



UNDER THE VOLCANO

Vernissage Saturday 8th February 2020

In 2019, Brooke Benington began its residency programme in Mexico City, based out of Studio Block M74.

Conceived as a practical residency, it has been an opportunity for the artists to explore and integrate themselves in a small but rapidly growing arts community and network. Beginning with Simon Linington in April, over the next ten months seven artists have participated in the residency programme: James Lomax, Amanda Moström, Rob Branigan, Clare Burnett, James Fuller and Anna Gonzalez Noguchi. As the residency progressed we observed how each subsequent artist brought in influences and reflections of the city to the work they were producing. Each approached this in their own distinct way and produced very different work that still holds true to their core practice, and the essence of the City.

To accompany the exhibition we have invited each artist to share with us a memory from their time in Mexico City.

There's a small park in a southern district built for a community of actors in the 1940s that through association, fire and the death of a prime minister, became over time a Japanese Garden, complete with painted concrete Torii gates and Karp pond. Originally used by the nearby film studio as a Japanese style backdrop, now you can watch it provide backing to real lives, as four different

photo-shoots rotate the park's angles on a Saturday morning to capture wedding, romance and coming of age, complete with tiaras.

Wake up, get dressed, gather my things and walk to the studio. On the way get some fruit, lime, chilli and salt. Perhaps repeat for a lunch. Even a dinner.

I was introduced to Centro by two wonderful new friends who took me through the specialist streets to Merced and Sonora. A quick morning's shopping followed by an afternoon in the studio I thought, I didn't believe them when they said to buy anything I wanted when I saw it because I might not find it again. Streets each with a different speciality - tools, fabric, dolls, nail varnish, fertility aids; an enormous plastic flower market; chickens and goats. Utterly overstimulated I got back to the flat at 3 and lay with my eyes shut until eight in the evening.

The thing that sticks most is watching enamel sign production for the entire world passing through the same CDMX kilns to fix branding, directions, information and instructions into the surface. From London maps on the banks of the Thames to the Hong-kong metro and

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everywhere in between. Public space everywhere hanging by the hook and worked by the same hands.

It is my first day in the studio. I pause on a landing in the stairwell before continuing upward, my lungs rasp and my heart begins to race as I labour to lift the weights that are my feet. They are blocks of cast concrete with warm terrazzo lying beneath them. My blood is less saturated with oxygen at this high altitude. I realise that in this month and in this city I need to switch pace, slowing down, I pause often to look and to think. My body's response forces me to reframe, to de and re-contextualise what I'm taking in.

Two overlapping memories most stand out, and they're regarding silence. In Mexico City, certainly in the Centro, noise surrounds you, it is along with the populous and street vendors, something that weaves the urban centre together. I think I started to forget what silence felt like,

hearing the call for scrap metal, the street organs, and the various vendors calling out for sales, continuously. Approaching the Chapultepec botanic gardens early morning on my fourth day, the sound started to fade away and I was left with the silence of the workers, trimming and pruning, no other visitors in sight. In stark contrast, and arrestingly odd, was the silence that followed the earthquake drill that occurred halfway through my residency. Not knowing what the alarm was for, I stepped out of the apartment and the clamour of Centro had ended. For ten minutes mid-morning there was quiet, people queued orderly outside buildings at the congregation points, and everything in the city stopped.

I stand on the roof of the studio building and look out toward the mountains. I don't know what I'm looking for but I've felt these feelings before. Until I have seen enough I will keep climbing the stairs every day, twice a day, and maybe then I will know why I do this.

BIOGRAPHIES

Rob Branigan (b. 1992 Liverpool) graduated from the Ruskin School of Art in 2013, and the Royal College of Art, MFA Sculpture, in 2019. He has recently exhibited at Assembly Point, Filet Space, and Belmacz Mayfair, London, and was shortlisted in 2019 for the ACS Studio Award, and the Tiffany & Co Studiomaekers Award. From November 2019 he has been in residence in a collaborative project with Finbar Ward at Standpoint Gallery, London.

Clare Burnett (b. 1964 UK) lives and works in London. She studied Architecture and Social and Political Studies at Cambridge University and Fine Art at the Byam Shaw School of Art. She is President of the Royal British Society of Sculptors. Solo exhibitions include Leighton House Museum, William Benington Gallery and the University of Leeds. She has shown in group shows at Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer, the Venice Biennale, the Royal Academy, the National Gallery, the Jerwood Space, the RIBA and the Royal Society of Sculptors. She has completed site-specific installations in spaces such as Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation, Brompton and Norwood Cemeteries and Bishopsgate Square. Last year her first public sculpture was installed in China.

James Fuller (b.1988, UK) lives and works between London & Athens, GR. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2018 and was awarded the Kenneth Armitage Post-graduate Sculpture Prize and the Tiffany's x Outset Studiomaekers award 2018. Recent exhibitions include An Arrangement in Two Halves, a Bench in Two Parts, with Marco Miehling at William Benington Gallery, co-curated with Lily Brooke. Further Images, White Crypt - Curated by Anais Lerendu & Adam Thomas, RCA SHOW (2018), ebc013 at East Bristol Contemporary and The Hum at Caustic Coastal curated by Tzuzjj, Salford.

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Anna Gonzalez Noguchi (b.1992 Japan-Spain-UK) studied at Royal College of Art, MA Sculpture. Living and working in London and Athens. Recent exhibitions include NEW FOUND LAND at Caustic Coastal Salford, To The Core at White Crypt, London (2018), Nomadic Vitrine at Recent Activity, Birmingham, Northampton Contemporaries, Northampton (2018).

Simon Linington (b. 1983 Isle of Wight) graduated in Sculpture at Chelsea College of Arts in 2006. He has exhibited at Castor Projects, London; William Benington Gallery, London; Lily Brooke, London; Division of Labour, London; the Museum of Contemporary Art Project Space, London; The Arts Gallery, London, Space In Between, London, Departure Gallery, London; Fold Gallery, London; James Taylor Gallery, London; amongst others. He has been awarded the Emerging Artist Bursary from the Royal British Society of Sculptors (2010) and was a finalist at the Best Emerging Sculptor in Britain award (2012), at Christies. Residencies include Pivo, Sao Paulo; Emma Thomas, Sao Paulo; Los Gazquez, Spain; Culture Vultures, Morocco. Simon is currently living and working in London.

James Lomax (b. 1991 Winchester) studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford. He has exhibited at Lily Brooke, London; Sadie Coles HQ, London; The New Art Gallery Walsall, Walsall; Castlefield Gallery, Manchester. In 2014 he was awarded a Sky Arts Academy Scholarship and more recently he has undertaken residencies at The New Art Gallery Walsall (in partnership with Eastside Projects), Ikon Gallery, Birmingham and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

Amanda Moström (b.1991 Umeå, Sweden) studied at City & Guilds, London. She has exhibited at Galerie Chloe Salgado, Paris; Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer, Fulmer; Void Gallery, Derry; Castor Projects, London. In 2017 she was awarded the Collyer Bristow Award and was part of the Bloomberg New Contemporaries. She has also recently worked on collaborative projects and residencies in Tokyo and London.

With special thanks to

