

Press Release - IM MAKING THIS FOR THE RAT THAT LIVES UNDER MY OVEN

IM MAKING THIS FOR THE RAT THAT LIVES UNDER MY OVEN is a show that explores the work of artists and writers in lock-down: how they have been affected emotionally and materially and how that changes the works they make. The show is an interactive online exhibition created by Molly Stredwick and co-curated by Molly Stredwick and Elliot Martin with texts by Elliot Martin. It will be accessible from mollystredwick.com at **8pm on Saturday 25th April**. The show contains art from: Aimee Bannister, Alexander Yates, Archie Benton, Alice Mansfield, Chelsie Coates, Caroline Jackson, Daniel Kerrison Stock, Eibhlin Morrison, Fabia Elouise Sturridge, Flo Webb, Freddie Wise, Georgia Reyniers, Hannah Williams, Hana Whyte, Holly Orpen, James Knights, Kate Jackson, Laura Hessey, Lillian Fawcett-Wolf, Matthew Hawkins, Molly Mcfadden, Molly Stredwick, Robin Finch Pickering, Ruby Streek, Stella Pearce, Suzy Crossley, Sophie Wood, Winnie Hall.

'Since the lockdown began there has been a new and uncanny interaction between precarity and stasis. That these two moments have become heightened has put new stresses on our relationship to the world, each other and ourselves. To create art now means interrogating all this: everything is in flux yet pervaded by a lingering quietude.' This is the premise of the show; it is an exploration of the changes happening to artists during a global catastrophe..

There is overwhelming dread in the face of this crisis. Its invisibility may put us at an epistemic remove from the virus but its effects are all too visible. There is a penumbral fear for ourselves and for our loved ones - a collective *bête noire* (see Fabia Elouise Sturridge's work 'Miracle Dog'). Not only are we daily presented with *memento mori*, we are also spending more time with ourselves than before. Chelsie Coates ('i am not chinese enough to be verbally assaulted') uses this time to explore the intersection of racialised and misogynistic aspects of the pandemic, in particular, her experience of *sinophobia*.

Yet lock-down has had the perverse effect in many of causing a loss of self through isolation and, in many cases, deracination. Many artists have had to move house or move home to parents before being locked-down. In both cases the altered situation can have material as well as psychological effects - room is less available, studios are out of reach and materials are unobtainable - many of the works are smaller than the artists are used to making.

At the same time, however, there is an uneasy calm. In the streets and towns (save for the essentials) there is no-one, the roads are clearer and many have found time for introspection (Alice Mansfield's 'Thought' series or the text by Kate Jackson dealing with her anxiety). The privilege that allows many artists this time is not unobserved, of course, but in doing so it has manifested in the production of works that allow us personal insight into these artists.

Many have found solace in their domesticity - all the *things* that surround them (as in Eibhlin Morrison's 'Too cold for a swim but we'll have a paddle anyway' or Holly Orpen's 'Bottom series one, episode three, 1991, Life Drawings') . This therapeutic art makes us revert to a 'womb-being' who is cut off from the world (take Winnie Hall's work 'Should've Been a Wag'). Others look to escape: James Knights' hyper-illustration 'Gammon in a Thong' and Ruby Streek's stella 'Untitled [smoking star]' to name two. All these diverse reactions and interrogations of the pandemic are included in **IM MAKING THIS FOR THE RAT THAT LIVES UNDER MY OVEN**.