



Art Based Masters Programme Self-directed Study Proposal – Major Project (PDP)*

Art and Design: Arts and Education: Arts Practice and Education : Arts and Project Management :
Fine Art: History of Art and Design: Contemporary Arts China.

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| Student | Madeleine Washbrook | | | Course MA Fine Art | Tutor Mona Casey | Date: 18/06/2023 |
| Mode | FT | PT | Cohort: September FT | | Term 3 | Stage 3: Masters |

This **Self-directed Study Proposal** gives you the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss what you have done thus far with regard to your arts-based practice or in your professional employment. You should also give some sense of what you hope to achieve while on the course you are following as this assists the course teams in understanding your point of departure which in turn helps the teams to gauge your progress through the course. Obviously, nothing is set in stone and things will change as you move through the three stages of the course. This is to be both expected and welcomed as your course should take you on an adventure. This form should be completed in consultation with your Course Director or module tutor. Please note that this process is designed to enable you to take responsibility for the initiation, development, and evaluation of the work you undertake.

Working Title:

Re-Wearing the Wicker Mask: Exploring how the resurgence of folklore, mythology and pagan ritual is an urgent movement in contemporary art, identity, and context.

Aims and Objectives

I aim to create a developed and interlinked body of work which communicates across film (Digital and Short 8mm), drawing, print, writing and performance. Within these films, I aim to construct non-linear contemporary narratives informed by rhizomatic theory, folklore, mythology and neo-pagan ritual within a performative and film practice. I will begin to develop my film skills in experimenting with celluloid film within the brief time available to create short, dreamy, and experimental narratives. I am aiming to explore Celtic folklore narratives within a contemporary arts practice and exploring overlooked (or forgotten) narratives lost in the noise of appropriation, within regards to neo-colonialism, and the reinvention of Paganism through Neo-Paganism. This is motivated by a desire to sustain personal cultural identity decentralised by Christianity, like Celtic Pagan culture. This aims to be a radical, political act against Western Christian Capitalism and a desire to sustain existence through non-domineering methodologies. I will be primarily responding to the recent resurgence of interest in reclaiming folkloric, Celtic, and Pagan cultures in Britain. This exists alongside a rising disrespect of sites of historical significance, in particular the destruction of Chemin De Montauban in France, a site part of the Carnac Stones. This site was believed to be where Merlin turned an army of Roman soldiers into stone and it was destroyed to make way for a new branch of the French DIY Hardware Store chain, Mr. Bricolage.



Parturition of the feminine worm, installation, 2022, Advanced Practice 1.

I aim to develop my drawing practice into a print practice, which will aid as still images/cells in contrast to the films and could be combined with writing and audio in the installation of my work as a functional balance of the digital films. This could result in experimentation with the size of landscape prints in relation to the landscape screen, as a return to my installation of work in AP1. I will be using the materials and processes of Super 8 film, 8mm Film, digital filming, and performance with limited or no props. These would manifest as long digital films, experimental Super8 shorts with painterly elements and analogue animation onto the celluloid and Straight8 shorts, which are films with no editing from shooting on one cartridge. The new direction to performance aims to be more durational, subtle, slower, with the opportunity to use more of the building, I could use the space in studios over summer and gallery space to branch out and move away from site-specific performances but also claim the spaces as my own. The position of sculpture in my practice will continue, but I mostly view sculpture as a methodology for other mediums as props for films and performances, or plaster plates for printing. As my primary ideas for sculpture are a wicker costume for a performance, creating piskies to hand out as a social performance, and creating etchings on plaster to simulate cave drawing animation, sculpture will need to be resolved in the curation of my work as I still view sculpture as a research supplement to the films due to the process of making work. My aim of research is to reconnect, redefine and understand heritage and how the past ties to the present, and developing the monstrous transformations in my practice with the shapeshifting beasts of Celtic Folklore.

Professional Context

My development of my drawing practice into a print practice was motivated by professional development, not only to learn these skills before graduating, but to develop my work to a professional quality for post-graduate exhibitions. This was motivated by applying to various open calls with digital films, which require AV equip to exhibit and I noticed these galleries accepted mostly 2D work with less exhibition requirements. While I am not converging to cater to these galleries, I am finding ways to develop my practice and adapt my work to these spaces to help my career. My practice will continue to be primarily research informed as I plan to seek a PhD in the next 2-5 years, but in the meantime, I am also interested in seeking research positions and academic journal writing. I aim to focus on the curation of my work this semester as I would like to develop the role of curator alongside my artistic practice.

Top Refined Research Questions (4-5 questions)

- How does history hold relevancy in contemporary art, identity and contexts?
- How can storytelling be a methodology for exploring connections to heritage?
- What part of the context of 2023 has contributed to the resurgence of Paganism and Celtic tradition?
- What are the similarities and differences in storytelling across film, writing and print?

Overview:



The Tenth Lady, film, 2023, Advanced Practice 2.



'effeuiller la marguerite (pluck the daisy)', film, 2023, Research in Practice.



Fake Blood Test 2 – Rinsing, film, 2023, Advanced Practice 2.

This is a development of my work from Research in Practice in which I explored counteracting gaslighting and liberating the domestic space through a neo-pagan effigy burning ritual and non-linear auto-fictional narratives.

In developing from Advanced Practice 2, I used blood imagery and abject worm bodies in my practice to symbolise the boundaries between femininity and death in the process of 'becoming-woman'. I would like to develop away from my previous aesthetics of abjection in the final stage of healing, acceptance. While blood is motif I would never truly move away from as it phases in and out of my practice, I found positioning it as the focal point was limiting and focusing on exploring where I can go with body, objects, and space is more fruitful. The use of worms was an absurd gesture and being within my practice, but it would be interesting to develop away from this and find how Celtic folklore and my involvement in *Sweet Dreams Sweet* would impact the narratives and development of my performance practice. Following my participation in Melati Suryodarmo's *Sweet Dreams Sweet* performance and attending many of the events surrounding the exhibition, I find myself fascinated by subtle, stripped back, slow movements and durational performances, which could be either laborious in action like Suryodarmo's *Exergie – Butter Dance* and *I Love You*, length like Suryodarmo's *I'm a Ghost in My Own House*, and healing, like *Sweet Dreams Sweet* and the martial arts of Tai Chi. I want to investigate the roots and stalk of my practice, taking it apart and putting it back together again like Suryodarmo's Present to Presence programme and performance laboratories. It would be productive to engage in discussions with other performance artists to share our approaches and find out how our practices work. From my own observations of practice, the main elements to change and develop are space of performance, the length, props, and the complexities of performance. Stripping it back to my own body, slowing the movements down and focusing on the stories, which it might be good to return to the simpler performances, remake them and develop from there. From my feedback, Mona recommended to remake the blood test performances and develop the painterly use of blood. It might be good to develop the use of vessels in my practice and use domestic objects as tools for ritual liberation.

I will phase out worms and interrogate the future of cocoons in my practice as I want to develop beyond these ideas and explore the Earth and animals in Celtic folklore, the deities of bears and the respect for Sheep and Hares. Particularly relevant to my practice is the shaman and deity shapeshifters and their connection to the Otherworld/Underworld through wearing hides, skulls, and bodies to 'pass', which could bring back an element of queer neurodivergence to my practice in playing with trying to 'pass' in a neurotypical, heteronormative society as an autistic queer woman. This interest stems from my Celtic Scottish heritage and a childhood filled with Pagan traditions. My surname fuels my interest in using the river as a prop or place for performance, I do not intend to truly move on from filming on sites as I enjoyed the semiotics, but I will reduce the dependency and focus on elements of the site that relate

to me. It is a surname from old English and anglicised German for 'waesse' meaning marsh land/place for washing clothes and broc (river). Essentially meaning the marshy land by the river for washing clothes in. It originates from Suffolk and *Birmingham*. Although my first name as well bares no relation to my origin, my surname has an interesting connection to the Scottish clan I'm descended from, Muir, meaning from Moors/Marsh Land.

Output/Form

I aim to produce a multi-disciplinary body of work across film, performance, audio, writing, and print, interlinking these elements through combining visual, verbal, and physically performative narratives and curation of the work.

- Developing drawing practice into Print Making
- Film Performance and Durational Performance
- DSLR Digital Film
- 8mm / 35mm film for photography and film (within limitations of time/skill)
- Sculpture
- Writing/Storytelling/Narrative developed into Audio Performances

Methodology:

In approaching my question, I am arriving to this module with the hypothesis that the resurgence in interest in Celtic Pagan folklore, mythology and rituals is a byproduct of the current political, socioeconomic, and environmental zeitgeist, as a countercultural movement to the Colonial White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy. I plan to test this through a variety of primary and secondary resources through pre-existing knowledge from academic research and practical-based research methodologies. I am approaching these films with experimental methodologies of storytelling as a means of exploration of identity, context, and politics; this will include, but not limited to, books, papers, seminars, peer discussions, and archives, which may develop into entering discussions and interviews with ritual attendees, organisers, and academics.

Schedule of anticipated activity development of work to include tutorial dates and anticipated work ready:

Week 1-3: Establishing ideas, research, writing, narrative development.

Week 4-6: Making props/sculptures, plan display and degree show requirements, making prints and start filming.

Week 7-9: Development of filming, responding to feedback, pivoting and adaptation. Finalise degree show ideas.

Week 10-11: Final filming, editing, testing presentation, install and documentation.

Week 12: Finalise installation for degree show.

Method of Log (Blog/Vlog/Digital Platform/ Physical/Journal):

My research presentation will be a Digital Reflective Log, which will be similar to previous submissions but I will aim to keep it up to date, develop the thoroughness of my research, and increase the criticality of my development to keep track of what I am making, how long it is taking and its effectiveness

I aim to keep up with my Miro Board as I have kept a board for each module, but I am using it as a hub for thinking through ideas, connecting and developing my practice, rather than a dumping ground for research.

In supplement to the Miro Board and Reflective Log, I will construct a Portfolio to summarise the resolved body of work from the module and as a professional representation of my development of practice to use for applications and interviews.

Literature/Sources

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Roth, M. S. et al. (2001) Disturbing remains: memory, history, and crisis in the twentieth century. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.

Groom, N. (2012) The Gothic: a very short introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Snow, P. (2022) Which as You Know Means Violence: On Self-Injury as Art and Entertainment, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books.

Winter, T. & Keegan-Phipps, S. (2013) Performing Englishness: identity and politics in a contemporary folk resurgence. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hawitt, R. B. (2020) 'It's a part of me and I'm a part of it': ecological thinking in contemporary Scottish folk music.

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Blain, J. & Wallis, R. J. (2004) Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/ Rights: Contemporary Pagan Engagements with the Past. *Journal of material culture*. [Online] 9 (3), 237–261.

Wallis, R. J. & Andersson, P. (2005) Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, alternative archaeologies and contemporary Pagans. *Public archaeology*. [Online] 4 (1), 60–63

Samuel, H. (2023) Mayor destroys 'French Stonehenge' to make way for DIY shop, *The Telegraph* [Online], Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/06/14/mayor-death-threats-french-stonehenge-brittany-carnac/> [Accessed: 15/06/2023]

Artists and references



Alastair MacLennan, *ALCHEMIST*, 2010, Performance Film.



Ratu R. Saraswati, *Ungu*, 2013, Video Performance.



Melati Suryodarmo, Exergie - Butter Dance, 2000, Performance.



Melati Suryodarmo, I Love You, 2007, Performance.



Sinead O'Donnell, Above the Clouds, 2011, Performance Film.



Vicky Roden, I'll Make My Own Damn Deities, 2021, Vivid Projects.



Jamie Isenstein, Rug Rug Rug Rug Rug, 2009, Performance.

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| Student Advice Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disability Services BCU Educational Psychologist Appointment due on 13th November - Dyslexia - Dyspraxia | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Counselling/Mental Health Support | <input type="checkbox"/> | Financial Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chaplaincy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student's Signature Madeleine Washbrook Date: | | Tutor's Signature Date: | |

*Personal Development Planning

Log notes – feedback
Incorporates feedback.
Tutorial notes

AP2 Feedback:

You attempted to resolve the issues with regard to the filmic work, by testing it in a number of sites, and on monitor and existing screen. **The relationship between the components of the installation still needed further scrutiny.** The similarity in scale of the hanging sculpture to the tv monitor, queried the relations between the form and the tech, **but whether this is interesting or distracting is to be explored.** Testing with a smaller monitor, or with projection and sculptural elements together would have been positive experiments to do and **a critical component of your artmaking to resolve in the next module.**

The research journal documents the development of the work over the semester very well. There are some useful and articulate insights, reflections and critique of your approach to thinking about

and making work. The range of interrelated interests in blood, blood recipes, the abject, worms, paganism, ritual, performance, remnants of performance, feminisms etc. are well established in the support materials.

The blood tests videos are interesting. The pace of movement, the painterly quality and the abjection are strongly communicated. There is an opportunity to remake these, but maybe with a tripod.

- Performance: Use blood liquid as a painterly, movement, abject
- Installation components needs to be critically evaluated in MP.
- Is it the video, the sculpture/other physical work, or both that is relevant? What is telling the story?

RIP Feedback:

"I like the symbolism explained in sacrifice as a Pagan feminist tool and wondered if the decisions on filming were deliberate or contingent to time. Not a criticism but wondering about your developing of film and performance within your practice, on MA."

"If film and performance are continuing – looking at more performance work could be beneficial. I think there are likely many iterations and multiple analysis that can be made from the material and research you have here. Considering what to take forward to Major Project will be interesting.

It is very clear here that you have a distinct skill in using theory, making research methods, and using practice-based research within Fine Art. I hope this is something you will continue in a PhD but do understand the need for some different experiences too!"