

# MAP

FOR ARTIST-LED PUBLISHING AND PRODUCTION

NOW

THEN

INDEX

SEARCH

#44 WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO - REVIEW - MAY 2018

## GI REVIEWS AND RESPONSES

Last in a series of reviews and responses to Glasgow International 2018, Maria Howard writes on Nadia Myre at The Briggait, *Cross-feed* by Gary Zhexi Zhang & Aniara Omann and *Self-Service* by Kirsty Hendry & Ilona Sagar



'Code-Switching and Other Work' installation view, Nadia Myre 2018. Photo: Ross Fraser McLean.

At The Briggait Nadia Myre offers work that is both fragile and loaded, its roots in traditional craft a striking departure from the shonky sci-fi aesthetics that pervade much of this year's GI. Choosing the clay pipe as both her material and a symbol of transatlantic trade, Myre questions Glasgow's colonialist past, a history rarely mentioned as frequently as it permeates the city's architecture and street names; for 'merchant' read 'slaver'.

The clay pipe was one of the first disposable commodities produced in Glasgow; bought ready stuffed with tobacco and discarded once smoked, a large amount can still be found in mudlarking hotspots today. An Algonquin member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Myre uses both readymade pipes and replicas in this show in order to decolonise the objects and suggest new meaning in the context of indigenous culture and craft. On a long blue plinth on one side of the room rests a string of real clay pipes, their hollow cylinders seeming like the smallest of bones. Across the gallery lies a

beautiful, pipe-woven basket, while elsewhere a large fishing net is draped over a white frame. In these works, the pipe fragments act as beads, woven together to form a whole; but they are imitation pipes, some with their surface carefully yellowed like teeth while others are tinged with indigo.

At the far end of the gallery stands a panel covered in *faux toile de jouy* wallpaper with illustrations of a traditional canoe, a clay pipe, a beaver and Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art building, once home to tobacco lord William Cunninghame who built his fortune on slavery. I am told the show's opening performance was an arresting experience, in which the artist whipped and cracked a length of the original pipe fragments. I suspect this may have served as an activation of the exhibition, where the objects, given new agency in their movement, embodied a sense of rage before being assigned to a plinth to be passively admired. In the light, open space the works breathe freely, a peace that perhaps belies the trauma of their story. The only hint of dread comes from a speaker emitting sounds of the sea and of wood creaking, as if the merchant ships are still on their path to trade and plunder.

*Code-Switching and Other Work*. Nadia Myre, curated by Mother Tongue. The Briggait. 20 April - 7 May



Credit: Aniana Omann

*Cross-feed* is a luminous exhibition of work by Aniana Omann & Gary Zhexi Zhang that finds a common thread between art and biology. The walls of the darkened Market Gallery are lined with what look like grotesque carnival or death masks made from a mixture of tapioca starch and silicone, created by Aniana Omann to accompany her film, 'Closer than together' (2018). The film tells the story of how the liberty cap—perhaps the most famous of the psilocybin or 'magic' mushrooms—got its name; a slightly slurred voice begins by telling us that when Roman slaves were freed they were given a conic cap, or pileus, to wear as a sign of their freedom. The cap has been associated with freedom ever since, appearing on coins and in depictions of revolutionaries; it also bears a striking resemblance to the cap worn by The Smurfs. From here we learn about a Greek stoic philosopher who advocated 'freedom from the slavery of the mind' and how

the psychedelic properties of the mushroom became associated with this symbol of liberty. All the while the camera shows us mushrooms growing, the process of making mushroom tea and a silent woman who stares out at us with an uncanny prosthetic applied to her face.

Throughout the show is an emphasis on the intersection between the natural and the synthetic, a theme continued in Gary Zhexi Zhang's film 'Parasite' and sculpture 'Farm II'(both 2017) which reflect what the artist described at the opening GI panel discussion as an 'ecosystemic' way of thinking. The film explores the idea of organisms, through a fictional telling of an airborne virus that infects people with a greater sense of empathy; as the virus spreads, people report to feeling 'a little tired but a little happier'. The work traces where the organism began while showing us the symptoms of its infection, from ringworm-like marks on the skin to the growth of gelatinous membranes that seem to pulse and breathe as if independent from their host. On a nearby plinth a computer fan whirs in an acrylic tank of water, fed and extracted by tubes running across the room, while submerged wires glisten like black water snakes in the bubbles. Zhang has said he is interested in showing how systems are connected—how they feed off each other, rely on each other—in a parasitic relationship, and his film succeeds in provoking empathy towards this organism that chooses infection as a way of leaving its mark; 'Their bodies became their territory; when you don't have a memory you can leave a little of yourself behind instead'.

*Cross-feed.* Gary Zhexi Zhang & Aniara Omann. Market Gallery. 20 April - 13 May



'Self-Service' 2018. Credit: Ilona Sagar

Zhang's work crops up again in the compelling *Self-Service* by Kirsty Hendry and Ilona Sagar at CCA. Consisting of a publication and a series of events, *Self-Service* takes the 1926 Peckham Experiment as its subject and starting point. Led by doctors George Scott Williamson and Innes Hope Pearse, the project aimed to study health in society, to bring people together and give them agency in their own healthcare and community. Though sometimes problematic as a premise—the subjects, openly referred to as ‘guinea pigs’, were monitored constantly—the experiment was utopian in its ideals, at a time when social care was virtually non-existent; the NHS was not founded until 1948.

As a response to exploring the project's archives—which have found their way to an office by Glasgow's M8—the artists have commissioned six texts that explore notions of sickness and health, people and architecture, and crucially the idea of self-service, ‘not as expedient but as principle.’ This notion is explored further in a joint text by the artists which draws parallels between contemporary neoliberalism and consumer convenience by taking the non-service of the self-checkout machine in the supermarket and the self-check in system at the GP as markers of the new age of austerity.

In another text Hendry explores the etymology of the word *bug*, both as verb and noun, and, through a fascinating story about her grandmother's necrotic flesh being healed by ‘maggots in a teabag’, questions whether the new age of antibiotic immunity will bring us back to natural remedies and a closer to a relationship with ‘bugs’ that is symbiotic rather than oppositional. Zhang sees these links too, again bringing in the living organisms of our social structures to offer a view of ‘humans as codependent and co-nurturing entities’ both in his text and film for the screening part of the project.

The screening opened with a beautiful film by Sagar which looks at the building where much of the experiment took place. She focuses on the Pioneer Health Centre—a striking 1935 block originally designed by Sir Owen Williams and now converted into flats—and specifically its pool, cut in with archival footage from the centre, recreations of children using old gym apparatus and a woman undergoing an MRI scan in the present day. But where the centre's inhabitants once dived joyfully into the pool, now it is still and cold, its purpose private rather than public.

*Self-service*. Kirsty Hendry & Ilona Sagar. CCA. 20 April - 7 May

\*\*\*

*Maria Howard is a writer and curator based in Glasgow*

---

#44 - MAY 2018

**GI REVIEWS AND RESPONSES**

Sixth in a series of reviews and responses to Glasgow International 2018, Ari Nielsson writes on Torsten Lauschmann at GSA, 'i' The Opera at The Art School and Cabinet Interventions at Pollok House

---

#44 - MAY 2018 SHORT STORY

THE TEAR IN THE WORK SHOP, AND POST-OFFICE PERFORMANCE, AND THE PEEL EEZY REVIEW

By The Critic: proudly ghost-written by Andy Grace Hayes. Commissioned by Peel Eezy. All persons fictitious

---

#44 - MAY 2018

**GI REVIEWS AND RESPONSES**

Fifth in a series of reviews and responses to Glasgow International 2018 presentations, Calum Sutherland reviews Ross Birrell at CCA, Mark Leckey at Tramway and Michael White at Oxford House

---

#44 - MAY 2018 ESSAY

XENOFEMINIST ECOLOGIES

(Re)producing Futures Without Reproductive Futurity by Helen Hester (Laboria Cuboniks) philosopher

---

[Instagram](#)  
[Facebook](#)  
[Twitter](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

---

ABOUT



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

© 2005–2019 MAP Magazine.  
All rights reserved.