

NEWCASTLE CONTEMPORARY ART

SALLY MADGE:

NOWHERE BETTER THAN THIS PLACE

SATURDAY 28TH JANUARY – SATURDAY 25TH FEBRUARY, 2023

Free Entry

NCA, High Bridge Works, 31-39 High Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1EW. <https://www.visitnca.com>



Stuff of Dreams (2013)

Installations, Institutions, Inhabitations

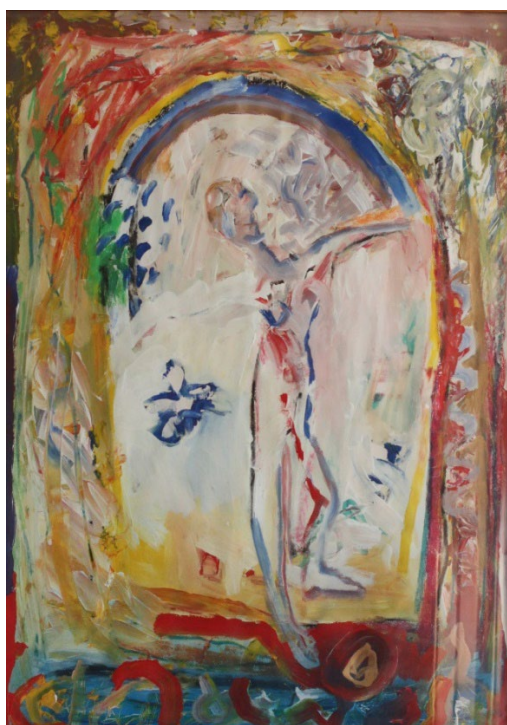
Tom Jennings

Introduction	1
Prelude: Limits of the container	2
Directions of travel	3
Romantic fictions	5
Humans and other animals	8
Nowhere better than this place	11
Destinations	14
Notes and further information	15
Appendices	16
1. Dis/comfort zones	16
2. Risky plenitude	17
3. Draw to perform	19
4. Hands and feet of clay	22
5. Gross domestic products	24
6. <i>Still Life</i> : The interviews	25
7. A body of work	27

Installations, Institutions, Inhabitations

Tom Jennings

Nowhere better than this place is a retrospective exhibition which presents work made over three decades by renowned north-east artist Sally Madge, who passed away suddenly from Covid in November 2020. It highlights aspects of a rich and diverse contemporary arts practice embracing installation, collage, mixed media sculpture, assemblage, photography, film, and performance combined in highly original ways in all manner of hybrid projects. However, although her work appears to defy categorisation, certain consistent principles as well as notable patterns of progression can be discerned. Bold and surprising juxtapositions often deploy unusual, scorned or otherwise broken, discarded or neglected material. They are skilfully crafted and grafted using innovative techniques reflecting ideas drawn first and foremost from personal resonance and daily life, seasoned with characteristically mischievous wit and wisdom to draw in and delight yet simultaneously to unsettle and challenge the viewer.¹ Meanwhile, surrealism, psychoanalysis, and avant-garde, conceptual and live art along with radical movements in philosophy and pedagogy are prominent among many inspirations and influences; nonetheless, close attentiveness and direct sensual responses to whatever came immediately to hand, eye and mind were always starting points in her artistic process.



Celebrate! (1986)



Ars Longa Vita Brevis (2015)

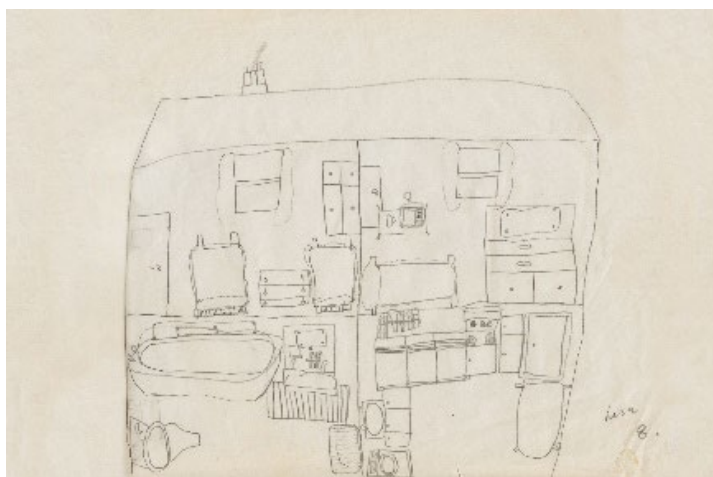
The displays of exhibits and records – some never before shown in public – are organised according to themes that preoccupied Sally and function as site-specific elements stitching together disparate media, imagery and materials linking surface content to norms and narratives which shape understandings of what has value as ‘art’. Broader questions are also posed concerning how the meanings we ascribe to experience are swayed by social, cultural and institutional arrangements that limit and discipline us – they may change and crystallise over time, but are felt as inevitable, natural elements of the world and identity. Sally devoted much of her energy to pondering, manipulating, and creatively expressing the consequences of and mismatches among these notions and manifestations. In developing distinctive approaches to making art, and in offering such vivid ruminations on the impulses and actions involved, she hoped to nourish potential for reinvention and reimagination in the practice and reception of artistic activity and in wider society – and appreciation of the work enhanced her growing reputation as arts educator as well as practitioner.

It should be noted that the motifs described below are to some extent arbitrary, regularly recurring elsewhere in a trajectory impossible to sum up so neatly. Furthermore, several other important strands in Sally's art activities are not represented here at all – and, in general, the selection and curation of material has depended heavily upon what was available in her archive. Nonetheless, this structure does offer a means to grasp abiding directions of travel in what might otherwise seem a somewhat bewildering, if consistently fascinating, body of work. And given her penchant for reworking, recycling and repurposing the subjects, objects, and products of her creative labour wherever salient and practicable, these sets of traces, remnants and records of multiple ventures may be viewed as a constellation of installations knitting together most deeply felt motivations.

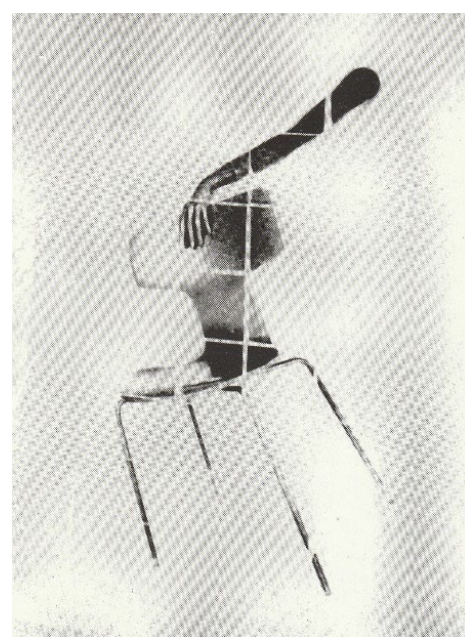
Prelude: Limits of the container

“There is no trace without resistance and there is no etching on a surface without pain.”

(Sally Madge, *Listen with Mother*, 1991; quoting philosopher Marike Finlay)



Lisa's Drawing (1991)



Listen With Mother (1991)

Sally Madge's adventures in contemporary art began in earnest when she embarked upon an MA in Fine Art at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, which had become Northumbria University by the time she graduated in 1992. The motivation to return to student life had built for a while due to growing dissatisfaction – to some extent with her own artistic endeavours, but more specifically the environments and practices she encountered as a community artist and teacher at all levels of education. These reservations and frustrations centred not so much on her passion for creation and inspiration drawn from an ever-broadening knowledge of art and artists, techniques, materials and possibilities which sustained Sally throughout her career, but rather the constraints imposed by the institutions and discourses circumscribing such activity, thereby making it even more difficult to negotiate life as an artist even in relatively enlightened times compared to the austere neoliberal present. Thus, as Lecturer in Arts Education at Sunderland Polytechnic/University from the late 1980s onwards, she conducted research questioning generally accepted notions concerning the growth of artistic skills and abilities. After soliciting the responses of sundry experts, colleagues and peers to an 8-year old's drawing, the investigation culminated in *Limits of the Container*, a fascinating film of herself and a friend's young daughter making art which includes a sharp commentary on the inadequacy of mainstream psychological science in (mis)understandings of creative potential and its realisation.

These efforts may have originated in a conviction that children as well as adults were ill-served by prevailing educational policies and their application – including those purporting to be progressive –

and set the tone for Sally's subsequent emergence as an original and inspirational teacher. However, as the title of the film cited above implies, this was also personal. Explorations of the diverse social, cultural, and institutional forces bearing down on experience and creative expression thus paved the way for the development of her contemporary art practice. Central to this trajectory was discovering how to deploy and integrate multiple dimensions of her own proclivities and capabilities using the full range of established and new hybrid artistic forms and techniques – and the latter suited her down to the ground, since they also encourage the flouting of conventional categories that she naturally gravitated towards.

Her own orthodox arts education so far had taken Sally from recognition of her enthusiasm for and talent in art at school to a foundation course in Oxford and then the Central School of Art and Design in London where she studied ceramics and sculpture and became accomplished in the relevant craft skills and disciplines. Meanwhile, despite being profoundly excited by and taking part in various of the outlandish happenings and innovative cultural milieux emerging in the 'swinging sixties' and radical 1970s,² their influence on the process and products of her artistic labour took longer to manifest since starting a family and associated upheavals in daily life took precedence. But when conditions settled and allowed space to play in a now permanent home in Newcastle, a gradual change in intentions first yielded pottery and ceramic sculpture which was, as before, impeccably fashioned. But now it became more expressive and intuitively realised, more vibrantly colourful and potent in symbolism – while a parallel departure in the 1980s saw comparably exuberant dream- and fantasy-laden painting.

Still, the limits of these containers did not furnish sufficient depth or range to house and combine all of the layers of meaning, connotation and feeling that Sally realised were required. Her development partly reflects the impact of schools of thought as varied as psychoanalysis, surrealism, anthropology, sociology and philosophy as well as strong feminist convictions, all of which tendencies persisted. But not all of her expressive desire could be accommodated in the forms she was most familiar with. Hence the search for more expansive and open-ended paradigms of practice which could approximate the complexity and overdetermination of lived experience while providing the flexibility to permit apposite aesthetic responses. Having sounded out likely candidates in the relatively safe space of the MA, she hit the ground running immediately thereafter.

None of this, it should be emphasised, dimmed in the slightest Sally's delight in exploring materials and experimenting with techniques in making smaller-scale work. Indeed, more recently she devoted considerable energy to testing the conventional scope of drawing; resulting in, for example, shortlisting for the Jerwood Prize with a film of a performance, and the delivery of shows, presentations, lectures and workshops elaborating upon its importance and extending its remit.³ Moreover, she resumed her love affair with ceramics and likewise extended the limits of those containers too.⁴ So, what follows here represents an attempt to map the work's progression during three decades of activity following the full-blooded embrace of conceptual art, poststructuralism and twentieth century avant-garde and modernist ideas and methods, and the corresponding development of her unique practice. All quotations are from Sally's own artist's statements and exhibition texts, and it should be noted that the discussion below is not intended to be definitive but merely aims to do some kind of justice to an especially vigorous and variegated life in art.

Directions of travel

My work is concerned with concepts of containment and separation, questions of authenticity, and the construction of the self.

Social control operates in part by narrowing our focus from wider public and institutional power down to a kind of knowledge which individualises, psychologises and biologises us. These kinds of knowledge or discourses produce our identities as grounded in our separate bodies and minds which we then believe to be the sources of our experience. My aim is to reflect this process in my work as well as transgressing it.

(No Trace Without Resistance, 1992)

Having decided to expand the remit of 'containment' beyond dictates imposed by the properties of specific materials and their handling, as in traditional Fine Art, and the formal rules of composition and display familiar from modernist practice and 'white cube' gallery exhibitionism, for example, Sally began to address questions of wider social and political consequence as well as personal and intimate resonance. Here, the usual guiding principles of art practice might be deployed to fulfil particular purposes or when felt appropriate in a certain context, but were not followed slavishly or allowed to govern or determine the creative process or product. With a much broader wealth of sources and resources at her disposal, responses to themes of interest no longer merely required condensation and translation into symbolic and physical framing such as in clay and acrylic, and she enjoyed free rein to deploy all kinds of media without aiming for unity in singular and exemplary products.



Bric-a-Bracollage (2008)



Chance Encounters (2015)

From now on – and with no *a priori* hierarchy of value ascribed to their diverse provenance or intrinsic features – historical and contemporaneous textual and arts quotations, allusions, references and imagery are also mobilised along with photographic, film and audio content as well as found objects and the often abject, devalued or debased materials saturating popular culture and daily life. These are treated as found objects just as worthy of notice and handling as the animal, vegetable, mineral or synthetic matter and detritus littering any environment. This magpie propensity, incidentally, originated much earlier in beachcombing and foraging by an already unusually curious and adventurous child in the Cumbrian countryside and remote Anglesey woodland and coast. Engagement in these activities and fascination with the natural and unnatural world intensified throughout Sally's life, and the influence of her mother's own meticulous nature notebooks as a schoolgirl is also evident in tastes for exhaustive sketching, nature table arrangements, and land art interventions such as 'rearranging the beach' whenever and wherever circumstances allowed.

So, the classic craft techniques mastered in her Fine Arts education were now mobilised to support the subaltern promiscuity of hybrid approaches in smaller mixed-media sculpture, collage and assemblage – and especially in larger-scale installations, where an exhibition space tended to mutate into something of an artistic ecosystem and experiential environment rather than merely hosting a selection of objects. These projects allowed the destabilisation of the presumed coherence and common-sense truth claims of rationalising and scientific narratives about the social world. This is achieved by bringing to the surface, counterposing and conjoining hidden connections and repressed emotional and existential dimensions in works which function as temporary liminal zones between so-called objective reality and more multi-layered imagined, fantasy and dream/nightmare landscapes. As confidence and enjoyment grew in creating such ambivalent spaces, reference to overarching discourses

became 'second nature', less strident, integrated with more subtlety and humour, and arguably more effective too. Meanwhile, the performative and social elements of Sally's artistic process increasingly took centre stage in collaborative, collective and artist-led and -run initiatives and live art events, all of which developments were woven in mutual interaction with her parallel career in arts education.

The following sections describe a set of artworks by Sally as well as records and supporting material pertaining to a passage 'from installation to inhabitation' borrowed from her archive or generously loaned from private collections for exhibition at the High Bridge Gallery. The content is arranged for convenience in three categories: the first considers childhood, adulthood, sex, and selfhood; the second concerns visceral and physical experience expressed in terms of animality and embodiment in relation to systems of knowledge; and the third covers work in liminal coastal spaces, and especially on the tidal island of Lindisfarne in Northumberland.

I. Romantic fictions

It would be preferable for an art work to speak for itself. The viewer's response is what counts, even if it differs from the artist's intention. Perhaps the art object can be seen as part of a conversation between artist and viewer – a conversation where meanings often lie in the spaces between words.

Most of my work entails gathering, selecting and reassembling elements – ideas, objects, images and words. In this case the process was sparked off by the invitation to take part in an exhibition for International Women's Day. Its theme, 'Hand', has many possible aesthetic and material connotations. This multiplicity of possibilities led me to the surrealist merging of conscious and unconscious processes, and the creation of unexpected qualities and associations – especially in the mundane and everyday world ...

How do I locate myself within my work without merely reproducing the conventional tendencies to objectify and fetishise women's bodies? Since I do not advocate the notion of biology as destiny, I prefer to operate in the space between the natural and the cultural. By representing parts of the body as merging, I wanted to question traditional cultural meanings. So here the hand is implicated in women's desire and pleasure, while women's sexuality may itself be seen as an active and empowering force ... The unexpected resonance of the merged images is suggestive of the potency of creative energy wherever it is employed. (*Handmaiden*, 1998)

'Romantic fictions' tackles subjects related to personal life and power relations in compelling expressions of visceral, sensual, social and emotional existence. Often, in Sally's hands, the codes and rules embedded in culture concerning childhood, education, the family, gender and intimacy are unhelpful, even damaging fantasies. Rather than representing reliable guides to understanding who we are and how we might live, these systems may achieve coherent authority only by suppressing or ignoring the messy reality of being human. However, in line with her radicalism and steadfast feminism, and in opposition to narrow and prescriptive methods frequently used in teaching art, for instance, Sally resisted aesthetic or philosophical resolution. Instead, these playful, forthright acknowledgements of the pleasures and pains, complications and contradictions inherent in each case signal a process of working things out for ourselves.

In that regard, early installations set bodily urges in striving for creative expression against prevailing systems of pedagogy which may curtail rather than encourage it. These efforts were preceded by *Limits of the Container: Development and Restriction of Expression* (1990) – a video anthology showing Sally painting exuberantly while spoken and projected texts contrast perspectives from cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis, intercut with footage of her kneading dirty clay on the floor and a toddler's equally rapt, sustained contemplation of her large abstract easel painting. Subsequent tales of childhood play consider the impact of commodification in the growth of personality and, along the way, complicate comforting nostalgia. *Transitional Goods'* array of cuddly toys magnifies the intense templates for close relationships manufactured by youngsters with favoured items, paralleled by a

photograph of the adult artist indulging her inner childlike queen/mother resplendent in a pink rabbit suit reclining among her part-objects and -subjects. *Replay* then explores more ambiguous and sinister connotations of commercialisation in a darkened toy museum whose contents are clothed in ghostly white – interrupted with projections of clockwork devices whose jarring mechanical chatter accompanies sounds of babies crying and playground pandemonium, balancing fond memories with baleful reminders of early years troubles and aftermaths.

Toys can be powerful reminders of childhood ... they evoke nostalgia as well as a more direct physical experience of child's play. Their visual qualities hold a fascination for the viewer, but memories are much more elusive. Encased behind glass, the multitude of museum exhibits frustrates, as it magnifies, the desire to play The display cases are shrouded, so that the toys are 'absent', instead replayed as ambivalent and disturbing hints, shadows and projections ... The aim is to emphasise a sense of fragmentation, poignancy and loss and to activate more of the presence of childhood.

(*Replay*, 1999)



Transitional Goods (1996)



Avant Guard (2009)

Having firmly characterised creative development in terms of inextricably internal and external social relations, another series of exhibitions similarly addresses the portrayal of sex and gender. More ambitious installations are interspersed with smaller-scale sculptures and collages mulling over representations of womanhood and consistently emphasising collisions of bodies and ideologies. *Self Portrait* and *Film Stars* suggest the artifice of the feminine 'masquerade': the former in photographic and video still images of a heavily disguised fugitive confounding objectification in medical and public spheres; the latter in perfunctory refusals of the pedestal of perfection. High fashion fairytales are tainted with the threatening low carnality of the precursors to Cinderella in *Putting My Foot In It*, as dainty footwear sprouts exotic plumage and where "the visual and tactile qualities of the shoes are intended to fascinate and simultaneously to unnerve ... This tension and interplay between repulsion and attraction speaks more generally of the pain and pleasure of creative exploratory processes, as well as the effortless fetishisation of packaged products". More directly, *Handmaiden's* multiple exposures marry several signifiers of the sexualised and objectified female form to wrest agency from subjugation.

The city is often described through analogy with the body: the heart, soul, guts of an urban space. The gallery is situated in the heart of the city ... Now, the site is both part of and separate from city centre street activity. Romantic love also appears detached from mainstream culture – a special, intimate space separate from community. Fantasy and desire are felt to exist inside our isolated selves. Sexual interaction is somehow marginal to economic and political business – an influence to be suppressed as part of our ‘private’ lives. Likewise, cultural expressions of romance and sex easily end up in low status genres such as Mills & Boon novels or pornography. Social groups honour sexual love, but also monitor and police its worrisome unruliness and subversive potential ...

This installation blurs boundaries between the bodily, social and historical, and weaves a narrative through the physical and emotional structure of the space. In romancing the heart of the city, the work hints at the ways a sense of place, and our positions in it, are constructed through processes originating outside its boundaries in other times, spaces and experiences. (*Slippery Bliss*, 1996)

The immersive *Slippery Bliss* juggles a host of ‘adult’ themes, intertwining Keats’ sentimental lip-service with various courtly and vulgar accounts of love and lust. Audio advice on writing popular romantic novels and walls covered in real red roses (plus thorns) clash with video of frenzied kissing, fluorescent blood-red cracks in the floor, while interview transcripts describe working-class nights out in the ‘party city’ against a playlist of contemporary soul and R&B. Conversely, the minimal *Bed of Roses* (without thorns) provides just what it says on the tin – with the rationale that: “I like the profoundness of clichés” – except hinting at a certain disingenuousness given the polyester bedlinen and plastic-petal fairy lights as well as a cheap paperback entitled ‘Enter My Jungle’. Then, the acclaimed video installation *Underdog* riffs on Bunuel and Dali’s cinematic classic *Un Chien Andalou* and rivals it for weird, wonderful surrealism, juggling garish animation, dolls house sets, live human and non-human action and Super-8 film to furnish a dreamlike universe of dread and yearning with an exemplary archive soundtrack.

I am interested in the performative potential of daily life and domestic rituals and the sculptural possibilities of the environments and materials encountered there. My aim is to rework mundane narratives in such a way as to touch on deeper layers of experience.

A consistent interest is mixing the ordinary and the extraordinary, the sublime and the abject, using strategies and techniques which merge conscious and unconscious processes in creating unexpected qualities and associations from everyday actions, objects and places.

(Artist’s statement, 2015)

Later, and profiting from the integration of live art into Sally’s palette, collaborations with Carole Luby offer poignant, indignant, celebratory and riotous assertions of the agency of mature gendered bodies in nurturing others alongside righteous feminist fury. So, the toll of domestic endurance drains visceral resources both metaphorically and literally in *Labour Intensive’s* monstrous cottage-industrial complex, with bucketfuls of blood and breast-milk (here, stewed fruit and single cream) woman-handled for filtering through outsized muslin skin before nourishment is served to viewers in the form of cups of tea, scones, jam and clotted cream. Next, in *Late Shift*, a wall of white sliced is built behind the gallery window, and bemused city centre pub-crawlers passing by proffer advice on bricklaying. This prompts the further infiltration of the outside world into an increasingly chaotic delivery of daily bread, as participants in off the street contribute creatively and conversationally in digesting this food for thought.⁵ Then, Valerie Solanas’s tirades against male privilege in the *SCUM Manifesto* are recast as carnivalesque stand-up in which hierarchy is ritualistically overturned in a Byker chainsaw massacre of Barbie’s mate Ken and Action Man toys for boys – although, ironically, the final-girl slaughter is actually perpetrated by a male collaborator under the direction of our heroines. Notably, in all these happenings, the creative process is itself directly manifest in real time in the actions and interactions of the artists inhabiting the installation space and inviting audience involvement. With tangible collective experience privileged over sovereign individuals engaged in isolated reflection or interpretation, boundaries and distinctions between art and life begin to blur.

II. Human and other animals

The work described above concerns decidedly human settings and subjects, but the emphasis on a complex interplay of bodily as well as mental and social experience is pivotal in Sally's pragmatic philosophy of art as well as her creative, educational and other socially-engaged activities. This is exemplified in her appreciation of the concept of the 'habitus', denoting a framework of bodily dispositions, tastes and responses built up over time which come to characterise one's physical presence, orientation, and patterns of behaviour. It provides a means to grasp how routine embodied practices typically develop and operate without necessarily involving conscious awareness or control – forming a backdrop to our existence which may be rather more intransigent than we might wish but also represents a foundation for all that can make life worth living. Moreover, the habitus may be saturated with their effects but is not wholly determined by biological, social, cultural, or political factors. These instead exert influence merely as some among many pressures and forces in the internal and external environment which are adapted to in order to fulfil needs and satisfy desires relating to visceral as well as psychic urges and impulses.

This formulation made sense to Sally in striving to understand and channel some of the origins and dynamics of her creative motivations and expressive outcomes, while at the same time learning how to encourage others to pursue the fulfilment of their own potential. Central to both was a spirit of curiosity and exploration and general openness to the world – epitomised by direct physical engagement with the beings, objects and materials in one's surroundings while remaining unencumbered for as long as practicable by defined instrumental objectives imposed by either oneself or others. In short, 'play' – in its most (allegedly) innocent, ideal, and 'childlike' sense, and notable in the conduct of human and non-human species alike. So, in a pattern apparent throughout her biography ever since a dislocated and rather isolated childhood of exploration and den-building where she was effectively free from pressure to conform, Sally compulsively foraged for, collected and played with anything capturing her attention wherever she found herself irrespective of its status or valuation according to anyone's criteria.



Always Look on the Bright Side of Death (2014)



Souvenir (2013)

The installations and projects recalled under the rubric of 'Human and other animals' illustrate this fascination with natural environments in all their biological and mineral – and often 'artificial' – glory and Sally's insistence on our full physical embeddedness, as animals, on this earth. Our sense of animality and animalistic references and remains thus feature in much of her output whatever its focus, and the artefacts shown here are interspersed with some of the consequences of a fondness for collections, assemblages and cross-fertilisation as preferred means of aesthetic investigation and creation – again offering critiques of systems of knowledge which claim to tell truths about the world

but strictly circumscribe engagement with it. Subjects tackled include the fates of wildlife impacted by human dominance in urban and rural settings, contrasted with rationalising discourses in natural and environmental sciences, heritage management and museology as well as the arts which typically view natural lifeforms as helpless objects of the expert gaze with little agency of their own. However, animals – including those of the human persuasion – may have other ideas. Sally mines a range of conceptions drawing connections between our lived bodily habits, including those involving the senses, emotions, and modes of expressivity, and many strands from art history, folklore, mythology and ancient, indigenous and tribal cultures, practices and worldviews past and present which acknowledge and embrace aspects of animistic belief and sensibility and are often much less inclined to attribute any decisive difference, let alone superiority, to *Homo sapiens*.

I wanted to disrupt the formal boundaries between art galleries, museums, and heritage displays of the products of nature and culture, so as to evoke unexpected emotional resonances through the interplay of objects, sound, images and text. In doing so, the installation aims to explore the effects of symbolising such experiences through the mediation of cultural codes and institutions.
(*Hot House Cold Storage*, 1994)

In *Hot House Cold Storage*, a rural gallery is alive with avatars of the owl evicted during barn conversion and its prey along with an effluent bronze-cast cowpat lurking among haystacks emanating the intoxicating aroma of agricultural productivity. Citations from texts on heritage management and museological sanitisation accompany a projection of an iconic line from English Romantic poetry – which, interrupted by barbed wire, is now rendered as ‘Nature never did betray the he that loved Words’ and ‘art her worth’. *Heart of the City* then delves into the urban economy in a former dry-cleaning establishment. Accompanied by cooing and crowing, an antechamber of arterial red translucent hangings leads to antithesis in a squalid closet, with an egg in a washbasin nest of droppings guarded by an overstuffed feral pigeon – the ‘flying rat’ of underclass fauna – which appears to be obese, or perhaps pumped up on steroids.

Traces of the building's previous occupants lurk in a hinterland between the mundane everyday and deeper unconscious states ... Cleanliness and dirt, and life and death mingle – healthy growth flowering in the wasteland. The strains of dawn chorus birdsong overlay distantly heard city centre noises. Even more poignantly, shit cradles eggs dislodged from unseen nests. I hope these resonances can do justice to the ambivalence, pleasure and anxiety of our experiences of the heart of the city. (*Heart of the City*, 1995)

A decade later, the titular pet in *Gerbil's Guide to the Galaxy* methodically minces a classic ‘Universal Reference’ encyclopaedia for its own purposes, manufacturing a new home from the deconstruction of scientific evangelism. Sally subsequently salvaged remnants of the book's illustrations churned out by the industrious rodent and from them produced a series of images printed on paper handmade from the bulk of the chewed fragments, in a magical transubstantiation of hubristic rationalism courtesy of the life-force of the lower orders.

Reminiscent of the surrealist technique of automatism, which involves the surrender of conscious control in the production of works of art, the fate of the book dissolves the architecture of knowledge into that of action ... as the gerbil as architect works to reconstruct its environment according to its own design ... We may think about rodents collectively in terms of the feral masses gnawing away at and polluting our social and built environment as opposed to the regimented labour required to build the latter in the first place ... Once isolated, domesticated and controlled as part of the culturally sanctioned phenomenon of pet ownership, animals contribute to everyday life, providing companionship and pleasure and having affection and care lavished on them in return. (*The Gerbil's Guide to the Galaxy*, 2005)

Other skewed contemplations of natural history are influenced by museum conventions and their origins in colonial 'cabinets of curiosities' plundered from foreign parts. Countering such cold-heartedness, more intimate scenarios include *Bird in Hand*, where visitors to a group show at London's Freud Museum collaborate with the artist/analyst in a soulful ritual of cradling, contemplating, mourning, and communing with a freeze-dried shorebird exhumed from its coffin: "referencing psychoanalytic notions of free association and confidential disclosure ... the bird is transformed in this travelling performance by the weight of its secrets while the attendant remains vigilant." Also with deep personal connotations, *Souvenir* intervenes in Newcastle's Great North Museum, installing Sally's ageing self and granddaughter to hang out in one of many large display cases housing taxidermy and wildlife ecosystem pastiches. Meanwhile, a black wall panel with strange and surreal contents whose unclear origins and status resist definition is just as unfamiliar in modern natural history exhibitions – and, as in other responses to museological aesthetics, an earlier video tour of the vaults of this institution was an obvious precursor.

Whereas, now excavating unnatural history and problematising its monuments in a global context, the elegaic *Out of Place* aimed "to create a memorial ... hinting at a story which is not quite evident other than as an uncanny juxtaposition of incongruous elements." It tells the unlikely but true tall tale of a rescued wild brown bear enlisted in active service in World War 2 allied forces before exile to a Scottish airfield – with references to the events accompanied by a film screening on a TV perched atop a cairn of partly dressed masonry. Here, a pantomime bear-suited actor roots aimlessly through wreckage at the derelict demobilisation site, in what is a tribute but also an "un-monument" to Wojtek the bear which undermines "the uniformity and conformity of mediated, ritualised remembrance". (And, on reflection: "memory, time, space, place ... this is possibly a self-portrait.") Likewise, two more projects in this category as described next deploy traces and tableaux of animal life to enliven drier and less cataclysmic if, ultimately, comparably world-shattering phenomena – but, again, with a typically improbable and apparently oblique focus on dimensions which might be deemed marginal to the grand narratives involved but turn out to be surprisingly salient if one is willing to go with the flow.

Swept gallery walkway for an hour, sometimes on hands and knees but mainly squatting so as not to get splinters in my knees. Wore face mask, apron and rubber gloves, got very hot and dusty ... I have actually ingested some of this ancient and erudite dust, it has become part of the fabric of my being ... It does, however, make me feel quite sick and I have a headache coming on. As I sweep, I note that Greek Mythology and the Biblical section are dustier than other sections, there is a damp stain on the floor near Social Sciences, Ethics gets a lot of sun and there are large gaps in the floorboards along the Spanish, French and German Literature sections. (*Fictions*, 2013)

As part of the 'Return to the Philosopher's Table' programme at the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle, centuries-worth of learned tomes suffer an invasion of *Fictions*. These mixed-media sculptures loitering among the shelf-stacks twist biological matter into fantastical grotesqueries, denoting realms of tragedy, wonder and barely imaginable potential repressed or disavowed by the conventional camouflage and imperious arrogance of officially certified storytelling. Now, as correctives, they are ghostly reminders of what is lost in hopeless quests for pure, unequivocal truth, whether supernatural or secular. In parallel fashion, dust collected from the library infrastructure and packaged as artists' multiples stands as the detritus shed by the dead weight of alleged progress – the leftovers of inconvenient phenomena that cannot be accommodated and so are excluded from consideration as central in the production of life and knowledge. The *Stuff of Dreams* performance lecture then compounds the insult to respectable wisdom. Clothed in lab coat decorated with fur, feathers and bones with a backdrop of texts from critical theory, Sally expounds alchemical formulae to conjure alternative real, symbolic and imaginary universes – a process interrupted by and climaxing when ballroom dancers sweep in with a rousing Viennese waltz.

Boundaries are blurred between fact and fiction and ... the sites and spaces of public and private institutions are explored. As artist, adventurer and collector, I attempt to construct a personal taxonomy from these experiences, choreographing encounters with objects gifted to the early Literary and Philosophical Society as well as engagements with people and events ... utilising my personal archive of objects, anecdotes, jokes and theoretical citations to investigate ways in which an auto-ethnographic position might be developed ...

This is a surreal assemblage of humour and critique which incorporates the messy business of individual subjectivity into the research process and outcome, where objects act as 'verbal props' and represent nexus points for particular dialogues and concerns that derive from conversations and actions by and between people ... This might generate a reassessment of the provenance and display of museum objects, propelling them beyond their fixed and materially-bound context and questioning assumptions about the nature of collections and conservation.

(Stuff of Dreams, 2013)

Finally, commissioned for a museum in North Shields – a town clinging onto an oceangoing fisheries legacy – *Still Life* maps wildlife responses to Anthropocene desecrations of habitats. Stuffed seabird protagonists in mixed-media microenvironments have colonised and adapted to urban spaces and resources, and mock interviews recount their struggles in common-sense grassroots Green terms.⁶ Their perspectives are presumed and relative autonomy assumed despite entanglement in the nets of our attitudes and activities, and two short films further sketch the pitfalls of such sympathetic identification in vignettes of humans wearing latex seagull headgear: a fish supper with genteel table settings on the Fish Quay shading into the mayhem familiar to anyone who has delivered leftover takeaways to massed avian hordes at a seaside resort; and a science-fiction actioner where schoolboys battle vengefully monstrous mutants. In fact, Sally had exhibited comparable small taxidermy tableaux in North Shields two decades earlier in *Free as a Bird*. However, not only is the tragicomic sensitivity sharper in the later installation, but major advances in sophistication and realisation are apparent too – not least in foregrounding agency rather than mere victimhood; albeit in circumstances not of the animals' choosing, just as in our own predicaments.

Humour, pathos and a touch of surrealism are combined in visual scenarios using a range of objects, materials and media, including preserved sea birds, plastic beach debris, children's action figures and scale models, as well as performance on film. Viewers are invited to develop the story lines implicit in the work. (*Still Life*, 2016)

III. Nowhere better than this place

The third group of exhibits nudges the erosion of demarcations between lived experience, creative imagination, and orientation to place and space towards a logical conclusion. Sally chose the term 'Nowhere better than this place' for her lifelong love of shoreline and coastal environments, and so it is site-specific in a more expansive sense. Immersion in ambiguous liminal zones – here, between high and low tides and 'readymade' rather than contrived by installation – resulted in ambitious as well as humble output, with only a tiny fraction on view here. While the most well-known work was, in its later iterations, collectively accomplished, the majority is characteristically and idiosyncratically individual. This array includes a range of small pieces, as produced routinely throughout her arts practice in response to particular stimuli and scenes, along with various found object collections and deployments of beachcombed "low-brow archaeology" prompting compulsive sketching and sculpting, and experimentation with and contrasting treatments of marine themes in all media. And although the items shown stem from time spent at seashores across the UK and Europe, a sizeable proportion arose from a long relationship with the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in Northumberland (in reality, sometimes an island but at other times not) and some of it decorates a specially-commissioned 'MadgeMerz' wall reminiscent of the work of Kurt Schwitters – a touchstone for Sally.

The shelter survived eight years of winter storms and spring tides and gained status among locals and visitors as a public artwork, site specific installation, museum and/or space for reverie, play, pilgrimage, parties, sleeping and bird-watching. Over time the interior filled with a bricolage of flotsam, found objects, handmade artefacts and personal mementos ... The boundaries between artist/maker and visitor/spectator became not only blurred but interchangeable. I regularly tidied, edited and rearranged the contents – and so did others, often not to my liking. The shelter became a locus for an ongoing symbolic engagement between strangers (sometimes humorous, frequently poignant, occasionally unpleasant) and I found myself disoriented as well as intrigued by the fact that ownership and provenance had become such a moveable feast. ('Serious Play', in *Garageland*, No. 11, 2007).



Shelter sketch (2009)



At the *Shelter* (2006)

The Lindisfarne *Shelter* marked a sea-change in Sally's practice, yet its chequered 15-year lifespan began with no great aspiration beyond serious play after preliminary beach shacks were scuppered by officialdom. An anonymous drystone hut then gradually assumed shape, substance and a driftwood roof on a more remote rocky stretch before unheralded demolition by a nature reserve manager. In the meantime, word of mouth and virtual myth and fame had accrued far and wide, with multitudes of passersby refashioning the décor and filling dozens of visitor's books. Throughout, and once rebuilding was complete in 2011 with health and safety duly addressed (and after extensive damage caused by a tidal surge), the site served Sally, and many known and unknown others, as venue for friends and family as well as outdoor studio, conceiving and realising plans for artwork shown elsewhere alongside her typical torrents of sketching, collaging, collecting and sculpting engaged in purely for the sake of immediate gratification with no ulterior motives. Subsequent major collective arts programmes and events then raised the public profile even further until final destruction by arson in early 2016.

I have embarked on a collaborative venture which now includes artists, academics, educationalists, institutions, fund raising, and project coordination. Despite this shift in gear and the danger of the fun/subversive element bleeding away, our plans allow for the hut to remain untampered with, apart from the occasional intervention, and there are certain art precedents which offer the potential to extend the narrative ... [with] an active programme of events in and around the hut as a constantly evolving site ... The development of an online and travelling alternative 'museum' builds on the already existing archive of collected ephemera – a re-imagined museum which gathers momentum and embraces context as it goes, a performative site, a discursive space – engendering dialogue and action as a means to generate further material for the collection. In one sense this represents a return to the

pre-disciplinary *wunderkammer*, with its unorthodox taxonomies and unlikely juxtapositions allowing for doubt, contradiction, irony, conflict and constant revision. (Presentation for the AHRC Northern Peripheries Research Network workshop 'Reframing the North', 2014)

The arrangement of material in the gallery condenses a sense of the atmosphere at the site in hosting the extraordinarily broad spectrum of Sally's creative activity, which throughout her career was the basis for all her output however minimal or maximal. A fine example of this meticulous and wide-ranging preparatory business – long before concrete plans would be hatched – is the *Scatter* assemblage, for which large volumes of rotting flotsam and jetsam fabric scraps rescued from near, far and wide were cleansed and stitched into painterly tapestries with no clear intent as to a final form or destination. One early idea was to clothe a geodesic dwelling – hence the dome, here also symbolising the *Shelter* itself – but a later brainwave led to the notion of a set of cushions signifying the dissolution of unknown objects across the seas, followed by unlikely healing and a restoration of home comforts. And, apart from tremendously poignant historical and contemporaneous resonance with dramas and catastrophes of diaspora and migration, this microcosm of human geography pertains equally appropriately to a lower profile of mobility and attendant displacement which many of us have known – as, certainly, had Sally.

I am a collector. Part of my collection consists of broken, lost or abandoned items which I like to 'rescue' or revitalise by combining them to create something new. For this work I have gleaned fragments of cloth found washed up on beaches around the country and stitched them together to create abstract and colourful patchworks. Mystery surrounds each piece. Where has it come from? If clothing, who wore it and how did it find its way to a particular destination? Is it here as a result of misfortune or is there a more mundane story associated with its passage? Multiple possibilities are implicit in each sea-worn remnant, and I have refashioned this fabric of mixed quality and uncertain provenance to make cushions which might provide comfort and rest after a long journey ...

[They] aren't quite cushions, but reference bits of the body ... There's a sort of lovingness about it, trying to recreate something positive out of something destructive. (*Scatter*, 2017-2020)



Scatter fabric on the beach (2015)



Acts of Reclamation (2021)

Moreover, the layers of metaphorical sophistication discernible in this work go even further, in suggesting the thoroughly and unavoidably hybrid, mongrel, collective nature of selfhood and society too. Each cushion is constituted from an array of elements assumed to have entirely different origins but now offering a semblance of individuality balancing intrinsic differentiation, contradiction and synthesis. Likewise, a person's body and character have been formed, from earliest childhood and throughout life, in an uneven, haphazard process of the full or partial incorporation of elements from outside the self.

Far more is involved here than a mere accumulation of experiences, since these inevitably combine with and are altered by traces of interactions and relationships with others – just as the fabric remnants represent many sources now digested, assimilated, and provisionally and imperfectly integrated in what appear as single entities. Equally, and just as ineffably, we give of ourselves – whether aware of it and willing or not – in contributing to the lives of others in ways major or minor, obvious or subtle. So, in effect, these cushions also represent *social* constructions as well as reflecting the nature of social construction itself – physically, materially, and bodily; and conceptually, psychologically, and imaginatively – even if here orchestrated and accomplished by what we, for convenience, perceive as a purely individual artistic temperament. And if our fragments dispersed during a lifetime can somehow be reunited, then these objects radiate a profound empathy with all kinds of personal and communal trials and tribulations which might be transformed into ambivalent beauty, reconciliation, and even transcendence via the creative imagination – as part of a process of inhabiting an artful life.

But it's playful in the sense that you're exploring ways in which to operate in the world ...

(Sally Madge, 2019)

Destinations

In summary, the progress of Sally's practice culminating in these projects brings to crescendo an insistence on potential unlocked when we travel beyond arbitrary, rigid, and reified distinctions: the political and geographical, human/animal, mind/body, rational/emotional, conscious/unconscious, self/other, adult/child, individual/social, material/conceptual, life/art ... Her work testifies to a restless quest for new ways to passionately grapple with our angels, demons, and other down-to-earth everyday concerns. So, a primary intention of this show is to bear witness to the confluences of interests, experiences, skills and subject matter which engaged this artist in close scrutiny of the shifting, merging and contingent nature of existence as living creatures intermingling, dreaming, creating, and organising ourselves and each other. And nowhere, perhaps, better encapsulated this vision at full scale than the site-specific mega-installation and arts community institution at Sally's legendary den, studio, nest and all-round inhabitation in Newcastle. That blend too is gestured at in the gallery, with a 'snug' library for viewing, reading and meditation along with room for play and discussion around a 'kitchen table' – as in her own most hospitable home.



Dufton Pike, Cumbria (1987)



Sorting collections for *Still Life* (2016-17)

- ‘Romantic fictions’ features material and records from the following exhibitions and projects: *Celebrate!* (1987) *Limits of the Container* (1990), *Listen With Mother* (1991), *No Trace Without Resistance* (1992), *Self Portrait: Who We Are* (1994), *Putting My Foot In It* (1994), *Slippery Bliss* (1996), *Transitional Goods* (1996), *Bed of Roses* (1998/1999), *Handmaiden* (1998), *Can You Feel It?* (1998), *Replay* (1999), *Underdog* (1999; with Sam Hooper), *Risky Plenitude* (2015), and *Film Stars* (2016), along with three collaborations with Carole Luby: *Labour Intensive* (2008), *Late Shift* (2009), and *S.C.U.M.* (2009).
- ‘Human and other animals’ includes items from: *Hot House Cold Storage* (1994), ‘Below the Scenes at the Museum’ (1994), *Heart of the City* (1995), *Free as a Bird* (1998), *Gerbil’s Guide to the Galaxy* (2005), *Bric-a-bracollage* (2008), *Bird in Hand* (2011), *Just Visiting* (2012), *Souvenir* (2013), *Fictions* (2013), *Stuff of Dreams* (2013), *Always Look on the Bright Side of Death* (2014), *Out of Place* (2015), *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* (2015), *On the Gut* (2016), *The Pecking Order* (2016), *Still Life* (2016-2017), and *Nests* and other ‘nature table’ collections.
- ‘Nowhere better than this place’ presents a range of material on coastal subjects and work associated with the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland, including: *Shack* (2001-2002), *Shelter* (2002-2016), *Holy Smoke and Holy Shit* (2005-2006), *Flotsam Fandango* (2007), *Hot Charcoal Drawings* (2013), *Shelter Museum* (2014), *Granfer* (2014; with Adam Phillips), *Return to Sender* (2014), and *Scatter* (2017-2020), interspersed with driftwood art, paintings, sculptures, beach-fired pots, sketches, films, assemblages, found objects, and photographs of shelters and environmental art made over the years. The *Scatter* cushions were finished by Sara Braithwaite and Paula Blair, and Paula also made the fabric panels. The geodesic dome and ‘MadgeMerz’ wall were conceived and constructed by regular collaborator Michael Davies, while the ‘kitchen table’ space was designed by Foundation Press.
- Other films available to view are: *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* (2015), *Avant Guard* (2009), *Making a Mess and Clearing Up* (2010 and 2017 versions), and *Stuff Happening* (2008).

Thanks to Amy and Lucy Madge and everyone who loaned items from their collections and helped in preparing for this exhibition and associated events, which were organised and curated by the Sally Madge Research Group: Richard James Hall, Michelle Hirschhorn-Smith, Tom Jennings, Dawn Felicia Knox, Helen Smith, and Judy Thomas.

For further information, see: <https://www.sallymadge.com>; and <https://thesheltermuseum.net>.⁷ See also:

- ‘Sally Madge: Acts of reclamation and renewal between site, studio, archive and gallery’, by Ysanne Holt and Matthew Hearn, *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 259-281, September 2022 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14702029.2022.2108198?tab=permissions&scroll=top>)
- *No Trace Without Resistance: The Radical Practice of Sally Madge*. Programme of presentations and guest performances, installations and films at Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 2021, including: ‘Making an exhibition of herself’ with performances by Sally (https://youtu.be/KtxAQEx_bdo); and a compendium of records of works large and small in ‘Enchantment’ (<https://youtu.be/Cdrg9v0zTB0>). (For an online copy of the *No Trace Without Resistance* programme, email: tjtexts@hotmail.com.)
- *Flotsam Fandango* (Sally Madge, 2007/2021). New edition of the original 2007 film featuring driftwood and bone puppetry at the North Shore and Coves Haven, on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland, together with video footage at the Lindisfarne *Shelter* (2002-2015) (<https://youtu.be/A1vmGXwdm6k>).
- *Sally Madge: Acts of Reclamation*, retrospective exhibition at Gallery North, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, curated by Matthew Hearn with Ysanne Holt, November 2021 (<https://learning.northumbria.ac.uk/nugallery/whats-on/future-exhibitions/sally-madge-acts-of-reclamation>; film of exhibition by Paula Blair at: <https://youtu.be/Kzk1J1vmlhE>).
- ‘Remembering Sally Madge’. Podcast, *Audiovisual Cultures*, No. 103, October 2021, by Paula Blair. Featuring contributions from friends, fellow artists, and colleagues (<https://youtu.be/YENO8a15ysc>; and <https://shows.acast.com/avcultures/episodes/remembering-sally-madge>; also available on other platforms).
- ‘Paula Blair talking with Sally Madge’. Podcast, *Audiovisual Cultures*, No. 40, March 2019, in which the artist describes her practice and processes (<https://www.patreon.com/posts/audiovisual-40-24603495>; also available on Acast and YouTube).
- ‘A hut on Holy Island: Reframing Northern landscape’, by Ysanne Holt, *Visual Studies*, 28 (3), pp.218-226, October 2013 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1472586X.2013.829998?journalCode=rvst20>).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: 'Dis/comfort zones'

Exhibition of material from *Transitional Goods* (1996), *Shelter* (2002-2016), *Still Life* (2016-17), and *Scatter* (2017-20), along with a week-long series of workshops and discussions to begin preparation for the exhibition *Nowhere Better than this Place* and associated participatory events. Hosted by Helen Smith with Judy Thomas, Dawn Felicia Knox, and Tom Jennings, Newcastle Contemporary Art, High Bridge Works, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 2022.

Introduction

Sally drew upon all sorts of ideas, materials, media and methods in her working practice. This approach resulted in regular confrontations with traditional restrictions and narrow horizons in both art and society. Personal preferences as well as inspiration from progressive and avant-garde movements therefore led her to resist impositions of discipline and the policing functions of social, cultural, economic and governmental institutions and discourses. Instead, she emphasised the pleasures and pains of play and experimentation, bodily experience, free association, eruptions from the unconscious, and accidents, mistakes and contradictions. After all, despite being a nuisance to those wanting to manage and control us, those elements loom large in our real lives. Accordingly, she favoured the humble, overlooked, and undervalued stuff of everyday existence as conceptual and practical grist to her artistic mill, seeking forms of expression in contrast to the profitably rarefied products of genius and elitist pretension.

However, these days, crossing borders, transgressing limits, blurring boundaries, flouting rules, and challenging arbitrary definitions and authority are supposedly valued in certain contexts – including in contemporary art – while being ever more firmly suppressed elsewhere. Therefore, fashion-conscious claims to occupy a 'liminal zone' – a place where conventional norms are suspended – require closer examination. One criterion might be what you actually 'do' when you get there, and its effects, as opposed to a superficial pose of special status, rebellion and transcendence ... Plus, in any case, what might it actually mean if daily life for everyone were to operate in such liberated spaces?

Now, it's well-known that holidays – on the beach for the archetypal British family in the summer, or at carnival, festivals and comparable celebratory events – can also be occasions for problems and conflicts to surface that otherwise remain submerged when coping with the normal daily grind. And Sally's own affinity for the 'no-man's land' between high and low tides itself developed during a childhood of upheaval and uncertainty – with refuge in coastal 'liminal zones' likely also accompanied by anxiety, insecurity and ambivalence in addition to release and rapture. So, her aesthetic responses and choices tend to encompass difficult and unsettling emotional, visceral and rational resonances – with the sense of self and identity, relationships with others and our place in the world, attempts to repair perceived damage, and the grappling with symbolic and material forces apparently beyond our control or understanding. Enchantment, in other words, always has a dark side. And if that's not acknowledged, how can we expect to develop meaningful autonomy, agency, and creative resolution?

A focus on the complex and often troubling aspects of life (and art) could thus be said to represent one of the common threads running throughout Sally's mature work as an artist (and as collaborator, facilitator, and educator) – alongside, of course, her warmth, goodwill and good humour, and that wicked sense of mischief. If so, it might be useful to try to identify and reflect upon the simultaneous feelings of comfort and discomfort that may arise when faced with some of the fruits of her singular imagination.

Tom Jennings

Appendix 2: 'Risky plenitude' by Sally Madge

Essay commissioned for *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, Occasional Papers, 2015.



Sally Madge and Ivor Davies, Edinburgh, 1966.

Looking across the count of time, flickering images, remnants, scraps. This narrative is stitched together from such fragments. It's September 1966, Shepherd's Bush, London, a fine day. I leave the flat in Sinclair Road feeling good in my new Anello and Davide Spanish shoes, black, and Quant mini skirt, red. I've spent half this term's grant on them, so extra shifts at the Italian restaurant are needed to fill the financial void. Black and red – I feel good. I'm on my way to pick up Sebastian and Georgia, Mark Boyle and Joan Hills' kids. Boyle Family. I look after them on a regular basis. It's Ivor who introduced me, Ivor Davies, a key player in the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), Gustav Metzger's assembly of international artists and activists using destruction *in* rather than *of* art as a strategy to critique conventional aesthetic forms and to promote direct engagement in culture as a political force for change.

In her essay 'The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the "DIAS Effect"', Kristine Stiles states that "It is noteworthy that many DIAS artists pioneered Happenings, Fluxus, Wiener Aktionismus, and Concrete Poetry, and that these media dominated at DIAS" [1]. She also claims that "DIAS represented the most concentrated influx of international experimental artists into London since the 1930s, laying global foundations for socially engaged art that had its first international expression there".

I walk on past a building site; workers whistle from the scaffold: "chick bird doll dollybird", they shout. I'm pleased, I'm annoyed, I'm demeaned. En route I meet up for a coffee with fellow art students. "Did you know, I just heard they accepted the women on the course for their looks rather than their qualifications?" I am naive. So, within this frame of infantilism and sexist objectification, along with a fledgling interest and involvement in avant-garde art, I become a groupie and a gofer for various radical artists of the time, including Ivor Davies. Picking my way in my well-crafted footwear through the obstacle course of, on the one hand, counter-cultural activism, and on the other, youthful, style-obsessed consumerism, I try to juggle with these disjunctions and embrace the complexities of both worlds ...

One prime example of the problematics of this set of hurdles is my attendance at a performance by the Vienna Actionist Hermann Nitsch at St Bride's Institute just off Fleet Street. Although nothing is blown up, Nitsch's 'Orgien Mysterien Theater' encourages audience members to "lose their senses" and participate in the action, which in this instance involves eviscerating and trampling a lamb's carcass, masturbating with pig entrails, and pouring blood over each other (although red paint is used instead), whilst haunting and jarring repetitive sound is used for dramatic effect as a film of a penis penetrating a brain is projected onto the carcass. As an audience member I am far less concerned with these visceral grotesqueries and trying to fathom the connection between destruction and socialisation, let alone Nitsch's "masochistic devolution into

bloody phallic tragedy”, than the worrying probability of my borrowed pale lilac Biba coat becoming stained with pig’s blood (or red paint). So it is with some relief that (ironically) I am spared this problem by the arrival of the police (tipped off by a journalist present at the event) who stop the action, confiscate the film (although they are given an empty reel in place of the real one) and eject the audience. I have my name and address recorded as a participant in and witness to this “depraved and violent spectacle”, which both adds to my counter-cultural credentials and avoids a friendship/ financial/fashion disaster. So, I escape unscathed.

I don’t know of Valie Export’s feminist Actionism, haven’t seen Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*, or anticipated Valerie Solanas’s *SCUM Manifesto* and her singular act of failed annihilation – my own feminist sensibilities are not yet honed.

I met Ivor earlier in the year in Edinburgh when staying with my sister, who is a friend and ex-student of his, where I assisted with the auto-destructive event *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions* (1st September 1966) that he presented at Forrest Road Drill Hall shortly before DIAS. Now, as I look back, the only memory I have of this is a faded newspaper article and photograph where along with a friend I assist Ivor with his protective headgear in preparation for his detonations. Following this, he comes to stay in my flat in Shepherd’s Bush and sets to work on developing a destructible pyrophonic organ for his next DIAS event [2]. I am not really aware of the nature of his research and the materials he is using, but one afternoon on returning from a visit to friends I find several fire engines outside the flat. Upon entering, I am confronted by police and several firemen who are in the process of transporting to Woolwich arsenal Ivor’s chemicals (some of which have unexpectedly ignited and caused a fire; hence my sodden and charred bedroom), a worried flatmate (who has done a substantial amount of cleaning up before I arrive), and a rather bemused and apologetic Ivor.

When things have calmed down, I discover on checking my wardrobe that a neat, round hole has appeared through the toe of one of my precious Anello and Davide shoes. No-one can work out how it happened, such a precise puncture, so strategically placed; a conundrum which has over the years been a subject of much conjecture on my part.

At some level, this shoe and the process whereby it has reached its altered state stand as a metaphor and significant reminder of my lowly status as a foot-soldier in the battle against the established order: here is a war wound, a battle scar? But perhaps a more fitting symbolic association is that of the fetish object of the Aschenputtel (Cinderella) myth – the glass slipper (or in archaic versions of the tale, the *fur* slipper). Trying to flesh out the symbolism and unpack the relationship between the organ’s premature chemical ejaculation and the punctured shoe would take a degree of research too lengthy for this recollection. It could also be argued, however, that the shoe functions as cultural commodity and as such the explosive action wrought on it is symbolic, even if in a small way, of the destruction of capital. Furthermore, from my point of view, the defunct, deformed and spoiled shoe is symbolic of a rite of passage. Either way, this unpublicised destructive performance leaves a trace which still resonates today and reminds me that I have unconsciously incorporated many of these early manifestations of radical art into my own practice – from early painting and sculpture through to more recent performance and installation.

French writer, philosopher, and literary theorist Maurice Blanchot describes the ‘Everyday’ as “a junction of different experiences and perspectives... as fleeting and permeable, yet perpetual and ineradicable at the same time”, asserting that:

“Every artist is linked to a mistake with which he has a particular intimacy. All art draws its origin from an exceptional fault, each work is the implementation of this original fault, from which comes a risky plenitude and new light” [3].

I like the idea of a ‘risky plenitude’. Thanks, Ivor!

Notes

1. ‘The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the DIAS Effect’, in Sabina Breitwieser, ed., *Gustav Metzger: Geschichte Geschichte* (Vienna and Ostfildern-Ruit: Generali Foundation and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), pp. 41-65.
2. See *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* (Occasional Papers, 2015, pp. 99-100). Fifty years later in 2016, Ivor rebuilt a ‘pyrosyrinx’ like the one in my flat, after writing a lengthy and precise plan of this complex performance a year before it took place. He would not have done so if his first attempt had been a total success; see ‘Unfinishing the Fire Organ Today’, in *Silent Explosion* (pp. 162-7). Peter Telfer’s film of the 2016 fire organ was integrated into Ivor’s lengthy multi-media performance, also filmed by Peter Telfer, which is called *Pyrogenesis*.
3. In: Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 2000).

Appendix 3: 'Draw to perform'.

A few examples of Sally's wider conceptualisation of 'drawing' and performative mark-making

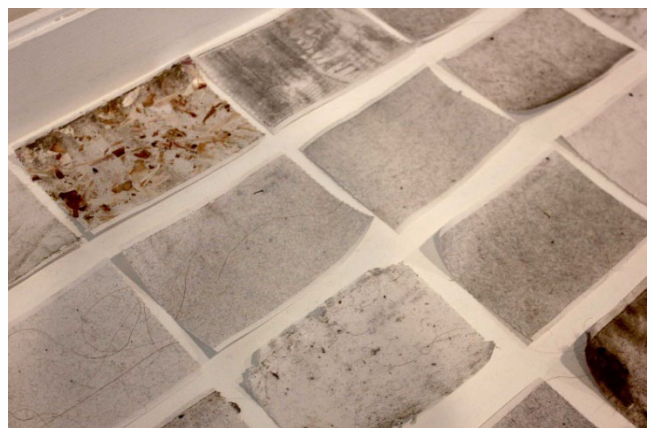
Making a Mess and Clearing Up. Performance. Group show, 'Borderland Drawing', Bergby Konst Center, Hallstavik, Sweden, part of Gränsland Teckning, International Drawing Biennale, Leaking Circus Projects and NoA, October 2017.



How Can I Tell What I Think Till I See What I Say? Installation. Customs House Gallery, South Shields, South Tyneside, September-October 2015.



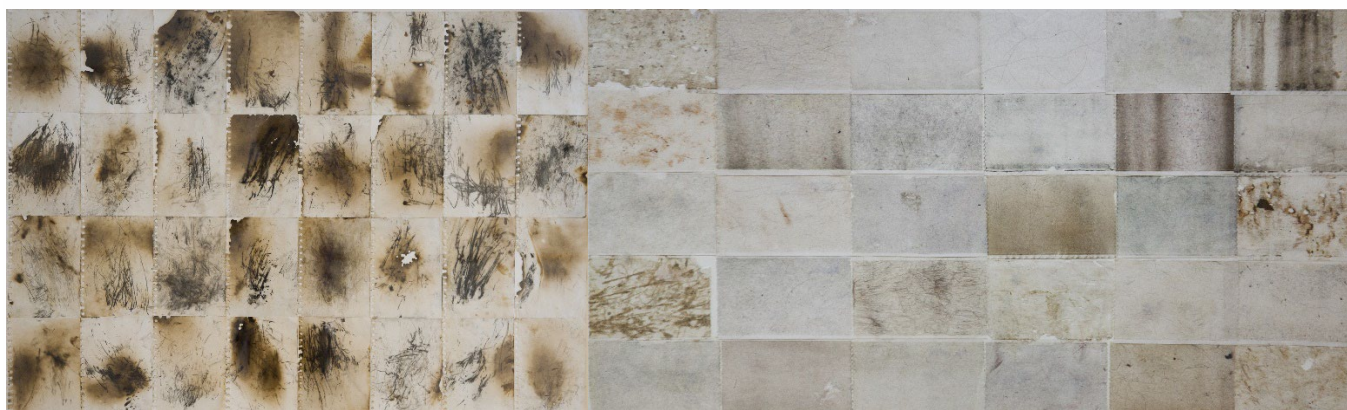
Landscape. Performance with lint roller, part of 'Drafting' drawing event, Baltic 39, Newcastle, March 2015.



Still Life: Draw to Perform. Performance. Performance Space, Hackney Wick, London; and as part of 'What Is Drawing?' programme, Customs House, South Shields, South Tyneside, December 2013.



Hot Charcoal Drawings and Galata Landscapes. Drawings from Holy Island and lint-rollings from Istanbul. Group exhibition, 'What Is Drawing?' Customs House Gallery, South Shields, September-November 2013.



Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Circumference of a Circle, Performance. Part of 'Platform Northeast', Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle, December 2010.



Making a Mess and Clearing Up. Performance. Garage Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, March 2010.



Drawings for a New Illustrated Reference Book. Group exhibition, 'Waygood Art Boutique', Newcastle upon Tyne, July 2008.



Stuff Happening. Performance in international performance event, 'GalataPerform', Istanbul, March 2008.



Appendix 4: 'Hands and feet of clay: A love affair with ceramics'

Biographical sketch and descriptions as part of proposal for ceramics pieces to be held in the permanent collection at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, January 2022.



Born in Whitehaven in 1946, Sally Madge had a rather unusual, peripatetic childhood in West Cumbria and Anglesey. The three sisters were left largely to their own devices and, during a year without school aged 9, Sally ran wild and developed a lifelong fascination with the natural environment and wild woodland and shorelines – where she spent as much time as feasible thereafter – making dens and playing with found material. She subsequently shone at art and especially enjoyed pottery, before studying in ceramics at the Central School of Art, London, and working for a commercial designer. She graduated in Newcastle, where she had moved after marriage and the arrival of two daughters, and became prominent in community arts in the Byker development project and archival work on the Maling Pottery's 150 years in the city.

Having completed a PGCE, she then spent over three decades teaching art on courses at all levels in different institutions and contexts – for three decades at Sunderland University but also at the Baltic, Gateshead, ever since its inception. Freelance work with students of all ages continued after retirement until her passing in November 2020. Throughout, Sally maintained a highly prolific and increasingly rich artistic practice adding to traditional disciplines of ceramics, sculpture, and painting with all manner of contemporary art activity after an MFA at Northumbria University. An impressive and very long list of solo and group exhibitions ensued – along with curation and involvement in countless collaborative and communal initiatives – encompassing installation, film, video, photography, conceptual, avant-garde, mixed-media, site-specific work and performance; receiving critical appreciation at national and international levels as well as regionally where she is a legendary and inspirational figure for peers and younger generations.

However, despite voracious interest in, comprehensive knowledge about, and skilful prosecution of so many forms and manifestations of professional creativity – thoroughly embedded in family and social life and leisure too – Sally returned to ceramics whenever possible, often weaving it into more ambitious and promiscuous artistic enterprises. Having spent years exploring the geology of coastlines, hills and mountains and perfecting techniques of moulding clay from seams found nearby for firing in makeshift temporary kilns, she finally returned to a more formal concentration on technique once other pressures relaxed somewhat. Experiments at the Ouseburn Pottery in Byker involved designs deploying a range of processes and finishes influenced by environmental and land art as well as other artists using ceramic media, all tinged with her own favoured themes and preoccupations. A diverse series resulted using earthenware, stoneware and raku clays and many different techniques, including slab work, reliefs, tiles, sculpture, slip work, inlay, collages and mosaics – some with intimations of Dubuffet and Art Brut – in addition to more conventional pottery pieces. One of the latter featured in *House and Garden* magazine but, sadly, Sally didn't survive to enjoy the irony. After all, she was never in it for the money, but rather – as in the rest of her life – for the joy of creation, craft, and community, and the sheer artfulness of it.

The first of the three pieces to be offered for MIMA's permanent collection, *From Underground*, represents a series of contrasting shapes with surface finishes of brushed-on oxide glazes, composed of thrown sections made from blends of crank and smooth buff stoneware clay explicitly inspired by Hans Coper – who tutored Sally at the Central – and recalling some of her 1970s ceramic sculpture. The work ranges from small, slender, delicate-looking specimens to monumental compositions such as this reminiscent of, on the one hand, fungal lifeforms bursting forth or even science-fiction imagery, and on the other hand combinations of geological strata found, for example, on her beloved rocky Northumberland shores and sandstone and dolerite outcrops as well as the grandeur of classical columns and arches and their contemporary postmodern simulacra. Subtle, controlled gradations of texture and tone echo effects of physical chemistry and weathering on boulders, crags and cliffs, with pitting, scratching and etching reflecting specific trajectories and tussles with the elements in this piece, or a glossier striation hinting at consistently polished erosion in others. The juxtaposition of parts draws attention to the processing of resources for forms and functions in commercial pottery, industrial architecture and civil engineering, as well as referencing dramatic natural geophysical phenomena. So, in addition to their dimensions and sheer presence challenging conventions of traditional jugs and vases, the colour schemes, solidity and density of the pieces highlight the earthly stoicism of soil, clay and mineral deposits

– in Sally's typical foregrounding of and innovative grappling with everyday, abject or neglected material to do justice to its inherent potential while fashioning objects of considerable stature.

The next piece, *Hip/Flask*, progresses the propensities outlined above, but in this series ceramics skills are blended with the sculptural advantages of the medium. Rather than melding thrown components, oval panels of conjoined parts are here curved into a truncated flattened spheroid with sharp corners and edges softened in organic shapeliness. The surface delineations of colour and angle are suggestive of a torso's cross-section or the eruption of strata in otherwise homogeneous substrates – both also subject to the wear and tear of respective lifecycles indicated by a heavily textured and variegated appearance. The overall form brings to mind water containers for various contexts, including suitability for attachment to the aforementioned bodily contours; comparison with decorative pottery again being apt. And whereas in the contemporaneous slab, relief and tile series, as well as sketches and acrylics, Sally used a more expansive Modernist palette of colour patchwork evocative of some of Ben Nicholson's geometric studies, for example – here the hues are restricted, as in the 'architectural' pieces, to the off-white, beige and brown shades of stone and earth in keeping with Coper's and her precedents.

The third piece, *Tower of Bubbles*, relaxes constraints in a decidedly playful style now expressive of fluidity rather than stasis and rootedness (despite, say, undertones of *From Underground's* ripe fruiting body and *Hip/Flask's* clam ready to crack open). The stoneware elements were produced by pinching and coil-building, and appear mobile and provisional in an asymmetric whole evocative of temporary columns of molecules, pebbles or larger entities always likely to part or collapse but momentarily integrated as if freeze-framed. A clear influence is the environmental art of the likes of David Nash, Andy Goldsworthy or Richard Shilling, along with that of untold hordes of 'naïve' artists, holidaymakers, or ramblers erecting cairns and assemblages of found materials for fun or fascination – among whose ranks Sally would unapologetically position herself even if her efforts characteristically entailed deeper contemplation and care in interacting with specific surroundings. Here, the predominant black/greys and greens and browns of the finish from semi-matt glazes and oxide overspraying evince a certain lustre, as with sea-coal or basalt with trace impurities, but also opacity and impenetrability – like colliding celestial bodies or even ceramic black holes, drawing in energy, awaiting the fulfilment of potential; empty containers (another of this artist's persistent metaphors) available for viewers to project perceptions and desires into. Precarity, open-endedness and uncertainty may prevail – but certainly not in the skill of construction or overall effect, evidencing confident experimentation and secure realisation.

In summary, these pieces taken together may serve as emblematic of Sally's long and profound engagement with ceramic media – and, in embodying various of her abiding concerns and methods, could also stand as a condensed tip-of-the-iceberg snapshot of her remarkable body of work running the gamut of contemporary art and craft.

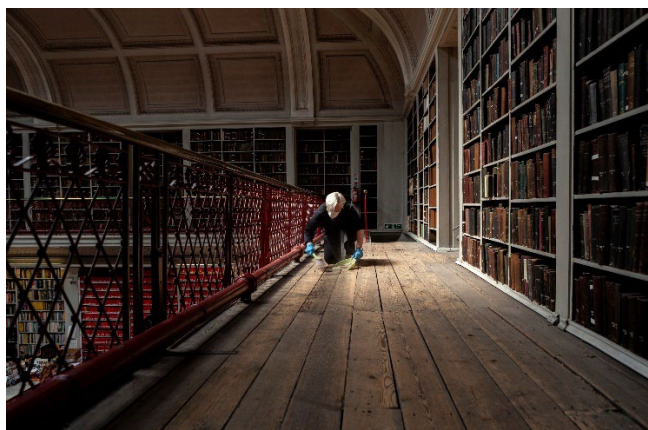
Tom Jennings

Appendix 5: 'Gross domestic products'

The generally undervalued, typically repetitive, and usually physically and emotionally draining domestic, caring, and affective labour required to sustain and our and each other's lives crops up in many different ways in Sally's work. In addition to *Labour Intensive* and *Late Shift*, Sally and Carole also collaborated in a 2011 performance at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland, where they were filmed playing the role of cleaners bantering among the aristocratic settings – but unfortunately this piece was not developed further and survives only as raw footage. (Carole also provided the gallery space for Sally's acclaimed *Making a Mess and Clearing Up* performance drawing referred to in Appendix 3 above.)

Sally also incorporated themes of onerous labour and 'cleaning' in the normal sense of 'housework' and routine maintenance in various other projects, highlighting its centrality in all aspects of society as well as its lowly status – often associated with the regressive concepts of 'women's work' that feminists have comprehensively critiqued but which still, in practice, prevail. Instead, she renders it as 'found material' just as worthy of treatment in her art as other abject, neglected or rejected subject matters devalued elsewhere but now accorded due recognition not only as fundamental to life but specifically also to her own artistic process and practice. See, for example, the lint-rolling exercises and outcomes in *Stuff Happening* (2008), *Galata Landscapes* (2013) and *Landscape* (2015), along with *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner* (2010), as cited in Appendix 3, and similar deployments of hard graft in *Tea Event* (2012), *Surface Matters* (2013), and litter-picking at the Lindisfarne *Shelter* (2014). And, in her 'Fluxworker' persona in *Avant Guard* (2009), Sally took the argument into the belly of the beast at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead to deliver a barbed commentary on the art world's own crimes and misdemeanours ...

Tom Jennings



Preparing *Surface Matters* (2013/2015)

Excerpt from diary, May 7th, 2013, Lit. and Phil.:
"12.30– 2.00: Swept gallery walkway for an hour, sometimes on hands and knees but mainly squatting so as not to get splinters in my knees. Wore face mask, apron and rubber gloves, got very hot and dusty. Interesting to think I have actually ingested some of this ancient and erudite dust, it has become part of the fabric of my being – if only temporarily, it does however make me feel quite sick and I have a headache coming on. As I sweep, I note that Greek Mythology and the Biblical section are dustier than other sections, there is a damp stain on the floor near Social Sciences, Ethics gets a lot of sun and there are large gaps in the floorboards along the Spanish, French and German Literature sections.

I am developing an affection for dust balls and also note there are some tiny book cover shreddings in my dustpan".



Avant Guard (2009)

Part of 'The Dream of Fluxus',
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.

This interactive performance draws attention to some of the ironies thrown up by the official art world's recognition of Fluxus. Its original manifestos aimed for a 'living art', an 'anti-art' – valuing the creativity of ordinary everyday activities rather than unique artefacts made by special individuals – but now these revolutionary efforts are fossilised in museum showcases.

So, appropriately dressed and accredited in her 'Fluxuniform', the artist patrols the gallery and tends to the exhibits, inviting the participation of viewers as a gentle reminder of the movement's early collective ethos and intention to dissolve artificial hierarchies separating artists from audiences.

Appendix 6: 'Still Life: The interviews'

Part of the installation *Still Life*, at the Old Low Lights, North Shields Fish Quay, North Tyneside, October 2015-January 2017.

Excerpt from an interview with a mature adult Lesser Black-Backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*):



Artist: Do you feel that you are treated as a second-class citizen?

Lesser Black-Backed Gull: Most definitely; it's quite a battle to survive these days, but as a breed we are pretty resilient and adaptable (we are still on the amber list of endangered species – not in the red yet). We've had to change our habits quite radically, of course, against the rising tide of interference from humans – including, for reproductive purposes, taking advantage of some of those artificial clifftops they're fond of plonking down all over the landscape. So, for the time being, there are still plenty of us around to stake our claim to what's rightfully ours ...

(Model created by Sally Madge, mixed media; knitted balaclava by Michelle Hirschhorn; Lesser Black-Backed Gull from the artist's collection.)

Excerpt from an interview with an adult female Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*):



Artist: What benefits do you feel there are in nesting and rearing your chicks on the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead?

Kittiwake: Our colony has been nesting here since the 1960s, with a brief spell on a purpose-built tower further down the Tyne whilst they converted the old flour mill into an art gallery in the 1990s. Even though it's further away than ever from our dwindling feeding grounds, we decided to return to this ledge as we enjoy being part of the contemporary arts scene. We've taken part in a number of videos which are on permanent display in the gallery.

(Baltic model created by Daniel Wallder; nest by Sally Madge; Kittiwake chick kindly loaned by Dan Turner.)

Excerpt from an interview with a young adult Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*):

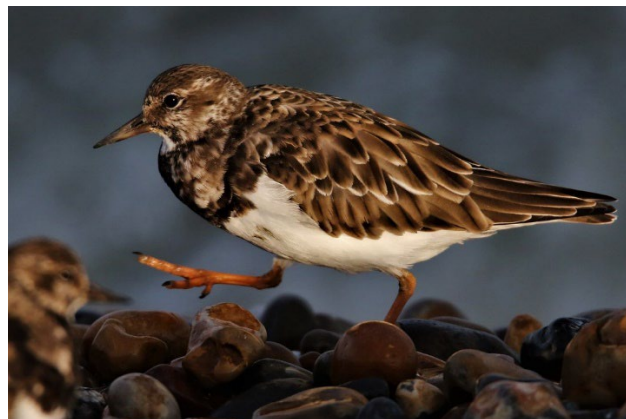


Artist: What are your thoughts on climate change?

Shag: Well, I recently lost both parents in a storm off the east coast of Scotland, they died from starvation and exhaustion. It's hard to find food these days, since the sand eels we normally eat are in very short supply due to rising sea temperatures. Also, because of changes in weather patterns, my parents nested early and so I was a premature chick and as a result I'm not very strong. What with pollution from chemicals and plastics and the lack of safe breeding sites, I don't feel very optimistic at all about the future.

(Model by Sally Madge, Sonny Addison, Leon Brown, Samuel Farmer and Billy Hooper, mixed media; Shag from the artist's collection.)

Excerpt from an interview with a Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*):



Artist: So, what's your take on the pollution of the oceans and beaches?

Turnstone: Yes, well, 'Mermaid's Tears'* – are you having a laugh? You wouldn't be all romantic if you were starving because your gut was full of micro-beads. And it's all very well crying crocodile tears and doing a bit of tidying up, getting rid of stuff too unsightly for tourists, but why not stop producing and chucking away billions of tons of plastics every day? It's not rocket science, is it? So why isn't anything serious done about it? To find that out, you'd have to dig a little deeper, turn over a few stones, see what comes scuttling out ...

(Models created by Sally Madge, mixed media; Turnstones from the artist's collection.)

* 'Mermaid's Tears', 'nurdles', and 'industrial granules' are among many names given to tiny plastic beads ('microplastics'). The smallest microscopic ones are in extensive use in cosmetics, for example, but are flushed away and end up intact in the sea where they are inadvertently eaten by marine animals and thus, ultimately, seabirds.

Appendix 7: 'Sally Madge: A body of work'

Selected exhibitions, projects, and events

2017 – 2020	<i>Scatter</i> [unfinished]. Installation. Assemblage of cushions of varying shapes and sizes covered with fabric rescued from beach detritus around the UK.
September 2020	<i>Printing on the Allotment</i> . Performance lecture with Nancy Hooper. Part of: 'Baltic Connect, Meet and Make Online', Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cenLYevUYw .
September 2020	<i>What do you feel strongly about?</i> Poster/banner making. Learning Lounge project, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
June 2020	'Fluxus Alert: Fluxus instructional artworks for lockdown times.' <i>MIMAZINA</i> 10, Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art / Foundation Press: https://mima.art/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MIMAZINA-10-Final-Version.pdf .
July 2019	'Collage into Mixed Media'. Workshops at the Slade School of Fine Art, London.
March – April 2019	<i>Dialoguments</i> [collaboration with Judy Thomas]. Performance, film, and drawings. Part of 'Drawing, Dialogues and Documents', Northumbria University staff exhibition.
March 2019	'Paula Blair talking with Sally Madge'. Podcast, <i>Audiovisual Cultures</i> , episode 40, at: https://www.patreon.com/posts/audiovisual-40-24603495 .
August 2018	<i>Granfer</i> [collaboration with Adam Phillips]. Arthouses, Whitley Bay Film Festival, Albany Gardens, Whitley Bay, North Tyneside.
July 2018	<i>Sense of Place</i> . Exhibition of work from 'Create, Aspire, Transform', a Berwick Visual Arts Schools project, Berwick Museum and Art Gallery:
March 2018	<i>Creating Change</i> . Den-building workshop in collaboration with Barbara Priestman Academy, Sunderland, at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
October 2017	<i>Making a Mess and Clearing Up</i> . Performance. Group show, 'Borderland Drawing', Bergby Konst Center, Hallstavik, Sweden, part of Gränsland Teckning, International Drawing Biennale, Leaking Circus Projects and NoA.
June 2017	<i>Collab. Lab</i> . Performance and workshop at Northumbria University, collaboration with Judy Thomas, David Fudge, and pupils from Barbara Priestman School, Sunderland.
February 2017	<i>House of Correction</i> . Performance and site-specific installation. Part of 'Inhabit: Performance Art', curated by Neon Arts, Moothall Gallery, Hexham, Northumberland.
October 2016 – January 2017	<i>Still Life</i> . Site-specific installation, Old Low Lights, North Shields Fish Quay, North Tyneside. Includes the films: <i>On the Gut</i> , performance and site-specific installation filmed by Catherine Hardwick, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBWXEI7KGTc ; and <i>The Pecking Order</i> , by Sonny Addison, Samuel Billington and Billy Hooper.
October 2016	<i>Table Top Utopia</i> . Collaborative workshop at New Bridge Project, Newcastle upon Tyne, responding to Jimmy Cauty's installation <i>Aftermath Dislocation Principle</i> (2013).
August 2016	Workshops, BxNU M.A. Summer School for Artist-teachers, Northumbria University and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
June – July 2016	<i>Museum of Fleeting Moments</i> . Residency, and presentation at Finissage weekend, Bergby Konst Center, Hallstavik, Sweden.
September – October 2015	<i>Surface Matters</i> . Limited edition dust packs from the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne, from 'Returning to the Philosophers Table' (2013). Group show, 'I'M Ten', IMT Gallery, Bethnal Green, London.

- September – October 2015** *How Can I Tell What I Think Till I See What I Say?* Installation. Customs House Gallery, South Shields, South Tyneside.
- July 2015** *Chance Encounters*. Collages. Images published in *Verdure Engraved* magazine. <https://verdure-engraved-blog.tumblr.com>.
- May 2015** *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*. Performance. Part of FLARE 2: Body Works, Excavating the In/visible', Gallery North, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjAqR1zICA0>.
- April 2015** *Out of Place*. Installation. Group exhibition, 'Borderlands', Gallery North, University of Northumbria at Newcastle upon Tyne.
- March 2015** *Landscape*. Performance with lint roller, and co-curation [with Sandra Johnston, Mike Collier and Esen Kaya]. Part of 'Drafting', 2-day drawing event, Baltic 39, Newcastle.
- February 2015** *Risky Plenitude*. Essay commissioned as contribution to: *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, by Ivor Davies, Occasional Papers, November 2015. [unpubl.]
- January 2015** *Our Work: We Can't Stop*. Exhibition of small works by Carole Luby and Sally Madge, St Thomas Crescent, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- September 2014** *Return to Sender* [curator and contributor]. Group exhibition of artworks, documentation and found objects relating to the Lindisfarne *Shelter*, Berwick upon Tweed Museum and Art Gallery.
- September 2014** *Granfer* [collaboration with Adam Phillips]. 16mm film installation, Coxon's Tower, Berwick upon Tweed. Part of *Return to Sender* programme. Film première at the 10th Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival.
- July – September 2014** Events and artist's residencies at and inspired by the Lindisfarne *Shelter* [curator]. Part of the *Return to Sender* programme: litter picking workshop with David Fudge and students from Barbara Priestman School, Sunderland; screening of Roman Polanski's *Cul-de-Sac*; residencies by Corinne Mynatt, Carole Luby, Alex Hughes; performance by Sandra Johnston and Lee Hassel; and sound installations by :zoviet*france:.
- June 2014** *Self Build*. Performance/presentation. Baltic Plus BxNU Symposium, 'Cloudscape: Responding to the theme of memory in the work of Lorna Simpson'. Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. See: <http://balticplus.uk/bxnu-symposium-cloudscape-sally-madge-c22889/>.
- May 2014** *Always Look on the Bright Side of Death*. Mixed media sculptures, floral transfers on skulls and bones. Group exhibition, 'Eulogy', collaboration with LUME projects and Zara Worth, VANE Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- April 2014** *The Shelter Museum*. Launch of digital archive for *Shelter*, site-specific installation on Holy Island, Northumberland from 2002-2014 at <https://sheltermuseum.net>.
- December 2013** *Still Life: Draw to Perform*. Performance. Performance Space, Hackney Wick, London.
- December 2013** *Still Life: Draw to Perform*. Performance. Part of 'What Is Drawing?' programme, Customs House, South Shields, South Tyneside, with post-performance discussion.
- November 2013** *In the Dark*. Performance. Collaboration with Carole Luby, GSN Project Space, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- September 2013** *Stuff of Dreams*. Performance lecture. In 'Mapping the Return', part of 'Returning to the Philosophers' Table', Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne. See: <http://philosopherstable.org/the-stuff-of-dreams-a-performance-lecture/>.
- September – November 2013** *Hot Charcoal Drawings and Galata Landscapes*. Drawings from Holy Island and lint-rollings from Istanbul. Group exhibition, 'What Is Drawing?' Customs House Gallery, South Shields.

- June 2013** *Walk On*. Performance and presentation. Part of 'On Walking' programme, University of Sunderland and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland.
- June 2013** *Fictions*. Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'Returning to the Philosophers' Table', Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne. Includes *Surface Matters*: artists' Limited edition dust packs from the library's 'Ethics' section.
- May 2013** *Souvenir*. Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'Cabinet of Wonders', Great North Museum, Hancock, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- May 2013** *Bird in Hand*. Performance. Part of Late Shows, 'Museums at Night' event, Literary and Philosophical Society Library, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- October – November 2012** *Moving In*. Site-specific installation. Guest of honour in 'a-cross-the-board', Departure Foundation, New Curators North East, Tower House, Sunderland.
- September 2012** *Just Visiting*. Live installation. Group exhibition/intervention, 'The Hearing Trumpet', curated by Natalie Gale and Rachael Macarthur, West Dean, West Sussex.
- August 2012** *Games and Gameplay*, workshop at Summer School for Artist Teachers, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
- March 2012** *Tea Event*. Performance. Group show, Departure Foundation, Sunderland Art Prize, Tower House, Sunderland.
- October 2011** *Blah Blah Blah: Becoming Art* [artistic direction]. Youth Panel performances for the Turner Prize, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
- October 2011** *Schwitters Banner*. The Last Merzbau, Elterwater, Langdale, Cumbria.
- October 2011** [Untitled]. Performance. Collaboration with Carole Luby, Chillingham Castle, Northumberland. Filmed by Tom Madge.
- March 2011** [Untitled]. Installation with images, objects and texts from the Lindisfarne *Shelter*. Group exhibition and symposium, 'W.A.L.K.' (Walking, Art, Landskip, and Knowledge), Vardy Gallery, University of Sunderland.
- March 2011 – January 2016** *Shelter* [II]. Site-specific installation. Back Skerrs, Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland.
- February 2011** *Bird in Hand*. Performance. Group performance event, 'Objects of Desire', Freud Museum, London.
- December 2010** *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Circumference of a Circle*, Performance. Part of 'Platform Northeast', Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle.
- September 2010** *Making a Mess and Clearing Up*. Film by Adam Phillips of performance, Jerwood Drawing Prize Shortlist, Jerwood Space, London, and touring.
- March 2010** *Making a Mess and Clearing Up*. Performance. Garage Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- November 2009** *S.C.U.M.* Performance. Collaboration with Carole Luby, at INX: Istanbul Newcastle Exchange, part of 'Wunderbar Festival', Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne. Performance and interview filmed by Richard Canham.
- August 2009** *Shelter*. Installation with material from the Lindisfarne *Shelter*. Group exhibition, 'With or Without God', L-13 Light Industrial Workshop, London.
- May 2009** *Late Shift*. Performance. Collaboration with Carole Luby, Waygood Art Boutique, Newcastle upon Tyne. Filmed by Richard Canham.
- February 2009** *Avant Guard*. Performance. Part of 'The Dream of Fluxus', Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. See: <http://balticplus.uk/the-dream-of-fluxus-inspired-performance-03-sally-madge-c17062/>; <http://balticplus.uk/the-dream-of-fluxus-sally-madge-and-ginny-reed-in-conversation-c17063/>

February 2009	<i>Game Bird: Performance Instructions for Three Star A La Carte</i> . Part of 'The Dream of Fluxus', Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
December 2008	<i>Bric-a-bracollage</i> . Three mixed media sculptures. Group exhibition, 'Waygood Boutique Christmas Salon', Waygood Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
October 2008	<i>Labour Intensive</i> . Performance. Collaboration with Carole Luby, Saltburn Gallery, Saltburn by the Sea, Teesside.
October 2008	<i>Selected Work</i> . Group exhibition, 'Baltic Art Market', Newcastle/Gateshead Art Fair, Sage, Gateshead.
July 2008	<i>Drawings for a New Illustrated Reference Book</i> . Group exhibition, 'Waygood Art Boutique', Newcastle upon Tyne.
May 2008	<i>Touch Wood</i> . Site-specific installation. Group show, 'Waygood Wood', Castle Keep, Newcastle upon Tyne.
March 2008	<i>Stuff Happening</i> . Performance in international performance event, 'GalataPerform', Istanbul.
November – December 2007	<i>Flotsam Fandango</i> . Beach puppetry with driftwood and bone puppets at the North Shore and Coves Haven, Holy Island, Northumberland, filmed by Tom Jennings. Group exhibition, 'Serious Playtime', Gallery Glue, Newcastle upon Tyne.
November 2005 – June 2006	<i>Holy Smoke</i> and <i>Holy Shit</i> . Limited edition artist's multiples relating to Holy Island. Group exhibition, 'Multiplus III: Go Find the WMDs', VANE, Newcastle upon Tyne and touring; Aquarium Gallery, London.
March – June 2005	<i>Gerbil's Guide to the Galaxy</i> . Installation, Bookville and Waygood Gallery, Newcastle.
January 2005	Workshop with students, parents, teachers and governors from Biddick School, Washington, based on Phyllida Barlow's installation <i>Peninsula</i> . Education and public programme, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
June 2004	<i>Outpost</i> . Collaboration with Ed Harrison. Live webcast from Head of Steam pub, with a series of participants exhibiting artwork. Part of 'The Postal Room Weekend' in the 'Return to Sender' programme, Waygood Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
March – May 2004	<i>Soft Core</i> . Limited edition video and accessories, artist's multiples. Group exhibition, 'Multiplus Reloaded', VANE, Saltburn Gallery, Teesside; and Lowry Centre, Salford.
May – June 2003	<i>Recipe</i> . Installation. Group exhibition, 'Resist: Protest Art', Crescent Arts, Scarborough, North Yorkshire.
November 2002 – October 2010	<i>Shelter</i> [I]. Site-specific installation. Back Skerrs, Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland.
September 2001 – August 2002	<i>Shack</i> . Site-specific installation. Sandham, Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland.
May – June 2001	<i>Bad Hiding Place</i> . Installation. Collaboration with Matthias Schamp, Waygood Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne. Essay, 'Hidden Agendas', by Tom Jennings and Sally Madge.
October 2000	<i>Thin Red Line</i> . Installation. Group exhibition, 'Contained', part of 'VANE 2000', Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne.
June 2000	<i>Return to Sender</i> , Mail art project [including <i>£5 Note</i>]. Waygood Gallery, Newcastle.
January 2000	<i>Slippery Blisses</i> . Video of performance. Group exhibition, 'An Invitation to Kiss', video and interactive installations, digital, photography, and video screenings, Generator, Mid-Wynd, Dundee.
January 2000	<i>Underdog</i> . Video installation and sound performance, collaboration with Sam Hooper. Part of 'Live-Stock, RAM/FM', 72-hour audio event, The Arc, Stockton, Teesside.

- October 1999** *Underdog*. Video installation and sound performance, collaboration with Sam Hooper. NXN Film and Arts Festival, The Workhaus, Liverpool, part of 'Tracey', Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art.
- October 1999** *Bed of Roses*. Installation. Group exhibition, The Workhaus, Liverpool, NXN Film and Arts Festival, part of 'Tracey', Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art.
- October 1999** *Shelter IV: Relocation*. Site-specific installation, part of 'VANE 99'. The Chapterhouse, Blackfriars, Newcastle. Collaboration with Kevin Anderson and Karen White.
- October 1999** *Shelter III: The Flood*. Site-specific installation, part of 'VANE 99'. Polestar Studios, Shieldfield, Newcastle. Collaboration with Kevin Anderson and Karen White.
- October 1999** [Untitled]. Installation. Group exhibition, 'Re:Searchers', part of 'VANE 99', Jesmond Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- October 1999** *Underdog*. Video installation and sound performance, collaboration with Sam Hooper. Group exhibition, 'node 5+5', Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland.
- March 1999** [Untitled]. Group exhibition, 'VANE Export', Waygood Boutique, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.
- March 1999** *Replay*. Site-specific installation, Childhood Memories Toy Museum, Tynemouth, North Tyneside. Part of 'Hidden' programme, commissioned by David Metcalf Associates and Globe Gallery, North Shields.
- November 1998** [Untitled]. International website group exhibition, Northern Arts, Axis, <http://www.lmu.ac.uk/ces/axis>
- October 1998** *Shelter II: The Haunting*. Site-specific installation, part of 'VANE 98'. Polestar Studios, Shieldfield, Newcastle upon Tyne. Collaboration with Kevin Anderson & Karen White.
- August 1998** [Untitled]. Group exhibition, 'Prints', University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, New South Wales, Australia.
- July 1998** *Can You Feel It?* and *Free as a Bird* documentation. International website group show, 'Visible Philosophies' curated by Rose Frain, Axis: <http://www.lmu.ac.uk/ces/axis>.
- June 1998** *Shelter: Where Do We Draw the Line?* Site-specific installation, part of 'VANE 1998'. Polestar Studios, Shieldfield, Newcastle upon Tyne. Collaboration with Kevin Anderson and Karen White.
- June 1998** *Can You Feel It?* Group exhibition, 'Artists in Arms', British Red Cross: St David's Hall, Cardiff; Portfolio Gallery, Edinburgh; Royal Geographical Society, London.
- May 1998** *Free as a Bird*. Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'GotM at the Shed', North Shields Fish Quay Festival, North Shields, North Tyneside.
- May 1998** *Bed of Roses*. Installation. Group exhibition, 'Flower Power', Globe Gallery, North Shields, North Tyneside.
- March 1998** *Handmaiden*. Mixed media sculpture/photocollage. Isis Arts group exhibition for International Women's Day, 'Hand: Women on Women': Buddle Arts Centre, Wallsend, North Tyneside; Woodhorn Colliery Museum, Ashington, and Queensgate Art Gallery, Alnwick, Northumberland.
- January 1998** *Brass Cowpat*. Sculpture. Group exhibition, 'Art for the Park', No Business on the Moor, People's Gallery, Discovery Museum, Blandford House, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- July 1997** [Untitled]. Group exhibition, 'Arts in Schools', Globe Gallery, North Shields.
- July 1997** *Stars in Their Eyes* [director]. Group performance, Gulbenkian Studio Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, commissioned by Northern Stage.

- October 1996** *Land Army*. Site intervention. In 'Artists Challenge the Armouries', collaboration with Crystal Clear artists initiative, Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds.
- September 1996** *Transitional Goods*. Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'Shop', collaboration with Blue Cowboys, Grainger Street, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- July – August 1996** *Slippery Blisses*. Site-specific installation, Waygood Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- June – July 1996** *Psycho Soma*. Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'On the Corner', Burdon House, Sunderland.
- May 1996** *Self Portrait*. Video print from 'Who We Are: Women '94'. In *Portfolio*. Printmaking by staff from the School of Arts, Design and Communications, University of Sunderland.
- March 1996** *Self Portrait*. Video print from 'Who We Are: Women '94'. Group exhibition, 'Towards a Place for Art: Works on Paper II', Surikov Institute, Moscow, Russia.
- March 1996** *Our Natural History*. Mixed media collage. Group exhibition, 'Open Art '95', Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Teesside (joint first prize).
- March 1995** *[Untitled]*. In group exhibition, 'Towards a Place for Art: Works on Paper I', Surikov Institute, Moscow, Russia.
- February – March 1995** *Heart of the City*, Site-specific installation. Group exhibition, 'Sale', in collaboration with Blue Cowboys artists group, Bigg Market, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- February 1995** *[Untitled]* Sculpture. Original Mary Quant shoes containing acetate insoles inscribed with: "There is no trace without resistance ... there is no etching on a surface without pain". Group exhibition, 'Words', Aspex Visual Arts Trust, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth.
- November 1994** *Putting My Foot in It, I and II*. Mixed media sculptures. Group exhibition, 'Open Art '94', Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Teesside (second prize).
- September 1994 – January 1995** *Self Portrait*. Still image from video performance in Stowell Street, Newcastle. Group exhibition, 'Who We Are: Women '94', National Festival of Women Photographers in the Northern Region, Zone Photographic Gallery and Newcastle Playhouse, Newcastle.
- September 1994** *Hot House Cold Storage*. Site-specific installation, Isis Gallery, Melmerby, Cumbria.
- April 1993** *[Untitled]*. Installation. City Challenge, The People's Gallery, Museum of Science and Technology, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- March 1993** *[Untitled]*. Mixed media sculpture. Group exhibition, 'Natural Forms', Clayton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- March 1993** *[Untitled]*. Paper presented at *Women and Art Practice* conference, Exeter University.
- February 1993** *[Untitled]*. Group exhibition, 'Other People's Shoes', Manchester and touring.
- September 1992** *No Trace Without Resistance*. Site-specific installation, M.A. Fine Art, final show, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- March 1992** *Are You Sitting Comfortably?* Installation at the Newcastle offices of the Royal Institute of British Architects. M.A. Fine Art presentation, Newcastle Polytechnic.
- July 1991** *Listen with Mother*. Installation, M.A. Fine Art, mid-term show, Newcastle Polytechnic.
- November 1990** *Limits of the Container: Development and Restriction of Expression*. Video performance/essay on the development of children's art. M.A. Fine Art presentation, Newcastle Polytechnic.
- May 1987** *Celebrate!* Ceramic sculpture and painting. Group exhibition with Nicola Balfour and Sarah Shaw at the Dovecote Arts Centre, Stockton, Teesside.
- January – February 1986** *Work by Sally Madge*. Exhibition of paintings, Concert Bar, City Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Other professional activities

2003 – 2020	Freelance Artist, Education Team, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
2011 – 2014	Project development and curation of the Lindisfarne <i>Shelter</i> artists' residencies, installations, events, and performances, Holy Island, Northumberland.
2011	Artistic direction, Baltic Youth Panel performances for the Turner Prize, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.
2006 – 2011	Academic Tutor and Visiting Lecturer, Foundation Studies in Art and Design, School of Arts, Design and Media, University of Sunderland.
2003 – 2008	Member of steering and selection group, Platform North East, regional forum for experimental, live art and multidisciplinary practice.
2002 – 2007	Member of Board of Directors and Programme Board, Waygood Gallery, Newcastle.
1998 – 2006	Senior Lecturer in Visual and Performing Arts, School of Arts, Design and Media, University of Sunderland.
1985 – 1998	Lecturer in Art and Design Education and Visiting Lecturer in Foundation Studies in Art and Design, Sunderland Polytechnic.
1995 – 1996	Member of Arts/Landmarks/Monuments Group, Newcastle Cityscape II. Proposed site-specific billboard project at Central Station, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1990 – 1992	M.A. Fine Art (Distinction), University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1986 – 1987	Ceramic mural residencies: Spital Tongues Community Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne; Willington, Langdale and Hadrian Park Schools, Wallsend, and Marden High School, Cullercoats, North Tyneside.
1984 – 1988	Visiting Lecturer in Arts Education, North Tyneside College, Wallsend.
1983 – 1985	Sessional Supervisor in Art, Northumbrian Probation and After Care Service, Gateshead.
1982 – 1985	Visiting Lecturer in Ceramics and Sculpture, Department of Fine Art, Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic.
1981 – 1985	Sessional Supervisor in Community Arts Education: Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside Councils; Newcastle upon Tyne Area Health Authority and Community Relations Council; Scotswood Community Association; Byker Women's Ceramic Workshop; and Raby Street School, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1983	Production Assistant for independent film company funded by Department of Recreation, Newcastle upon Tyne Council, and Northern Arts.
1981 – 1982	Postgraduate Certificate of Education (Primary Education), Newcastle Polytechnic.
1980 – 1982	Exhibition of Maling Pottery: History, photography and documentation, Byker Library and Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1977 – 1980	Community Artist, Byker Community Development Project, Newcastle upon Tyne.
1978	Visiting Lecturer, Art Department, St Mary's College of Education, Newcastle.
1977	Community gable-end mural painting project, Harrison Place, Shieldfield, Newcastle.
1975 – 1977	B.A. (Hons.) Fine Art (ceramic sculpture), Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic.
1970	Established ceramics workshop and part-time teaching, Hull University.
1967 – 1968	Diploma in Art and Design, Central School of Art and Design, London.
1965 – 1966	Foundation Studies in Art and Design, Oxford College of Art and Technology.