

WORDS

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EMBODIMENT AND EMOTIONS

Art Residency at THECUBE

A group of seven artists from varying backgrounds currently studying on an MA Art and Science course at Central Saint Martins are taking part in a seven-month residency at THECUBE. Here, an interview with the group reveals more on their backgrounds, interests and aspirations for the residency.

What is your background?

Eleonora: I have grown up with both arts and sciences in the family, and this has influenced me in my studies and practice in psychology, teaching, dance and photography.

Monika: Having worked and researched in fashion design, psychology, and contemporary dance, I merged these fields throughout the years to develop my own language. In my practice I am holding mind and body workshops, and make multi-media works, including performance, illustration, video and costume. Having grown up in the German countryside, with both German and Polish influences, I have been influenced by the closeness to nature and historical trauma.

Virginie: My background is in theatre lighting and video design. Before that I studied photography while working in lighting design in the music industry for venues and on tour for indie bands. I try to often have a performative element in my artwork.

Allison: My background is in fine art,

gemology, and manuscript conservation/restoration.

Julie: After spending most of my career working in the media, I came to art via glass making.

Lisa: Originally from California, I have a degree in graphic design and worked in print and branding before moving to London. Here I was also able follow a passion for glass sculpture and completed a BA Hons at UCA. With a lifelong interest in physics, it's a pleasure to connect my work more closely with science at CSM.

Jill: I first came to art in 2004, moving away from a career in international development and social services. After completing three years of study at an academic painting atelier in the US, I moved to London with intentions to develop a career as an oil painter and portrait artist. Instead, life experiences led me to shift away from a fine art-focused painting practice rooted in the visual, to a project-based one rooted in narrative and personal experience.

What are your interests and inspirations?

Eleonora: I am interested in the psychological and philosophical questions surrounding identity. I am intrigued by the wide scope photography provides artists; using photography itself as a performance or simply as a record of a performance.

Monika: Music plays an important part for me as it connects the physical with psychological movement. Primary research, such as my own complex biography, play an important part for my creations. I am curious about psychotherapy and other theories that regard mind and body, such as Buddhism, meta-cognition, contemporary dance.

Allison: Everything, really. What isn't inspiring or interesting?

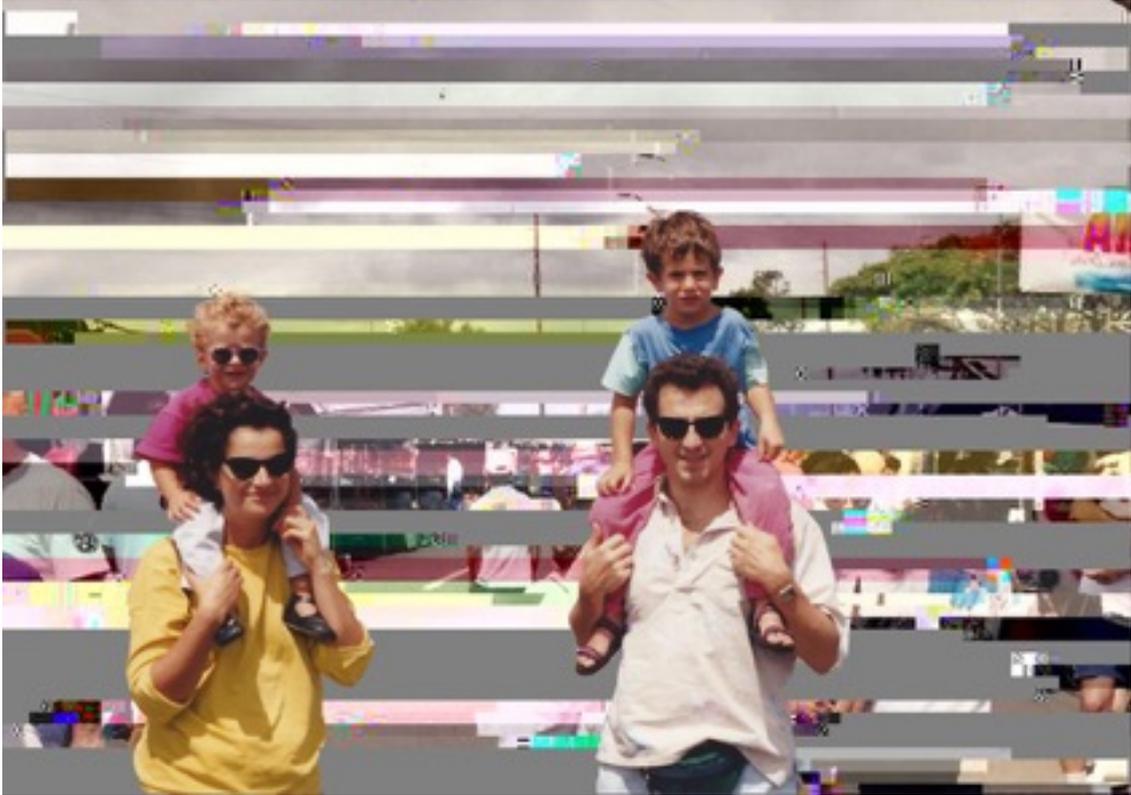
Virginie: I'm interested in many aspects of the human condition and all sorts of conflicts within society. Some of my work focuses more specifically on feminist issues.

Julie: I have two main sources of inspiration

that have stayed with me since I started making art—a fascination with texture and an absorption in the microscopic interiors of the human body.

Lisa: I'm attracted to wide-open landscapes that empty the mind and make you feel small so I went to Iceland last year with an adventurous group from Super Collider, climbing glaciers and encountering extraordinary vistas. The photos I took there have been a fabulous resource for my work this year.

Jill: Illness and medical experiences have strongly influenced my practice. Although the bulk of my work stems from the autobiographical, my aim is not to share a personal story but to explore aspects of our common experience. My practice is rooted in making sense of how we experience the world through our emotions, ideas and actions, and how we find meaning and our place in the world.







What do art and science or embodiment mean to you?

Eleonora: “A deeper ontological question remains: Are art and science related, and if so, how? Alas, there’s a catch: The question is not quite right. We need to ask not how, but where. And to that question, there is an answer: In the human brain.” Stuart Mason Dambrot

The above quote raises an interesting question regarding the relationship between art and science. The arts and sciences are often placed in opposition, so the natural question when exploring the possible relationships between them is to also ask why it’s of value to do so. I believe, as Dambrot proposes, that the value lies in them both being human activities of exploration. The scientist’s laboratory and the artist’s studio may look radically different, but they are both spaces where questions are asked, ideas are challenged, and our understanding of the world is further developed.

Monika: Science and Art are only two fields, amongst many, that seek to understand life. I regard philosophy as a science as well, which explores mind and body with fewer limitations. Ideally all these fields should be connected non-hierarchically.

Virginie: Understanding the mechanism of embodiment allows humans to make improvement on their well-being and hopefully can help with some of the social conflicts I’ve been exploring in my art practice (violence, rape culture, social exclusion).

Allison: Embodiment is the vehicle through which we experience and work with (or against) the planet.

Julie: The supposed division between art and science to me seems artificial, and so I am interested in artwork that blurs the boundaries or in other ways leads us to question the separation of these two fields.

Lisa: For me art and science are two sides of the same coin that help us explain the world and express thought.

Jill: Art and science operate in similar ways; they are both grounded in asking questions, in seeking meaning. The scientific method brings to mind words like measurable; logical; objective. The artistic method, ambiguous; intuitive; subjective. These words and ideas are part of one spectrum that we can engage from different perspectives, can turn on end and move about. And that is really exciting!

What are you exploring during your residency, and what do you hope to gain from the residency?

Eleonora: During the residency I would like to build relationships with professionals from multiple disciplines. In my practice I will explore embodiment and emotions through memories and identity; investigating how we process memories, how objects elicit emotions and memories, and how, if possible, can we encapsulate the intangible in to objects. Furthermore, I’m attracted in exploring the tensions between women’s lived bodily experiences and the cultural meanings inscribed on the female body.

Monika: During my residency I will explore my interests in the plasticity of mind and body, and use my long-term collaboration

with contemporary dancers to develop a series of illustrations. By using dance as a medium of research I am intending to discover other ways of documenting consciousness.

Virginie: I’m exploring embodied cognition and objects, particularly objects from one’s past. I’m questioning the emotional value of an object. Why do humans collect objects? And why have humans invented the notion of “archives” and what is their purpose?

Allison: I’m looking at emotional response to human colour perception, and I would like to gain more information to process and to build relationship with scientists.

Julie: I want to use this residency to build on my interest in texture, focusing on how the suggestion of different surfaces, sensations and devices can impact our emotional state. I would particularly like to explore whether visual cues about texture or touch can create emotional responses without the necessity for actual physical contact.

Lisa: This residency is a unique opportunity to make contact with scientists at the rock face of my, sometimes, troublesome dissertation subject 'gravity'. It appears that this force permeates every part of our lives and I'm hoping to develop the salient points that define the humanity in this broad subject and in turn spark new responses my artwork—much of which is self-forming through the pull of gravity.

Jill: I'm interested in how engagement with nature and the self transforms our bodily responses and thought processes and informs our narrative of self. Medicine can treat or heal the physical body; can nature and mindfulness heal the whole self? The residency will allow me to open up my current work to provide a broader perspective of how the body and mind work together to navigate the modern medical experience.