

# Delpha Hudson

#### About Artcore

Artcore is a contemporary arts space that celebrates the cultural richness and diversity of Derby, the East Midlands and beyond. The venue presents an ever-changing programme of art exhibitions, creative activities for adults and young people, film screenings, artist residencies, talks, and festivals.

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Ancore

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#### Acknowledgements

Delpha would like to thank Derby University for the kind use of their kiln for firing, all of the women at Derby Women's Centre for being so warm and welcoming but especially all of the team at Artcore for being so supportive and amazing.

## All Good Art is Political

As with all the best artistic practice, the two artists selected for this residency, Delpha Hudson and Natasha Joseph, illustrate the great American writer Toni Morrison's contention that "All good art is political!" Particularly in the times we now live in, the notion of what could, or should, constitute home – whether that is our personal domain, our nation or our planet - is intensely political, as the discussion around nationalism and immigration, who should remain and who should leave, becomes increasingly polarised around political parties and positions, reducing what are, in the lived experience of each of us, extremely complex issues to crude sloganeering.

But, as one of the foundation slogans of second-wave feminism tells us, the personal is political. The intended meaning of the slogan back in the 1960's was that the lives led by women and the roles they occupy were not decided by women themselves, but systematically imposed upon them by a patriarchal society. We could equally apply the slogan to the personal choices we make regardless of our gender, and their impact - whether in making our choices we support or oppress others, whether by doing so we care for, or neglect, our fellow human beings.

Art also has to be beautiful, says Toni Morrison, but it must always be political; "...it's not just the narrative, it's not just the story; it's the language and the structure and what's going on behind it. Anybody can make up a story."

And here both artists have been told and are telling stories; stories of migration, of displacement, of loss and belonging, stories of care, of hearing echoes of home even though we may be far from it, and these have been filtered through the consciousness of the artists and retold through artworks which present those stories back to us, using the language and the structure of their respective artistic practices. The stories may be personal, but they are most certainly also political.

#### David Gilbert

Curator November 2019

### Delpha Hudson

Delpha Hudson works with performance, film, installation, paint and sculpture. Based in Cornwall, her work often uses humour and contradiction to explore ambivalence in women's lives and creating new ways of representing lived experience in order to renegotiate value.

Small Promethean Acts celebrates home and domesticity with small ceramic figures that are sculpturally combined with domestic and found objects. Displayed on domestic furniture the installation combines texts and recordings of the public's stories about small caring acts.

The everyday lives of mothers and carers involve acts of care that go unnoticed and unrepresented. This project is a tribute to the smallest acts of care that make a big difference to other's lives and help us feel at home wherever we are.

Website:	www.delphahudsonartist.co.uk	www.delphahudson.co.uk
instagram:	delpha_hudson	
facebook:	Delpha Hudson Art	

#### **Artist Biography**

Delpha Hudson originally studied BA History at London University and often uses historical research in her arts practice. She returned to study art in Birmingham and completed her MA in Visual Performance at Dartington (2003). She has had performance and video work shown internationally and around the UK, with performance work commissioned by the Tate St Ives and video work shown in Serbia, Ireland and Scotland. As co-director of Art Surgery (1998-2008) she co-curated a series of Arts Council funded performance and video programmes. Her painting and sculpture work have been shown widely through different galleries around the UK. Current projects include Domestic Dystopias, a series of paintings that explore with dark humour the ambivalence of mothering, and a multi-media project about women and mental health called How to go from one page to another planned for 2020.



Fired stoneware bozetti

It's hard to get the language right. When you talk about 'care' people immediately think of care in the community rather than the things we do for other people that make them feel at home, where ever they are. Small things like making a cup of tea or giving their time to talk through problems even when they are busy.

I live in West Cornwall, very near Land's End. At home I often gaze at the garden sculpture we inherited when we moved in – the bits we didn't give away like the dogs and pigs. The classical figures of women made of plaster that has a pleasantly aged patina have a certain charm though during the project I began to see them differently. One of the women, her arms alluringly raised supports a bird bath, another, a woman in classical dress reaching towards something. Just like everyone I take for granted that this is the way that sculpture portrays women.

What is the significance of monuments? Do we aspire to be like the famous people whose sculptures we see in our streets? Do we think differently about our lives because of them? I'm interested in how we change public perceptions of value by representing what is really important in our lives – like family and home, rather than stereotypes (often male) doing heroic deeds. Our families, our homes and our domestic experiences form us and make us who we are. Truly great deeds are the simplest kind acts performed at home. They are however the hardest to represent. Small Promethean Acts is about trying to find new languages to celebrate important aspects of our lives, to value ourselves and to respect 'great deeds'; actually the smallest things that (mostly) mothers and women do for their families every day.



Delpha in the Artcore studio

We tell stories, write them and change them. There are in everything. We have special relationships with objects and create stories about them that often become part of our own story. Objects that we value, keep and have around us carry significant value. They are not just metaphors or containers of stories but often manifest and mediate our physical and psychological experience through touch, texture, shape, material, and smell. They talk to us, and our relationship with the exterior world is often moulded by our objects. They are part of the landscape of home as much as the stories that we tell and they often intertwine in surprising ways. The small stoneware figures I make are scaled to fit around domestic objects in order to create empathy and make new stories about our lives.

In Manchester Art Museum there is a Promethean vase on display with figures hanging from the top of its beautiful blue Celeste glaze. It references this classical story: Prometheus stole the secret of fire for mankind. As punishment the gods chained him to a rock and commanded an eagle to peck out his liver, which grew back to be pecked again and again. Caring acts in the home are like this. They are the daily grind that can be painful as well as joyful. I am constantly amazed at what people throw out and during the residency I came across some interesting finds. A serving platter found next some rubbish in Charnwood Street is an unusual old dish with contours and an oval depression, perhaps for dipping. I found myself wondering what the story for this object was and a small ceramic figure of a woman – sitting and serving – was added.



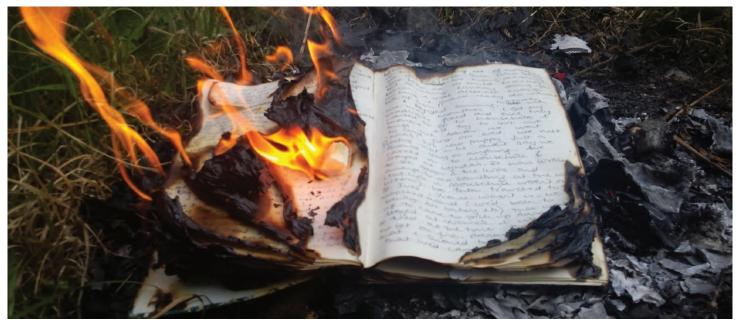
*Nothing says home like that old teapot,* teapot with ceramic figure, 24x20x10cm, work in progress, October 2019



*Serving Platter, Charnwood street,* found dish with ceramic figure, 50x40x17cm, work in progress, October 2019

The sculptures don't illustrate the stories I have collected. I had some lovely conversations with people in Derby, where people told me their stories, often with no recordable outcomes. Negotiating the practical territory of 'outcome versus process' is challenging. I could spend every day talking to the people I meet in Derby about their homes and small acts of care but have nothing to 'show' for it. It's difficult to capture the magic of encounter and the stories that I did collect, and which form the accompanying sound work, are given very generously.

Working with a group at the Women's Centre in Derby, it was difficult to find the right label for the workshop - the Women's Centre called it 'celebrating your successes'. It wasn't quite that. The idea was to gather together and in the process of making, share things we have done – small but valuable things that we do for our families. It was less about the clay than talking and telling stories. Clay is so therapeutic –it's like a stress ball as much as a creative malleable material. I'd love it if the women who took part had an increased sense of value through taking part, even if they weren't confident enough to show their work.



Documentation from performance work Theatre of the Self, 2017

Reading, editing and destroying 30 years worth of my own diaries as an art project Theatre of the Self (2017), was more than a cathartic act, it was a conscious starting point for re-writing and re-valourising our personal stories. I see the project as a spring board to finding ways of creating contexts in which women can re-write their own stories and change a cultural narrative that simultaneously trivialises women's caring and domestic roles and creates pressure to live up to unrealisable ideals.

Valourising the realities of our everyday lives and homes is part of a personal and collective project in which people can have a voice. Women do the lion's share of 'home work' but Small Promethean Acts is not about gender bias. There are plenty of men who perform large and small acts of care for others in the home. The root of the issue is value. The project aims to collect the most insignificant stories and present them so that they can accrue cultural value. Manipulating objects around us can change the way we live and think. Changing our stories and re-presenting them can be a political act.

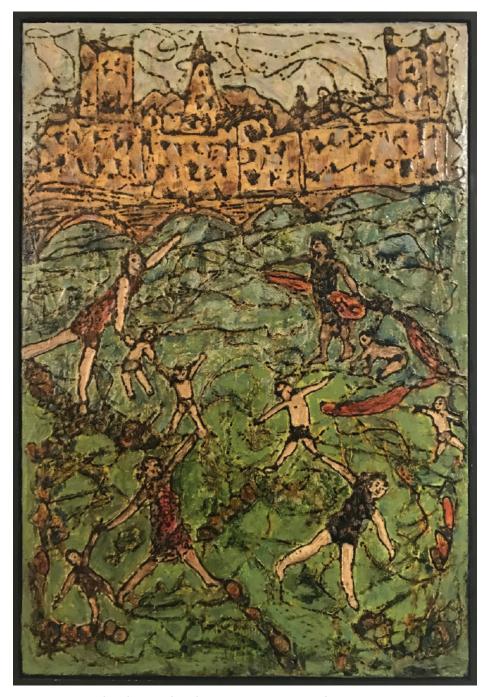
We recently moved a small village in Cornwall where news and gossip travels fast. One of our neighbours passes our house regularly, stopping, we are sure to collect any gossip about us that she can share in the local shop. Since she has a Zimmer frame and she moves extremely quickly onto the shop after talking to us, our nick-name for her is 'hot wheels'. One day as she was plugging us for information about ourselves and asked how we were settling in, we told her we were very happy, she said "home is where you are understood." It's time that we understand home through the things that we do and have done for us.

Delpha & Natasha in conversation at the Artcore studio





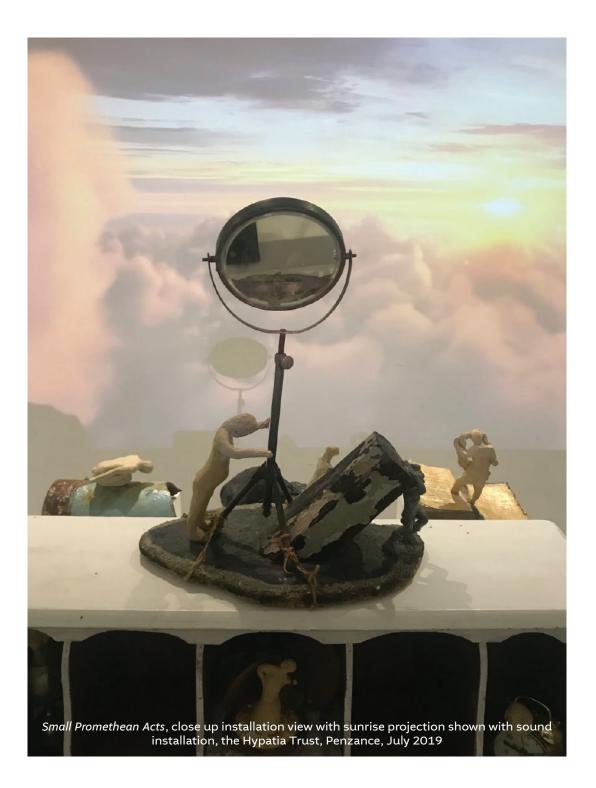
Delpha making small ceramic figures in the Artcore studio



Parenthood as a political act, bitumen paint and oil on canvas, 56x84x5cm, 2019



Small Promethean Acts, installation view with star projection shown with sound installation, the Hypatia Trust, Penzance, July 2019





A comical attack on impermanence, laundry soap and ceramic sculpture, 13x7x19cm, sculpture, 2019



*Pietra di paragone*, found fire grate and ceramic sculpture, 30x10x15cm, 2019. Photo credit: Florence Brown

#### Collaborative work - text by Delpha Hudson and Natasha Joseph

Home can be a place where we can be our true selves, a space redolent with childhood memories, or a refuge and shelter. Home can be a site for developing rituals, family relationships, and acting out cultural expectations. Home can be the geographical, the psychological and the emotional.

The residency artists, Natasha Joseph (based in Leeds) and Delpha Hudson (based in Cornwall) went through a dichotomous process of understanding this idea of home whilst working creatively in Artcore, Derby, a truly welcoming space waiting to be discovered. Joseph's work explores the reimagining of culture. A way of life outside of its natural context, threading connections and new hybrid stories between England and India. Hudson's work explores the notions of home through understanding and collecting stories centred around the small acts of care that that make us feel at home wherever we are.

Although aesthetically and stylistically Hudson and Joseph have very different practices, what illuminates the collaborative ethos of the residency process was finding contextual overlaps between their themes and processes. Both artists found common interstices between their practices in the form of stories, words, people and objects, bringing the worlds of home together under one roof.

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Then you start to look at the buildings; are they old or new? Tall and close together or small and spread out? What do the streets look like or the belly of an under-bridge? Is it lonely or vibrant? Coming into Derby station, it was about a fifteen minute walk to the City Centre where the new Artcore building is located. The way there wasn't a very complicated route, only a few turns and crossings. The closer I got to the centre, the more I started to notice the people and the pace of this city.

I grew up in Bangalore, India which is home to 12.9512 million people, but I would say it is one of the more socially relaxed cities in India, for now anyway. Although in comparison to England, Indian cities breathe and live chaos. Leeds reminds me of a small town fast on its way to becoming bigger, it's pace quickening every year as the masses of students take over. Whilst Derby, although classified as a city, has a very interesting pace and feel to it. Everyone seems more at peace. I didn't notice a single person trushing about looking hassled or late, but perhaps people from Derbyshire have incredibly good time management skills. There was something familiar about it but I couldn't quite put my finger on it, then.

Traveling between Leeds, a city I have come to know fairly well, and Derby, a slightly smaller city full of hidden treasures waiting to be explored, reminded me a lot of traveling between England and India. Although probably a tenth of the journey in terms of time or effort, the familiarity of going to a foreign place and contemplating it whilst in transit back to the known, brought back thoughts of Home. It seemed to re-evaluate this idea for myself. Maybe I must pry myself away from the known and delve into the unknown so as to better understand it. It is interesting to think that the theme of this residency really is a big conflicted question mark in my head. Something David said as we were walking through Derby that first day of the residency has been stuck in my head alongside the big question mark; "There are no bad answers, only better questions."

There are things you notice when you go somewhere new. The obvious ones, of course, are being able to find your own landmarks. Things that make you feel like the land is familiar. Things that make you feel like you know where you are going, even though you probably don't.

Things that make you feel safe in the knowledge that you aren't lost.

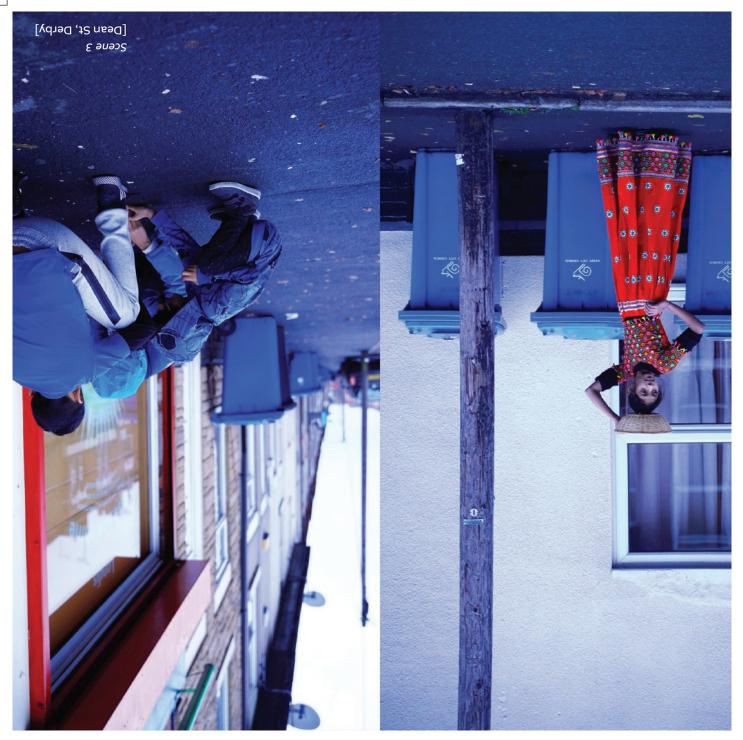


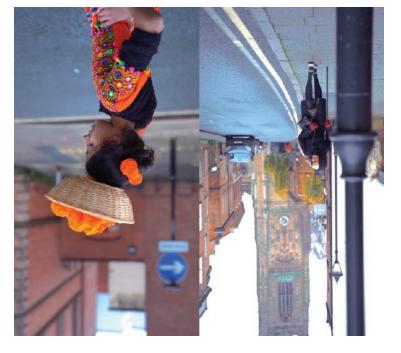
Candy Cotton Traffic Lights [MG Rd, Bangalore] [MG Rd, Bangalore]

I remember sitting in an auto one day and looking out at a bright pink towel hanging on a washing line which caught my eye. There were three boys playing hide and seek. The boy in the yellow shirt was going to be the seeker and he sat down on the steps to begin counting. His two friends started running in different directions to hide; the boy in the red shirt jumped up onto the ledge and the boy in the white started running towards the house when suddenly the shrill voice of who I assume was his mother started yelling at him.

It was clear his friend was getting close to the end of his counting and he was stuck in the middle of the yard trying to whisper an explanation, to no avail. The other boy in the red curiously peeped from his perch, interested in the commotion but then thought he was better off hiding before he was caught. It was at some moment in-between all of this that I decided to capture that moment forever. Just like that, the traffic cleared and my auto sped forward and I never saw them again. Sometimes I would pass that street and I could see the whole scene unfold, as though it lives eternally inside me for as long as the street and I could see the whole scene unfold, as though it lives eternally inside me for as long as playing in a park and I remember the three boys.



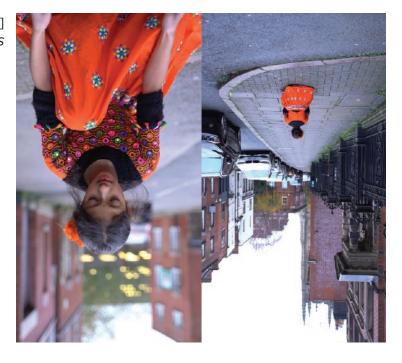




[Jury St, Derby] Scene 2, Shot 1

It is hard to describe just how different places can be. Some lands are like warring giants and some are as calm as ice, only the wind tells you stories. Sometimes I forget that I come from a land of Chaos. England on the streets of your homeland was filled with colour, adventure and unexpected happenings. India taught me how to watch and observe, and often times the best way to watch was when you were stuck in a traffic jam as long as it probably takes you to go to your nearest corner shop.

Patiently (another quality taught from a young age by the land) I would usually be sitting in an autorickshaw, often in comfortable silence with the auto driver having already exchanged life stories early on in the journey home. We were like ants, waiting for colours to change from red to green, all small and insignificant but together there were millions of us trying to scurry forward. In the mean time, we would look out and see what new enterprise was taking place in the streets. We were never disappointed.



[Jury St, Derby] Scene 2, Shot 1

When I think of Home, I think of India and I feel my heart flutter a little bit. Sometimes when I am traveling in England and I think of home, I think of Leeds but more because it is filled with the people I love and it is familiar and close by. When I think of a house that made me feel at home I remember my grandad's house.

Imagine paradise. Now imagine a green paradise with trees as tall as the sky and seas of green in every direction you look. You can smell the peace and the calm tranquility. There is no Chaos here but there is no human order either. You are not in control you are merely allowed to be a keen, humble observer. The only hidden power is the Sky herself, and when she cries you stop and you watch. When she cries, all the trees begin to whisper to themselves. The clouds gather in a big grey blanket and try to embrace her. Everything below her bows their head and for one moment they are all silent. Even the Earth tries to calm her and releases his best aroma but it only makes her weep more. And as she howls, the heavens open and she is ablaze with thunder and lightning.

And you watch because this is Home. This land, this house, this memory, this smell, this awe-struck wonderment with which you stand on the edge of your grandfather's portico stood on top of a railing at the age of six, wearing a red tunic watching patiently with reverence... This moment. In this moment you find a love you will never replace and you find home, forever.



Look Outside Recce A Series Macklin St, Derby]

"A home is merely a transient space where the people you love come and go."

Oftentimes many mistake houses for homes. A house is four walls, a floor, and a roof. Logically, there is tothing special about a structure that provides shelter but everyone remembers the house or houses they grew up in. They remember it because in some form or the other this is where they were first loved and this is where they learned how to love.

The philosophy of phenomenology, which inquires and investigates the meaning of pre-reflective and lived experiences, when applied to the object, the house or architectural spaces has an instantaneous tendency to re-create or find the familiar. Our unconscious mind finds a home everywhere we go and yet our conscious mind rejects this as it isn't exactly the same. Somewhere along the line we forget what it looked like and focus on what it felt like. You fill your home with your futures, tomorrows and dreams.

#### Natasha Joseph

Natasha is a community and participatory based artist, living in Leeds, UK. Her practice dwells heavily on community engagement, participation and collaboration. She explores themes of belonging, community, migration and specifically cultural difference. Her choice of medium and stylistic language changes in accordance to her projects and the people that she works with. She has recently been working mainly in film, mural work and textiles.

For 'Homestruck' Natasha has worked primarily with film and object, recreating fictional and nonfictional memories of life in India, and imagining them in the context of an urban English landscape. 'Homestruck' explores the surreal absurdities of situations- planned or otherwise - somewhere in the impulsive disassociation of two things that don't fit into the same space. Yet, being set in real-time with real people on the streets of Derby these occurrences suggest the pretence of acting but yet no pretence of illusion.

#### Artist Biography

Natasha Joseph was born and brought up in Bangalore, India. She recently graduated from Leeds Arts University with a degree in Fine Art and is currently developing her own community interest company, specialisesing in cross-arts events and arts engagement. She also curates and runs a multi-creative arts, dance, poetry and music night in Leeds called We Belong Here. The last event exhibited work from Berlin, Russia, Ukraine, Cyprus as well as by artists from all over England. In her time in England, disciplinary arts projects. In 2018 she was awarded funding towards her project "Haath Se/Handmade" which was a series of work in London and Leeds as well as collaborating in a number of multidisciplinary arts projects. In 2018 she was the head artist for Arts Council England funded project, which was a series of workshops working with the elderly community of Leeds, teaching them four types of traditional Indian folk arts. In 2019 she was the head artist for Arts Council England funded project, Northern Noir - a cross-arts night exploring Blackness, Masculinity and Femininity. She also works of traditional Indian folk arts. In 2019 she was the head artist for Arts Council England funded project, for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in for children's councils (makkla graham sabhas) within smaller town councils (graham panchayats) in hodia and are currently being circulated to various state governments in India to push children's civic

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David Gilbert Curator November 2019

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#### Acknowledgements

Natasha would like to thank the Indian Community Center and their members for sharing their stories.

All the actors involved in the making of the film.

Lucy Teoh and Michael Godsall for being part of my film crew.

The abundance support and motivation of the Artcore Team without whom I would not have been able to realize this project.

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