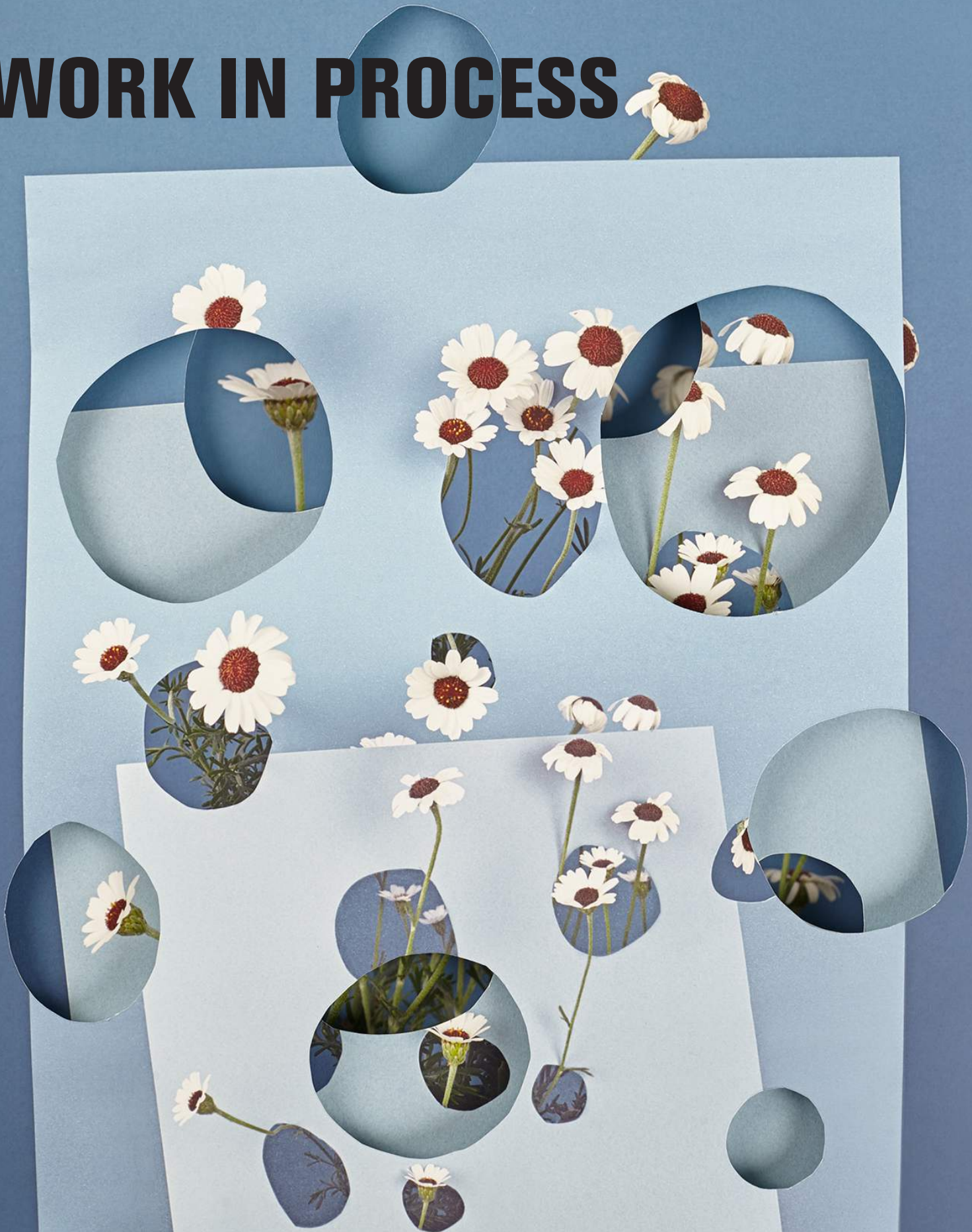


**PRINT SALES GALLERY
27 APR-9 JUN 2018**

**THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS'
GALLERY**

WORK IN PROCESS



JULIE COCKBURN | JESSA FAIRBROTHER | FELICITY HAMMOND | ALMA HASER | LIZ NIELSEN

WORK IN PROCESS

27 APR–09 JUN 2018



Work in Process explores new and recent work by five contemporary female artists, whose process-based practices focus on the photographic surface, interacting with it in challenging and innovative ways.

Approaching photographic prints as three-dimensional objects, **Julie Cockburn** draws on her training as a sculptor to re-invent vintage photographs as unique, contemporary works of art, through careful and meticulous application of hand-embroidery and other mixed media.

Physical intervention is also harnessed in **Jessa Fairbrother's** series *Armour Studies (Regarding Skin)*, in which she proposes the body-as-site to perform and meditate upon personal experiences and emotions. Here, intricate needle perforations in the surface of the silver gelatin prints highlight the skin's role as vessel and surface.

Alma Haser uses repetition and appropriation to layer and re-configure the photographic image as a means of questioning what is real and what is manufactured. Her recent series *Within 15 Minutes* (2017-2018) features 1,000 piece puzzles of identical twins' portraits manually assembled and combined to make new individuals that are no longer recognizable or identical. Haser's three-dimensional works from *Pseudo* (2018) involve various stages of re-photographing real plants and their digital renderings, then assembling and cutting away to reveal multiple layers that invite the viewer to look deeper into the image.

Photography also takes on a sculptural form in **Felicity Hammond's** *Surfacing* (2017), an on-going investigation into the extraction of the digital world into the physical. Using photographs of adverts for future sites in the city, Hammond prints digital collages of both real and imagined spaces onto acrylic and then, making moulds to vacuum them, creates abstracted, futuristic works each with a unique terrain.

Liz Nielsen omits the camera altogether to produce her unique vivid, abstract photograms. Her distinctive works are created using an alternative darkroom process, involving handmade negatives with coloured gel transparencies and found light sources, including torches, bicycle lights and mobile phones.

All these artists employ alternative processes to create photographic works that celebrate the materiality of the photographic medium as object, especially in an age of ubiquitous digital media.

JULIE COCKBURN



Gust, 2018

Julie Cockburn (b.1966, UK) is renowned for re-imagining and re-configuring found objects and vintage photographs into meticulously constructed and unique contemporary artworks.

Having trained as a sculptor at London's Central Saint Martins, Cockburn approaches each work as if working with a three-dimensional form. Using embroidery, collage and painterly techniques, she transforms the found prints – adding a layer of bold geometric patterns, stitching or gestural scrawls – rendering the original subject almost unrecognizable. By re-contextualizing the image, Cockburn opens up the work to new possibilities of narrative and interpretation, provoking dialogue between the contemporary and the historical, gender and identity, the real and the fabricated.

Cockburn has exhibited extensively in the UK, Europe and the United States and her work resides in a number of public collections, including the Yale Center for British Art (USA) and the Wellcome Collection (UK).

Categorising Digital Images



Spell, 2016

A new, specially commissioned body of work from British artist Julie Cockburn (b. 1966) comes to the Print Sales Gallery at The Photographers' Gallery in London. The exhibition, *Layer Opacity*, focuses on the multifaceted nature of the artist's delicate craftsmanship whilst referencing and making use of software algorithms for the categorisation of digital images. Much of Cockburn's work reconfigures found objects and vintage photographs into carefully constructed, contemporary artworks.

Drawing on her professional training in sculpture, the artist approaches her source material from a three-dimensional perspective. Through the use of embroidery, collage and painterly techniques, she transforms found prints – adding a layer of bold geometric patterns, stitching or gestural scrawls – rendering the original subject unrecognisable. These unique interventions provoke new dialogues and narratives between the contemporary and the historical, gender and identity, the real and the fabricated.

Introducing newer, experimental processes, the 30 images featured in *Layer Opacity* reflect upon recent developments in digital technologies. Many of the pieces on display draw on the increasing authority of computer algorithms over the categorisation of digital images. For this body of work, Cockburn fed her prints through an image recognition software and found visual matches to various photos of objects such as marbles, 3D glasses, a Chinese vase, etc. These objects were then sourced and are displayed beside her prints in the exhibition space.

Julie Cockburn, Layer Opacity, until 13 Nov 2016, Print Sales, The Photographers' Gallery, London

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH JULIE COCKBURN, ISSUE 62

You transform found portraits – why do you reuse found images? Why not take new shots?

There is something about the found object that has inspired me since doing my sculpture degree at St Martins, where we were encouraged to skip dive for our materials. **Working with old photographs is similar to engaging in a dialogue.** I am not working on a blank canvas. Rather, I am entering into a pre-existing conversation that took place between the photographer and sitter, and where I experiment with a personal visual language.

How do you select the images to reinterpret?

Generally it is really important to me that the photographs have an archetypal quality – be it portrait, landscape or still life. I definitely prefer to work with anonymous portraits, studio shots where, because of their rather stilted nature, there tends to be a stillness and conformity that embeds them into the generic. Therefore, I see them as the image of the everyman / woman, which allows me great freedom to extrapolate new characteristics, new metaphors and a new set of readings.

Can you explain the process behind the construction of the images? Is the production of each work organic or do you plan them in detail before you begin?

I initially sketch in Photoshop or onto printed scans of the original photos to get an idea of what will work with each individual piece. Sometimes my intervention is driven by the series I am working on; sometimes I am more experimental. I use the computer to plan templates for the final work and then transfer those designs to the original. There is play here between freedom and control; a throw-away scribble becomes a time consuming collage, embroidery, or trompe l'oeil painting. I have to work within certain parameters, but the pieces always tend to evolve as I work on them. They never come out the way I think they will. One of the things I love is when people get really close to my work to see how it is made. I aim for perfection and fall dismally short, but I hope that the errors give the pieces a humanity that would be lacking if made by machine.

In an ideal world, what would you like audiences to take from your work?

I try not to be too prescriptive, but hopefully my engagement in fantasy play opens a door that will invite the viewer to do the same. I love to make the work – obsessed really – and I am thrilled when it touches someone on any level.

Which artists inspire you?

I love the decorative arts and traditional craftsmanship. Dali's jewellery, Ming dynasty Chinese pottery, pretty much anything Japanese, are all inspirational. And I was recently enthralled by some sanded filler in a piece of plywood. That's the sort of thing that stimulates me.

What are your next projects?

I have a variety of group show commitments for next year and I have a yearning to make some more sculpture. I am also experimenting with a change of scale for the photo works. I think it's rather exciting to embark on a new project and not knowing exactly what is going to happen. •

JESSA FAIRBROTHER



Dragonfly I, 2017



Dragonfly II, 2017



Dragonfly III, 2017

Photography and performance are central to **Jessa Fairbrother's** practice. She uses the body-as-site to perform and meditate upon personal experiences and emotions, employing a needle and thread as tools with which to exploit the photographic surface.

In Armour Studies (regarding skin) (2012-ongoing), intricate needle perforations puncture the body, highlighting the skin's role as vessel and surface; 'seemingly delicate but constructed sometimes through true hardship.'

Jessa Fairbrother completed an MA in Photographic Studies from the University of Westminster (2008-10) and developed her practice while working as both lecturer and journalist. In 2016 she produced the body of work *Conversations with my mother* as a limited edition Artist Book with hand-perforated images, now held in various collections including Yale Center for British Art (New Haven, US) and libraries at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (US).

Her tactile approach to making work has led to her being shortlisted for the 2017 Jerwood Makers Open as well as awarded the GRAIN portfolio prize at Format International Photography Festival.

PRESS

GRAIN PORTFOLIO AWARD

GRAIN

GRAIN PORTFOLIO AWARD 2017

GRAIN is delighted to have awarded the Format Portfolio Award to Jessa Fairbrother for her work 'Armour Studies'. This is the second time GRAIN has awarded a special prize at Format International Photography Festival.

'Armour Studies (regarding skin)' uses the body as both vessel and surface. Employing self-portraiture Jessa hovers on the edge of being object and subject to explore the connection between her form, the exterior and audience.

Describing her shape as provocation she interrupts the surface of photographs using sewing needles to puncture hand-made prints, creating textural adornments suggestive of lace and engraved metal: violent acts making delicate marks.

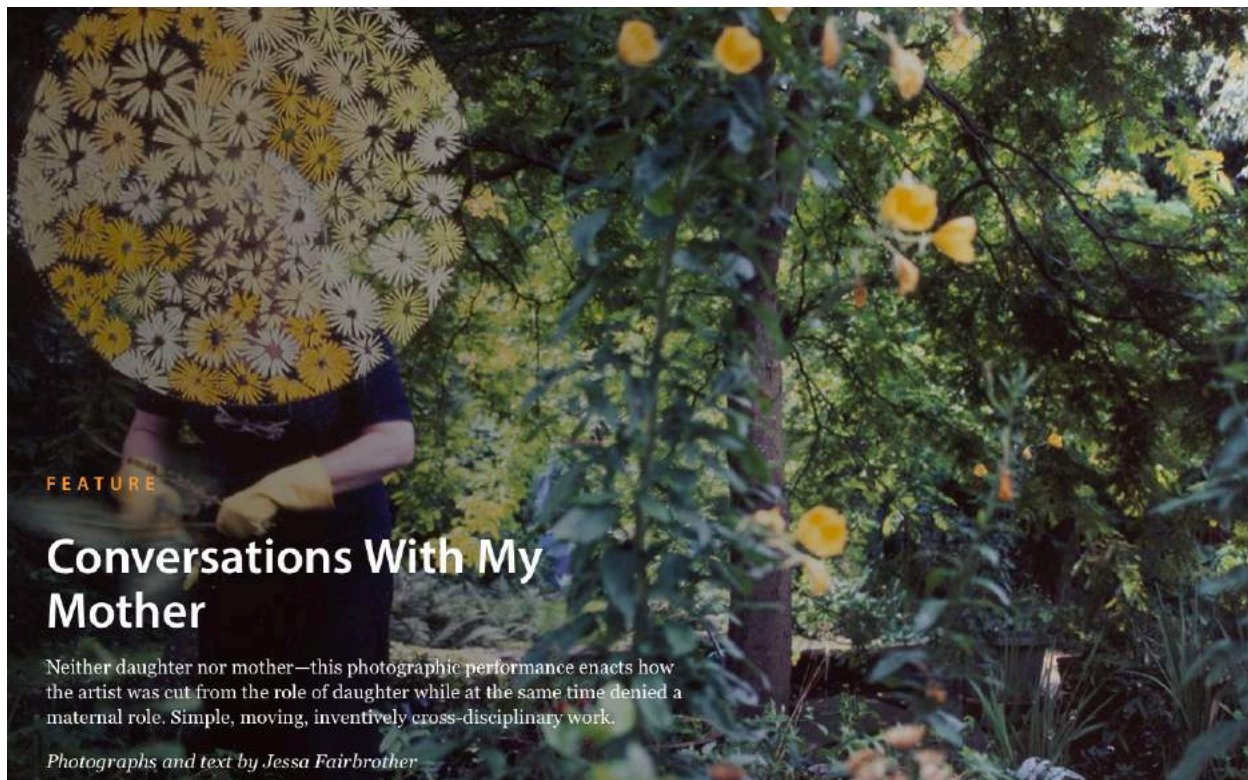


from Armour Studies (regarding skin) © Jessa Fairbrother

In perforating this exterior layer she invites the viewer to think of the skin not only as an embodiment of selfhood but as a body that touches and is touched. Her concerns originate in attempts to identify feelings beyond the shape of the person seen, confronting gestures of fallibility and the body's relentless failures.

This ongoing work brings together pieces where she performs within the image and upon it, cladding her physical identity in armour to protect it from her own disappointments and the viewer's scrutiny.

In her practice Jessa explores the familiar and the personal, where yearning and performance meet each other in photography. She investigates how behavior is shaped and influenced by both memory and visual consumption, concentrating on the gesture as a physical archive of emotional life. Role-play is a key part of her studies. She is interested in how individuals perform, continuously assigning status (and having status bestowed upon us) through roles.



“This is my story of severance.

This photographic performance explores the relationship I had with my mother and my own inability to conceive. It represents how I was cut out of my role as daughter and simultaneously denied the maternal role that I hoped would shape my future.

We (my mother and I) had been tentatively making work together using a single disposable camera. I would take a photograph of my life and then send the camera to her in the post; she would do the same. We tried to communicate through this process.

My fertility began to unravel not long after, but I was unable to concentrate on my story—hers soon took precedent. We both found out she was going to die.

I dismantled my existing life to relocate and care for her, my second parent dying of cancer.

In the immediate moment I concerned myself with recording her as she was, but I immediately felt the photograph’s inability to do this. As such, I photographed myself responding to my new surroundings, to negotiating space.





Green Garden Trilogy © Jessa Fairbrother

Once or twice I asked my mother to photograph me, echoing the way we had used a camera only a few months before. I tried to make sense of things that had no sense except sadness.

I jostled with several personas during this period—wife, daughter, sister, artist. Ultimately, I gained a new role—Carer. I became child-less...or child-free. We strived to understand and love each other more completely; we looked at each other seeking resemblance, resentment, entanglement and reliance. I found a new role: Orphan.

I put on her chemotherapy wig afterwards: it was the only thing that smelled like her. I burned, buried and embellished photographs of us. I performed my grief and began to stitch.

I cried a lot for her. I cried for the loss of feeling: her body when we hugged, her touch, her laugh. I cried in sorrow at the abrupt suspension of future narratives: for the mother I would not hold again and for the child who would never hold me.”

—Jessa Fairbrother

FELICITY HAMMOND



Surfacing (formation 01), 2017



Surfacing (formation 03), 2017

Felicity Hammond (b. 1988, UK) is a London-based artist who works across photography, installation and sculpture. Fascinated by political contradictions within the urban landscape, her work explores construction sites and obsolete built environments. In specific works Hammond photographs digitally manipulated images from property developers' billboards and brochures, and prints them directly onto acrylic sheets, which are then shaped into unique sculptural objects.

Surfacing (2017-) is Hammond's recent on-going investigation into the extraction of the digital world into the physical, where most of the collages are made using her photographs of hoardings and billboards advertising future sites in the city. By printing digital collages of both real and imagined spaces onto acrylic and then making moulds to vacuum, Hammond creates abstract, futuristic three-dimensional works, each with a unique terrain.

Hammond graduated from the Royal College of Art with an MA in Photography in 2014, and is currently studying for a PhD in Contemporary Art Research at the University of Kingston. Her work has been exhibited in private and public galleries across the UK, Europe and New York.

Recent awards include: British Journal of Photography International Photography Award: winner 2016, ING Unseen Talent Award: finalist 2016, Jerwood/Photoworks Award: shortlisted 2016, FOAM Talent: selected 2016, and FOAM Paul Huf Award: nominee 2017.

INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

Published on 6 October 2017

Felicity Hammond on winning the Single Image Award at the IPA 2016

Written by British Journal of Photography



Restore to Factory Settings © Felicity Hammond

We hear from Felicity Hammond about what she's been up to since winning and how the award has benefited her career.

Felicity Hammond was awarded the Single Image Award at the International Photography Award 2016 for *Restore to Factory Settings*, a large scale photographic collage C-type print.

Originally part of her MA Degree show, this piece is emblematic of the tension between past and future, which is inscribed on the rapidly changing face of London. Once a city dominated by factories and industry, Hammond's work looks at the demolition of these structures to make way for luxury housing and office spaces, and what this says about both progression and loss in the context of the urban landscape.

Hammond's work sits at an intersection between image-making, installation and sculpture and so having her practise recognised by some of the most influential figures in photography was a defining moment for the artist.

"One of the most important outcomes has been the introduction of my practice to a range of curators and professionals who were not aware of it before. The award attracts a wide range of people, many of whom I have collaborated with since."



Capital Growth, 2015 © Felicity Hammond

Her practise is a testament to how photography can be incorporated into a larger multi-media experience and the medium continues to play a central role in her work. Hammond began a PHD in Contemporary Art Research at the University of Kingston the same year she won and is currently researching the image making methodologies employed in architectural visualisations, looking at ways to translate them into her practise.

She recognises the importance of entering the International Photography Award for the development of her career. Encouraging others to do the same, Hammond observes “it’s a way of presenting your work to a panel of judges made up of curators, writers and photographers. Even if you’re unsuccessful in your application, someone may remember your work in the future.” Winning the award introduced the recent graduate’s art to an array of curators and professionals, many of whom she has worked with since.

The past two years have been particularly busy. Following her show at TJ Boulting, with fellow IPA winner Juno Calypso, Hammond went on to have her first solo exhibition in London at Space In Between, supported by Arts Council England. She then exhibited at Unseen with South Kiosk and at both Photo London and AIPAD New York with The Photographer’s Gallery. She has also received numerous commissions, including a project for Photoworks and, most recently, one from Signal Film and Media.

Combining her PHD research and the Signal Film and Media commission, Hammond’s recent project *In Defence of Industry* is, by her own admission, “my most ambitious project to date, where I have pushed my interest in installation, considering ways of translating digital forms into the physical space.”

PRESS

BRITISH JOURNAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY

British Journal of Photography

Realised as a huge photo-collage mounted on a four-metre light box, the work centres on the former iron-ore mining industry of Barrow-In-Furness, and looks too at the future landscape of an area best known for making and housing the UK's nuclear submarines.

This project is an extension of the themes she investigated in *Restore to Factory Settings*. Participating in the IPA 2016 provided Hammond with an opportunity to reflect on her practise, which helped her better develop it: "it was important to enter as it provided a means of reviewing my work. I was forced to think critically about it and work out which parts were successful and which could be left out."



In Defence of Industry, 2017 © Felicity Hammond

Since winning, she has focused many of her projects on exploring the relationship between her art and the site in which it exists, most recently, producing a performance piece at the Tate Modern in 2016, as part of her project *The Language of Living*.



The Language of Living, 2016 © Felicity Hammond

Developing her own unique voice and style are central to Hammond's work. Offering advice to entrants of this year's award she stresses the importance of remaining true to your vision. "Don't be afraid to be honest in your work – don't try and replicate what you think the judges are looking for, or assume that your work isn't the right style or genre. What they want is something unique; work that is contributing something new to photography."

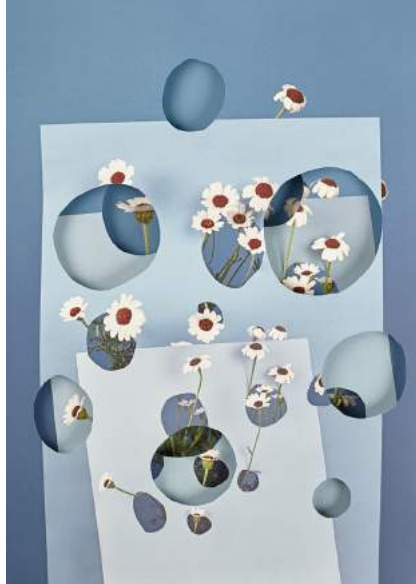
Currently Hammond is researching the different surfaces that exist in the built environment, both physical and metaphorical. Given that the work she creates is wedded to the changing landscapes around her, Hammond predicts her future projects will evolve in tandem with rapid developments in the urban environment.

"As technology advances and the city adapts, as new architectural features respond to security threats and new public safety measures, then my practice will also adapt to make sense of our environment." •

ALMA HASER



Phalaenopsis 2018



Rhodanthemum, 2018



Alocasia, 2018

Alma Haser (b.1989, Germany) is known for her complex and meticulously constructed two and three-dimensional works, which combine photography with collage and origami techniques. Using inventive paper-folding techniques, collage and mixed media, Alma expands the boundaries of traditional portrait photography by creating layers of intrigue around her subjects.

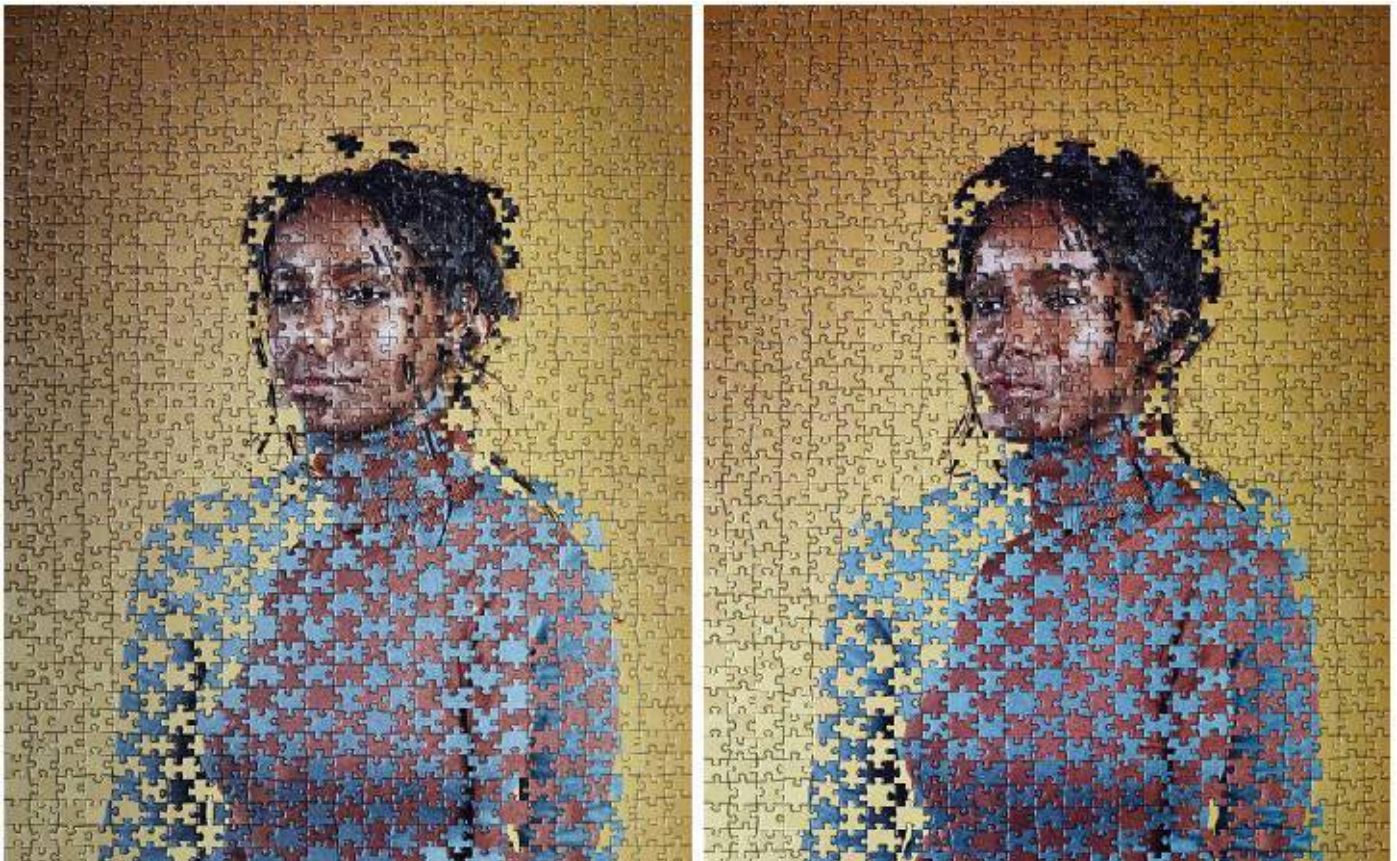
Haser's first UK solo exhibition at The Photographers' Gallery (8 Jul–14 Aug 2016) comprised of prints, 3D portraits and free standing paper sculptures from her critically acclaimed on-going series *Cosmic Surgery* (2012-2016), based on an imagined futuristic medical procedure for extreme alteration of facial features. Her most recent projects build on this act of alteration and repetition: *Within 15 Minutes* features individual portraits of identical twins turned into puzzles and combined to make new individuals, no longer recognizable nor identical. *Pseudo* - Haser's latest series of plant portraits - uses layering as a means of questioning what is real and what is manufactured, through various stages of re-photographing.

Alma Haser completed her Photography degree in 2010 and was shortlisted for the Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize in 2012. She has since won several awards including the Magenta Foundation's Bright Spark Award (2013), First Prize at the PX3 Prix de la Photographie Paris (2015) and Winner of PDN Photo Annual (2016). Her work has been exhibited worldwide, most recently at the Saatchi Gallery in *From Selfie to Self-Expression* (31 Mar–28 May 2017).

Puzzling Portraits of Identical Twins by Photographer Alma Haser

NOVEMBER 29, 2017

KATE SIERZPUTOWSKI



Hermon and Heroda (1 & 2), 2017 , from Within 15 Minutes © Alma Haser

In her latest series, German photographer Alma Haser combines the portraits of several pairs of twins by literally puzzling their images together. Haser first photographs each twin separately, then prints their corresponding photograph onto a 500 or 1000-piece puzzle. Finally, Haser painstakingly switches every other piece to create two works that are an equal combination of each sibling.

In earlier works in the series Haser only switched the twins' faces, rather than melding their entire portraits. In the side-by-side images of the the twin brothers below it is difficult to tell if anything is swapped, unless you narrow your focus to the subjects' eyes.

Haser recently contributed a few portraits from this series to the group exhibition The Body Issue: Human Stories at NOW Gallery in London. •

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Alma Haser's Handcrafted Origami Portraits

– July 28, 2016 –

"I love the act of physically making something, of stepping out of this digital world," says the German-born creative, whose curious works take centre stage at The Photographers' Gallery this summer

Alma Haser's Cosmic Surgery series – currently on display at London's Photographers' Gallery – is a project she describes as a 'happy accident', right down to its title. "I'm really dyslexic, so I always mix words up," the German-born, British-based artist-photographer explains. "Whenever I'd talk about cosmetic surgery, I'd refer to it as cosmic surgery and it kind of stuck. When I started this project it made sense to call it that."

Haser's portraits of anonymous sitters, their faces obscured by lattices of their own image, are an intriguing albeit unsettling sight. Her process involves printing multiple copies of portraits she has taken and folding them into origami structures. These are then placed onto a copy of the original portrait, before she photographs the assemblage in situ. It's an indelible working style that has seen the 27-year-old carve out a niche for herself in a digital world saturated with imagery. Consequently, her work has been shortlisted for the Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize and exhibited internationally. Below, she discusses the evolution of her unique artistic practice.



Patient no.11, 2012-2016



Patient no.1, 2012-2016

On her bohemian childhood...

I was born in the Black Forest; Germany where my parents lived in a converted matchstick factory, before moving to Somerset with my mother aged six. My dad is a painter and sculptor and my mum is a mixed media artist. In 2002, when I was 13 she took my younger brother and I travelling to Singapore, Bali, Tahiti, the Cook Islands and New Zealand for a year. It was my mum – around this time – who really got me interested in photography. She made a pinhole camera and used it to take photos of us on a desert island somewhere, and then I'd watch her develop the pictures. I loved seeing the whole process.

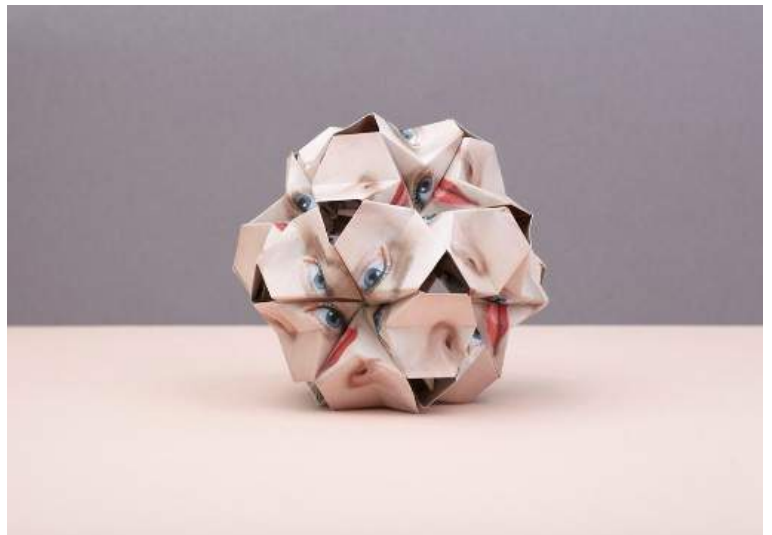
On the importance of artistic integrity...

After studying photography at Nottingham Trent University I knew I wanted to get into the profession, but I avoided assisting other photographers because I didn't want to be influenced by their style. I wanted to be my own person, and make my own work.

Now, in many ways, photography is the least important aspect of what I do; it's more about how I modify the photograph, and turn it into something else. I'm currently working on a series for Spiegel magazine, which involves working into the pixels of portrait I have taken by weaving them, cutting out some of the pixels and so on. I love the act of physically making something, of stepping out of this digital world. Taking a photo and then editing it on Photoshop is my idea of hell. If I were to offer any advice to an aspiring photographer, it would be to always make what you truly want to make – not what you think someone else will want to buy.

On Cosmic – or should that be Cosmetic – Surgery?

When I started this project I wanted to find a way of [visually] describing the face of the person in the portrait. I originally made paper masks and tested them on my face, but that didn't work so I started experimenting with kusudama balls [origami flowers], but in more geometric shapes – I've always been fascinated by Japanese culture. The idea behind the work is to show the stage when a person, who is about to have cosmetic surgery, is formulating the vision of the face they want to have.



Prototype no.32, 2016

Last year the project evolved when I published the second edition of the Cosmic Surgery book, which I made as a pop-up book, to emphasise the three-dimensional aspect of my work. I did it in collaboration with my stepfather, the science writer Piers Bizony who wrote a promotional catalogue of the cosmetic surgery you could have in the future.

Alma Haser: Cosmic Surgery is on view at The Photographers' Gallery in London until August 14, 2016.

LIZ NIELSEN



Landscape Shapes, 2017

Liz Nielsen (b.1975, Wisconsin) is a Brooklyn based photographic artist known for her high-colour, high-gloss abstract photograms. Her distinct, camera-less works are printed in the analogue colour darkroom using handmade negatives and found light sources, including torches, bicycle lights and mobile phones. Each photograph is unique, created by collaging and layering different coloured gel transparencies through multiple exposures onto chromogenic paper.

Liz earned her MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2004, her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2002, and her BA in Philosophy and Spanish from Seattle University in 1997.

Nielsen's works have been exhibited internationally in New York, Chicago, Paris, London, Amsterdam and Budapest, and reviewed in *The New Yorker*, *The London Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Vogue*, *ArtSlant* and *FOAM Magazine*.

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Liz Nielsen

Force Fields

— Text by Liz Sales

Through the work of Anna Atkins, many of us are familiar with the term 'photogram'—a camera-less photograph made by placing objects onto light-sensitive material to create a negative shadow image. Atkins, arguably the first female photographer and undisputedly the first person to publish a photobook, began releasing fascicles of *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* in 1843. Each page of each volume in this landmark edition was uniquely made by placing dried algae directly onto cyan paper then exposing it to sunlight to yield elegant white botanical outlines with handwritten nomenclature against a rich Prussian Blue backdrop. Atkins' scientific rigour and formal mastery are intrinsically linked to the photogram and all camera-less photographers are, to some measure, a part of her legacy.

Liz Nielsen is a Brooklyn-based artist who creates camera-less photographs in a colour darkroom, using handmade negatives. She uses an enlarger, as well as natural and found light sources—such as flashlights, bicycle lights, lasers and cell phones—to create distinct prints which feel like landscapes distilled into abstract shapes and luminous colours.

Like traditional colour darkroom printing, Nielsen must work in complete darkness because colour photo-paper is sensitive to the entire spectrum of light. This environment allows for rigorous light-based experiments in order to create highly specific colours. Nielsen explains, 'What really draws me into a photograph is light. So I have



p. II3

always been interested in working with light itself. I can get richer colors in the darkroom than I can digitally. I think this is because there is a depth to photo-paper, while a digital image just sits on the surface of an inkjet print or a screen.' The artist's understanding of the visible colour spectrum is palpable in her prints which make colour feel like a tangible object.

Nielsen builds her own contact negatives of abstract shapes, cut from colour transparencies. These are then assembled and reassembled into different configurations printing multiple exposures onto a single sheet of photo-paper. Each exposure has a different negative configuration and colour balance—created by mixing different ratios of yellow, magenta and cyan light. The artist expands, 'I feel I have reached a point in this process where I am building more complex harmonies of color. At first, I could only make one color in the darkroom, or mix two colors to create a third. As I experimented, I learned to

mix three or four colors without getting white or black. This is like playing C, D, and G on the guitar and then learning to play 4 fingered bar chords.'

Like pioneering nineteenth-century photographers who experimented in creating new forms of image making, Nielsen's experiments are highly meticulous and procedural. Each piece is totally unique. The artist explains, 'I think uniqueness is important in contemporary art. There is such a multiplicity of imagery because of digital technology, any given person has 25,000 photographs on their phone. I like building something that takes time, and exists as just itself.'

While the irreproducibility of and technical rigour of her practice are reminiscent of nineteenth-century photographers like Atkins, the formal qualities of Nielsen's work evokes twentieth-century movements like Abstract Expressionism and Colour Field Painting. This may be due to her affection for negative space. When visualizing her compositions, she will often begin with representational shapes, pluck out the negative space around them, then layer these new shapes on top of each other in order to create abstractions. Her luminous colours in these recontextualized spaces have a hypnotic effect, as if culled from physical space and folded in on themselves, a transcendence through abstraction.

All images from the series *Force Fields* © Liz Nielsen, courtesy of the artist, Next Level Gallery (Paris) and Danziger Gallery (New York)

Liz Nielsen wants to create photographs that give viewers “an ah-ha moment”

The photography work of artist Liz Nielsen has captured the gaze of many mesmerised viewers. There are many reasons for this, but for us it's her ability to create photographic pieces, just not in the way we're accustomed to it.

Liz's work relates to the traditional practice of photography as it's reactionary. Described as creating a “distinctive place in the photographic tradition of ‘cameraless’ photography,” her pieces are created in the dark room, but rather than just developing a pre-captured image, Liz swaps the usual negative for a designed one built “by collaging coloured transparencies on top of glass”. From here, the photographer prints the work on chromogenic paper featuring her abstractions. “They are what you see in them, and therefore they are many things.”

When viewing Liz's work huddled round a computer screen, the It's Nice That team's gasps were quickly followed by questions of “How on earth has she done this!?” And so, in the run-up to a new show at Black Box Projects in London's Soho, Liz has kindly shared some of her secrets with us.

Though her works are abstract and appear spontaneous in places, Liz explains she goes into the dark room with a concept in mind: “I start with sketches in my sketchbook. I do a bunch of research on what it is that has inspired me, and then make drawings, then I make the negatives,” she explains.



Diamond Dimension © Liz Nielsen

“The negatives are very layered and include transparent coloured gels that are used in photographic/film lighting. When I get into the dark room, there is a plan of how the light is going to be exposed onto the paper. As you'll likely know, each piece I make is unique so there is just one. In the photographic world this is exciting, as you can't have a duplicate...”

The abstract tendencies of Liz's work are known, and appreciated, for their openness to interpretation. Whether they are displayed in a gallery or printed in the pages of various magazines from *The New Yorker*, *ArtSlant* and *The Wall Street Journal*, every viewer has a differing opinion. “The work is made with a lot behind it from my own world, yet the way it is read often comes from what the viewer brings to each piece,” she says. “There are surprises for me sometimes, yet at this point, so much is intentional. My hope for the work is that it opens up a space inside of the person looking at it, and that space is an invitation into a new way of seeing. At its very best, I wish for the viewer to have an ‘ah-ha’ moment, a quantum leap inside the mind.”

Ahead of her part in the Black Box Projects show running from 6-10 March, Liz has been “working with ideas that surround transcendence,” she tells It’s Nice That. This concept culminates in Smoke Signals a series shown below, including “a communication that spreads through signs and signals, and in contemporary time, I like to think of it translated into viral or better stated, universal,” she explains.

Looking to the future, Liz plans to “continue to push myself out of my comfort zone,” she tells It’s Nice That. “I’ve got some ways of working that are steady and other ways that are new, experimental, and unpredictable.” The photographer’s background lists impressive and eclectic accomplishments such as a BA in Philosophy and Spanish from Seattle University, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA in photography from University of Illinois, the photographer points out that her “process is evolving,” she says. “In terms of what I’d like to try, I’d like to get back into printmaking at some point. I started as a printmaker before I became a photographer and I still have the feeling in my gut for it. We’ll see.” •

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ART & PHILANTHROPY / ART

Analogue photography’s artistic renaissance

Traditional analogue photography techniques are being repurposed with extraordinary results. Emma Crichton-Miller meets the artist photographers reinvigorating the medium for the 21st century

...Gemma Barnett, print sales director at The Photographers’ Gallery in London, describes the appeal of such an approach for collectors: “I don’t think the appetite for digital has faded – this is, after all, a technologically driven art form. But as a reaction to the ubiquity and facility of making digital images today, I have seen a surge of interest among both artists and collectors in unique works. Uniqueness and rarity have become important factors in the market.”... •



Liz Nielsen using colour gels to produce images in her New York studio. Her vibrant Orbiting Landscape, 2017, €4,000