



We are Asteroids

Victoria Sharples



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.

Faux Naturele by Victoria Sharples

Victoria Emily Sharples is an artist and researcher whose work speculates on human-imposed authorship of materials, and eco-politics, from post-war to contemporary art. Often durational, her practice encompasses time-based performance, video, photography, scores, events and sculpture. Informed by ecocentric and anthropocentric thought, and the discourse between human and non-human agency, her practice makes comment, however nuanced, on the juncture of this binary.

Responding to Timothy Morton's phrase – WE ARE THE ASTEROIDS – which acted as both a proposition and title for this exhibition, Sharples presents a new series of works that consider the profound impact that consumer activity has had on the planet. Through the display of manufactured objects, that attempt to simulate something natural, the artist calls attention to such synthetic things, that are both familiar and unearthly. Here, the artist makes use of conceptual/material-affordances that point to the effects of capitalism, and the unease felt in the Anthropocene. Contributing to the argument that nature itself is no longer natural, Sharples exhibits artificial grass, polyester sponge, a plastic shell, and a marble effect duvet, which through their accumulative production, and disposal, will, too, enter the geological strata.

Conversation with Victoria Sharples

How did you become an artist?

I first was interested in movement; specifically looking at different ways movement could communicate something through different movement languages. From there, I studied Performance so in many ways I have a newfound relationship with art, which is a blessing because there's a constant reeducating of myself, and an education between these practices; whether that be performance and sculpture, or video and performance.

Where do ideas come from?

The ideas seem to come out of nowhere. It could be when i'm doing something that doesn't really necessitate a huge amount of thought; often when swimming. An idea or concept might come into mind, and then I want to pursue what that could be.

How do you transform ideas into art?

I spend many hours in the studio or work from home; writing in one of my many notebooks; sketching, and scoring diagrams. And then, I start experimenting with materials and processes trying not to ground the work too early on. Eventually, something happens.

How are you responding to the We Are Asteroids residency theme?

I am looking at Morton's publications, and Anthropocentric tensions. I am considering human agency and its effects on the biosphere. Over the past two months, I have been working with synthetic materials that perform being natural. These are often familiar, domestic, things that are manufactured and traded. They are uneasy; and allow for conversations about object value, the art market, consumerism, and unnatural things in the environment.

What do you hope to get out of the residency?

The residency, for me, is an opportunity to unpack these concerns. It is a space for examination.

Which other artist's work do you admire?

There are many that come to mind. I admire Carey Young, Kimsooja, Erwin Wurm, Hilda Hellström, Jiro Takamatsu, Katie Paterson, Wolfgang Laib, Giulio Di Sturco, Sasinun Kladpetch, Anne Imhof, Pe Lang, Hannah Rowan, Yin Xiuzhen, Song Dong, Lai Chih-Sheng, Yoko Ono, Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Tehching Hsieh, Vajiko Chachkhiani, Zimoun, and many more.

Work by Victoria Sharples



Victoria Sharples, *Bedrock* (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, Faux Naturele (2019)



Victoria Sharples, *Bedrock* (2019)

Artist Biography

Education:

PhD Candidate (2016–2020) Fine Art, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds
MA (Distinction) Performance Practice (Fine Art), York St John University, York.

Recent works, exhibitions, and residencies include:

Orbit, The Middlesbrough Art Weekender, Middlesbrough (2018), The Brownfield Research Centre, Airspace Gallery, Stoke on Trent (2018), Watercolour, Bloc Projects, Sheffield (2018), Aggregates, East Street Arts (Supported), Bradford (2018), Aggregates, 2021 Visual Art Centre, Scunthorpe (2018), Triptych, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2017), Landfold, (EVE) Experimental Video Evening, Bloc Projects, Sheffield (2017). Upcoming shows: Ash, Gloam Gallery, Sheffield (2019).

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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