

STATES OF LIVING: ARCHITECTURE, OBJECTS, BODY

States of Living: Architecture, Objects, Body is a three-day exhibition and event series facilitated by curator Rachel Grant, with visual artist and performer Alexandra McGregor, and writers/performance artists Hanna Gia Louise and Mae Diansangu. The project has focused on commissioning new works from artists with critical feminist perspectives to investigate the political conditions of architectures in Aberdeen.

Architecture reflects states of rapid regeneration and new developments are often a sign of progress for a city. Where the old collides with the new, the preservation of social and cultural histories is often lost or in ruins. This suggests that architecture is far more than simple bricks and water; these structures reveal the histories, hopes, power struggles and culture of the society we live in today.

Aberdeen was once framed by its industrial processing; iron, grain mills, textiles, meat processing, and soap making to name a few, taking advantage of underground resources in the forms of the Gilcomston and Denburn river. The disappearance of the industrial landscape in Aberdeen leave remanences in vacant and derelict buildings like Broadford works or Richards as it was known locally. An important symbol of Aberdeen's textile history having run continuously from 1808 to 2004.

It was once one of the largest employer in the city and on its closure in 2004 around 200 of the workers, many of whom were on minimum wage lost their jobs and pensions and received little or no redundancy. The group of buildings, once the largest group of A listed buildings in Scotland has remained empty for decades. Left to decay and open to arson the infrastructure of the building now sits visible through broken window panes and crumbling brickwork. Its future is in the development of the site into a £50 million 'urban village' a mixed-use development including housing, student flats, commercial, retail and café spaces.

Given this deteriorating architecture the cultural preservation, is scattered in the oral histories of locals and ex-employees, city and museum archives, local newspapers and online blogs. Broadford works is just one example of the reflective nature of architecture in the city; lost industries, working communities and culture is replaced with neoliberal urban regeneration. The artists' works shown here reflect a critical approach to both specific historic architectures and disruptive approaches to the city's built environment more widely.

A new body of work from Alexandra McGregor uses the Aberdeen Comb Works that once stood on Hutcheon Street as a site of the city's industrial past and Pictish stones embedded in rural North-East landscapes, many of which are carved with symbols of combs.

This collection of works takes advantage of the slippages in historical truths merging Northeast folklore, fact and fictions to explore female potential in the past and present

To develop this work, Alexandra spent time with the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums archive and selected a number of combs manufactured by the Aberdeen Comb Works to display as part of the exhibition. The selection is diverse and situates both practical and ornate comb designs made from the synthetic material Keronyx. In response to the collection Alexandra developed a series of contemporary combs. Marigold gloves, washing pegs, a tea strainer and horse hair are the materials of choice. The use of primarily domestic, at hand materials disrupt ideas of functionality and material value, seen more clearly in those held in the archive.

The collaborative work of performance artists and writers Hanna Gia Louise and Mae Diansangu focuses on the body, intimacy and the built environment in Aberdeen from queer perspectives. 'Intersections' is a series of photos and written works, in which the artists have collaged images of their intimate bodies with anonymous buildings in the city. The lines and shapes of their bodies act as a disruption to the structures and proportions of the buildings. Situating narratives of the personal and subjective within heteronormative architectures.

The project has been made possible through Creative Funding, from Aberdeen City Council.

Many thanks to Lead Curator Jenny Brown and the team at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums for their time and expertise in navigating the comb archive. We are also grateful to Lise Bos, a non-binary analog photographer, based in Aberdeen who collaborated with Hanna and Mae for a selection of the images displayed.

Rachel Grant is a freelance curator based in Aberdeen. In 2018, she completed an MA in Curatorial Practice at Gray's School of Art and has recently established her own curatorial platform Fertile Ground where she works with context – specific approaches, primarily focusing on new commissions. Projects will often involve collaboration across disciplines and attempts to remain sensitive to site, previous projects have taken place at a food bank, a library and an industrial estate.

She is currently working as one of the Shadow Curators for the Peacock Associates: Curatorial Fellowship program, run by Peacock Visual Arts Aberdeen. In 2019, she has participated in curatorial residencies at the Shorestation on Unst, Shetland Isles and with arts organisation Despina in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Her current research areas include oil cultures, arts ecologies and feminist practice.

www.fertileground.info

Facebook: @fertilegroundarts

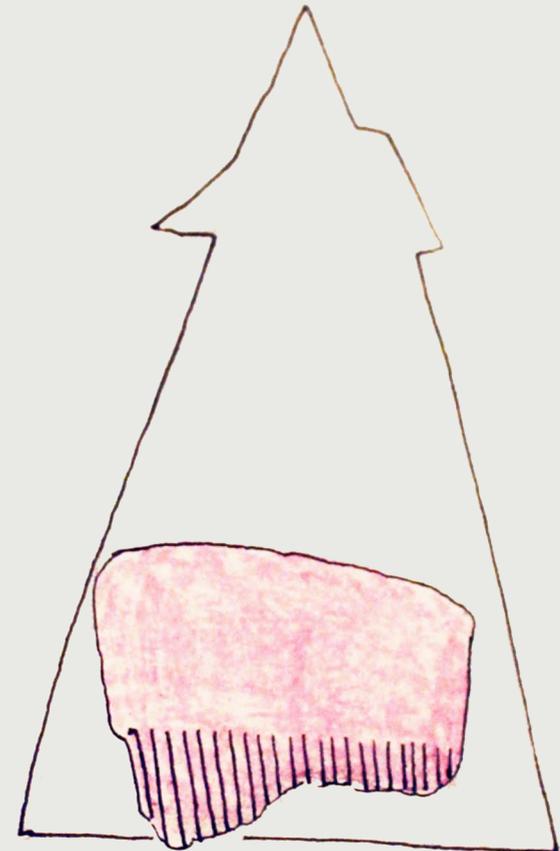
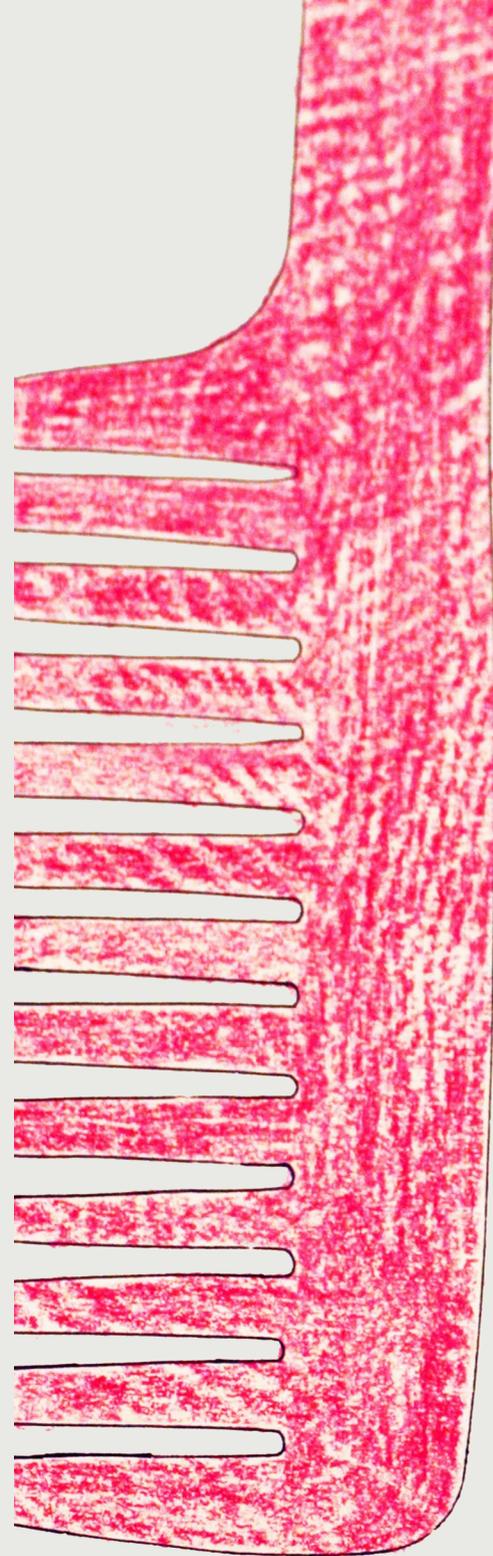


ALEXANDRA MCGREGOR

The work presented focuses on the Aberdeen Comb Works that used to stand on Hutcheon street, as a lost historical site within the city and the comb symbols used in Pictish stones embedded within the rural North-East landscape. The comb takes many forms in this body of work through performance, sculpture, video and drawing in untangling ideas surrounding the female position within the city and societies. Drawing on her research on the Picts and visits to the comb collection of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums archive Alexandra has produced a new collection of combs from domestic and natural material.

Through her visits to Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums comb collection Alexandra selected a number of combs on show with the exhibition, produced by the Aberdeen Comb Works. They reveal both practical and ornate uses, with some influenced by natural forms and Celtic designs and others, for example one with a small triangle cut in between the teeth may have been used for parting the hair. They also signify the cultural influences of Europe, Africa and the Pacific Islands on the design of combs produced in the city for example the Mantilla comb which has been traced back to Spain.

Maiden's Meeting is a film work developed at the site of The Maiden stone in Inverurie. The most notable folklore tale surrounding the stone is that the stone was once a maiden, who lost a bet with the Devil. As she fled, the Devil turned her to stone.



The Comb Crone is a performance and series of drawings takes inspiration from an ancient land goddess in the North East one that perhaps was venerated by the Picts.

Channeling the power of a site, body or object, disrupting archives or paying homage to an ancient land goddess venerated by the Picts, the work unearths cultural histories, untangling and questioning it to situate allegories of the present and post female.

Alexandra McGregor is a visual artist and performer based in Aberdeen. Her work explores feminine rites and traditions seeking out and questioning the present and post female. The narratives within her practice are embedded in historical material interweaving elements of folklore and history using past residue to explore the present and future role and place of women.

Alexandra graduated in 2017 from Gray's School of Art and from 2017-18 was Graduate in Residence for the Contemporary Art Practice department. She has exhibited at the RSA New Contemporaries (2018) at the Scottish National Gallery Edinburgh, and 'Positive Geographies' as part of the Look Again festival (2018). More recently she has exhibited and performed in group exhibitions organised by Nomad (2019). Alexandra currently works as a volunteer Gallery Assistant for Grampian Hospital Arts Trust at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

www.cargocollective.com/alexandramcgregor

BONE

HORN

TORTOISESHELL

WOOD

WHALE BONE

IVORY



HANNA GIA LOUISE & MAE DIANSANGU

Intersections is a series of written and visual representations of womxnhood, body and urban environment. The collaborative nature of the work creates a conversation between Hanna and Mae that reflects their individual and combined experiences around these themes. The work is a representation of how two queer bodies intersect with one another, the built environment and the heteronormative, patriarchal spaces that they both move through. It is a comment on the tension between the narratives which are inscribed on 'female' bodies and the personal, subjective narrative of those bodies.

For a selection of the images, Hanna and Mae collaborated with their friend Lise Bos, a non-binary analog photographer, based in Aberdeen.

Hanna Gia Louise is an anthropology student, writer and performer who explores queerness, sexuality, relationships and adversity through autobiographical performance poetry.

Mae Diansangu is a performance artist who uses spoken word and music to explore queerness, gender and race - particularly their intersections and the liminal spaces they produce.

the violence of defining your sexual Self in relation to a male ideation of female eroticism,

searching the folds and crevices for something Wantable and finding only failed womanhood

you start to identify as a certain kind of woman

you were danger in my mouth
or the moon and stars cut
onto the ceiling of my mind
every person i wanted to fuck
my contour and smoky-eye.
i chase
and ricochet, play
the movie of our life
on repeat
in my brain.
i think i knew you
before i knew you

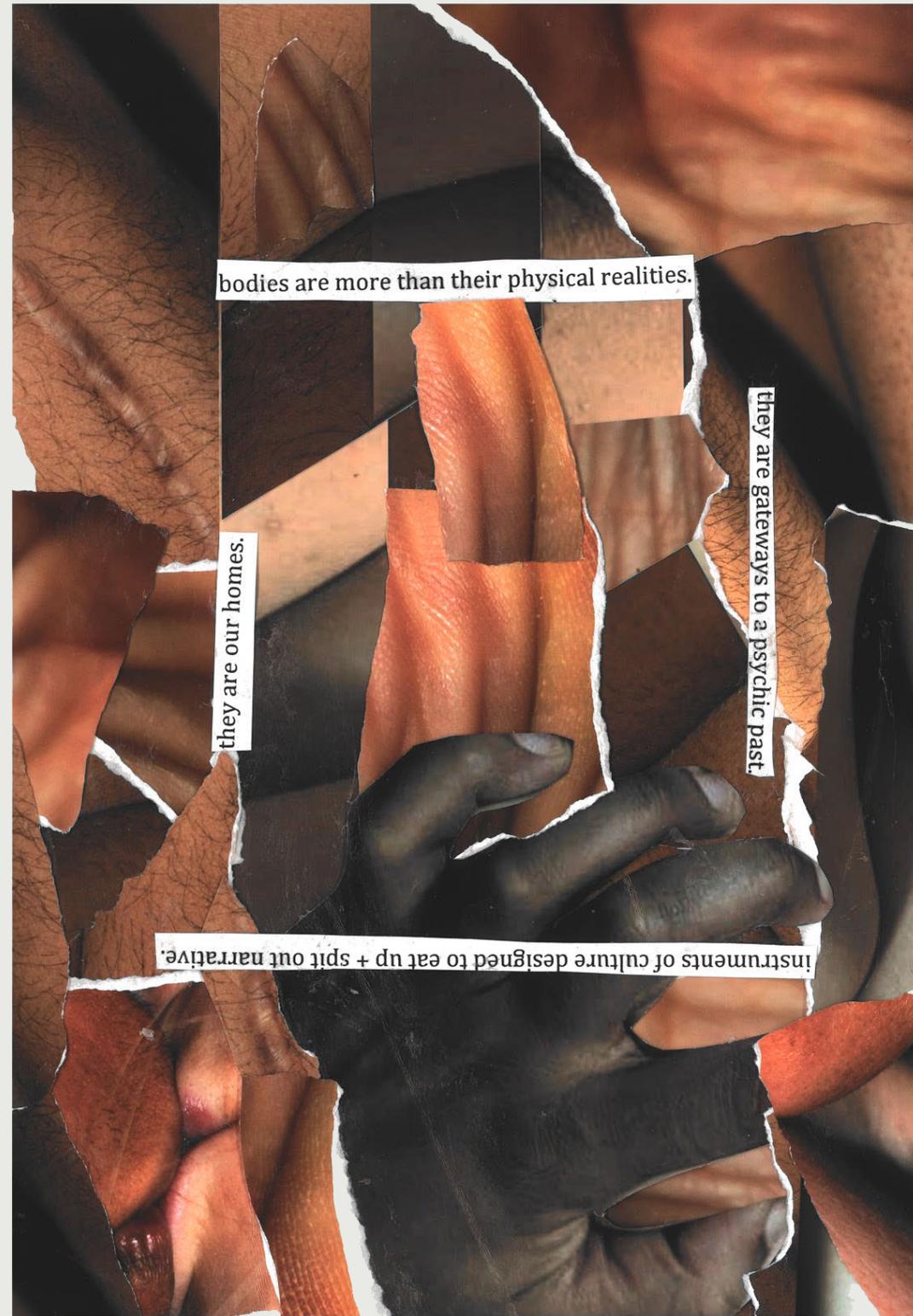
you never stop to wonder if she ever asks herself who dreamed her into being.

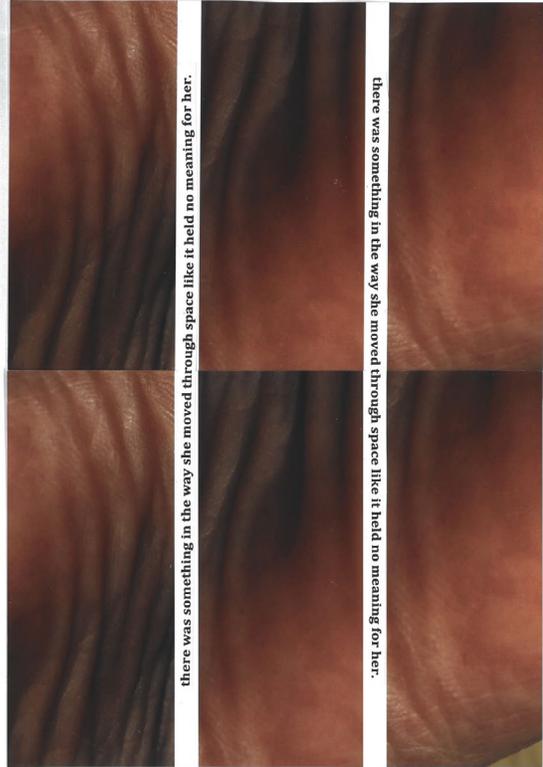
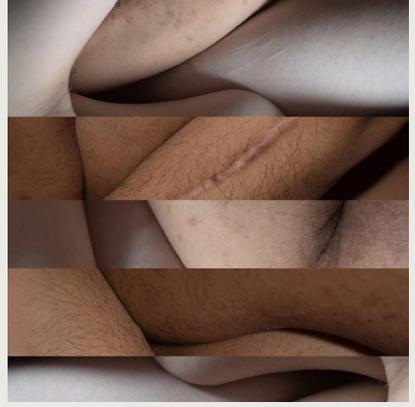
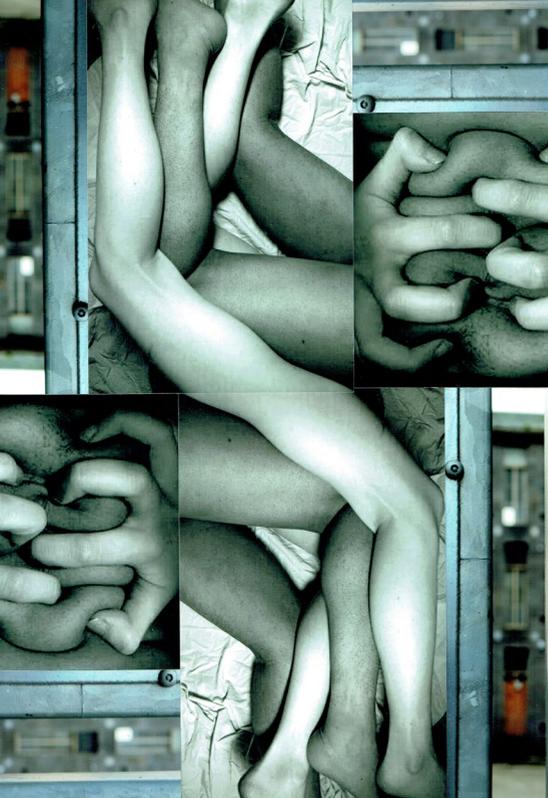
In 2018 Hanna and Mae co-founded the arts collective and performance night Hysteria, which showcases the work of women and non-binary creatives in Aberdeen. They are part of the city's emerging underground queer performance scene where art and activism has merged to elevate queer feminist perspectives.

Hysteria Instagram: [@hysteriaABDN](#)

Hanna Instagram: [@anthr0boi](#)

Mae Instagram: [@maemondo_369](#)





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