

APOCALYPTIC DREAMSCAPES: A STUDIO VISIT WITH REBECCA ACKROYD

17/11/2020

Text by Kate Neave

Rebecca Ackroyd's installations haunt our imagination long after we first encounter them. Her arresting piece for the Lyon Biennial is the disintegrating remnants of an aeroplane flight with casts of plastic detritus strewn amongst crumbling body parts. Like a monument to a lifestyle left behind, it hints at a conversation about the environment, our collective past and the direction of our future. I chat to Ackroyd about this work, her installation inside a polytunnel for Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro and the influence of the pandemic on her practice.



Rebecca Ackroyd, Singed Lids, Installation View, 15e La Biennale de Lyon, September 18 – January 5, 2020
Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin, photographed by: Blaise Adilon

ON MAKING WORK:

When I'm creating I don't always know specifically what I'm making until near the end of the process. Instead I have in mind a feeling that I want to evoke with the work. I build a set of parameters and through the repetition of making objects and casting them I build the work by following my instincts. Now I see the end product I can't imagine it being anything else.

ON HER INSTALLATION FOR THE LYON BIENNIAL:

I wanted it to feel a bit like a relic –the remnants of something. I was thinking about it in the sense that everything else has fallen away from it or sort of dissolved. I didn't see it as a crash site. I was more imagining this dissolving of everything else leaving these remainders from a past world.

PERES PROJECTS



Rebecca Ackroyd, Singed Lids, Installation View, 15e La Biennale de Lyon, September 18 – January 5, 2020
Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin, photographed by: Blaise Adilon

ON THE MATERIALS:

It's made from a combination of wax and resin. The chairs and the windows are all resin and the bottles and some of the other casts are wax. It's quite simple materially but I wanted it to be more about the translucency and the fragmentation and the colour. I wanted it to feel like embers, like a glowing aftermath of something.

ON THE TITLE OF THE PIECE:

The title was 'Singed Lids' and I was thinking a lot about afterimage – when you get a residual image on your eye after looking at a bright light. The piece was inspired by this idea of an imprint of an image. That's why I like using casting. I like the idea of it creating these fragments of one-off occurrences. It's a bit like photography in its ability to capture a snapshot of a moment.

ON HER INSTALLATION IN A POLYTUNNEL

I was thinking of the polytunnel as a signifier of man-made growth. The plastic around it is this really thin polythene so it has a movement to it when you walk through it. The chaise longue pieces are a literal reference to psychotherapy. I was thinking a lot about compiling pieces of conversations to put together a history of someone's life – creating a mental archaeology with fragments of memory and time. That was the starting point for that body of work.



Rebecca Ackroyd, Underfoot, Installation View,
December 4, 2019 – January 31, 2020, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan, Italy,
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin

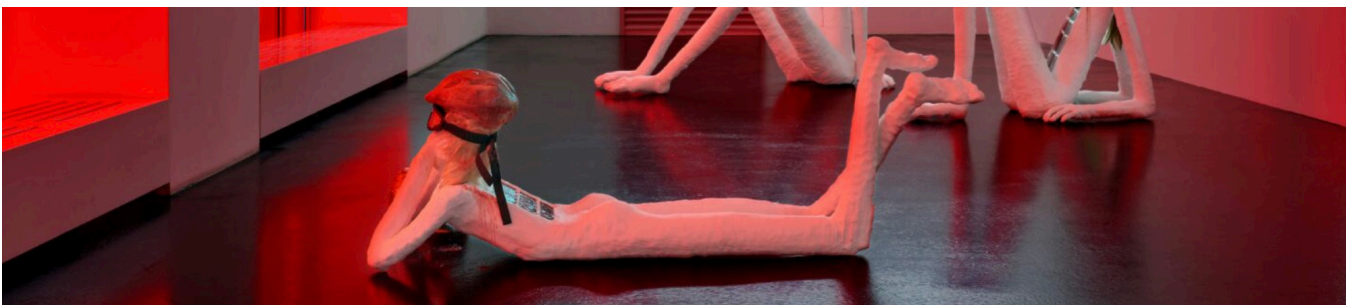
PERES PROJECTS

ON THE PANDEMIC

I didn't make any work for about three months. Instead I kept dream diary. I've had really vivid dreams since I was a kid. Ever since I could talk I used to tell my mum about my dreams. In lockdown I was dreaming really intensely so I started doing these drawings of them. There are these pivotal dreams that I've had at different points in my life that have been really important in making sense of certain things but I've never really brought them into my practice directly until now. The dreams that stick in my mind are quite dark and weird. They really make me feel something.



Rebecca Ackroyd, *Underfoot*, Installation View, December 4, 2019 – January 31, 2020, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan, Italy, Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin



Rebecca Ackroyd, *The Mulch*, Installation view, 27/04/2018– 15/06/2018, Peres Projects, Berlin, photographer: Matthias Kolb, courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin

ON BEING AN ARTIST

I think that my job as an artist is to be in the studio and then put the show together and that's where it ends. I don't feel I need to tell everyone what they're looking at. The work that I'm really into is open to interpretation. It creates an initial feeling in us. It's quite similar to the emotive impact music has in some ways.

Rebecca Ackroyd is currently working on a solo exhibition for Peres Projects, Berlin in January 2021.

This feature is part of 'Unearthed: Eco-visionaries' a thought-provoking series by Kate Neave uncovering contemporary artists at the forefront of environmental thought. We discover artists that engage with the natural world, explore topics at the frontier of art and nature or shed light on an environmental issue. Taking inspiration from these creative practitioners, we join the complex conversation about the climate crisis, harnessing creativity's power to reach a deeper understanding and be a catalyst for change.