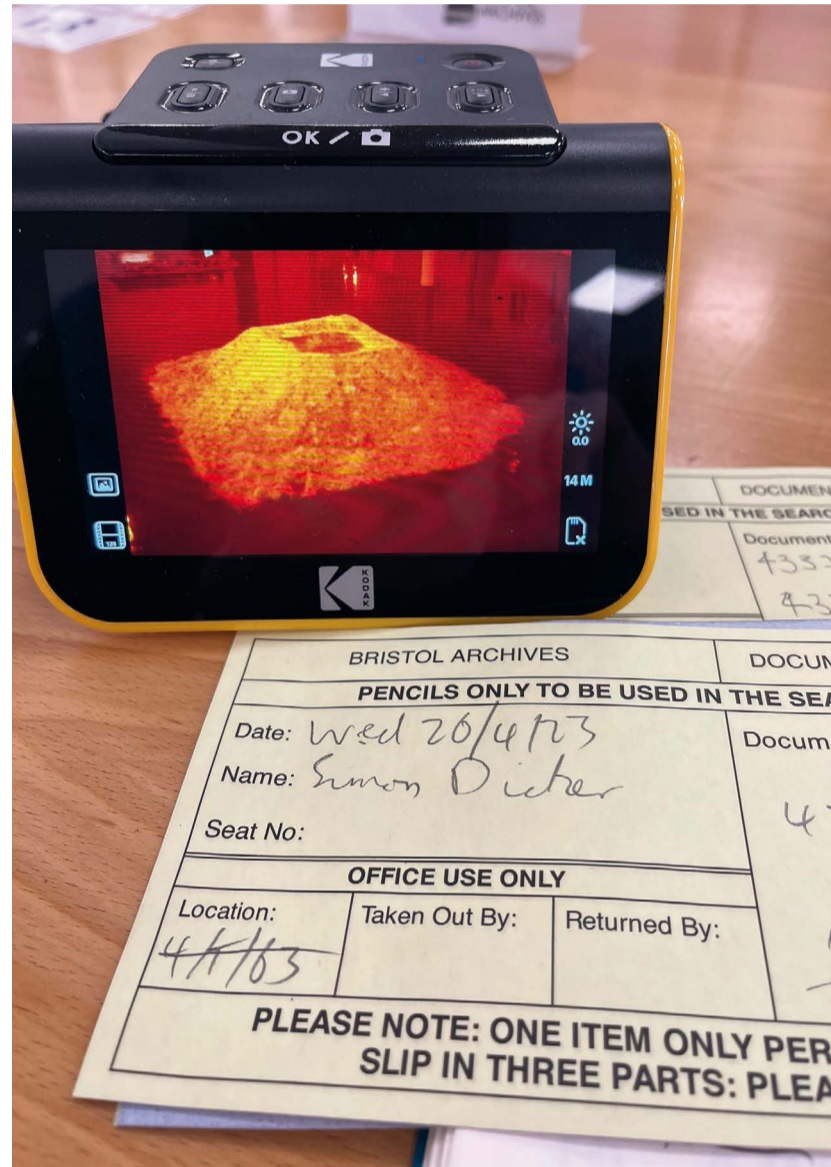




A WEEKEND AT HOTEL PALENQUE

OSR Projects
Simon Lee Dicker / Sam Jukes / Andy Parker



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Guest writer Rosemary Shirley

In 1969 artists Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt and art dealer Virginia Dwan left the 'art-world' for the "Western deserts and lush jungles of Mexico"¹ staying at the dilapidated Hotel Palenque. In 1971 Smithson presented Hotel Palenque as a slideshow lecture to architecture students from the University of Utah, exploring ideas of entropy and de-architecturalisation, in a style accurately described by curator Neville Wakefield as 'more stoner than statesman'. This work still resonates 50 years on and has been represented in galleries and publications internationally.

OSR Projects have worked with Smithson's Hotel Palenque as a conceptual backdrop for a weekend event taking place at Arnolfini. Exploring ideas of entropy, de-architecturalisation and edgelands in the rural landscape the participating artists pay attention to what is airbrushed out of a collective imagination of the rural and focus on what lies in the peripheral vision. In addition, the work speaks to the traces of the exhibition of Robert Smithson at Arnolfini in 1977, which included films shown in the same theatre space as OSR Projects present this new work.

¹ Yucatan is Elsewhere – On Robert Smithson's Hotel Palenque. Neville Wakefield

SIMON LEE DICKER

The Flatlands - 2023

Film installation with tyre mound
Dimensions variable

The slow violence of the earth eventually reduces all that is standing. These horizontal slabs are the last remaining evidence of a former mound. In time the foliage will grow through the concrete and turn it back to dust.



Located within sight of roads, tyre mounds are one of the most archetypal structures to be found across the neighbouring counties of Somerset, Devon and Dorset. Differing in scale according to the size of the adjacent road, these are some of the most impressive examples of stacks to be found the region.



Structures resemble the peaked roofs of ancient roundhouses, made from willow and water reed, that have long since dissolved back into the ground on which they rested.

ANDY PARKER

Sailing Equipped (open gratings, divisions or bulkheads in a greater number than are necessary), 2022-3

Old cardboard boxes, paper tape, glue, household paint, carrier bags
Dimensions variable



ByWay at White Sheet Hill (Photo: Susie Clark)



Sailing Equipped (open gratings, divisions or bulkheads in a greater number than are necessary), 2022-3 (Photo: Andy Parker)

As we cycled over the narrow stream that declared itself as the River Wylde I told my neighbour James what I'd been doing that week. Working for the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, he'd already shown an interest in the prints I'd been making, which (although based on ships jettisoning their cargo overboard), depicted piles of fly-tipping I'd photographed on previous bike rides with him. "I've been making gates from old cardboard boxes" I said. "Big ones. Not wooden. Kind of like field gates. Old and rusty. Well... mostly field gates. I did my old front gate too". The trail disappeared as we crossed the parched ruts beside a field and heaved skywards toward the summit of White Sheet Hill.

1st.—Hatches with open gratings, instead of the close Hatches which are usual in Merchant Vessels.

2d.— Divisions or Bulkheads in the hold or on deck in greater number than are necessary for Vessels engaged in lawful trade.¹

Riding past the neolithic causewayed camp at the top of the hill I was told about the work James had done with farmers in his previous job. The wind tried to whip the words away before they reached my ears, but he told me of the potential problems with water run-off through compacted or eroded field gateways. He mentioned a government grant for moving gates and said his old colleague Tim was a Farm Advisor for a water company and could probably tell me more.²

Countryside Stewardship Grant RP2: Gateway relocation.

It is available where all of the following apply: in areas targeted for the reduction of water pollution from agriculture / where a gateway is acting as a conduit for water movement / to move gateways associated with farm machinery or livestock. How this item will benefit the environment; This item will move the gateway to a suitable location where it will not act as a pathway for water runoff. This will prevent polluted surface water from leaving fields through gateways and help to reduce risk of soil erosion and diffuse pollution. Requirements; You must: leave the existing gate posts where they are, keeping any existing stone or slate posts that are traditional landscape or historic features. re-route the existing trackways associated with the gateway and make good the disused section / gap up the old gateway using materials that match the character of the rest of the boundary / use new hanging and shutting posts in the new gateway.³

Kate's farm is home to stacks of old metal gates. Some are ancient field gates, patched and repaired and tied safely in position, leaning against barn walls in readiness to be dragged into action for lambing or quarantine. Others are small household gates which local residents see no harm in adding to the stacked pallets of other small gates. As an artist, Kate has made drawings and prints of her gates. It's a multi-generational working farm so the gates are part of the family, burnished by the touch of many hands and repaired with ongoing care. Kate talked about how they signified control of an animal in space, they were about restricting movement, enclosing.⁴



Stacked gates at a farm (Photo: Kate Genever)

Compaction and run-off could only be problems that arose as land was permanently enclosed, funnelling the footfall. Tim kindly did a Teams meeting with me. "You could talk about how it's evolved from when we first created enclosures to keep the wolves out which would have been some sort of thorny thicket with a barrier in it through to fairly primitive wooden gates (...) and the wooden ones start getting phased out with the iron ones that probably went rusty quite quickly and now all the new gates that get put in, well, it's going to be a galvanised steel gate for £150 from Mole Valley Farmers.... but the moving of the gate is really rare. What's changing the look of gates in the landscape is when an old gate wears out and you replace it with a new one and 99 times out 100 it's going to be in the same gateway. I don't want you to go off on a tangent about moving gateways and make this a theme of your exhibition in Bristol when actually it's really rare".⁵

*I can't give you what you want. And I won't decide — in your stead, on your behalf, in your name—what it is that you might crave; I refuse to represent to you what you desire for yourself. It's the hardest thing to admit but I cannot mystify you.*⁶

The dry spring of a Galvanised Spring Loaded Sliding Bolt Assembly screeched as we manoeuvred our bikes through a heavy Ashbourne Metal field gate (£104.10 inc VAT⁷) onto the smooth historic asphalt of Long Lane. Swooping homewards my mind swung on the idea of gates as mobile, unhinged structures, and was drawn to those I saw propped in hedge gaps, or loosely tied with bailing twine to a post, to another gate, to a telegraph pole.



Timber of unknown origin (Photo: Andrew Pearson)

The temporary division, the improvised bulkhead. Setting objects afloat in the world, the ground became permeable; seascape not landscape. These propped gates could float away at any moment. "On repurposed objects, one thing that I found fascinating on St Helena is the re-use of ship timber in some of the buildings. The Consulate Hotel uses a mast, while there are others in a house on The Run. If memory serves, Distant Cottage may also utilise similar material. Ship-breaking was a major outcome of the Royal Navy's suppression of the slave trade - several hundred ships were broken up in Jamestown harbour. It is tantalising, though unprovable, that some of the timbers in these buildings originated from such vessels."⁸

1. Instructions for the guidance of Her Majesty's Naval Officers Employed in the Suppression of the Slave Trade, London: 1844
2. Conversation with James Peacock, 4th June, 2023
3. Extract from <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/gateway-relocation-rp2>, accessed 11th June, 2023
4. Conversation with Kate Genever, 23 April, 2023
5. Conversation with Tim Stephens, 9th June, 2023
6. Jan Verwoert, *Cookiel*, 2013. Berlin, Sternberg Press, p13
7. Price as advertised at Mole Valley Farmers, not available for home delivery if ordered via website
8. Excerpt from email exchange with Andrew Pearson, *Archaeologist*, 16 June 2022

SAM JUKES

Sound Silos - 2023

Corrugated steel, rivets, loudspeakers and field recordings
Duration 42 minutes - looped
Dimensions variable



Top image: *Sound Silos 2023* (Interior) Right image: *Sound Silos 2023* (Photos: Sam Jukes)

ROSEMARY SHIRLEY

Seasonals

10 November, 18:30.

Congratulations to me, I'm officially a "Warehouse Operative". At least until January. I am seasonal staff. The shit the season.

Everything's been online so far, the interview and a training video with smiling "colleagues" in Hi Vis vests. I've not actually seen the place yet, Dad said, 'it's that monstrosity they've thrown up on old Dixon's farm'.

I've not been over that way for years. Do you remember decorating the floats for field day in their barn? I think it was the year we did the Pirates of the Caribbean.

Dixon's farm has all gone now, first that big road island and now this new warehouse. Someone's made a packet on those deals. It wasn't the Dixon's though, they left ages ago, sold up at rock bottom price just to get out - going broke according to the font of all knowledge (Dad).

I start on Sunday evening, the night shift, 6pm to 4am. Unsociable hours for an unsociable person.

Wish me luck!

20 November, 14:45.

Yeah, I know what you mean, it is strange to be back in our old room. I noticed the other day that there's still marks on the mirror from where we stuck those Polly Pocket stickers. Anyway, needs must at the moment and I barely see Mum and Dad. Mum says she knows I'm back from work because there is a ghostly whiff of toast in the kitchen when she comes down in the morning.

I wake up around noon and I have the afternoons to myself and then I'm out the door by the time they come back from work.

The nights are properly drawing in, as they say, and I feel like I'm living in permanent gloom. Mum got me some of those fizzy vitamin D tablets, she worries I'm not seeing enough daylight.

I'm not having any problem sleeping though. I'm absolutely knackered by the end of the shift. I pinched Mum's slimming world step counter the other day and no shit I walked 15 miles up and down those shelves. I've never seen anything like this warehouse, honestly, it's massive. It takes 20 minutes to walk from one end to the other. Sometimes it's not even worth going to the staff room to take your break, by the time you get there the time's up. You're better off sitting on the floor where you are and eating a banana.

I saw your pics on insta – very nice. I hope those posh skiing types aren't too knobish.

24 November, 17:30.

I'm early for my shift. I'm not sure how that happened, all this night work, I don't know what time it is anymore. I'm not going in before I have to. I'm going to sit in the car while there's still some warmth from the heater and write to you instead.

It's cold this evening, not Switzerland cold, but still pretty bloody freezing. The frost has already come down on the cars, when the day shift come out they'll have to scrape their windscreens before they can drive home. Although there's frost, it's not one of those clear and bright Silent Night type evenings, it feels like fog is hanging in the air gathering itself to descend later on.

The lights around the carpark make everything greyish yellow. On one side is the big road and the orange glow coming off the roundabout but on the other it is just dark. I don't actually know what's over there, I've not been here in daylight, at least not since we were kids. It must be fields from the old farm.

They've planted a grid of thin trees in between the rows of parking spaces. Little spindly things. I can't tell what sort they are, they're just bundles of winter twigs belted to stakes with black rubber ties. I wonder how their roots will fair pushing down, searching out the earth beneath the tarmac.

Ok sorry, now you have a detailed description of my work's carpark that you never asked for. That pie you put on insta looked amazing, I guess this chalet host thing is really upping your cooking game. It's about time for me to go in, so I'll leave it there.

Miss you.

27 November, 22:23.

They call us pickers, warehouse pickers.

Do you remember when we were strawberry pickers that summer? That was round here somewhere wasn't it? Those Bulgarian boys, Petar and Penka! Walking up and down the rows of plants in that giant poly tunnel. Working here reminds me of that but instead of picking strawberries it's sex toys and post it notes. Well, it's more than that, - whatever you can think of it's here, filed away in its own little section on one of these never-ending shelves.

They give you a trolley with a screen on it and it tells you the location of the things you've got to go and pick: not real locations, but little codes: LV55 or AB13, and off you scamper trying to remember if L comes before M and which zone you are in. The screen calculates how many units you can pick in an hour and beeps if thinks you're not going fast enough. There is a lot of beeping.

Thanks for the Christmas biscuits, they arrived safe and relatively unbroken. I can't imagine you snowboarding! Send pics.

03 December, 00:23.

That video was amazing, you're so good, and you've got all the kit! Very impressive.

I wish I had more to say about what I've been doing outside work, but there's nothing to tell. I've been trying to get out for a walk in the afternoons, to force some fresh air into my lungs in the short window between getting up and it getting dark. But to tell the truth, tramping along field paths edging endless brown lines of ploughed earth, just makes me feel like I've gone to work early.

Tell me more about your snowy adventures, at least I can live vicariously.

06 December, 04:15.

Today my screen thingy sent me down to the lower ground floor, I'd not been there before but all the floors look the same so it's no problem. It's much colder down there though, they must keep it super air conditioned for some reason.

I found the right shelf location and it's a mini-bin, that's what they call it - a bit like those cardboard files you put magazines in, they use them for small items

that would get lost on an open shelf. You put your hand in and grab the units it tells you on the screen and move on. So I put my hand in and felt something soft, and not in a good way. You'll never guess what it was. Strawberries. Very old strawberries. They'd gone that wet pinkish brown like dead flesh and my hand had gone in up to the wrist. I nearly vommed up by break time banana.

Well no-one puts in an online order for decaying strawberries, I don't care how perverted they are.

To be honest I wasn't sure what to do about them and my screen was beeping at me, so I just re-shelved that sucker and went on my way.

I didn't get chance to wash my hand until the end of the shift. They make such a fuss about going to the loo outside of break times and I was behind on the orders so I just had to wipe it on my Hi Vis vest and get on with it. I can still smell it now on my fingers, even after scrubbing.

08 December, 01:05.

It's one in the morning and I'm sitting in the car on my lunch break. I had to get out of that place for a bit. I've got a bacon double cheeseburger from the 24 hour McDonalds on the roundabout. I know - dirty – but I bloody need it.

Even though this is a fancy new warehouse I reckon they've got some sort of animal problem. I don't want to say rats, because the thought of that just freaks me out, but there's definitely something. Let's say it's cute little harvest mice, perhaps in Victorian costumes, living their best lives on the lower ground floor.

I walked all over that floor today and I couldn't get away from that scrabble and scurry that you get with rodents. It was driving me nuts. For a while I thought it was my trolley making the noise, I'd hear it and then stop and the noise would stop, and then soon as I started walking again it was back. But it wasn't my trolley, the noise was everywhere, scratching and chewing. And I'm not surprised because when I got back to the lift there were loads of sacks of grain, all stacked up against the wall. I don't know where they'd come from but whoever had left them there was a moron, they were blocking the lift entrance and one of them had split and there was grain all over the place.

I told Aiden, the shift manager, about the sacks and the noises. He said he didn't know what I was talking about, but if there was a mess then I needed to clear it up. Dickhead. Anyway, it didn't matter in the end because when I got down there with a brush, someone must have shifted the sacks, they weren't there anyway.

Right time for me to go back in.

15 December, 16:33.

I haven't been sent down to the lower ground floor again in the past few days, so can't give you a rodent update, but I'm not super keen to go down there again.

I'm so tired. I suppose it's the mad amount of walking I'm doing. But my sleep's been all over the place the last few days. We went out for the Christmas do, a bunch of us actually had the weekend off, so they dragged me out for a Christmas curry and then very disturbingly we ended up at the Jubilee. Can you believe it's still going? It's got a different name, but inside it's pretty much identical. Flip, talk about - flashbacks. I kept thinking about you. I felt very old and drank too much.

You look good in your Christmas jumper, and you've got a bit of a winter tan going there. We had a Christmas jumper thing here but I couldn't be bothered, what's the point when you have to put a Hi Vis vest over the top.

21 December, 02:12.

Yeah sorry, it's been totally fucking frantic here. I honestly haven't had a second. I fucking hate Christmas.

The big day won't the be same without you, but I understand. It makes sense for you to stay where you are especially with the airline strikes.

I'm back on it Boxing day evening. People just won't stop buying shit.

27 December, 00:13.

I'm in the car. I don't know what just happened. I don't want to go back in.

04:12

Oh God, sorry about that last message, I didn't mean to freak you out.

I'm OK. I'm fine. I've finished my shift now and I just need to get back home. I'll message you later.

31 December, 15:31.

I know, I'm sorry for not being in touch. Every time I try and message you I just end up deleting it because it seems so, I don't know. Anyway, I'm trying again.

The first thing was the singing.

They sometimes have the radio on near the packing stations upstairs, but there was no way I could hear that on the lower ground floor. In any case, this wasn't GEM FM this was old and slow. A man's voice. I couldn't make out the words, I don't know if there were words, but the song was keeping time with the beat of footsteps. Not footsteps on the concrete floor, but the hollow thud of hooves against earth. The sound was close and in the distance, it filled the whole space, yet somehow it was only in my head. And then I felt them pass through me, the horse, the clink and swish of it, the heavy plough with its metal blades and the man with his song. They came through me like I was nothing, and after them, the smell of freshly turned soil.

I know how it sounds and I haven't told anyone else but I promise I am not shitting you.

1 January, 01:20.

I asked Aiden if I could go on the packing station, or work on the upper floors. He said no. I asked him if he'd been down there recently. He said he went every day and then gave me this leaflet about the company's online mental health portal. He's such a wanker.

3 January, 14:41.

Thanks for the advice. I did have a quick look at the online mental health thing, but it was just a load of webinars on "coping with stress at work" and "self-care". I don't know. Could it have been some sort of hallucination brought on

by extreme tiredness, or, maybe they used toxic concrete to build the place and the fumes are messing with my head.

Anyway nothing to report for the past couple of days.

5 January, 03:45.

Fuck. I couldn't see what it was at first. It just looked like a small mound of something lying at the bottom of a shelf. As I got closer the lights pinged on ahead of me and I saw it was an animal.

A lamb, dead. Its head was perfect, a soft pale nose and mouth surrounded by tight fleecy curls, eyes closed. Its forelegs, black and gangly were stretched out as if it was mid gambol, but its body and back legs were covered in a bloody membrane.

It made me so sad. Looking at it, I could hardly stand up.

I knew I had to hold it, the lamb, to pick it up.

Its body had a weight to it, like holding a baby, but very still. I had to take it out of there, it wanted to lie on the earth.

I went through the fire escape, the alarm went off but I didn't care. I ran across the car park to the hedge. I held the lamb close inside my Hi Vis and I pressed myself through the thorns and branches. I could still hear the door alarm and someone shouting my name but I ignored it. I knew I had to get through the hedge and into the field.

It wasn't as hard as I'd expected, almost as if someone had come that way before. It was dark in the field, the lights from the carpark made no difference. The ground was soft under my feet. I looked up at the shallow curve of white moon high up in the sky. I couldn't feel the weight of the lamb's body anymore. It had gone.

It was Aiden who'd come after me. He took me back inside and gave me a cup of tea. He's not a total dickhead. I think he was a bit frightened, finding me all covered in tears and snot, with my face scratched up from the hedge.

He said what I'd done, going out the fire escape, would usually mean immediate dismissal, or at least a serious disciplinary, but that it wasn't worth the paperwork as the seasonals were being "zeroed" over the next few days.

I can't stop thinking about the feel of that lamb in my arms.

7 January, 16:03.

We got the emails. All the seasonals' hours have been cut to zero, which is their way of saying "you're fired". My last shift is tonight.

I finish at 11am.

8 January, 11:16.

It's bright and gusty this morning and the wind flapped at my jacket on the way across the car park. Some of the other seasonals are going to Wetherspoons to get in a pint and a breakfast to celebrate or commiserate our last shift. But I just want to get back home.

11:52.

So much for getting back home. The road through Wintercoates is closed, there's a line of cars with their engines off and people standing about. I've been sat here for 20 minutes. I'm going to go and find out what's going on.

11:58.

It's the Straw Bear! Do you remember? It's been so long since I thought about the Straw Bear.

They're coming now. I can hear the drum and the accordion, puffing its way through the same few bars on repeat. There's three of them, the bears, they look like walking haystacks. Those costumes must be so heavy but they are skipping and lolloping down the street doing their clumsy dance. There are two little kids on the pavement watching, they are so excited they're jumping along too.

Now here come the farmers, or at least people dressed as farmers, in tweed jackets and flat caps. They are pushing the plough, all spruced up for the day with a coat of paint and ribbons streaming off it.

12:14.

I just called Dad to ask him about it. He says it's to do with Plough Monday, one last day of freedom and mischief before the farm labourers went back to the fields, the traditional start of the new year.

He was on the allotment. Said he'd pulled some 'cracking parsnips' and that he'd do me some soup for lunch.

12:20.

I'm back at the car. Bits of loose straw have escaped from the bear's costumes and are blowing all over the place in this wind. I've just found some some stuck in my hair.

They're re-opening the road now. I'm going to be on my way.



The Flatlands 2023 (Photo: Simon Lee Dicker)



Sound Silos research (Photo: Sam Jukes)

Artist Biogs and credits

OSR Projects

Based in rural Somerset, UK. OSR Projects produce ambitious, playful and socially-engaged projects. Established in 2011 by Simon Lee Dicker and Chantelle Henocq, OSR Projects have worked with artists and partners from around the world connecting people through contemporary art. With focus on artist-led practice they have an evolving exhibition programme and host regular events including Od Arts festival that takes place across the villages of East and West Coker in Somerset.

Arnolfini

Arnolfini is Bristol's International Centre for Contemporary Arts located on the harbourside in the heart of the city. Woven into the fabric of Bristol since 1961, Arnolfini is an international centre of interdisciplinary contemporary arts, presenting an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of visual art, performance, dance, film, and music.

Artists:

Simon Lee Dicker was born within the ring of the M25 and now lives and works in Somerset. His work explores a discordant relationship with landscape, the marks we make on the natural world, and what it means to be a human at the beginning of the Anthropocene. From intimate drawings and transient installations to event based social activities, each work is the start of a conversation, often evoking ritual activity and personal narratives that include other people in the production and presentation of work. simonleedicker.co.uk

Sam Jukes is an artist and educator who has, throughout his life, lived on the rural fringes of Britain. He creates works examining the relationship between the aesthetics, tactility, and sound of environments, using paint, objects and noise. The sonic element of his practice grows out of his involvement in the 1990s sound system culture, taking the immersive and sonic qualities of large sound systems to evoke conversations about our relationship with the environment. Work often asks the viewer to consider the politics of rural landscapes, and the cultural context of their situations. samjukes.co.uk

Andy Parker grew up in the naval city of Portsmouth and his complex relationship with the sea forms the backdrop to a diverse practice. Graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2007 he received a Deutsche Bank Award for Fine Art the same year. He has exhibited widely, including at the Museum of St Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. Preoccupied with ideas of communal progress and personal failings played out in a public arena his repetitive botanical painting, indiscernible sign writing, sinking sculpture and smudged drawings question the validity of received histories of human production. andyp.co.uk

Guest writer:

Dr Rosemary Shirley Associate Professor in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research centres on cultural representations of rural places and she has published widely on this subject including her monograph *Rural Modernity, Everyday Life and Visual Culture*. She co-curated the critical landscape exhibition *Creating the Countryside* at Compton Verney and her writing was included in *Documents in Contemporary Art: The Rural* (Whitechapel/MIT Press 2019).

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OSR/
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ECTS

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