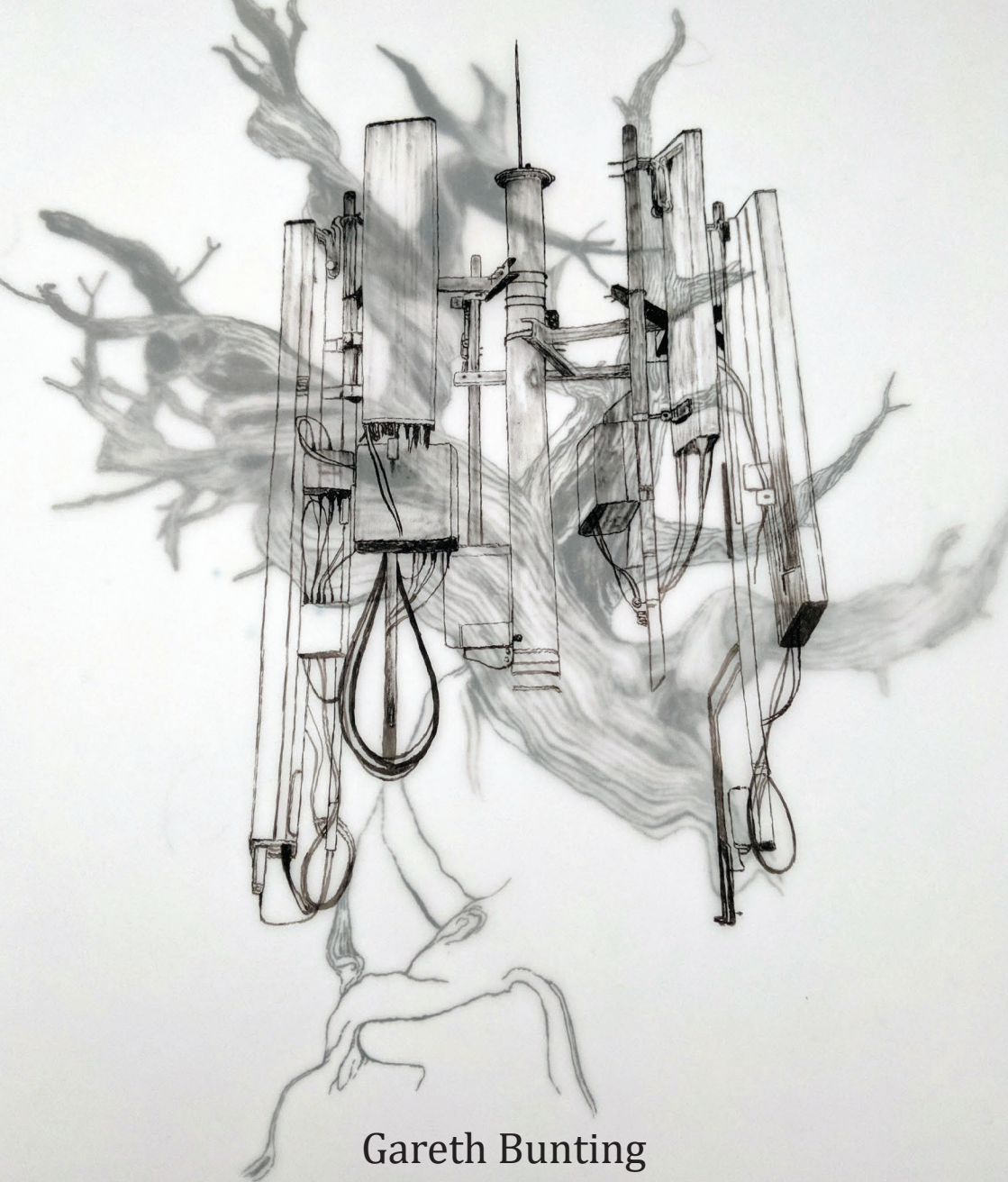


# We are Asteroids



Gareth Bunting



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



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# We are Asteroids

Artcore is proud to present the, 'We are Asteroids' exhibition with artworks by two artists in residence, Gareth Bunting and Victoria Sharples. The catalogue collects the outcomes of two months of guided residency, research, development and production.

Borrowing its title from eco-philosopher Timothy Morton, who calls out humanity's effect on the planet, Artcore invited Gareth and Victoria to take part in a two month residency as an urgent response to the climate emergency. As scientists warn us of the consequences of our human impact on the environment, the arts can help us visualise the consequences of climate change and natural catastrophe, eliciting emotional responses that prompt us to take action.

By drawing on the concepts that have emerged from environmentalism, the 'We are Asteroids' residency asks artists to respond to the following questions:

- How has climate change been reflected in increasingly urgent artistic responses?
- How might visual art affect opinion on climate change?
- What can artists do in order to translate global issues - including climate change - into artistic visions?
- What are the opportunities that climate change could bring our way? And how can we be ready?

For two months Artcore became an incubator of ideas for the artists to challenge, inform and engage audiences through their work and how art can create the conditions for change.

## **We are Asteroids - Contribution by David Gilbert**

At Artcore we want to harness the power of art and artists to deal with the big issues, and 'We Are Asteroids' deals with perhaps the biggest issue of them all; the survival of humanity and the planet we live on.

Gareth and Victoria were selected from an open callout for the We Are Asteroids residency because their very different types of work responded powerfully and urgently to the theme. The title is drawn from eco-philosopher Timothy Morton, who talks about how the impact of humanity on the planet, with our seemingly unbreakable addiction to petrochemicals, is a kind of slow violence against nature. There have been five mass extinctions in history, the most recent being the asteroid that struck the Earth in the Cretaceous period, which wiped out the dinosaurs and seventy-five percent of all life on Earth: now, he says, human beings are the asteroid, inexorably heading towards the largest mass extinction of them all - and our own.

But rather than curl up helplessly into a foetal position and do nothing, Morton thinks art has the power to make us act. He talks about how art is so often an evocation of the fragility of things, and the experience of art is like a warning light, telling us about the frailness of life and the proximity of death. Art, he says, is 'thought from the future', radical and unpredictable, which can disrupt the received logic of the Anthropocene Age and enable us to find new ways to challenge it.

Through their work, both artists give us different views, both literally and figuratively; in Gareth's case, he graphically represents our dislocation from reality as we move deeper into the hyper-real, placing dozens of intricately ink-painted images - juxtaposing the natural and the man-made - into an unsettling drawn space where scale and orientation are confused, like a latter-day Hieronymus Bosch in Virtual Reality. Victoria similarly wants us to feel uncomfortable when seeing her work, her collages pointing to the ambiguity of the language we use in relation to everyday objects - cleaning products and domestic paraphernalia - as the marketing messages used to sell them to us seamlessly, and apparently without irony, combine the opposing languages of the synthetic and the natural.

We hope that you will not only enjoy the work that our residency artists have made, but that it will make you think, and act, differently, and decide to make positive changes, however small.

## **We are Asteroids by Gareth Bunting**

Gareth Bunting is presenting two large scale ink paintings and a series of smaller pieces. His large scale pieces depict virtual worlds which were originally created in virtual reality, then painted in his signature dry brush style of ink painting. They investigate what happens to the real natural landscapes around us as we move further and further into virtual space, we live on social media through carefully curated and exaggerated avatars of ourselves. As we are entertained by films and tv shows which depict dystopian worlds we may well find ourselves heading towards in the near future, our ideas around politics and social issues have become warped and we seem unable to deal with the hugely pressing issues of the climate emergency and wealth inequality. Gareth is influenced by Baudrillard's writings on simulation, simulacrum, and the hyper real, and has created artwork which is a simulation of a simulation; through juxtaposition through juxtaposed symbols and careful composition, he contrasts the real and the unreal, the natural and the man made, and comments on the age of the Anthropocene which we now live in through his dreamlike inky landscapes.



# Conversation with Gareth Bunting

## How did you become an artist?

I feel like I've always been an artist in some way. I mean, even as a very young kid I was always drawing, always playing, making up my own sort of worlds and stories and things. I guess I was just kind of good at art at school and then I studied it at university and that's when I really sort of realised I could be an artist.

## How has your work evolved?

I feel my work has evolved a lot. I used to be more about space and place as I used to travel around quite a lot and I was always drawing from memory based on the places that I'd been to and experiences that I'd had in those places. But I feel like recently it's become more than just about a space and place with the addition of a virtual space as well. I've become very inspired by virtual reality and social media. My work evolved from ink drawing into abstract painting and then back again, and then making my own worlds in virtual reality and putting those back into ink paintings again. It's constantly evolving.

## Where do your ideas come from?

I get a lot of ideas while I'm moving and while I'm travelling. I think a lot of my best ideas come while I'm just on a train, going somewhere. I'm very inspired by other artists and people that I speak to. I guess ideas can come from anywhere really.

## How do you transform ideas into art?

It's mainly through symbolism and through contrast; contrasting different things on one piece of paper and telling a story through repeated imagery almost like a Rorschach test. At times, I'll just make this abstract splodge of ink on a canvas and I'll draw into it from my subconscious mind and that develops into a piece of work. By drawing into these fractal forms, at times it can feel as though I am studying a language. I found that by doing that I was able to draw natural things, like trees, rocks and clouds and water, just from memory because those fractal forms are found in those objects.

### **How are you responding to the We Are Asteroids Residency theme?**

I suppose we're all just stardust, really, and we always will be therefore, through my work I am trying to remind people that we are nature and not in this battle against it, even though it can seem that way at times. I'm trying to bring my work back to the environmental issue of climate change, so that's going to be a big topic I'll be dealing with in my work going forward.

### **What do you hope to get out of the residency?**

I'd quite like to interact with other local artists, galleries and universities in this area. I want to make really great artwork and hopefully give something back to the community. I want to put on some workshops with kids and adults and see if I can teach them to paint and open up a discussion about some of the ideas and themes that are in my work.



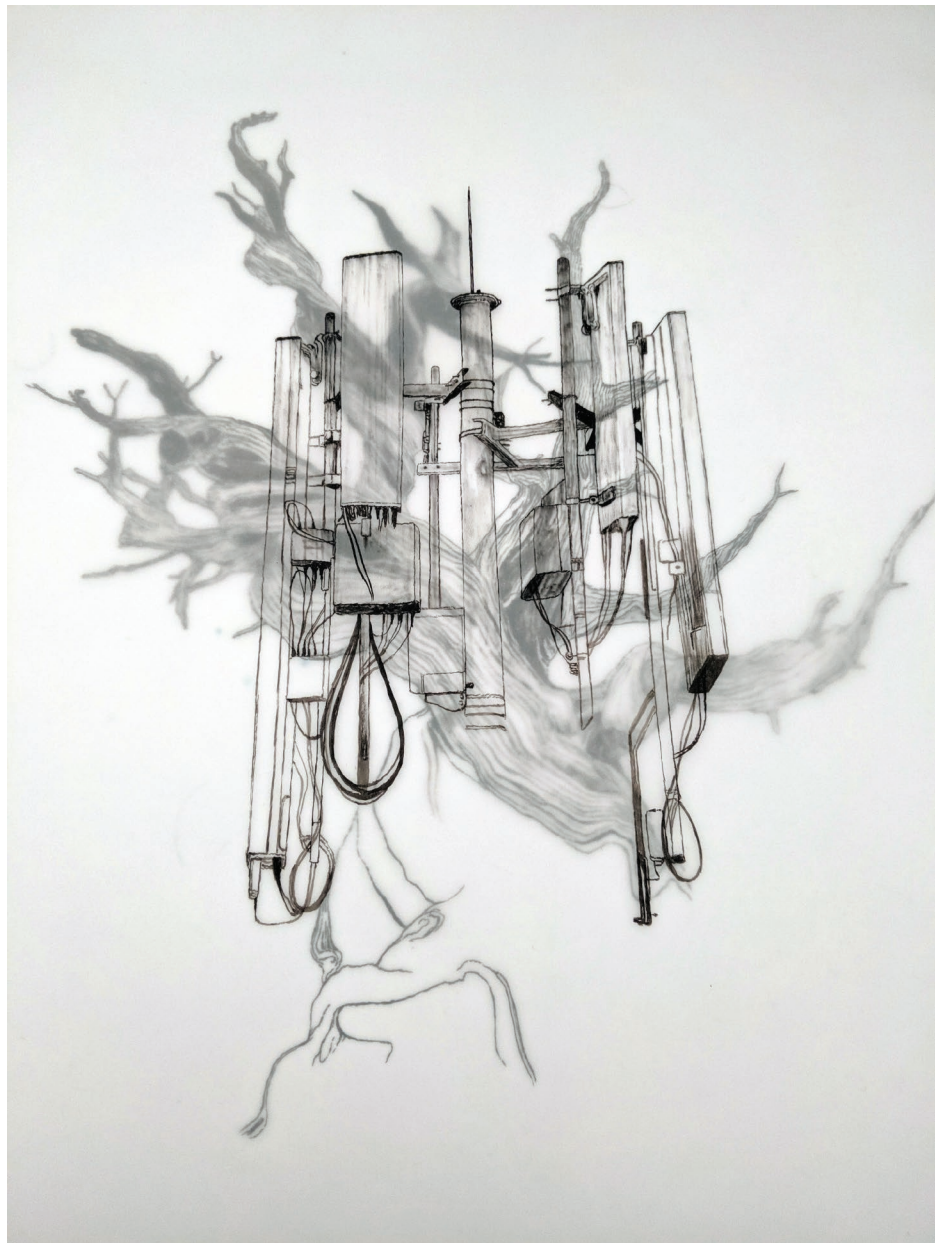
## Work by Gareth Bunting



Gareth Bunting, A clearing in the forest (2019)



Gareth Bunting, A phantasmagorical psychosis (2019)

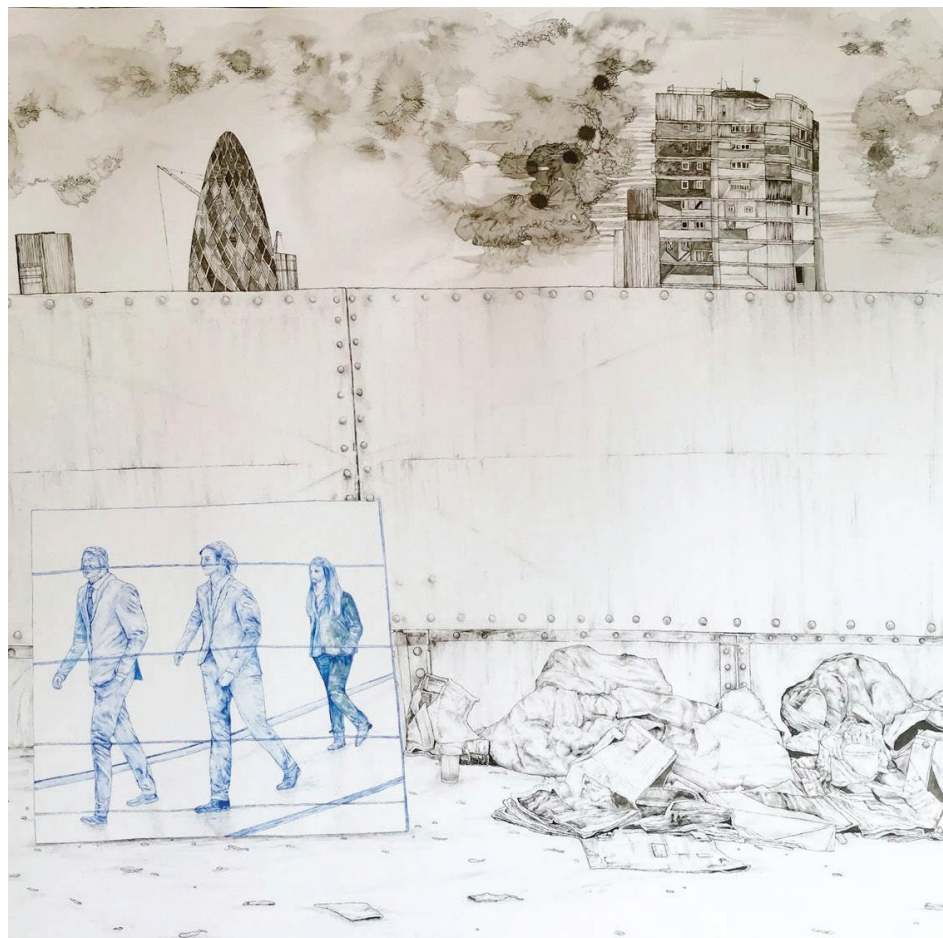


Gareth Bunting, Untitled (2019)





Gareth Bunting, Untitled (2019)



Gareth Bunting, *The Fairest of them all*



Gareth Bunting, Nature Bound





Gareth Bunting, *Untitled* (2019)



Gareth Bunting, *Recollections of a False Time*





Gareth Bunting, Universal Roots



Gareth Bunting, Veins of Shangri-La



Gareth Bunting, The Simulacrum Unfolds

# Artist Biography

## Exhibitions:

Artist in residence at the Regents hotel Taipei, 2018  
Cityscape, CICA museum Korea, 2018  
Migration, group show at the Phoenix gallery Athens, 2018  
Sacred realm between realities, The Room contemporary art space, Venice, 2018  
Variations group show at the Cylinder gallery, Mayfair London, 2017  
Chiayi arts festival group show, Fangliao, Taiwan, 2017  
Time Travellers Memory, group show, Pier 2 art centre, Taiwan, 2017  
Selected to be artist in residence at the Pier 2 art centre in Taiwan  
Group Show at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, 2017  
Guest Lecturer at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, 2017  
Group show at the Half image space, Shanghai, 2017  
Solo exhibition at the Tokyopan gallery in Shanghai- March 2017  
Artists of the future show at the DegreeArt gallery London, 2017  
Selected for the Imaginary Worlds Art prize- 2016  
New Light Art show at the Bowes museum, Durham/York- 2016  
Finalist at the HIX award show in London- 2016  
Group show at the DNA space at the cool docks, Shanghai- 2016  
Solo show at the Swatch art peace hotel in Shanghai-2016  
Artist in residence at the Swatch art peace hotel in Shanghai- 2016  
Artist in residence at the Xochi Quetzal residency in Mexico- 2015  
Artist in residence at Saqacha Centro del Arte in Peru-2015  
Castillo del lamas in Peru, group show- 2015  
The Manchester Contemporary art fair-2014/2015  
Sluice art fair in New York-2015  
Winner of the Signature art prize for drawing and printmaking in 2015  
20-21 Visual Arts Centre in Scunthorpe, group show-2015  
Millennium Galleries Sheffield, 'Fabricate' group show- 2014  
Graduated with a 1st class honours MA in Fine art from Sheffield Hallam- 2014

## 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.

With our statement “together we stand”, we want to engage and connect with a diverse range of communities in Derby. Our key objectives are to use art as a tool to strengthen community cohesion, to engage with a wide range of audiences, to educate, raise awareness and provide a space to build self-confidence and mutual trust and respect.

We engage with society’s most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, by offering inspiring and motivating programmes in areas where there is a lack in provision and engagement with the arts is minimal. Our mission is to become a place where talent and creativity is nurtured and where art and culture are accessible to all. We aim to bring positivity and shine into people’s lives, providing a platform to encourage dialogue between people of all ages, abilities, diverse cultural background through creative activities, skills sharing and development.

Artcore offers a contemporary gallery, workshop and artist studio promoting distinctive art and culture. Through a vibrant programme of events, exhibitions, residencies, art talks, screenings we provide a platform to showcase significant art locally, nationally and internationally by supporting early, mid-career artists and established artists.

At Artcore, education is fundamental to the work we do. We develop and strengthen this through an informal education approach. Our main objective is to engage young people in learning experiences to enhance their curiosity and interest on their art skills, developing their uniqueness and progression as individual, also through volunteering and work experience.

We believe art acts as a learning tool, breaking down barriers and contributing to the production of knowledge and dialogue as a vehicle for analysis and growth. Moreover we engage with our audience through creative, imaginative and meaningful activities, offering the individuals the opportunity to experiment with creativity, enhance learning and broaden career prospects.



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