



E.A.F.  
Edinburgh  
Art  
Festival

# Platform:2022

Saoirse Amira Anis  
Emelia Kerr Beale  
Lynsey MacKenzie  
Jonny Walker

# Platform: 2022

We are delighted to welcome you to *Platform: 2022* our annual showcase dedicated to artists at the outset of their careers.

Selected from an open call by curator Seán Elder, artist Lucy Skaer, and Beth Bate, Director of DCA, Dundee, four artists based in Scotland – Saoirse Amira Anis, Emelia Kerr Beale, Lynsey MacKenzie and Jonny Walker – have been supported to make and present new work at the heart of the festival.

Despite the openness of the selection process there are some compelling and overlapping themes which emerge across the artists' work. Saoirse Amira Anis explores aspects of her dual heritage and draws our attention to the care and generosity within everyday rituals of friendship and sharing. Emelia Kerr Beale's installation of video and sculptural textile works, processes the complexities of the experience of illness, with reference to the mythology of an ancient oak tree. Lynsey MacKenzie reflects on ideas of time, repetition and memory, her paintings simultaneously suggest luminous landscapes, whilst also drawing attention to the physicality and materiality of the paintings as objects. And, through his sculptural installation, Jonny Walker's series of cast lambs, with their surfaces in varying materials, seemingly in states of partial collapse and erosion, suggest a sense of the body's vulnerability, and temporality.

The exhibition is curated by Programme Assistant, Laura McSorley, who joins the festival on an internship designed to support the next generation of curators and producers; and who over the last six months has co-ordinated the selection process and worked closely with the artists to realise their projects, supporting the process of collective exhibition making.

We are most grateful to our colleagues in the Institut français d'Écosse for hosting the show for the second year – in the building which is also home to Edinburgh Art Festival.

The exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support of the PLACE Programme, a partnership between Edinburgh Festivals, Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland; with additional support from the Cruden Foundation and the Institut français, d'Écosse.

Thanks to our funders, and as part of a wider package of support for the participating artists, we are delighted to have been able to commission an essay for the exhibition by writer Harvey Dimond, for this booklet designed by James Brook.

Above all we extend our heartfelt thanks to the artists for their thoughtful and compelling work, and for their energy, commitment and good company in making this exhibition.

Jane Connarty, Programme Manager



# Visions of a Life Harvey Dimond

BELOW: Emelia Kerr Beale,  
*Film still of the Major Oak*  
tree, courtesy of the artist  
and Finn Rabbit Dove, 2022.

*Platform: 2022* sits at the heart of the art festival. This August, our home at the Institut Français d'Ecosse, becomes a stage to celebrate the breadth of talent of four emerging artists from across Scotland.

An invitation was extended to writer Harvey Dimond to produce the following essay in the months leading up to this exhibition. Developed through conversation with the four artists while they were in the process of realising their works for the show, the resulting text reflects a time of production, creation, and flux – through which Harvey carefully considers and discusses the ideas, practices, and artistic intentions of the artists at the time of writing in June 2022.

For *Platform: 2022*, Emelia Kerr Beale positions a speculative history of the Major Oak as a site of resistance that highlights interdependence and creative undertakings as acts of coping. This ancient tree is found in the historic Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, where Emelia grew up. Human interventions over time attempted to prevent the tree's limbs from growing downwards to use the ground as a support for its weight. This natural flourishing of branches was deemed unsightly and was pruned extensively, causing damage to the tree; to this day the tree requires metal chains and robust braces to hold its weight. Emelia unravels this mythology of the Major Oak to create a dictionary of bodily experience from a queer and feminist



TRUST FOR SUPPORT  
THE DOWNWARD  
OF YOUR BODY <sup>FORCE</sup>  
SINKING INTO  
A DEEP PLACE  
THEN RISING UP  
IN WAVES





ABOVE: Emelia Kerr Beale,  
*Untitled*, Monoprint,  
courtesy of the artist, 2022.  
BELOW: Emelia Kerr Beale,  
*Untitled*, Monoprint,  
courtesy of the artist, 2022.

vantage point, pointing to the ways in which categorizations of bodies can also be understood as myths, as part of the neoliberal directive to “be well”<sup>1</sup>. The machine-knitted garment that Emelia has created in collaboration with their father – Robin Kerr – hangs heavy, its weighty sleeves resting on the ground, alluding to the weight of the Major Oak’s limbs, and the tensions of the tree’s metal supports. The triptych of garments, stitched together as one piece, references the “false opposition between autonomy and dependence”<sup>2</sup>.

Working in collaboration with Finn Rabbitt Dove and Clara Hancock, Emelia has produced a non-linear, circular moving image work for the first time. The Major Oak and the human interventions upon it can be understood as a mythology that alludes to the ways in which “disabled people are denied the right to speak as experts about their conditions or produce knowledge about themselves.”<sup>3</sup> Reflecting on the last two years of the pandemic, Emelia has been using artmaking to refuse the starkly visible systemic disregard for disabled people. Despite the human attempts to alter its natural form, the Major Oak still stands steadfast, ancient and unwavering. The idea of this tree as a resolutely timeless and unwavering entity speaks to the concerns of all four artists exhibiting at Platform.

What is immediately evident in the work of these four practitioners is a visual investment in the natural world and the way in which its temporalities extend far beyond those of a human life. Saoirse Amira Anis’ diasporic consciousness is concerned with the materiality of natural forms, and for this exhibition, she has used an array of natural materials that are found in Scotland and Morocco. Her multidisciplinary, multi-sensory ‘sculptural collages’ are maps for navigating geographies of belonging. The medium of collage is celebrated by many artists as a cartographic device for charting themes of diaspora and creolisation, the use of found elements embodying a geographical or metaphorical presence in multiple places. Saoirse’s use of natural materials in the processes of fabric dyeing and making food speaks to the ways in which diasporic communities re-imagine the domestic space as a site of solidarity and safety.

Saoirse’s refusal to be constrained by discipline allows space for the formulation of an intentional, liberatory and therapeutic approach to making. In a society still devoid of care and fraught with lovelessness, Saoirse asks us to look beyond the love that is centred solely on sex and desire, and towards radical and decolonial cosmologies of self-love, platonic love and community care. Her personal mythologies are deeply connected to both the community and to the earth, practices that are largely absent from Western culture. In South Africa, for example, the urban infrastructures of flyovers and security walls are plastered with posters advertising the service of ‘sangomas’ (traditional healers). These healers deal with an array of health conditions and quotidian struggles. The collection and usage of ‘muti’ (natural plants that are believed to have healing properties) is an integral part of a sangoma’s practice.







LEFT AND ABOVE: Saoirse Amira Anis, *Film stills*, courtesy of the artist, 2022.

The most widely advertised, sought-after service promises to bring an old lover back into your arms.

Like Emelia, Saoirse invokes her own mythologies of care and healing, looking to natural resources as a medium for expressing ancestral belonging. Her work urges us to question what we have lost through the commodification of love – such as pinkwashing – the capitalist commodification of queer identity – and how the loss of our connection to the earth is inherently linked to the loss of our connection to one another.

In her instinctive compositions, Lynsey MacKenzie reimagines the temporality of the medium of painting, with an interest in time's relationship to space, movement and light. "Paintings do not unfold in a linear fashion; they are there all at once."<sup>4</sup> In her work, there are conversations between illusionistic space, painterly surfaces, and paintings as objects in themselves. She makes use of the atemporal nature of contemporary painting, where, thanks to the internet, all languages of painting are available to us simultaneously in a way they have never quite been before. This atemporality allows her to borrow and play with various painterly languages – to stretch them apart, to reform and reimagine them slightly differently each time. One painting becomes a source for the next – and so on – creating an ongoing experience of déjà-vu as Lynsey takes us further into kaleidoscopic abstraction. "When I'm painting



I'm reflecting upon change and flux, which time brings about. I am attempting to find a feeling of space, to capture a feeling of movement, of nothing being quite pinned down."<sup>5</sup> An interest in the dynamic interdependency of the natural world is evident in works such as the 2021 diptych *Halcyon*, which depicts vegetation lush with green foliage positioned alongside bare, skeletal trees, their copper leaves anxiously waiting to be carried away on an autumnal breeze. This collapsing of the temporality of the seasons within the artist's compositions allows the viewer to re-consider the phenomenology of looking at paintings. These richly textured works have strong suggestions of movement – trees, leaves and bodies of water exist in a state of flux, the viewer becoming completely saturated and submerged in these shifting landscapes.

The experimentation with scale and the physicality of painting itself points to the possibility of the paintings taking on the form of sculptural objects. The fluctuating thinness and thickness of the paint and the speed and energy of marks create an unfolding of space, inviting the viewer to enter within.

Lynsey undertakes an examination of the dichotomy of the atemporal and the temporal, the abstract and the representational. Materially, her paintings are formed of non-linear accumulations of marks. Lynsey's works span multiple timespans: 'chronos' time – measured numerically and linearly – the time of clocks and calendars, and 'kairos' time – which can be read as fleeting moments often tied to the experience of the natural world and human consciousness or



LEFT: Lynsey MacKenzie,  
*Daydreams*, 2022, (detail), oil  
on canvas.

BELOW: Lynsey MacKenzie,  
*Unfoldings*, 2022, oil on  
canvas, 24 x 30cm.

philosophically read as the opportune moment of action. This collision of time marks a more holistic relationship with the natural world and the experience of the body that each of the artists examines in their practices. “The painting inhabits a different temporality, and through our engagement with it, we too inhabit this altered temporal state”.<sup>6</sup> Lynsey’s paintings construct an experience of what some philosophers describe as ‘Deep Time’ – encouraging us to “slow down our increasingly hyperactive contemporary gaze” and feel time through a slow breath, a shared glance or a moment of joy.

Jonny Walker considers these unstable temporalities in his sculptural works. His sculptures are based on spring lambs belonging to a friend, which were then 3d modelled, printed and cast. The casts have been worked into to varying degrees, resulting in fluctuating levels of abstraction. These sculptures exist in varying states of collapse – some are made from cast aluminium and treated with chemicals, such as sodium hydroxide that mark and corrode the surface, resulting in interventions on the surface of the material that appears to be the result of a natural process. This sense of precarity and flux juxtaposes the inevitability of ecological disaster, with the vulnerability and warmth of intimacy. The volatility and material disruption also speak to the body’s ability to change rapidly and allude to experiences of disconnection and a recurring reconstitution of self.



Despite deploying materials that, on the surface, appear to be solid and fixed, Jonny manipulates them to question their apparent physical stability. This is seen beautifully in the patchwork metal blanket that the flock of disintegrating lambs leap over and lay upon. Jonny's practice shows a sustained interest in the proximity of sensuality and queer intimacy with the horror and tension of a looming collapse. These newly unstable materials, rendered soft and fluid through an array of chemical and bodily alterations, often come to represent natural forms, while also drawing attention to extractivist practices such as mining. When placed into conversation with one another, the altered surfaces of the sculptures influence changes of state in the materials around them, just as the precarious ecosystems of rivers, glaciers and oceans are inherently but precariously dependent on one another. Jonny's works visually embody the environmental theorist Rob Nixon's concept of *slow violence*, a violence that is often attritional and gradual that is enacted upon racialized, gendered and queered bodies, rendering them fungible. Nixon writes that our conceptions of violence are often "immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space... erupting into instant sensational visibility"<sup>8</sup>. Jonny addresses notions of disruption and disaster with material and conceptual patience and tenderness that is evident in this exhibition.

Jonny uses writing as a stimulus for his sculptural practice, with these founding texts often becoming arresting titles for artworks such as his 2011 work – *An angel appeared, he rests at the back of my throat*. His close positioning of seemingly unyielding materials expressed in fluid and agile forms has a particular poetic potency. Emelia often deploys text in their textile works in the form of meditations and affirmations, such as *I hope this finds you well/in strange and uncertain times*, words which echo many people's email communications in the early stages of lockdown. Emelia formulates a unique visual language for discussing illness and disability, particularly regarding the multiplicity of experiences. By adopting the concept of 'bodymind' – which understands the body and the mind as a single integrated entity, Emelia leaves only traces of bodies in their works. This collective affinity holds space for the vastness and complexity of bodily experience and advocates that there is no particular body at play.

Saoirse also expresses a profound engagement with writing, creating sonic-performativities (which are also visually arresting) that resist formalisation and instead invite the reader to orchestrate them. They are fleshy, intimate, tender moments, a call to arms to, as bell hooks writes, "seduce those among us who remain wedded to lovelessness and to open the door to their hearts to let love enter"<sup>9</sup>. Saoirse's practice draws her into discourses of queer ecology, reframing binary and heterosexist notions of the environment. The way that the materials in Jonny's sculpture react and respond to one another also allude to these queer ecologies, as does Emelia's manifestations of the experiential confluence of pleasure, pain, anxiety and joy.



RIGHT: Lynsey MacKenzie,  
*Headlands*, 2022, oil on  
canvas, 20 x 20cm.  
BELOW: Jonny Walker, *Detail  
of casting process of a lamb*,  
courtesy of the artist, 2022.







LEFT: Jonny Walker, *Detail of casting process of a lamb*, courtesy of the artist, 2022.

BELOW: Jonny Walker, *Detail of patchwork metal blanket*, courtesy of the artist, 2022.

ВОТТОМ: Jonny Walker, *3D render of a lamb*, courtesy of the artist, 2022.

Together, the four artists generously supply us with dynamic and multi-faceted visions of life, while at the same time feeling out and asserting their own individual desires. Lynsey's paintings offer rich, fluctuating depictions of landscapes operating on multiple temporal planes, fully immersing the viewer in the phenomenology of looking. Jonny's activated sculptural interventions play lucidly with temporality and material, embodying the fragility and multiplicity of the bodily experience. Saoirse's diaspora-conscious rituals of love advocate for a connection to the community, to the heart, and to the earth. Emelia's video and triptych of garments refuse the systemic disregard of disabled wisdom, instead positioning disability and sickness as instinctive sources of knowledge.

In the Institut Francais d'Ecosse – the site of this expansive and illuminating exhibition – and at the centre of the busy, congested heart of Scotland's capital city, I envision a giant, sprawling oak tree filling the exhibition space. The tree invites us to rest beneath it, to listen to ourselves and to our bodies. Like the oak tree, this exhibition is a demonstration of endurance, imagination and embodied consciousness – a praise-poem to the complexities of the natural world and the bodily experience.

**Harvey Dimond is a British-Barbadian writer and researcher living and working between Scotland and South Africa. Their practice looks to artistic and literary responses to environmental racism and ecological grief in the afterlives of slavery and colonialism.**

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## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Emelia Kerr Beale, 2022
- <sup>3</sup> Emelia Kerr Beale, 2022
- <sup>4</sup> Lynsey MacKenzie, 2022
- <sup>5</sup> Lynsey MacKenzie, 2022
- <sup>6</sup> Lynsey MacKenzie, 2022
- <sup>7</sup> Lynsey Mackenzie, 2022
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- <sup>9</sup> bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, 1999

## Glossary of Terms

**Multidisciplinary artist:** an artist who is deeply invested in a range of materials and approaches to art-making – often experimental, seeking new forms of expression and existing between established artforms.

**Diasporic consciousness:** a diasporic consciousness encompasses everyday life experiences that are “built in relation to stories of movement and displacement”.

**Interdependency:** the state of being dependent upon one another, a mutual dependence.

**Phenomenology:** a philosophy of experience that values the individual lived experience of human beings as a source of knowledge.

**Dichotomy:** a division or contrast between two things that are, or are represented as being, opposed or entirely different.

**Chronos Time:** Chronos (or Kronos) is the time of clocks and calendars; it can be quantified and measured. Chronos is linear, moving inexorably out of the determinate past toward the determined future, and has no freedom.

**Kairos Time:** a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: the opportune and decisive moment.

**Bodymind:** an understanding of the body and the mind as a single integrated entity.

**Sonic performatives:** a term used to describe how people respond to sound in the context or performance.

**Queer Ecologies:** an interdisciplinary constellation of practices that aim, in different ways, to disrupt prevailing heterosexist discursive and institutional articulations of sexuality and nature, and to reimagine evolutionary processes, ecological interactions, and environmental politics.

**Multiplicity of the body:** the quality or state of the body being multiple or various – to be everything and nothing at once.

**Extractivist:** the process of extracting natural resources from the Earth to sell on the world market. It exists in an economy that depends primarily on the extraction or removal of natural resources that are considered valuable for exportation worldwide.

**Collective affinity:** a group sharing of a natural liking for and understanding of someone or something.

**Heterosexist:** a system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination that position heterosexual relationships as normative.

**Creolisation:** refers to the process by which elements of different cultures are blended together to create a new culture.

**Fungible:** capable of mutual substitution, interchangeable, readily changeable to adapt to new situations.



# Artists' Biographies

**Lynsey MacKenzie** (born Edinburgh) lives and works in Glasgow. MacKenzie graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 2019 with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art: Painting and Printmaking. Recent exhibitions include *Royal Scottish Academy Annual Exhibition*, Online (2022); *REVERB*, Visual Arts Scotland, Online (2022); *Society of Scottish Artists Annual Exhibition*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2021); *Abstract Zeitgeist*, The Biscuit Factory, Edinburgh (2021); *RE:CONNECT*, Society of Scottish Artists, Online (2021); *Royal Scottish Academy Annual Exhibition*, Online (2021); *Interactions of Colour*, Royal Glasgow Institute, Online (2021); *New Contemporaries*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2020); and *HERE AND NOW*, SaltSpace Gallery, Glasgow (2020). MacKenzie has participated in residencies at SaltSpace, Glasgow (2019-2020) and Royal Drawing School at Dumfries House, Cumnock (2018) and currently serves as a committee member of Visual Arts Scotland. Recent awards include the Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Award, the RSA Latimer Award, and the Wasps Award.

**Emelia Kerr Beale** (born 1997) graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 2019 and currently lives and works in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions and projects include *TH4Y*, GENERATORprojects, Dundee (2020); Tonic Arts *Life Under Lockdown* commission for Western General Hospital, Edinburgh (2020); *Bathing Nervous Limbs*, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh (2021); *as if looking is knowing*, Nomas\* Projects, Dundee (2021); and Disability Arts Online and Attenborough Arts Centre visual artist support commission (2021). Recent residencies include The Bothy Project, Isle of Eigg (2019); The Royal Drawing School Artist Studios, Dumfries House, Cumnock (2019 and 2021); and Hospitalfield's Graduate Programme, Arbroath (2021-2022). Emelia is drawn to things that create space for collective (un)learning, and contributed to *In Session fka GRADJOB* (2019-2020); Eastside Project's *The Exchange* paired with CAMP member Thaïs Lenkiewicz (2020); and is currently an associate member of The Newbridge Project's *Collective Studio*.

**Saoirse Amira Anis** (born 1997) grew up in South Lanarkshire and is currently based in Dundee. Saoirse graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee in 2018 with a BA in Art & Philosophy, was a committee member at GENERATORprojects from 2019-2021. Saoirse was recently awarded places on Cove Park's Crisis Residency (2020-2021) and Jupiter Artland's Rising Residency (2021). Recent exhibitions and performances include: Jupiter Rising Festival, Jupiter Artland (2021); *ALIVE!*, GENERATORprojects (2021); *A Lesson in Vanity*, David Dale Gallery x LUX Scotland (2021); *BLM Mural Trail*, Jupiter Artland (2020); *2020 Visions*, Tron Theatre (2020); *GEN-TRS*, The Royal Standard (2020); *Working Out*, The Northern Charter (2019); and *Sustain Your Errors*, NEO N Digital Arts Festival (2018). Recent curatorial projects include: *Mis(sing) Information*, Perth Museum & Art Gallery (2022); *A Quest That's Just Begun*, Wooosh Gallery x GENERATORprojects (2020); and *Change:Debate*, NEO N Digital Arts Festival (2019).

**Jonny Walker** (born 1994) is an artist based in Glasgow. They graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee in 2017 with a BA in Fine Art. Recent exhibitions include; *The Deepest Gurgle I Ever Heard*, KIOSK, Glasgow (2021); *Meatworld*, 16 Nicholson Street, Glasgow (2021); *I'm worried about the soil because it's full of ghosts*, ARTNSHELTER, Tokyo (2021); *I tried to bite into you...* Wooosh Gallery, Dundee (2020); *Push your fingers into the world*, Laurieston Arches, Glasgow (2019); *They Had 4 Years* annual graduate group showcase at GENERATORprojects, Dundee (2018). Residencies include; Hospitalfield's Graduate Residency Programme, Hospitalfield House, Arbroath (2018).

# Platform: 2022

Institut français d'Ecosse  
West Parliament Square  
Edinburgh EH1 1RF

28 July – 28 August 2022  
Daily, 10am-5pm

Selected by: Beth Bate,  
Seán Elder and Lucy Skaer  
Curated by: Laura McSorley

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The moving image element of Saoirse Amira Anis' work is also supported by LUX Scotland.



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Presented across leading national institutions, internationally recognized contemporary art galleries and artist run spaces, it offers a chance to discover work by some of the very best historic and contemporary artists from Scotland, the UK and beyond.

Alongside our main festival programme, we run a year-round series of learning and engagement activities including bespoke tours, workshops and projects for community groups and organisations inspired by the work of our participating artists.

[www.edinburghartfestival.com](http://www.edinburghartfestival.com)  
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Cover image: Lynsey MacKenzie, *Park Days*, 2022, (detail), oil on canvas, 40 x 40cm.  
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