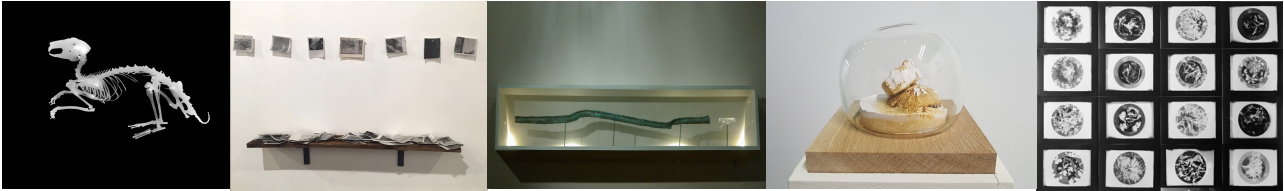


Curiosities

AIR Gallery



Duncan Cameron | Giulia Cacciuttolo | Helen Wheeler | Henny Burnett | Jane Fairhurst
Lee Finch | Luke Irving | Martha Lyons-Haywood | Paul Tuppeny | Penny Alexander
Thaleia Kavvada | Ruby Tingle

Exhibition dates: Thursday 2nd November- Saturday 9th December.

Curiosities is an exhibition of extraordinary artwork that celebrates the curious and unusual in modern day art. Featuring the work of 12 prominent artists from across the U.K, this exhibition aims to entice, excite and encourage visitors to explore.

Curiosity in itself is a fundamental part of any artist; that need to analyze, enquire and experiment is the starting point of any work of art. The inquisitive mind of the artist is reflected throughout the works on show, with artworks that dissect, transform and fall outside the usual constraints. This is seen directly in the work **Helen Wheeler**, whose sculptural works embraces the various states and processes of formation, change, preservation and fragility; harnessing both natural and physical forces in their production. Her resulting glass works are intriguing objects of a curious and desirable nature that push the boundaries of material. Similarly, **Martha Lyons-Haywood** uses organic and natural materials and playfully manipulates them into ephemeral works that will change and alter over time. Her work is based on her own interaction and investigation into her environment and the transformative properties of materials.

Like the purpose of a gallery, curiosity is also a distraction from the everyday and the mundane; an escape from reality. This cross over between fantasy and reality is seen within the work of **Ruby Tingle**, who reconstructs familiar forms to present and document the extraordinary as authentic. Each delicate piece has been manipulated and reassembled to create new ambiguous forms yet each is deeply rooted in natural history and aim to present an alternative folklore where boundaries between human and animal are obscured. This is further explored in the work of **Luke Irving** who has created a series of cryptzoology inspired artefacts using the 'found remains' of a lost beast undocumented in any science books. This work is designed to pulse the imagination and render the possibilities of a species that harboured such skulls whether real or fantastical. These works draw us to them with a strange fascination, sparking our imagination into the realms of the peculiar, the unfamiliar and unknown.

The title of the exhibition also draws inspiration from the 'cabinets of curiosities' of the 17 century where collections would present rare, historical and unusual objects as a narrative of a particular era for study or entertainment. This exhibition emulates that aspect in a present sense, bringing together a collection of remarkable artists that are toying with the borders between museum and gallery display. In particular, artist **Henny Burnett**, **Lee Finch** and **Jane Fairhurst** all play upon this era with the aesthetics of their work. Burnett's monochromatic photograms are a portrait of the jewel-like qualities of rockpools and beach debris, presented in the style of a Victorian album of specimens. Similarly, the glass dome work of Jane Fairhurst brings together disparate objects to create beautiful and intriguing works

that resemble Victorian parlour displays. In contrast, Lee Finch takes a traditional photography process that started in the Victorian era but applies contemporary methods and techniques to explore the subtle structures of an organic form. His work examines the ways of seeing and how by looking a little deeper into the aesthetics of an object, revelations often occur.

Parallel to a modern museum, the exhibition explores themes such as ecology, imaginaria and natural history with many artists focusing on the human condition. This is explored within the work of **Penny Alexander** who combines the playful use of a typewriter alongside scientific and symptomatic processes to create a series of works exploring the act of conception and birth. In contrast the work of **Thaleia Kavvada** takes on a darker tone, exploring the relationships between concepts of life and death by focusing on social and political issues. Her most recent works have been influenced by the refugee crisis and, although melancholic, aim to raise public consciousness about these issues, inspiring self-reflection, thought and human connection. Bringing these pieces full circle is work of **Paul Tuppeny** whose sculptural work is reflective of the way that we present our species to ourselves. More importantly he addresses the idea that the human species has a lifespan far greater than that of its component individuals and draws on the visual language of presented history to examine the legacies that we leave behind.

Curiosity can lead us to touch and to collect objects as well as to consider the objects that we ourselves leave behind. **Duncan Cameron** is an aesthetic explorer who finds and assembles materials from a place to create a record of the landscape and to capture the fleeting nature of things around us. The work draws focus on the inevitable entropy and impermanence of our marks on the land and the resulting work feels both familiar whilst also out of place. The work of **Giulia Cacciuttolo** follows on from this theme but explores the traces that we can capture. Her waxed photographs become a visual document through their contact with the public. Each time they are touched they capture the prints and traces of their interaction, leaving a record of their passage behind.

Hand-picked by the curator, these unexpected objects explore the strange and wonderful in contemporary art. These objects define classification, standing alone as objects of a rare and curious quality; whilst collectively creating a display that blurs the boundaries of contemporary art into the realms of science, fantasy and history.

About

AIR Gallery is part of **A4 Studios CIC** led by a co-operative team of early career professionals within the field of art and curation. We operate as a community interest company with the view to celebrate and support emerging talent within the North-West of England and broaden participation in the arts on an national scale.

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The logo for AIR Gallery, featuring the word 'AIR' in a large, bold, sans-serif font above the word 'Gallery' in a smaller, lighter sans-serif font.