New Voices: Sculpture & Literature
Paper Abstracts and Biographies

Panel 1: Poetry

‘It is only the base of a pillar, they’ll tell you’: Tracing Thomas Hardy’s Encounters with the Public Museum, and examining his Poetic Reconstruction of the Institution for a Regional Voice

Beth Howell (University of Exeter)

This paper will examine Thomas Hardy’s approach to the public museum through poetry, and consider how his interpretation developed during his own personal journey from serving as an architect’s assistant to becoming a renowned novelist and poet. Focusing specifically on the poems ‘In the British Museum’ and ‘In a Museum’, (written in response to encountering a cast of an archaeopteryx during a visit to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter), this paper will analyse Hardy’s language of sculpting, casting, and rebuilding, to argue his architectural knowledge shaped his own perception and interpretation of the museum as an institution, and the artefacts it contained. In a time in which museums are increasingly having to reconsider not only their colonial roots but also to reach out towards local disenfranchised communities by loaning and distributing their objects, this paper will consider the role of class in Hardy’s conception of the museum, and the voices that were left at the door. Just as the archaeopteryx was discovered by labourers at Solnhofen, Germany, and was later included as an example of evolution in Charles Darwin’s transformative 1861 edition of The Origin of Species, this paper will reconsider the true foundations and contributors of knowledge into public institutions, and question who the Victorian public museum, then as now, was really for. Hardy’s own relationship to hidden stories in the stone helped pave the way to his own social mobility, and yet, in terms of identity, appeared to provide a source of regret. These poems can therefore be reconsidered as literary moments that allowed him not to forget his past, but to rebuild his understandings in a different form. He was critical of the National Museum as a young Londoner - how did he approach and re-encounter the local museum at the turn of the century?

Beth Howell is a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter, where she is in receipt of an Eden Phillpotts Memorial Scholarship to research her thesis on the literary history of the Isles of Scilly and the Lost Land of Lyonesse, 1847-1967. She is interested in the intersections between art and literature, and how stories and legends are preserved as cultural heritage. She also retains roles as part of the education team at The Devon & Exeter Institution, and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter.
'Unknown Forces': The Poetics of Potential in the work of Mary Oliver and Barbara Hepworth

Jen McDerra (University of East Anglia)

Both Barbara Hepworth and Mary Oliver use their artistic practice to reveal (to themselves and others) a vital sense of self which they have each described as being both formed and concealed during childhood, and which sought and found expression through their art.

Taking Hepworth’s famous statement as my starting point:

Perhaps what one wants to say is formed in childhood
and the rest of one's life is spent trying to say it.

and connecting it to the words of Oliver, beginning with this extract:

What I loved in the beginning, I think, was mostly myself.
Never mind that I had to, since
somebody had to.
That was many years ago.

I will draw parallels between their experiences and lifelong practices, the space that they create for themselves to take their true form through literature and sculpture, and the crucial invitation they each make for their audience to create that same space in the work to reveal themselves.

Both Hepworth and Oliver speak of the space towards which we must move to hear ourselves. Their work in poetry and sculpture is an uncovering, an uncloaking of the knowing that exists beneath the happenings and noise of the world. Revelatory and revealing, I would like to share ideas I’ve had in relation to their work, which I call, the ‘poetics of potential’.

Further to this offering, I will draw in other poets and sculptors who illustrate the capacity for literature and sculpture to both define and then fill this quiet, important formative space within us. This will incorporate the work of Sophie Ryder (sculptor), Philip Larkin (poet), and others. I will frame this connection using the work of Viktor Frankl, concluding with a discussion of his suggestion that: ‘Between stimulus and response lies a space. In that space lie our freedom and power to choose a response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness.’

Jen McDerra (University of East Anglia) is a literary and life historian drawing on archives and oral histories to reunite twentieth-century women with their achievements. She is currently working on a PhD project concerned with restoring the innovative contributions made to publishing and broadcasting by women in the Caribbean. Her doctoral research ‘Finding Gladys Lindo: The Problem with Pioneering Women’ is part of the Leverhulme Trust funded Caribbean Literary Heritage project.

Previously Jen was CEO at the Charles Causley Trust which exists to further the poet’s legacy through opportunities for those engaged with Cornish heritage and the community. Prior to this she held several roles within the literature sector, including Culture Programme Officer (Commonwealth Writers), Development Manager (The Reader), and Community Relations Officer (Barefoot Books). Jen is Commissioning Editor at UEA Publishing Project, Clore Fellow, and a
Poetry Translation Centre Trustee. You can find her at the intersection of narrative, migration, and self-discovery.

**Holocaust Monuments and Holocaust Poetry**

Hannie Phillips (University of Leeds)

My presentation ‘Holocaust Monuments and Holocaust Poetry’ will be an introduction to and discussion of my PhD research. My PhD focuses on responses to the Holocaust in British poetry, and my methodology for approaching the poems in my study is an interdisciplinary look at how forms of visual art have represented and commemorated the Holocaust in comparison to poetic approaches. This involves me drawing on research on Holocaust memorials and monuments and the critical discussions around appropriate ways to remember the Holocaust in sculptural forms in order to understand memorial poetry better.

My presentation will begin by discussing Holocaust memorials and monuments, using specific examples including Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s *Monument Against Fascism* in Harburg, Horst Hoheisel’s *Ascrott-Brunnen Memorial* in Kassel, and Peter Eisenberg’s famous *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin. I will discuss these examples by outlining critical discussions around each memorial’s approach to visually representing absence, commemorating those murdered during the Holocaust, and resisting the pitfalls of traditional monuments. I will then take these ideas about the Holocaust monuments forward into my approach to discussing examples of Holocaust poetry.

I will compare Jon Silkin’s approach to writing about a concentration camp as a space of memory in his poem ‘Milkmaid’ with responses to Holocaust monuments. I will also compare Jon Silkin’s poem ‘Trying to Hide Treblinka’ to the memorial at Treblinka, and talk about the way that Tony Harrison’s film poem ‘The Gaze of the Gorgon’ uses a sculpture of poet Heinrich Heine as an imagined witness to horrific events of the twentieth century. I will conclude with a suggestion that studying approaches to remembering the Holocaust in memorials and poetry in tandem with one another helps to understand both forms in new ways.

Hannie Phillips is a PhD candidate in the School of English at the University of Leeds. Her PhD research examines the Holocaust memorial poetry of Geoffrey Hill, Jon Silkin, and Tony Harrison. She is interested in the intersections of Holocaust memorial poetry and Holocaust monuments and memorials, and in finding theoretical approaches to comparing the two. She has recently published an article in *Textual Practice* titled ‘The Role of Plants in Jon Silkin’s Holocaust Memorial Poems’, and has a forthcoming article to be published in *Word & Image* titled ‘Photographs of the Warsaw Ghetto in Geoffrey Hill’s The Triumph of Love’. 
Towards a Spectral Monumentality after Misty Poetry: From ‘Memorial’ to ‘An Unerected Memorial’

Kevin Zhichen Dong (University of California, Davis)

This project involves discovering a spectral perspective centered on monumentality in the transition from Misty Poetry to Post Misty Poetry in Post-Maoist China. Drawing on two poems that directly represent state-sponsored monuments, this project serves as a case study for rethinking the untouched threads in the criticism of modern Chinese poetry that exaggerates either the coherence between aesthetic practice and political pursuits on one hand, or the divergence between generations on the other. The two poems are Jiang He’s ‘Memorial’ written in 1977 and Zang Di’s belated echo in 1997 ‘An Unerected Memorial’. Two key questions this project aims to answer are: how an invention of literary monumentality contributes to the paradigm of certain aesthetic tenets; to what extent the practice of aesthetic monumentality intertwines with and is incorporated into the political agenda established by authoritative monumentality.

The ‘Memorial’ in Jiang He’s poem clearly refers to the Monument to the People’s Heroes whose monumentality is fixed by the legitimacy of the People’s Republic of China. Jiang He’s contributions to literary monumentality are not only grandiose political symbols and recitable lyric tones, but also a bold implication that an individual’s resistance against the Cultural Revolution can aesthetically conforms to, and thus be politically justified by the legacy of state-sponsored Monument. However, the monumentality Zang Di deals with is twofold: the monumentality that violently excludes dissidence in the June 4 Incident and the literary monumentality canonised in Jiang He’s poem. Therefore, inspired by Derrida’s hauntology, this project argues that Zang Di invents a ‘spectral monumentality’ in several stages: conjuring the dead memorised and suppressed in the name of the Monument, ‘un-erecting’ the Monument, converting the majestic Memorial into an anonymous obelisk, refreshing registers and lexicons to signify monumentality through poetic inscriptions.

Kevin Zhichen Dong is currently a research assistant in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Davis, where he received his Master’s degree in Comparative Literature in 2021. His research interests include modern Chinese literature, ghosts, and critical theory, with a special emphasis on modern Chinese poetry, comparative poetics, and Derrida. Dong won the Jury Prize of Asia-Pacific Chinese Literature Award for Literary Criticism in 2021. His poems, book reviews, and essays appear in The Yearbook of Young Poets in 2018, Literature and Art Newspaper, and National Taipei University Journal for Chinese Literature.
Panel 2: Cultural Memory

How Literature Became Form

Rae Stevens (Independent Artist)

Over the past year I have been researching Trauma Theory and the nature of traumatic witnessing specifically in relation to healthcare staff. Working collaboratively with Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge, I have been examining what healthcare professionals have been working through during the pandemic; the nature of their experiences and how they process them. It has linked to my time spent working with patients during the AIDS epidemic in 1980s London and I have been revisiting moments from that time. Initially working from written accounts of both my own experiences and those of the Addenbrookes staff. It required researching the relationship between Trauma Theory and how that might relate to contemporary Art practice. In the course of my enquiry I looked at the work of Caruth in particular but also Felman and Laub, Duras and Lacan among others. I began to understand the paradoxical relationship within trauma between destructiveness and survival and the incomprehensibility of such an experience. I felt reading the accounts from staff at Addenbrookes that it was important to give them a form which captured some of the nature of their experiences but also offered an encounter of a contemplative nature. The practical question very quickly became, in its broadest sense, how could these literal accounts become form?

I have spent the last year translating exactly that. I had no desire to replicate or show trauma in a reportage style, still less to create trauma in the viewing. The question of narrative was an interesting one. It was clearly apparent in all of the accounts and yet the very nature of traumatic witnessing itself creates the impossibility of this completeness. Capturing the hallmarks of traumatic witnessing required something repetitive and disrupting. I needed to create a form out of context and one that would be arresting in its viewing and sitting. The trials I undertook saw me working mostly in resin and wood to create multiple maquettes. The final work was outsourced for fabrication in aluminium which allowed for the required strength and yet still achieved a finesse and poise within its lines, characteristic of the traits within those individual’s initial accounts.

The repeated multi-facetted final structure stood 1.8metres high and has been shown at Canwood Gallery in Herefordshire.

Rae Stevens has spent the last two years developing her Fine Art practice into 3D form, which started in the final year of her BA (Hons) and has continued throughout her MA at Hereford College of Arts. Her work has always had a narrative element to it, although this is now more concerned with inter-human relationships, sometimes informed by her previous clinical career in the NHS or from personal experiences.
Monument and Memory: Hans Haacke and W.G. Sebald Engaging Architecture

Anna Henningan (University of St Andrews)

This paper brings into conversation Hans Haacke’s 1988 installation *Und Ihr Habt Doch Gesiegt* and W.G. Sebald’s 2001 book *Austerlitz*, exploring the ways in which these two artistic interventions invoke memory and demand critical reflection and a working through (*Aufarbeitung*) of the National Socialist past. The difference in the mediums of these two works makes them initially appear incomparable: Haacke’s installation was a temporary sculptural reproduction of a 1938 Nazi monument, whereas Sebald’s text interweaves narrative and photography. However, both works incorporate both writing and varied forms of engagement with real architectural spaces in order to create sites of reflection and memory. By analysing the affinity between Haacke and Sebald’s projects, I will explore the limits of the affinities between literature, architecture, and memory. I am particularly interested in Andreas Huyssen’s use of the term ‘palimpsest’ (evoking erasure and rewriting) to link these mediums, and their ability to preserve, create, and even destroy the past. Haacke’s installation embodied this fragility: not only was it temporary, but also it was firebombed and destroyed. *Austerlitz* appeared a generation later and as text could not be a target of this kind of destruction, but it textually imitates a palimpsest of memory. I will explore these differences through James Young’s idea of the ‘counter-monument,’ a type of memorial space that is meant to challenge traditional conceptions of monuments and monumentality. Young crafted this term to describe sculptural and architectural works that create space for critical reflections on the past. Through the lens of Sebald’s text, I will analyse whether this term could also be applied to literary texts – or whether there might be something slightly subtler and more elliptical at work in *Austerlitz*. At stake in these investigations is how artists can use an engagement with architectural landscapes in order to foster critical reflections on both the past and present of fascist ideology.

Anna Henningan is currently a postgraduate student of Modern and Contemporary Literature and Culture at St. Andrews. In 2019, she received a Bachelor’s degree with Honours in Comparative Literature and Society from Columbia University in New York City. Between her Bachelor’s and postgraduate study, Anna has worked as an educator: as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Germany (2019-2020) and as an English and Humanities Teacher at St. Anne’s Belfield-School in Charlottesville, Virginia (2020-2021). Anna’s research in Anglophone, German, and Spanish literature is guided by an interest in the relationship between aesthetics and politics: the power of the arts in effecting change and the impact and implications of the aesthetic choices that artists make. She has a particular interest in the role of art in preserving and constructing both personal and cultural memory and the relationship between literature, architecture, and urban space.
Mutilation: Cut as an Act of Sculpting in the Narratives of the Amazonas Jungle

Francesco Camacho Herrera (University of York)

Living literature from the indigenous people from Putumayo narrates the destruction of their cultural and physical space by the white coloniser’s hand, searching for cutting the skin of the rubber trees. In the form of songs, stories, or poems mean to be transmitted orally; within these narratives, we can find this act of cutting: a physical one in the form of making wounds to the trees, the mutilations of limbs done to the indigenous by the colonisers, or the destruction of the Jungle by deforestation - the action of a dark sculptor, named Civilisation by the contemporaries.

This act of cutting is inevitable to understand the dimension of the destruction of the Amazonian Jungle’s cultural and natural environment and the Jungle’s visual imaginary.

We can associate this concept with the descriptions of the Jungle by Latin American authors from the period of the Rubber Boom who wrote novels denouncing the atrocities of the rubber trade. The cutting finds adaptation within contemporary authors like Vargas Llosa, who in two of his novels narrates the period of the massacres of the natives, the monopoly of the rubber production by foreigners, and a Jungle that produces shadows, can be circulated and stands immobile as a sculpture witnessing the dramas and existential dilemmas of the actors, yet controlling the scene. The point of view of these authors regarding the Jungle is external in opposition to the native’s internal narratives, giving us the option to understand their conception of the Jungle as sculptural.

In perspective, this cutting action became the centre of geopolitical choreography. It transcends other continents almost in the same unchanged way. In the Belgian Congo, natives were punished by cutting their hands when they could not bring the right amount of rubber to their enslavers. A large part of nature was deforested in South East Asia to form rubber plantations, etc. This very first act of sculpting, the cut, is fundamental to understanding rubber’s narratives that very much shaped our nowadays socio-economic situation as no other natural product did before in human history.

Francisco Camacho Herrera has been speculating for several years on the possibility that Chinese sailors might have reached the Americas by crossing the Pacific Ocean before the arrival of the Spanish in the late fifteenth century. This inquiry resulted in Parallel Narratives (2015-18), a film that follows hidden trajectories and charts unexpected similarities between iconographies, utilitarian items, and ritual objects produced by geographically distant cultures. During the residency, Camacho Herrera will re-orient his research to explore connections between Southeast Asia and South America, especially in light of past and recent instances related to the economic exploitation of tropical nature. Understanding trade, migration, and natural resource economics as main propellers of development and cross-cultural encounters, the artist ultimately seeks to generate alternative narratives that challenge spatial, temporal, and geopolitical categories institutionalised in official accounts.
Copper Venuses and Midnight Galateas: Classical Statues in Black Women’s Writing

Grace McGowan (Boston University)

What happens if we centre Black women in American classicism? Or American aesthetics? This paper will explore how African American women writers use the classical tradition from Ancient Greece and Rome in their work. It will look specifically at iterations of Venus and Galatea in African American women’s writing from the twentieth century. This paper will consider how the classical tradition influences and dominates American beauty standards – in the realms of art, beauty, and the living body. It will take for its focus texts from Pauline Hopkins, Toni Morrison, and Robin Coste Lewis but also incorporate material culture approaches by looking at statue(s), jewellery, cosmetics, postcards of the famous Josephine Baker, combs, and other art and quotidian objects. It will combine material culture approaches with Ovidian and classical reception theories in dialogue with the texts which explore the consequences of objectification – how, from the history of slavery to the modern day, white supremacy has attempted to forcibly transfigure Black women into objects; and how these literary works are the history of resistance to and the undoing of those metamorphoses.

Grace McGowan is a PhD candidate at Boston University in the American & New England Studies Program. Her undergraduate degree is in English Language and Literature from the University of Oxford where she received the Classical Studies Grant to travel to Paris and study Toni Morrison’s curation of the Louvre. She currently holds the William V Shannon Memorial Fellowship at Boston University. Her work explores how Black women writers use the classical tradition from Ancient Greece and Rome in their writing and her paper ‘I Know I Can’t Change the Future, But I Can Change the Past: Toni Morrison, Robin Coste Lewis, and the Classical Tradition’ was published in Contemporary Women’s Writing under Oxford University Press. Her work on Phillis Wheatley was awarded an honourable mention for the Mary Kelley Prize under the New England American Studies Association. Her recent article on Lizzo’s music video for ‘Rumors’ and the classical tradition was printed by The Boston Globe.
Panel 3: Fiction

Sherlock Holmes and the Life Cycle of Plaster Casts Sculpture
Toni Rutherford (Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art)

‘For it was only a plaster cast and of no real value’

In 1904 Arthur Conan Doyle released the short story ‘The Adventure of the Six Napoleons’, where his main characters Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson and Inspector Lestrade investigate a strange case involving the destruction of plaster cast busts of Napoleon. During this investigation, the author creates characters of makers, distributors and collectors of these plaster cast busts creating a network of people involved in each stage of the sculptures lifecycle.

This paper, an extension of my MA dissertation research, offers a focused close analysis of the material culture of plaster cast sculpture in fictional literature. Using the production/consumption/mediation paradigm as a design history methodology to examine this literary work, we can go beyond the ekphrasis of the plaster busts themselves and explore the lifecycle of a set of plaster casts. Exploring the networks involved in making and distribution of plaster casts to examining the social and economic value placed on the sculptures.

The story was originally published in May 1904 in The Strand Magazine and offers a unique insight into the lifecycle and networks involved in plaster cast sculpture at the turn of the century. The Strand Magazine offered general interest pieces and so the fictional work of Doyle was placed alongside factual and opinion pieces discussing a wide range of topics including sculptural form. This places us in a position of questioning and discussing if the fictional work of Doyle if reflective of the wider audiences understanding of plaster cast sculpture and its social/economic value. Opening a dialogue of if it can be used as evidence of these networks by historians researching plaster cast sculpture today.

Toni Rutherford is a Design Historian of making techniques and processes. As a maker her research and practice intertwine to explore how knowledge of making is transferred from teacher to student, but also within the hierarchy of social structures. This is reflected in her MA History of Design dissertation ‘An Exploration of Armature Design within Plaster Sculpture during Nineteenth-Century England: Knowledge Networks, Innovation, and Materials’ a critical comparison of the materiality of armatures within modelled and cast plaster sculpture.
Getting Sculptures to Talk

Linden Hibbert (University of East Anglia)

This paper focuses on sculpture and the sculptural process as inspiration for writing short stories. The short stories used are a collection in progress, *All time is but light and shadow*, which has at its core a single sculpture known as Apollo and Daphne by Bernini, and the tale from *Metamorphoses* that was its inspiration. This paper explores how the themes of the Apollo and Daphne, of female sexuality and virtue, male power and desire, daughterly duty and failed fatherly protection provided a rich and complex array of themes and characters with which to develop new stories. It will also demonstrate how inspiration was drawn from the complexity of the sculptor’s character, specifically, his behaviour towards his mistress and the degree to which this contrasted with the sensitivity with which he depicted women in his work. Furthermore, it will explore the value of the time period itself in the development of story, from the values that made a seventeenth century Roman sculptor sculpt, and the role of the Vatican as the single wealthiest patron of arts at that time.

This paper also sets out how a short story collection can take inspiration from the sculpture process, including the vivid reality of noise and dust, creative dead-ends and abrupt changes of direction. It will show how researching the way in which sculptors conceive ideas and translate them to the stone, through ethnographic interviews in their studios, provided this collection with rich detail about tools and techniques, specific types of stone and their responsiveness to the chisel, and a transcript of the sculptor’s own language. The language in particular, which was highly metaphorical, enabled the creation of linguistic connections across stories. Sculptors work in three dimensions, for example; they need to have a working knowledge of geology and the properties of stone in order to anticipate the likely reaction of a stone to specific force; they need to be flexible enough in their thinking to adapt their conception or idea once the first cut is made, and to live comfortably with the idea that their work is reductive, with every blow or polish, their canvas decreases, and that once cut no piece can be put back.

*Linden Hibbert* is a second year creative-critical PhD student at the University of East Anglia writing a collection of connected short stories on sculpture, focusing on a work known as *Apollo and Daphne* by Bernini and the classical myth from *Metamorphosis* which inspired it. Linden is also conducting research in the sculptural process and conceptual metaphor in the sculptors’ own descriptions of their process. She is taking sculpture lessons and works collaboratively with sculptors and artists as a writer. She runs a pop-up gallery in rural Suffolk. Previously, she worked in advertising and communications as a strategist and copywriter in London and New York.
Space and Place: Art in the Park
Intergenerational Creative Writing Workshops for Sculpture Parks

Deborah Chagal Friedland (Independent Artist)

This paper explores the idea of using sculpture and installation art as a stimulus for creative writing in an informal education context within a sculpture park in this case the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Creative writing workshops were designed to use installations and artworks as a stimulus for discovery of ourselves and our relationship to physical space and nature. These workshops aim is to stimulate participants’ imaginations, to explore their inner and outer worlds and to create diverse and exciting writing responses to artworks at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in West Bretton by Joana Vasconcelos, Jaume Plensa and Barbara Hepworth.

This paper will present aspects of the creative writing workshops and show how participants are invited to consider how words are used in art and how art is used in words and the poetic tradition of ekphrasis - a descriptive response to a work of art. I will also explore how creative writing and sculpture fosters compassion, empathy, reciprocity and understanding.

As a framework for the design of the workshops, I used these sayings of Rabbi Hillel (110 BCE – 10 CE):

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?

The Creative Writing workshops were designed for individuals, groups or families visiting the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The activities are intended to stimulate responses using a range of genres from wordplay and imagery to longer poetry and prose and I will share some of my own creative responses to the sculptures. The workshops encourage a shared experience with the artist, to look together at language and installations playfully, create stories, and consider how the physical artworks interact with their surroundings.

Deborah Chagal Friedland recently completed the MA Creative Writing and Education at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is an experienced writer in the field of English Language teaching, publishing impactful teaching materials for learners of English. These workshops and exploration of creative writing and sculpture for informal education were part of her MA research.

‘Hammered Iron Statues’: Industrial Material and the Body of the Coal Miner in 1930s Britain

Tobah Aukland-Peck (City University New York)

In 1936 George Orwell travelled north to conduct research for the book The Road to Wigan Pier. The project, published by the Left Book Club in 1937, was an attempt to come to terms with the far-reaching consequences of the global depression. In a well-known segment, Orwell describes his
descent into a Manchester-area coal mine. His portrayal of the experience is an intensely physical one. Unbearable body aches, blasts of hot air, screeching machines, and the murk of coal dust assault his limbs, nose, ears, and eyes. While the hellish environs of the mine served to heighten the author’s bodily sensations, Orwell writes of the men who laboured in these conditions in starkly different terms.

The miners in Orwell’s prose have faces so darkened by coal dust that they lose individual identities. He equates their muscular limbs to machines made of steel. In fact, in their burnished anonymity the miners appear as ‘hammered iron statues’ rather than men. Orwell renders the miners as one with the industrial materials that they are engaged in excavating. In reaching for words to describe them, Orwell can only present their bodies in terms of sculptural form.

This paper addresses the sculptural condition of the miner’s body in the literature and art of interwar Britain. Just as Orwell used industrial materials like steel, iron, and coal as a descriptive proxy for the bodies engaged in extractive labour, so did visual artists, including Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland, shape the form of the miner out of the colour, texture, and form of metal, stone, and fossil fuels. The elision between miner and material in literature and the visual arts was a symptom of the contradiction in the national attitude towards coal mining communities, whose labour products were vital to the national economy but whose living and working conditions remained largely invisible.

**Tobah Aukland-Peck** is a PhD candidate in Art History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her dissertation, ‘Mineral Landscapes: The Mine and British Modernism’, examines the work of artists in mid-twentieth-century Britain who were drawn to the subject of mining, through which they explored pressing issues of labour, class, and environmental degradation through experiments with the formal qualities of modernism. She has also published and presented work about landscapes of disaster and the industrial provenance of artistic materials. She is currently a Junior Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art.
Panel 4: Materiality and Form

Evelyn de Morgan and the Sculptural Transformation of Medusa

Emily McConkey (University of Ottawa)

Between 1873 and 1885, the Pre-Raphaelite artist Evelyn de Morgan represented the classical Medusa in two instances: the first, a bust of the Gorgon in bronze; the second, a Medusa head done in relief on a gilded shield. These works do not depict a fearsome, menacing Medusa; they appeal instead to Medusa’s victimhood and protective status. De Morgan’s sympathetic approach to her subject draws on the Latin poet Ovid’s version of the Medusa story, in which Medusa is a victim of rape and comes to signify feminine power. Placing De Morgan’s interpretation of the Medusa myth in the context of Ovidian reception in the Victorian period, I demonstrate the artist’s participation in a wider interest in Ovidian myth and transformation among Victorian women. I argue that, in these sculpted works, De Morgan employs and transforms existing literary subjects and artistic forms in order to depict complex female experience. The bronze, echoing the masculine tradition of ‘petrifying’ Medusa into sculpture, monumentalizes her humanity rather than her monstrosity; the shield, displaying a Medusa head that juts out of the gilded background, transforms Medusa into a spiritual, transcendent emblem of feminine strength and protection. De Morgan’s sculpted treatments of Medusa humanise and empower her, prefiguring the feminist transformation of the Medusa myth.

Emily McConkey is an MA candidate in English literature and a research assistant at the University of Ottawa. Her thesis focused on Medusa in Victorian women’s art and poetry. In her PhD, she hopes to study Ovid’s reception among Victorian women poets and artists. She is a student researcher for the Christina Rossetti in Music digital archive and previously volunteered in the Library and Archives at the National Gallery of Canada. She is fond of music and travel and creates zines and other collage works in her spare time.

Anselm Kiefer: Wounded Pages of Memory

Christos Kakouras (University of St Andrews)

In a conversation with Tim Marlow at the Royal Academy, the renowned German artist Anselm Kiefer mentions that sixty percent of his work is primarily based on small-scale books. Their scale, materials and methods vary, while the fundamental purpose remains the same: the embodiment of trauma. Their essence is different from a literal sense of a book, as they cannot be touched or flipped through. The spectrum of their materiality ranges from light watercolour books to lead sculptures, immovable and hazardous for human contact.

This research proposal aims to address how painful and dramatic incidents of history are reflected through the use of books in Kiefer’s work. How conflict and post-war memories are embodied in
the pages of different weight and material? These sculptural pieces are constructed with materials, heavily charged by history, such as lead, straw, photographs and occasional written phrases. Words that come from mythical figures of Germany, Jewish mysticism and the poetry of Paul Celan.

The process of making is formed through layers of history, where in a reversed archaeological manner Kiefer excavates fragments in hope to find the truth and the origins of human pain. The presentation will introduce the audience to a retrospective journey of book making as a fundamental aspect of Kiefer’s work. His iconoclastic method of removing and discarding parts of an art-piece manifests itself as a way of unveiling truth or bringing the trauma to the surface. Thus, the books will be presented as archaeological sites, where a building or a landscape carries meaning only when human events have occurred there. The presentation will focus on Kiefer’s attempt of using healing as a method: the artist’s mourning over an open wound that never heals itself on the sculpted pages.

Christos Kakouros is a graduate researcher currently completing his MLitt in Art History at the University of St Andrews. Christos’ ongoing research examines the relation between trauma and memory through the lens of politics, periods of war and uncertainty. Currently, he is focusing on the physical manifestation of trauma based on Anselm Kiefer’s work. His research aims to analyse and cover the relation between post-war artists of Germany and the former Soviet Union. Christos’ holds an MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design from the University of Cambridge, and an Honours BA in Architecture from the University of Westminster. While at Cambridge, he undertook extensive research in Exarchia, Athens — a politically charged neighbourhood, where he focused on issues of trauma and memory. Prior to Cambridge, he trained at Amanda Levete Architects, working on projects such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, MAAT Museum in Lisbon and Maggie’s Cancer Centre in Southampton.

The Impossibility of Writing Sculpture or Reading Impossible Sculpture

Kate McLeod (Duncan of Jordonstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee)

At the 2010 symposium Sculpture Unlimited that took place in Linz in Germany, the question that speakers asked at the culmination of the event was ‘is there anything like an 〈essence〉 of sculpture?’ This question recognises the discipline as a set of thresholds with no concrete definition. Despite the complexity, sculptures are physical things in space of varying materials, scales, situations and durations. Therefore, it follows that ekphrastic literary sculpture with no visual representation can’t be defined as sculpture, and yet, it does possess an essence of sculpture.

In this paper I would examine examples of ekphrastic literary sculpture, specifically works that have been constructed by a writer (e.g., Homer, Keats, J G Ballard, Hustvedt). Unlike forms of ekphrasis where the writer explores an existing artwork (i.e., Feldman on Segal, Benjamin on Klee, Williamson on Serra) these written ‘sculptures’ are embedded within a narrative (but have no material presence).
Two key examples would be J.G Ballard’s short sci-fi story ‘The Cloud sculptors of Coral D’ (1967) and the sculptures by the fictional 1970’s New York artist Bill Wechsler that are meticulously described by Siri Hustvedt in the novel ‘What I loved’ (2003). These are impossible objects because they couldn’t exist (metaphysically) and/or they are fictional.

Sometimes, as maker, I write a short story of an artwork rather than making it, because its fabrication isn’t possible at that time. Writing and reading a fictional work allows you to inhabit the viewers encounter; sensorily, emotionally and bodily. If we recontextualise the literary passages of poetry and prose, as sculpture, what can we learn about the essence of sculpture and our encounters with it?

Kate McLeod is an artist, researcher and lecturer in Contemporary Art Practice at Duncan of Jordonstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee and a specialist in Sculpture. Her practice-based research explores a contemporary sculptural language around materiality, chance, anti-monumentality, dialogic inter-relationships and classical figuration through a series of sculptures, installations, drawings, photographs, performance, writings and exhibitions. Exhibitions connected to practice-based research have featured at the Royal Society of Sculptors, London; Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland; JGM Gallery, London; Andipa Gallery, London; Post Box Gallery, London; ME108, Lisbon. Residencies include CoLab, London; Brian Mercer Bronze Residency, Pietrasanta, Italy; University of Worcester; Merz Barn, Littoral Arts Trust, Ambleside.

McLeod trained at Goldsmiths College and the Slade School of Fine Art. In between studying she spent three years working for Anthony Caro at his studio in London.

Sculpture as Loop/Loop as Sculpture: The Actions of Making

Ilisa Colsell (Kingston School of Art)

Through my perspective as an artist and practice-based researcher this paper will challenge the limited scope of Ekphrasis as a means of describing finished artwork encountered within situations of display, pushing instead to explicate the process/es by which they are made in the artists’ studio; both physically and conceptually. By returning to instances of production as methodological approach, over those of reception, the paper will interrupt the usually subsequent privileging of interpretation and reduction of the artworks through Linguistic restatement by and for a dislocated viewer.

Focussing on a series of artworks made in my own studio over lockdown, (during limited access to materials or generative encounters with ordinarily accessible external influences, institutional or otherwise) the paper will seek to draw out the sensations and practicalities of working with materials, their physical accrual, their productive manipulation, their circumnavigated or accepted limitations and further, to describe as part of this account the conceptual work involved in synthesising, translating and reconfiguring the external references (from literary, biographic, art historical and visual art research sources) which all combined to inform and push the artworks forward within the studio.
The sculptures themselves having developed as accumulated forms, were worked on by repeated and discreet overlaying of material layers, (found and recycled from the local surroundings, scavenged or bought as building materials) each placed over the artworks most recent and uppermost surface; their growing contours the result of this regular action and retreat.

Utilising this looping and cyclical gesture of the sculptures’ own making, the paper will explore the act and not the result of making, constructing its account of their production directly and alongside interwoven retellings of the ideas of recurring, returning, reworking and overlaying that foregrounded my thinking as they were being worked on in the studio.

**Ilse Colsell** (b. Orkney) is an artist, writer and current practice-based research PhD candidate, Kingston School of Art, London. Her PhD titled ‘Overlay: How can we use layering and obscuring as a strategy for making?’ addresses the utilisation and perception of layers within art making. Looking to both the processes and historical precedents within collage, sculpture, photography and visual perception theory, current studio working is engaged in drawing out an expanded taxonomy of layering methods and their attendant potential effects as received by the viewer and deployed by the artist. Previous published/exhibited works include text, performance and sculpture, alongside essays on and with the work of other artists and published within monographs and contemporary art magazines. Her own book *Malicious Damage: The Defaced Library Books of Kenneth Halliwell and Joe Orton* (Donlon Books, 2013) outlines Orton and Halliwell’s lives through the prism of their shared collage.
Keynote Lectures

‘Mr Millar will draw it for you, exactly as it was’: Stone, Ink, and British Museum Artefacts in Print

Dr Eleanor Dobson (University of Birmingham)

Museum collections have long inspired artistic work in various media, the art object or the artefact functioning as an imaginative springboard for creative responses that contribute to an item’s unique cultural afterlife. In this talk, I turn to the British Museum and its collections from the ancient Middle East, where understandings of the sculptural and the literary were often intertwined. Of particular interest are several artefacts whose three-dimensionality asserts their status as inherently ‘sculpted’, and whose appearance in print texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also confers on them two-dimensional afterlives.

Two publications serve as case studies that exemplify creative responses to the sculptural, the carved, and the inscribed, both of which might be understood to be ‘hieroglyphic’ in the ways in which they combine image and text. The first is an underexplored yet unique book in the histories of Egyptology and print culture. Report of the Committee appointed by the Philomatheon Society of the University of Pennsylvania to translate the inscription on the Rosetta Stone (1858) provided the first full translation of the text(s) inscribed on the Rosetta Stone, and is one of only a handful of American books completely produced by lithography. The Report is an arresting multi-colour visual feast, and reveals in the long and expensive methods required to produce a chromolithographic book, a fitting process (requiring a considerable quantity of lithographic stones) to commemorate one of the most famous carved texts in the world. The second is The Story of the Amulet (1906), a children’s novel by the author E. Nesbit, dedicated to E. A. Wallis Budge, then Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum. In this novel, artefacts from the British Museum’s collections – ranging from Egyptian amulets to colossal statues from ancient Assyria – are represented both verbally by Nesbit and in illustrations by the artist H. R. Millar.

While most of these depictions are faithful to the original artefacts, anchoring The Story of the Amulet in fact, Nesbit and Millar also reinterpret these real objects to adapt them for a magical narrative. Together, these publications serve as intriguing milestones in the history of the British Museum’s collections as rendered on the page. The playfulness that they demonstrate on the part of writers, illustrators and scholars (and those who operate across these categories), along the creative legacies with which they imbue these objects, is historically significant in and of itself. But we might also interpret these examples as imaginative responses to objects once they have been removed from their original contexts by colonial processes. Polychromatic and magical frameworks are used to re-write and re-present these artefacts in their transitions from stone to ink: another textual layer to add to these objects’ imperial histories.

Eleanor Dobson is Senior Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature at the University of Birmingham. Her first monograph, Writing the Sphinx: Literature, Culture and Egyptology, was published in 2020 by Edinburgh University Press. Her current project is a second book, entitled Victorian Alchemy: Science, Magic and Ancient Egypt.
Writing and Making, Writing as Making

Hannah Black (Independent Artist, New York)

This artist’s talk will be a first-person account of the excitements and difficulties of developing and sustaining a practice that bridges art-making, art writing, and editorial work. It will trace Black’s experiences across a span of contexts, from commercial publishing to international biennials, and consider the inspirations, relationships, and politics that anchor their practice across them all.

Hannah Black’s multifaceted practice follows the contour of her education. She trained as a dancer then read English Literature at Cambridge; she went to film school then switched to an MFA in Art Writing at Goldsmiths, London; and in 2014 she completed the Whitney Independent Study Programme, New York. Her literary, critical and artistic interests are diverse, bridging object-making, installation, performance, experimental writing, essayism, editorsip, and activism. This artist’s talk will explore the connection between those experiences and interests.

Hannah Black is an artist and writer. She was born in Manchester and lives in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include shows at Arcadia Missa (London, 2020), Kunstverein Braunschweig (2019), Performance Space (New York, 2019) and Centre D’Art Contemporain in Geneva (2018). Recent group exhibitions include the Busan Biennial (2020), Manifesta 13 (Marseille, 2020) and Sharjah Biennial (2019). She is represented by Arcadia Missa in London and Isabella Bortolozzi in Berlin. She is the author of the books Dark Pool Party (2016), Life (2017, with Juliana Huxtable) and Tuesday or September or the End (2021).