

# **Hinterlands**

**22 October 2022 – 30 April 2023**

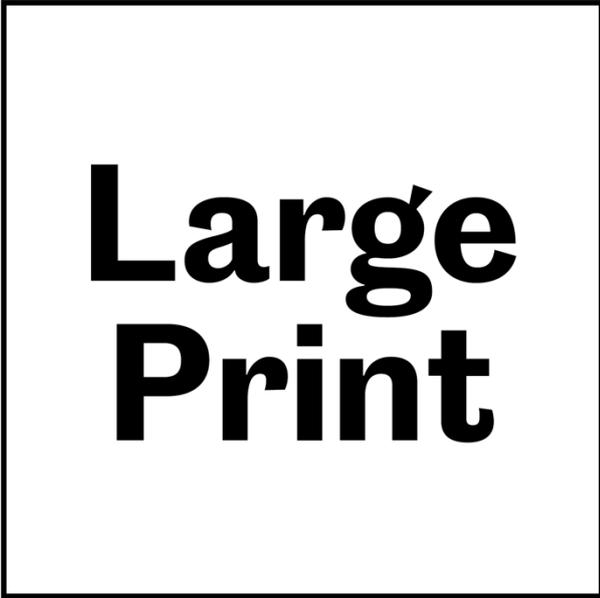
Michele Allen, Uma Breakdown, Jo Coupe,

Foundation Press, Laura Harrington,

Emily Hesse, Alexandra Hughes, Dawn Felicia Knox,

Mani Kambo, Sheree Angela Matthews,

Anne Vibeke Mou and Sabina Sallis



**Large  
Print**

**Please return this guide after use. Thank you.**

Hinterlands is a group exhibition that invites us to consider our relationship with the land and its ecosystems. Rooted in the landscape of the North East of England, the exhibition explores its histories, legacies, mythologies and potential futures for its custodianship. Considering land and place as a complex layering of relationships, it explores this idea through the possibilities of materials and contexts: geological, biological and social, shaped and hardened by history.

Reflecting on the idea of hinterlands, or what lies beyond the visible or known, the exhibition brings together new and existing works by artists connected with the region. They engage with how the landscape has been occupied through

processes of power, oppression and violence.

They consider the role of alchemy, witchcraft and folklore, seeking sensitive thresholds, and collapsing boundaries. Foregrounding the land's own agency, the works in the exhibition address these questions through the artist's processes, which include witnessing, human and more- than-human relationships, speculative fiction and world-building.

## **Michele Allen**

### **The Weight of Ants in the World (2018–ongoing)**

focuses on an ancient woodland in the centre of an industrial estate in the North East of England.

The work aims to manifest this site in other spaces, to mobilise the woods, considering their mass, fragility and endurance at a time of advanced climate crisis and species loss. The installation includes a video, photography, text and collected materials, which examine this ancient ecosystem across the changing seasons.

This work not only documents the woodland, but also the artist's developing relationship with it as a site of imagination, connection and activism. Allen approaches the work as a process of bearing

witness to the diversity of life held in the wood and the radical change it has undergone, and as a work of imagination, which considers how the wood might perceive the changing landscape around it.

Since 2018, the work has developed to also become a catalyst for the woods being surveyed and designated as a Local Wildlife Site and protected with a Tree Preservation Order. Allen is interested questioning the differences between protection and caring for nature whilst drawing attention to the administrative systems in place that categorise and preserve it. ask some questions about the differences between protecting something and actively caring for it.

## Uma Breakdown

**Take The Moonlight by The Tail** (2021), is a digital story about mourning and the uncertainty that big emotions can bring. It is also a story about carrying a person that you love, from the highest point of Gateshead where the artist lives, over the River Tyne and up to the castle in Newcastle. The work offers a journey that takes you through a landscape of complex swamps, sheer cliffs, unreliable simulations/memories, and a roaming commune of dead souls.

The work was made for arebyte gallery's **Open Screen 2021**, which supported artists with disabilities to make digital art around the theme of science fiction. Breakdown was interested in the

overlaps between the Russian novelist Gogol's speech-based writing form of 'skaz', the environmental storytelling of video games, the quasi-narrative conveyed with a game's 'user interfaces', and the saturation of (conflicting) information in Iain M. Banks' 'Culture' books. The resulting work tells a story about the distortions of reality when going through grief. The work invites audiences to have a creative role indistinguishable from that of the artist, raising questions about how narratives are shaped and played out and the possibilities for building futures within the digital space. Breakdown creates works that use the language and mechanisms of video games and tabletop role-playing games, seeing in these a

reflection of the approach to literature taken by writers such as Kathy Acker and Hélène Cixous. They are interested in the narrative form for the ways in which it can be active and unstable, conveying affect, imagery, and most importantly, invite audiences to speculate.

## **Joe Coupe**

Jo Coupe's works examine the fleeting, intangible and precarious. **After the Rain** (2022), emerged from an extended period of research into electricity and magnetism. The work explores Coupe's fascination with the complex network of

the power grid, which gives access to electricity and the huge impact this has on the landscape. The work began as a personal enquiry into the noise pylons generate, which can be felt in the body as much as it can be heard. This evolved into a desire to capture the sound from a particular pylon in a managed woodland near the artist's studio and conjure up its presence somewhere else. Recorded with DIY devices, a soundtrack emerged that included the sounds of bees, birds, a plane flying overhead, and a car in the nearby carpark.

**Lagniappe** (2020) (lænjæp/ LAN-yap) is one of a series of works by Coupe, which play with sculptural mass, excess and precariousness

through something between an image and an object. The title comes from a word used in Louisiana (USA) for something that is a bonus or extra. The work was produced using lithographic illustrations by Ivy Masseur for **British Fungi with a chapter on Lichens** (1911) cut out and reassembled. Coupe is interested in botany and plant taxonomy, from their colonial roots, to what shifting fashions in botanical illustration might reveal about a particular time and place. The work highlights the hidden labour of the (often female) illustrators and disavows the idea of nature as passive and fixed, making visible the multiple processes of reframing and control in our understanding of it.

## Foundation Press

Foundation Press, led by Adam Phillips and Deborah Bower, develops community-publishing and collaborative design projects. They collaborate with a wide network of artists and communities.

Founded in 2013 by Adam Phillips, Joe Woodhouse and Tom Madge as an experimental risograph printing studio, today, they create publications, educational projects, collaborative artworks and graphic design. Their projects often begin with a set of simple rules or published instructions, as a way of inviting others into the process of artistic production.

For **Hinterlands**, Foundation Press have produced a new collection of risograph prints titled

**Field Club** (2022), that celebrates one of the oldest naturalist groups in the North East of England, The Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club (formed 1881). The Club 'seeks to promote an interest in all branches of natural history and to assist members in finding out about the living things they see in the countryside around them'<sup>1</sup>.

Working with images from the Field Club's expansive archive, held at Teesside Archives, as well as collaborating with current members of the club, Foundation Press have arranged the diverse investigations of the group into playful patterns that reference display cases and museological presentations of nature.

In addition, Foundation Press have created a new typeface they have titled **Hinterlands**, especially for this exhibition. This letter set is inspired by a typeface used on the cover of the Cleveland Naturalist Field Club's **Record of Proceedings** booklet from 1905. The new typeface features alternate characters that show the letterforms slowly overtaken by nature, like abandoned architecture in a forest.

1. 'Welcome to the Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club', available to read: [www.clevelandnats.org.uk](http://www.clevelandnats.org.uk)

## Laura Harrington

Laura Harrington makes work that considers the complex relations between humans and landscapes, often through fieldwork, cross-disciplinary research and collaborative working.

Harrington's practice centres on 'upstream consciousness', a framework that connects rivers, peatlands and other upland ecologies to global currents.

The works included in **Hinterlands** span eight years. From extensive research around peatland erosion working alongside physical scientist Jeff Warburton from Durham University, to Harrington's most recent video, which brings

together her ongoing enquiry into the North Pennines and Upper Teesdale.

**Haggs #1–4** (2014–ongoing) investigates blanket bogs, erosion and weathering, a series of eroded landform remnants – or spirit creatures – shaped by a multitude of forces and processes.

**Vegetation Blanket #4** (2022) was created in collaboration with artist in the exhibition, who made felt collectively whilst having a conversation about landscapes, friendship, artistic practice and the places where things meet.

In **Fieldworking** (2020), six artists, an ecologist and two filmmakers spend five days together in an off-grid location surrounded by moorland and blanket bog. Camping on the former site of an

important scientific field station on Moor House-Upper Teesdale National Nature Reserve, they explore ways to exist and work within the context of this remote and wet location. The work meditatively interweaves footage and field recordings from this journey.

## **Emily Hesse**

Emily Hesse's interdisciplinary, often collaborative practice questions and aggravates social and political power dynamics through psychogeography, philosophy, regional folk histories, collective action and the use of land and its associated materials as a physical form of protest.

Deeply rooted in social structures and the landscape itself, Hesse's work is born of the space she occupies. Using art as a tool for subversion, Hesse takes her own land, the overlooked, personal items from her home and family life, and the often ugly and unfamiliar, materials of historical significance and draws out their political and social mythologies, highlighting thought-provoking content and transforming them into objects of collective familiarity.

Since childhood, Hesse has collected the material fragments of industrial Teesside. These materials range from the bricks that once formed the homes, buildings and structures of Hesse's hometown of

Middlesbrough, the clay from which they were made or the stories shared within four walls.

In Hesse's ongoing plight to write her historically marginalised community into history, she considers her works as building blocks. They not only hold the weight of an untold regional history but also create a space for previously silenced and unheard voices to speak.

The works for **Hinterlands**, **Banner for Appleton Common** (2022) and **Haunted a Common Theory** (2022) are earth painted works in the form of banners depicting symbolic iconography and folklore that relate to the village and common land of Appleton-Le-Moors, North Yorkshire. Appleton Common remains one of the few pieces of

common land left in England which is still regularly resisting enclosure. Although the land is protected by the community to remain common for all, the paintings look at how over time the common land has become an entity with its own being, forming and shaping the structure of the village itself, the stories and folklore that are remembered and the daily lives of the communities that live alongside it.

## **Alexandra Hughes**

Alexandra Hughes brings photographic images together with sculptural material, performative gestures and painting. Oscillating between objective representation and subjective reality, her work examines the boundaries of representation,

materials and imagination. She uses a process she terms 'wilding', which is led by materials and physical, embodied and tactile experience, to process her own physical encounters with environments. Her resulting installations challenge the 'fixedness' of materials and of the photographic frame, and the binary separation of nature and culture. They consider experiences as processes that can be understood through multiple perspectives and as a self-reflective journey that is visceral, haptic, ambiguous and open to change. Her installations create situations for embodied encounters that propose to destabilise and recreate worlds.

**Hinterlands** includes three lightboxes and an installation created during the artist's transition into motherhood. In the lightboxes, abstract and figurative imagery converge, patchy transparent forms are revealed, and boundaries blur between materials, surfaces, light and space. The images in the work include water, moss and ice, swimmers (or figures in water), an oil-spill, sulphur-stained rocks, urban flowers at night and internet found-images of the surface of Mars.

The installations disrupt and explore a sense of distance and proximity and have a precarious quality. The structures in vivid blue, purple and pink come from a white wall, a sky and a river photographed and recorded on the Spring

Equinox, when day and night are in equal balance, marking the start of spring.

## **Mani Kambo**

Mani Kambo explores the inner spirit by drawing personal symbols, influenced by her upbringing in a Sikh household filled with superstition, prayer and religious ceremony. Her use of textile, fabric dying and printmaking is rooted in Kambo's family history within the caste system. Her work investigates everyday and mythological objects, routines and rituals. Kambo states that she defines narratives through words and captures them within her drawings, using pictorial language as a method for representing histories, mythology, the

everyday and the future. Using this language, she produces sacred totems featuring symbols and shapes that weave together dreamscapes and portals to other realms.

Kambo presents a series of newly produced banners, which stand as emblems of a tribe, clan, lineage or collective group. They are reminiscent of historical processions and parades in which they could have been deployed. Within the banners, symbols connect the human form to multiple cosmologies. Hands are often present within Kambo's works, representing the mother, the protector.

## **Dawn Felicia Knox**

**The Felling** (2022) explores deep time, pollution and the way plants work together to undo the toxic residue of industrialisation. This is investigated through one plot of land in Felling, Gateshead, which was a swamp during the Carboniferous period, a working mine during the industrial revolution and is now a contaminated brownfield site.

In 2012, Knox began studying plant fossils excavated from Felling Colliery, held at the Great North Museum. Some were type specimens, the first of their kind to be seen by humans, which helped geologists to discover the actual age of the Earth. Knox then documented the site the fossils

came from by photographing a stand of trees that had grown twisted and gnarled as they struggled for purchase on the coal spoil heaps.

Felling has had years of natural plant succession atop the piles of slag and concrete. In 2021–22, Knox filmed the plants now growing on the site.

Bracken fern, white poplar, willow, annual honesty, fireweed and mugwort are just a few of the plants that have self-seeded in the once wasteland. Many of the plants use a process of phytoremediation, working to pull pollution from the soil while others are nitrogen fixing, pulling greenhouse gasses from the air.

From this work created over the last decade, Knox has made two films that are simultaneously

projected onto a series of makeshift screens. The layers of material attempt to contain the shifting images as they bleed through and spill over leaving the viewer to sift through the fragments of time.

Sound artist Anastasia Clarke has created the soundscape from field-recordings of the site broken down and reconfigured.

## **Sheree Angela Matthews**

### **The Country Journal of a Blackwoman**

**(Northumberland)** (2022) is a composite

palimpsest – a piece of writing on which later

writing has been superimposed – exploring the

matrilineal connections within the Northumberland

landscape. In this work, Matthews seeks to remember and reclaim evidence of Black female presence. Fabricating maternal histories, the work presents the identity and life of a composite Black woman through her visual country journal. Her body and creative journal are exposed, expanded and transformed into soundscapes, photography, collages and text.

The work is an ongoing study of the Black female body within nature to revive a matrilineal tradition connected to the landscape. It seeks to challenge colonial histories, making sure that Black women's stories are told and present.

Matthews sees landscapes as palimpsests, with the different layers of bedrock, soil, and vegetation

cover, connecting and supporting each other. She also argues that human beings are living palimpsests, layering our experiences, traumas, and memories in our bodies, minds and souls, over our ancestors' stories.

## **Anne Vibeke Mou**

Anne Vibeke Mou uses glass composition and diamond- point engraving (by hand) to transform botanical and mineral elements into glass objects that weave together histories and ancient landscapes in contemporary contexts.

In **Hinterlands**, two cornucopias or horns of plenty, **Wild Things Inwards** (2022), explore the landscape of the North Pennines through glass

aesthetics, recipes, raw materials and their connection to the land around her studio. The artist has melted vintage tableware, which she has reworked into objects decorated with grasses and moonwort. These works bring together histories of lead glass crystal developed to imitate rock crystal, the toxic legacy of lead mining, rare upland habitats, early chemistry and glass embodiment of transmutation.

The moonwort plant (**Botrychium lunaria**) has a rich history connected to the manipulation of metals and appears to tolerate contaminated ground. It was referenced by alchemists in their pursuit of the transmutation of metals and in folklore and witchcraft for its powers over metals. A

mysterious plant with a mostly subterranean existence, it is found on the Northern Fells amongst flora surviving from the end of the last ice age.

The cornucopia is associated with harvest, nourishment, fortune and infinite abundance; spiritual, agricultural and mineral. Mou's glass horns of plenty emerge from fragile environments that exist above and below ground into translucent forms laden with mythologies from the Greek, Roman and Norse. In a nod to her Danish heritage and the fifth century Golden Horns of Gallehus – stolen and melted down for profit – Mou playfully recycles objects with a heritage of feasting and aspirational splendour.

## **Sabina Sallis**

Sabina Sallis' work explores art as a sustainable land practice concerned with reconnecting oneself to local ecosystems through plants, healing and cosmologies. As cultural praxis of nurture and care, her work engages the complex entanglement between the human mind, knowledge and more-than-human worlds.

Sallis' **Multispecies Visionary Institute** is a project that seeks to harness creativity towards the implementation of alternatives in ways of thinking, making and multispecies flourishing. The **Multispecies Visionary Institute** invites visitors to experience **Apparatus for Resurgence in Trophallaxis**, a body of artworks informed by

sustainable land practices and a storytelling and healing device that uses cultural therapeutics, herbs, hives and other magical, healing substances to engage the senses. **Apparatus for Resurgence in Trophallaxis** promotes environmental sensitivity and speculates about forms of sustainable cohabitation and liveable futures.

The project emerged from Sallis' interest in the Voynich Manuscript (a fifteenth century illustrated codex hand-written in an otherwise unknown writing system, referred to as 'Voynichese'), permaculture design, earth-based metaphysics and healing practices, and the idea of reindigenising with local ecosystems through

involvement with living world and its intangible influences and interests.

For **Hinterlands, Multispecies Visionary**

**Institute** presents an iteration of the **Apparatus** as a wild, and abundant system, supercharged by local habitats and bioavailability that celebrates the plant **Mater Herbarium** – ‘the mother of herbs’ commonly known as mugwort. This plant is associated with folklore and magic and is known for its properties of healing and dream inducing. How can mugwort assist us to reconnect with our locality and with mysterious flows of energy and complex networks of multispecies relationships, and quantum intimacy in order to build a world in tune with nature?

The exhibition also includes a programme of events that offer training for **Becoming an Indigenous Organism Mystic (BIOM)** facilitated by the **Multispecies Visionary Institute**.

# HINTERLANDS

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BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art,

South Shore Road, Gateshead, NE8 3BA

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Harrington,

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Kambo,

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Matthews,

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A note on the type: This exhibition guide  
features a specially

created typeface 'Hinterlands', drawn by  
Foundation Press,  
based upon type found in the Cleveland  
Naturalists' Field Club's  
1905 Record of Proceedings. The Record  
of Proceedings are  
self-published books, collating the natural  
research conducted  
collaboratively by the Field Club, across  
fields including botany,  
entomology, ornithology and geology