



### **Art Confined- Norfolk Street project information and exhibition interpretation**

“Art Confined, Norfolk Street; social art with social distance”

A digital exhibition inspired by, and documenting, socially engaged, craft project “Art Confined”

Devised and delivered by Lady Kitt

Produced by Sarah Li, Commissioned by Norfolk Street Arts

Access the digital exhibition here: <https://www.norfolkstreetarts.com/ladykitt>

The wider Art Confined Project has been supported through funding from Arts Council England and commissions by Disconsortia (disabled artist led consortium), & Durham University, UK

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### **The project**

Created through collaboration with co-authors:

Sofia Barton. Cat Hurst, Tee McGahey & Dylan. Kev Howard. Deborah Nash. Jan Secret. Edwin & Sarah Li. The Witches Child. Riki Tsang.

Through this project, a small group of people living in the North East of England during the global COVID 19 pandemic, have used art to record and respond to challenges (and unexpected joys) we've experienced during this extraordinary time.

Horrific social inequalities have been starkly illuminated by the pandemic. In the UK, ONS estimates 2 in 3 people who have died from COVID19 were disabled, white people are 4 times less likely to die from COVID than black people, high infection rates in the North East have been exacerbated by historic, endemic and structural inequalities. There have also been positive impacts from the pandemic, particularly relating to our relationship with, and care for, the natural world. By working together through the Art Confined project, we have shared our stories, made art and offered support, friendship, hope and strength to one another, managing to stay connected, despite being socially distanced.



These are some of the things that have happened as part of the project:

- Each person / family/ bubble involved, told Kitt about an object which represented an aspect of lockdown to them and wrote a piece of text about that object
- Kitt made small, 3D, wearable sculptures of those objects out of international bank notes and posted each one to the person or family /bubble who suggested it
- In our own individual homes, we created performances/ installations including the objects
- We documented these with the photographs
- We posted the objects back to Kitt to be included in the installation described below
- We connected to one another through the project (via email, a Facebook group, telephone conversations, socially distanced photoshoots and chats)
- Once the installation has been taken down, each co-author will be reunited with their object which will then be theirs to keep!



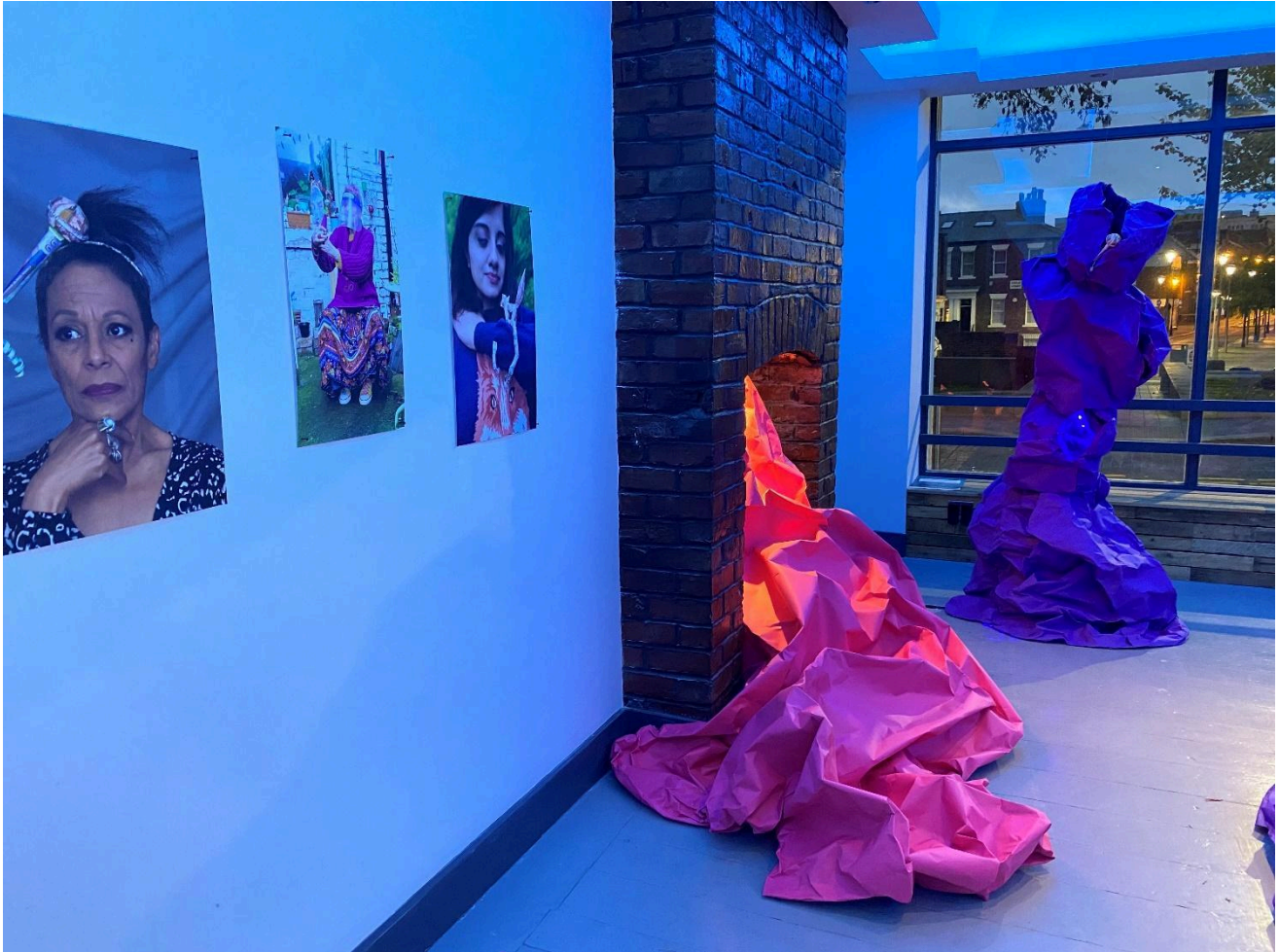
**Installation created by Lady Kitt at Norfolk Street Arts Gallery, Sunderland, UK Oct 2020**

Kitt describes the installation, which forms part of the digital exhibition, as “A secular, shrine to “us-ness”; celebrating our desire to make things different & better. Our collective ability to elicit, exchange, respond, and support, despite finding ourselves physically apart”

**What?:**

At Norfolk Street Gallery, Kitt spent a week creating an installation which includes giant paper sculptures made from 11meter by 2.75 meter sheets of bright pink and purple, recycled paper. The sculptural works are lit from outside, and within, by a variety of lights in shades of blue and white. Some form tower-like structures, others appear to drip from the ceiling, or pour out of the two brick fireplaces built into the gallery walls. Within these large, organic paper forms are hidden tiny, intricately sculpted, 3D objects (described above).





The crafting techniques Kitt uses range from cutting, folding and sticking with minute tools and a magnifying glass, to using their whole body for molding and manipulating the large sculptural forms (a process Kitt likens to dancing with, or cuddling, the paper). These processes (and the different ways they are presented and documented in the exhibition) aim to switch viewers focus from immersive experience to intimate relationship with a single object. Exploring techniques which transforms physical space, without losing focus on the handmade nature of the structures /objects which facilitate that transformation.

### Why?:

“For me, the large paper sculptures, or “shrines” as I call them, represent natural forms like, maybe, stalactites or waterfalls. They are inspired by Catholic shrines I visited as a child in Portugal. These were sometimes set into, or built out of, caves and rock faces. Other times, created around a natural spring or an old tree.

I was always fascinated by the combination of natural settings with incredibly artificial, ornate and gaudy offerings / statues. I loved the way they looked, the atmosphere they invoked and that they had a life all of their own. Growing and decaying simultaneously, both through natural processes and through a series of hundreds (sometimes thousands) of small, individual, human interventions. I was always very moved by the traces people left of their own stories and experiences- soggy, disintegrating, hand written letters or prayers. These seemed to document the strong social and spiritual significance of these places; the beliefs and communities they celebrate, illustrate and support.

A gallery setting (physical or digital) presents challenges in my work, mostly because a lot of what happens in these projects is to do with human connections , or “creative intimacies” as I call them. So my gallery based work is driven by the question: “How can I turn a gallery into an environment which tenderly exposes and fiercely cares for the social stuff that happens in/ through/ because of participatory projects?”

When I started thinking about how to present both; the objects (which are produced during) and the social connections and changes (that happen as a result of) socially engaged projects, I immediately started to think again of those shrines. Implicit in them was an invitation to get involved, to leave a votive offering, a



pray, to light a candle, to add my hopes and experiences to these collective monuments. And that's what I hope to create through these works. An environment that encourages exploration, contemplation and participation. A space which (gently) invites you to get involved."

Lady Kitt, Oct 2020

### **Why Bank notes?**

"Before inviting other people to get involved in a project I think it's important to consider the "exchange rate(s)" we are working with/to. I like to ask what is everyone giving to it (time, creativity, technical skill, emotional labor, physical resources), what will/ do we want to get out of it and how these exchanges would happen/be formalized? Considerations and processes like these are vital to the success and ethical underpinning of social engaged art. For me, using bank notes is part of giving prominence and value to questions like:

What is the worth of socially engaged art?

What is the use value of craft in a "fine art" context?

What value do we put on social change / interaction and what is the relationship between that and the value (social or financial) that we put on "art objects"?"

Lady Kitt, Aug 2020

**Exhibition curated by Vincent Todd with digital production & curation by Art Matters Now.**

### **What?:**

The digital exhibition includes:

- Photographs of the small 3D paper objects described above
- Photographs documenting how co-authors used these objects in their own homes
- Texts written by co-authors, about the objects they chose, and about their experiences during the pandemic
- Audio content (spoken and musical) created by co-authors to compliment their texts
- 3D digital scans of an installation Kitt created at Norfolk Street Arts Gallery during October 2020
- Video content of Kitt speaking about the projects, BSL interpreted by Riki Tsang

