our time is short and our actions have consequences. In allegorical still life paintings the food objects express symbolic messages of immoral pleasures; they warn us that a judgment is coming.

The vanitas message would be very different today. Commodities are presented to us as objects that can save time and slow the affects of ageing. At the same time the things we consume are transitory and likely to be discarded. We are trained to have an expectation of short-lived pleasure.

The concept of vanitas is ironic: a moment of time is captured and frozen to express an idea of the fleeting and ephemeral. It tempts us with objects in order to warn us against those temptations. I use irony to interpret the contradictions in vanitas paintings and consider how this approach can be used to disrupt the value of commodities in contemporary consumer culture.

## Animate Objects: Encounters between People and Things

13th October 2017, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge.

1.00-1.20pm WELCOME

1.20-2.20pm

### **PANEL 1: Valuable Objects**

Dr Magdalena Zawisza, Anglia Ruskin University.  
Dr Yeseung Lee, De Montford University.

2.30-3.30pm

### **PANEL 2: Emotional Objects**

Dr Louise Purbrick, University of Brighton.  
Dr Ellen Sampson, Chelsea College of Art.

3.30-4.00pm COFFEE BREAK

4.10-5.10pm

### **PANEL 3: Disruptive Objects**

Annie Thwaite, PhD candidate,  
History & Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University.  
Dr Michael Petry, artist, author, and Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) London.

5.10-5.40pm Intro to Exhibition

Dr Dawn Woolley, Anglia Ruskin University.

5.40-6.00pm CLOSING REMARKS

6.00-8.00pm WINE RECEPTION IN GALLERY

## **On the mind, body and objects in consumer context – a psychological perspective**

Dr Magdalena Zawisza  
Consumer & Social Psychology, Anglia Ruskin University

This talk will present psychological insights on the subject of the interaction between the mind, objects and the body in consumer context. First, the idea of Belk's extended self will be explored to illustrate the ways products we consume form, reflect and extend our sense of self in the physical and the digital world. Our body is an important part of the self and it is affected by the things we consume both physically and psychologically. But can our body affect the perception of objects and ideas others want us to consume? The second part the talk will explore this question through a discussion of empirical research on embodied cognition and its use in buffering the negative effects of gender-traditional advertising. Thus, we will consider the three-dimensional psychological space between the body, the mind and the object in consumer reality.

## **The Consumption of Self: sexual objects of desire**

Dr Michael Petry  
Artist, Author, and Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) London

Petry will look at the work of three contemporary artists who make objects that can be seen as still life, within the categories of Flora or Domestic Objects. However, these pieces aim to disrupt those traditional notions of representation and meaning. The works are by Mark Woods, Lisa Morgan and Petry, and all make work that has a sexual edge to it. The objects can be consumed by the viewer as well as those who might purchase them but for many they are rather hard to digest.

## **'Extraordinary Magnitude': Objects used for healing in early modern England**

Annie Thwaite, PhD candidate  
History & Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University

In early modern England, several different bodies of belief prevailed concerning the most effective methods of medical treatment. Objects played a crucial role – yet whilst many were highly valued for their remedial potency, they concurrently gave rise to contention regarding their efficacy, function and power. Such objects can be used as a means of learning more not only about the early modern corporeal body, but also about associated rhetorical bodies of debate and belief regarding 'things' in this period. Curative objects ranged from the quotidian to the exotic; from the relatively worthless to the priceless and revered; from the cheap and ubiquitous bent pin to the wondrous and expensive bezoar stone.

In the post-Reformation world, 'things' were problematic for many reasons – the origins of objects' potency was complex, and led to fierce religious, moral, and metaphysical debate. Nevertheless objects continued to play a hugely significant part in everyday life and medicine, maintaining a close relationship with the body being either worn, held, or even physically ingested, and used by both the elite and lower orders of society.

This paper will explore the ways in which objects represented medical and social power in early modern England. Using these two curative items as case studies, it will examine how these objects interacted with their owners, users and commentators, discussing their intended and widely believed curative or prophylactic effects. Yet it will also highlight the paradoxical conflict and debate generated regarding such objects' potency and use, asking questions about how objects affected and continue to affect our bodies and lives.

## **Seaming Hands: rethinking luxury through the handmade**

Dr Yeseung Lee  
Fashion, De Montford University

At the very core of fashion, as a system based on the dialectic relationship between the high-end consumer and the mass market, is the notion of the 'authentic' as the marker of distinction, the desire for which continuously generates change. Today, however, the authentic is often associated with an abstract commercial value fabricated by designer idolatry and media-driven marketing using the 'glamour' of celebrity culture. As contemporary consumers increasingly inquire into the provenance of their purchases, luxury companies place ever greater emphasis on the craftsmanship and heritage, while often sourcing labour in lower income countries. Moreover, the frequent association between 'hands' and authenticity is often exploited by both ends of the industry, placing the handmade at the centre of ethical issues in contemporary fashion.

In this presentation, I examine the notion of luxury and the handmade less via the finished product, but rather via the experience of production, which subsequently inspires the experience of consumption. With reference to my own experience of making, I reflect on how a garment maker, by way of putting together garments entirely by hand, might create a peculiar and unique value. What are the conditions of making that generate usefulness beyond utilitarian function? Rather than mythologising the handmade – as is often the case in luxury marketing campaigns – this paper focuses on the individual mode of perception in making and using, and potential social links generated through the product. Forgoing the preciousness of material or measurable time invested in the product, this presentation suggests an alternative notion of luxury, one which reflects the authenticity arising from attentive modes of interaction with material objects.



## **Attachment and Animation: the life of dead things**

Dr Louise Purbrick  
History of Art & Design, University of Brighton

Commodities are dead things. The alienated object, the lifeless, soulless, materialistic form has been considered the characteristic of the commodity. How, then, can we survive with them? How, to use Marxist turn of phrase, can humans reproduce our social existence with only these things to hand? This paper explores, in similar and different ways to the exhibition Stilled Lives, the contradictions and complexities of living with dead things.

## **The Cleaved Garment: the maker, the wearer and the ‘me and not me’ of fashion practice**

Dr Ellen Sampson  
Textiles, Chelsea College of Art

This paper explores the ways that the self and the garment may become entwined—how through the acts of making and of wearing clothes, the garment and self become cleaved, both to and from one another. The paper presents the processes of making and of using garments as both a negotiation with the garment’s materiality and the projection of the user’s fantasy onto their material form—processes through which the maker or user’s agency may become entangled with the material agency of the garment. Though the relationships between “the wearer and the garment” and between “the garment and the maker” have been addressed, these two sets of relationships are often viewed as bounded or mutually exclusive. The distance between maker and user in contemporary commodity cultures often renders the maker inert in the experience of the wearer; the maker’s agency is viewed as bounded within the transaction of making. This article suggests a rethinking of this dynamic, examining the ways that the maker is present for the wearer in their experience of the garment.