

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

EXHIBITION GUIDE
GALLERY 2

JAMIE CREWE

SOLIDARITY & LOVE

Sat 18 January – Sun 26 April 2020

Humber Street Gallery (Hull) and Grand Union (Birmingham) have co-commissioned sister exhibitions of new work by Jamie Crewe comprising video, sculpture, text, and print: *Solidarity & Love* in Hull, and *Love & Solidarity* in Birmingham.

This body of work is about repulsive kinships. It thinks about places, cultures, histories, communities, and individuals that are tied to each other, whether they like it or not. It is stuck on the pain and compromised pleasure of such entanglements.

The work begins with Radclyffe Hall's 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness*. This book is a portrait of Stephen Gordon, a masculine lover of women who wants to be a country gentleman like her father. The book thwarts her desires, and has been an influence on many anglophone queer and lesbian women, regarded both as a stirring representation and an insidious antique. It has also been interpreted as a transgender narrative, with some readers arguing that Stephen might be better understood as a trans man. Stephen, however, refers to herself as an 'invert': a sexological term from the early 20th century which has fallen out of use, and an identity which falls between the divided categories of 'homosexual' and 'transgender.'

SISTER EXHIBITION

**GRAND
UNION**

LOVE & SOLIDARITY
Grand Union, Birmingham
Sat 8 February – Friday 17 April

INTRODUCTION

by Jamie Crewe

Solidarity & Love at Humber Street Gallery opens with a blood-drenched portico: the entrance of the top floor gallery has been flooded with red light. Beyond this is a darkened space containing two new videos, both based around conflict and camaraderie, looping simultaneously. One video, titled "*Morton*" – "*Beedles*" – "*An abyss*", is projected on a screen; the other, titled "*The Ideal Bar*" – "*Le Narcisse*" – "*Alec's*", is played on a smaller monitor which stands before the projection screen, intruding upon the larger and longer video, and intruded upon in turn.

"*The Ideal Bar*" – "*Le Narcisse*" – "*Alec's*" is a dramatised exchange between two characters in a Glasgow nightclub, inspired by a sequence in *The Well of Loneliness* in which Stephen encounters a repellent reflection of herself in a Parisian gay bar. These characters are portrayed by performance maker and ogre Sorcha Clelland, and performance artist and music producer TAAHLIAH, who switch roles in the version shown at Grand Union. This exchange is punctuated, as in Radclyffe Hall's text, by the image of a panting, dying fox. Though it demands compassion, this fox is not real, and its blood looks perhaps more like lipstick. The video is scored by a hyperventilating concertina.

"*Morton*" – "*Beedles*" – "*An abyss*" is a video documenting Radclyffe Hall – a concomitant group of artists, writers, and others, working under the author's name and in this case composed of Jamie Crewe, Nicky Crewe, Vicky Crewe, Seán Elder, Laura Guy, John Heffernan, Mason Leaver-Yap, and Kim McAleese – engaging in a traditional craft from the Peak District, where Jamie grew up. The video shows this group, over the course of two days in Birmingham's Modern Clay ceramics studio, making a bastardised version of a well dressing.

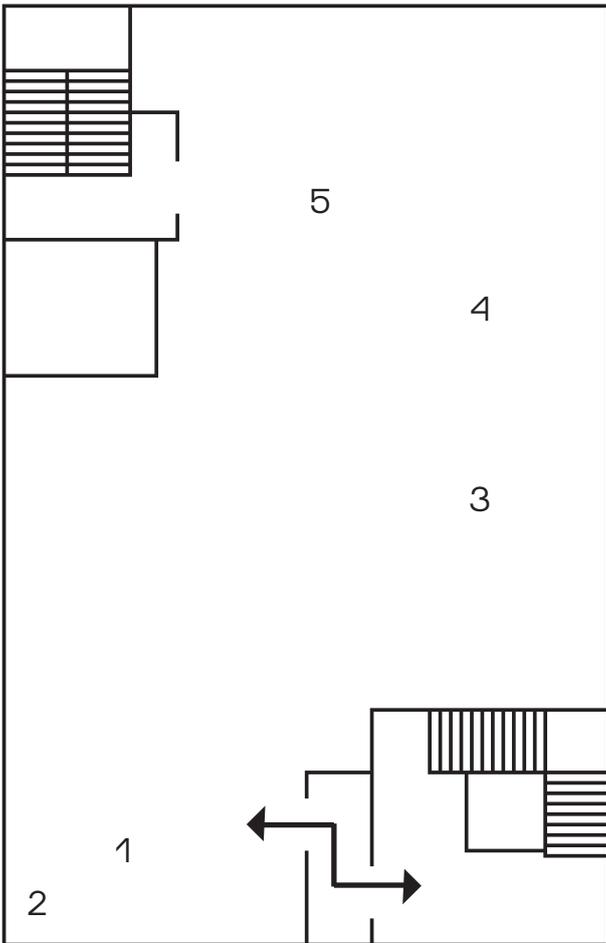
Well dressings are decorative pallets of clay into which designs are formed with fresh flowers, seeds, wool, and other natural materials. These are erected around the wells of certain Derbyshire villages and towns each summer, in a tradition which dates from the 1800s. "*Morton*" – "*Beedles*" – "*An abyss*" focuses on the group's hands doing the detailed, demanding work of constructing such designs, which, in this case, are not traditional: drawn from disparate sources, they touch on themes of heartbreak, LGBTQIA+ solidarity, the legacy of *The Well of Loneliness*, and more. The audio reflects this, as conversation recorded during the assemblage branches into varied discussions: (of going to — or refusing to go to — Pride celebrations); of the social function of well dressing as experienced by Jamie, Nicky, and Vicky; of instances of transphobia; of heartbreak and more. In this, there are small moments of friction and revelation, born from the combination of disparate people — and deep investments — working together under one name.

There is a crack in the olive green curtain which splits Humber Street Gallery's top floor gallery and forms this dark space for video viewing. Through this aperture light enters, and a steel and MDF rail is installed, cutting through the gap and leading into the second half of the gallery. On this steel rail are copies of a printed work, titled "*Womanhood*", of which around 3,000 copies exist, displayed across the two venues and available for any viewer to take away. The cover design of this is based on the cover design of *The Sink of Solitude* (1928), an illustrated lampoon of *The Well of Loneliness* written by Beresford Egan, P.R. Stephensen, and 'Several Hands'. "*Womanhood*", too, has things to say about Radclyffe Hall: through collaged excerpts of the novel, drawings, and a first-person narrative written with a knife, the work addresses the pain of disenfranchisement, and the contrary, almost spiteful endurance of hope.

Past the rail is the second half of the gallery, in which a free-standing wall faces the far window. This wall displays a series of fired clay slabs: the products of the labour depicted in "*Morton*" – "*Beedles*" – "*An abyss*".

Traditionally a well dressing would be erected for one or two weeks, then begin to dry out and

WORK DETAILS, GALLERY 2



1. *"The Ideal Bar" — "Le Narcisse" — "Alec's"*, 2020

Video, 2 mins duration. Featuring TAAHLIAH and SORCHA CLELLAND. Camera by TOM TURRELL.

2. *"Morton" — "Beedles" — "An abyss"*, 2020

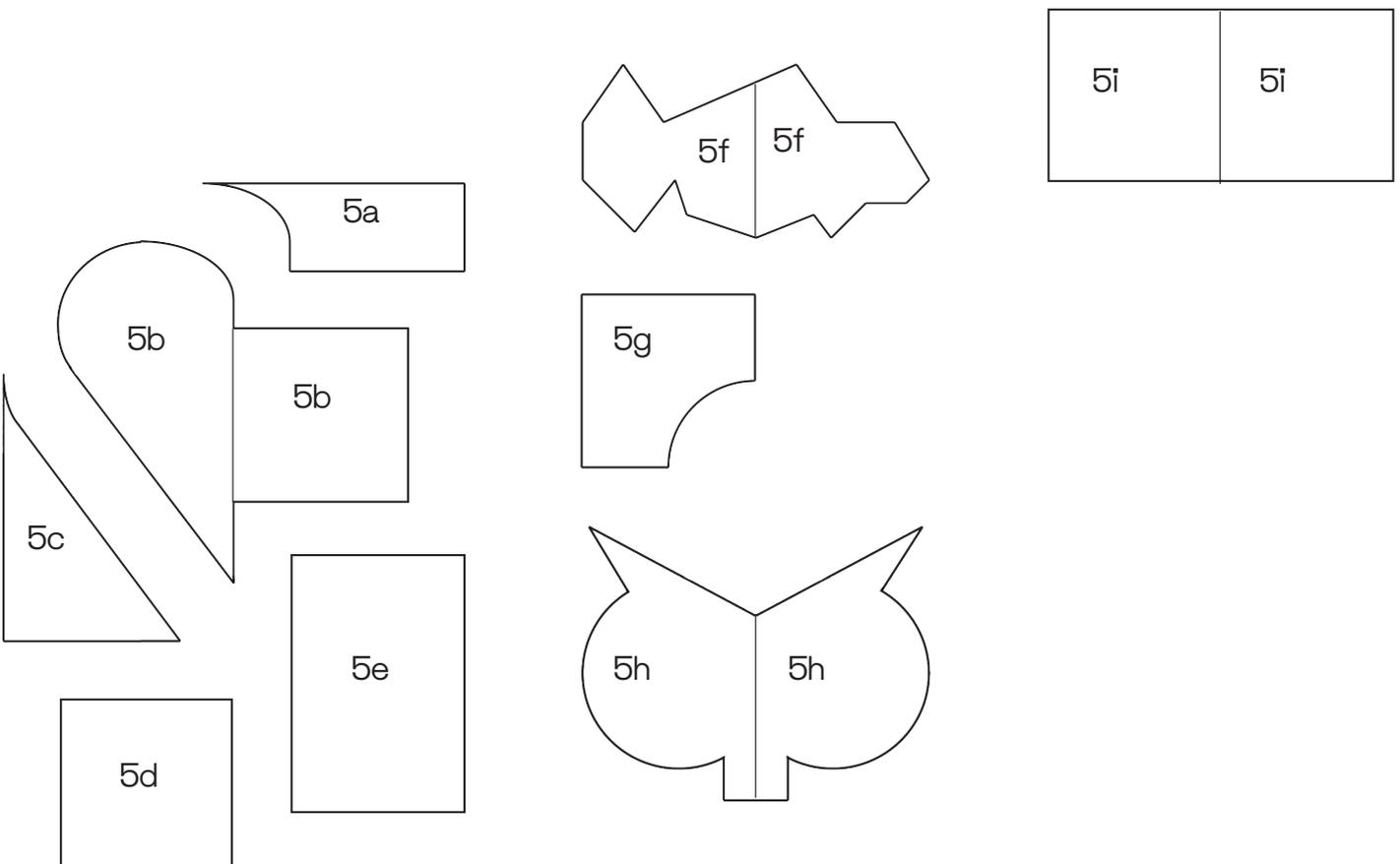
Video, 30 mins duration. Featuring RADCLYFFE HALL. Camera by TOM TURRELL. Sound recording by JOHN TURRELL.

3. *"Womanhood"*, 2020

Risograph print on paper, staples. Printed by THE HOLODECK.

4. *"Little red fox"*, 2020

Faux fur, foam, foam clay, glass, plastic, aluminium wire, ink.



SLABS BY RADCLYFFE HALL

5a. "A slab" — "*Large brown hand*", 2020
Pumpkin seeds, acrylic wool, chamomile,
sweet william petals, chrysanthemum petals,
daisies, fired clay.

5b. "A slab" — "*Sore heart*" — "*One*", 2020
Poppy petals, acrylic thread, ground coffee,
fired clay.

5c. "A slab" — "*Aunt*", 2020
Hessian, straw, grass, wooden tooth-picks,
acrylic thread, carnation petals, elderflowers,
pumpkin seeds, fired clay.

5d. "A slab" — "*Unfruitful breast*", 2020
Chrysanthemum, acrylic wool, rose petals,
carnation petals, fired clay.

5e. "A slab" — "*In the gold haze of late
afternoon*", 2020
Coffee beans, pine chips, hydrangea petals,
carnation petals, fired clay.

5f. "A slab" — "*Dignity and pride without
ostentation*", 2020
Poppy seeds, dried chamomile, acrylic thread,
fired clay.

5g. "A slab" — "*Mirrors thickly painted with
cupids*", 2020
Chrysanthemum petals, acrylic thread, fired
clay.

5h. "A slab" — "*Our three selves*", 2020
Rose petals, sesame seeds, chrysanthemum
petals, acrylic thread, fired clay.

5i. "A slab" — "*Protesting roses*" — "*Two*",
2020
Coffee beans, acrylic wool, fired clay.

GLOSSARY

ANGLOPHONE: English-speaking.

APERTURE: a hole or an opening through which
light travels.

CONCERTINA: a small musical instrument
played by stretching and squeezing a central
bellows between the hands to blow air over
reeds, each note being sounded by a button.

CONCOMITANT: naturally accompanying or
associated.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT: the state of being
deprived of a right or privilege

DISPARATE: essentially different in kind; not
able to be compared.

INSIDIOUS: proceeding in a gradual, subtle way,
but with very harmful effects.

KILN: a furnace or oven for burning, baking, or
drying, especially one for calcining lime or firing
pottery.

PORTICO: a structure consisting of a roof
supported by columns at regular intervals,
typically attached as a porch to a building.

THWART: prevent (someone) from
accomplishing something.

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

David Cleary, David Priestman, Louis Jones,
Steve Potter, Matthew Moore, Alice O'Rourke,
Kim McAleese, John Heffernan, Mason
Leaver-Yap, Laura Guy, Nicky Crewe, Vicky
Crewe, Seán Elder, Joseph Lilley, John Turrell,
Tom Turrell, TAAHLIAH, Sorcha Clelland, Mark
Essen, Sarah Taylor Silverwood, Cheryl Jones,
Nat Raha, Shola Von Reinhold and Juliet Jaques

ABOUT US

Humber Street Gallery is an Absolutely Cultured project, bringing a vibrant, high-quality contemporary art space to Hull. The gallery's free programme of exhibitions is supported by a series of talks, performances, screenings and workshops.

Absolutely Cultured puts culture at the heart of Hull's ambition and aspirations, commissioning and producing a programme of events and projects which are ambitious, surprising and imaginative. In addition to the gallery and our broader cultural events, we continue to develop our world-class volunteer programme, to deliver initiatives to support the cultural sector and to offer access to creative learning opportunities.

OPENING TIMES

GALLERY

Wed – Sun: 11:00 – 18:00
First Thu of the Month: Until 20:00
(During Exhibitions)

GALLERY CAFÉ

Tue: 10:00 – 16:00
Wed – Sun: 10:00 – 18:00
First Thu of the Month: Until 20:00
(During Exhibitions)

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