

Home: Live > In Room



Duchamp & Sons: Aasiya Merali, Akraam Ahammed, Ellen Lloyd, Iñaki Iriarte, Joshua von Uexkull, Maya Brown, Sammara Abbasi, Sara Ismail, Sonam Tobgyal, Zlata Mechetina with Renee Odjidja and Sofia Victorino

Whitechapel Gallery 25 August 2020 – 3 January 2021

Whitechapel Gallery's Youth collective, Duchamp & Sons, presents an exhibition curated online with artworks selected from the Hiscox Collection.

Home. How do we imagine a space where we have spent so much time over the past months? What does it mean to curate an exhibition from our kitchens and bedrooms, with our laptops and screens?

For this project, we met online over a two-month period working in groups and individually to select and discuss artworks. A series of workshops with creative professionals enabled us to gain an understanding of the curatorial process.

This exhibition develops across two rooms: one explores ideas of *home* as a place of confinement and

introspection; the other seeks to map *home* as a space where we project our fantasies and fragmented thoughts. The soundtrack features our writings about each work on display.

Lockdown has raised questions about the suffocating nature of confinement. You are invited to experience a darker, violently real home, and a dream-like, imagined home drawn from our lived realities. These are captured through a collection of personal stories, voices and images.

Trevor Paglen

CLOUDS, Hough Circle
Transform; Region Adjacency
Graph, 2018

Inside my home I see clouds. Familiar but forever changing. Gently led through air by winds from distant lands, their timeless and constant fragmentation draws in my gaze as we stare out the window from a place that has been both cell and sanctuary. A web of interlocking lines weaves themselves atop the image reaching out to one another, a reflection of both the numerous internal conversations had during the countless hours spent alone at home and the tens of billions of messages sent every day connecting all people.

Sonam

Barbara Kasten

Construct VI-D, 1981
Construct X-B, 1981
Construct XIII, 1982

Sharp lines and edges, pain and distortion, fragility and carefulness. This is a picture of my brain during the lockdown. Being in one's mind for too long is like applying pressure to sand, it forms glass, glass that is beautiful yet can cut deep when not taken care of. At the same time this is a reminder of mental health, it's crisp and contemporary, with a limited colour pallet. This is creative and bold. Beauty can be found in the most delicate of times in a person's life. There is admiration and courage required in revealing the truth, and a sense of pride in ownership. The reflections on the wall are like your projections and appearance on

the outside. It is subtle and gentle, but doesn't reveal the sharp edges the mirror has or what's behind that glass. **Akraam**

Colour, form and space is what we look at in the outside world. The forms Kasten uses are of geometric cityscapes, metals and glass, power gridlines, gloss paint primaries, and flattened space. They echo the interplaying overlapping architecture outside, yet they speak of confinement, of controlled lighting, collecting materials as if building a model city at home and flattening it into a picture, composed as a painting. **Josh**

Agnieszka Kurant

Political Map of Phantom
Islands, 2011

We were all at home when we began imagining foreign places. They came to us like remnants of a near-past, still hanging in the trees like rubbish after a storm. We were their territory and they had come so far to find us. To tell us that our home was not like their home; but to make their home they needed each brick from ours and each brick from our children's homes. They took and took until there was no earth to be found; first we became an island and then we drowned. **Sammara**

This map is lying, I think of whether any map tells the truth. We label a country or an island or a house to make it feel like it belongs to us. My home, my country. The map is a minuscule abstraction of the infinite world. We find our place in it by turning it into bright coloured flecks of paint

on a blue surface. I see in this map how our names for things give them a reality in our minds even when they do not exist. It is a fragile existence. Home, United Kingdom, the World, the Universe. **Josh**

Langlands and Bell

Air Routes of Britain (Day) / Air
Routes of Britain (Night), 2000

A scramble of lines and shapes blur a sense of visual clarity as I look to what appears as a mapping of constellations. These bright white lines score across depthless darkness, bursting outwards from points in an explosion of light. As if I've rubbed my eyes too hard and flashes of light fill my mind, lines shoot and sparkle through my vision. **Ellen**

The journey we made when we were younger, our hair not yet white against the black, brought us to a new land. One we had heard through the invisible line, stretched continent to continent. We had thought our home would be a straight affair, a line kept close and thrown to those treading flight. But we know now there is no one out there in the blankness, beyond our tangled bits of life, to throw the line to. Alas, they have their own entanglements, hubs and stops of their own. We are fixed points – we try the cosmic dance, but our limbs cannot reach far enough. We try to speak the universal language, but our tongues fight the words. **Sammara**

When a relative dies, there is a curious occurrence; suddenly a series of strangers appear who knew this person, yet never made themselves known while

they were alive. These moments highlight the intangible infrastructure that surrounds people, just like the home. The closeness of relationships that make home, their intensity, their changing temporality when stopped at interlude show they were all moving. **Iñaki**

Edward Burtynsky

Shipbreaking #4, 2000

Shipbreaking #13, 2000

Crash, crash, crash. The noise, the noise, the noise. I have a flat-pack memory but the instructions are lost. Versions of myself wander in and out periodically and add or subtract from whatever behemoth takes form and space in my mind. I constantly build, I take the heavy materials and I crumble. No material is enough to make us real. A brick upon a brick makes all the difference but it makes not the promised place. A naive promise made long ago in the distress of youth when it was thought that every ship finds a lighthouse and every shell finds a craft and that every wanderer must find home. This promise makes such illusion. When its attainability falters, a fear creeps in like seawater through undiscovered holes at the bottom of a stranded ship. It fills the forgotten space and you, floundering aimlessly at sea, forget how to breathe.

Sammara

The day a vessel was launched was always special. It was a celebration, a festive day. Someone likened it to a mother watching her son leave, wishing him the best of luck.

The ship carries the keys to the shipyard, because we were meant to make a series of ships and only made two that stood there for seven years. A mix of nostalgia, some rage lingered. Like: the ship is leaving and maybe taking the keys to the shipyard with it. And so, it was that the keys to the shipyard went with the ship. **Iñaki**

Peter Doig

Canoe Island, 2000

We took down our sails long ago,
Let them to sink
to the sea bed.
So now - we just drift.
There's six of us now, although
on a grey day
a few more appear.
A face blurred into abstract,
They're almost gone completely.
We found our way
through tsunamis, whirlpools
and sea storms.
But they seem insignificant
now, as we approach
the big gloom.
A heavy blue haze settles on
my shoulders and condensates
on my eyelashes.
The palm fronds wave us
goodbye and
We're holding hands now.
Drawn closer
into the unknown
With each rise and fall of the
tide. **Maya**

What becomes of home when we journey forth? Beyond the place we once held close, onwards to another which we know not yet. In this liminal space we may hang, unable to mark in our minds the shape of home. The cliché of the journey into the unknown made all the

more real in its intangibility. **Ellen**

Isolated, drifting away on the dark mass. Lost at sea. Overpowered by the salt in the air, it stings my nose. If I look up and behind me, I can see the horizon, the place I want to be, or is it the place I'm escaping from? I can't remember.

When the sky sings like this, sweet yellow and pink I don't want to remember what's real or not. If I look up and lie back I can live in my own dream – swaying into the rhythm of the dark sea. Always looking up and out. Sweet and salty. **Sara**

Especially when you do not have direct access to the artworks, and they exist in the dispersed ghost-like state online, perfect in your mind, not so on the surface of your computer. Some things actually add to the picture when you look at them through a screen; dust or fingerprints on the computer glass. It is disgusting but, excuse me, you do not live in a clinically perfect and clean space. **Zlata**

Lisa Oppenheim

Calendar, 1986-2011, 2013

How do we make sense of all the madness around us? We try to organise it, packing little fragments of violence, tightly together, into a contained chaos. Combusting slowly. Step back, look up and outwards, towards the sky. But it's not right. It's unsettling, uncomfortable. Only a confused sense of peace. **Sara**

Her brute exists, but here he is beautifully off-key: tender, holy, golden in the summer of just this. Fast and sharp and dirty but through my lens it's just me and her smooth, grey ache. The tiny hurts collect and band together, and I watch from my cage as they sparkle in the sun. She lied when she said I wouldn't burn but now I am built on ash and I can't breathe. **Aasiya**

Cornelia Parker

Loadstone (Elegy for an English Country Graveyard)

I'm not afraid of the monsters because I'm one of them. I see myself in them and I watch them in the mirror. The house is full but we are apart. He is sulking and she is sobbing and I am watching it unfold above me; waiting to grow into the chaos. **Aasiya**

How significant is this nucleus from which we seemingly base all forms of familial normalcy? How can it possibly be boiled down to something so simple? Only one side of one story told the loudest.

But can we not see the cracks and the creases in what should and shouldn't be?

How universal is this nuclear narrative, really? **Ellen**

Families are all different. The trends we may see in what this thing, family, 'ought' to be, barely brush upon the realities. Who's to say what ought and ought not to be, how we must feel about our families? What idyll we may – or may not – find is our own, and belongs to us alone. **Ellen**

Richard Billingham

Untitled, 1994

Untitled (RAL 43), 1995

Truth be told, I don't like this photo. It's too real, too exposed. Life is like this but I wish it was unlike this, trapped in reality, like there is no control, thick tar absorbed in the wallpaper, drenched in mucus. Like my uncle's room. Memories of the family I try to remember, but the settings I often try to forget. **Akraam**

I liked the Billingham's photos – so candid it became uncomfortable, unpleasant even. It felt familiar, not far off the TV dinners we'd have on a Friday night.

My parents reclined into the wine-coloured sofa, after sharing a bottle of red themselves,

The living room dimly lit by a coned lampshade and the static light of television screen reflecting off my dad's glasses.

Maya

How different could it be? What art would we hang and how many plants could we cram into the corners? How many coffees would come out of that machine and how many breakfasts would we eat together on the counter? One day, leaving will not feel like escaping and going home won't choke me with dread. When I return it won't be to this coop of four peeling walls and three crusty cushions. **Aasiya**

The image is ugly like a picture of a maltreated animal. Starkly lit, like a crime scene photo. The red man like raw meat and the dog like rotting flesh. I think home is a place where you can easily decay and rot. You like to see the ones that are carefully curated but not

Billingham's one. By showing us inside he becomes a voyeur and separates himself from it. **Josh**

Gregory Crewdson

Untitled, 2004

I can't count how many times I would stare out into the world and see this image. A near deserted street. Lonely figures and the odd car. In this eternal twilight zone, day and night flow seamlessly between one another uncontaminated by large scale human intervention. Even cities felt like villages.

Sonam

External space turns into the place of exoticism and othering; no one is confident enough on the issue of safety. Staying inside is more about one's ethics and moral code; but Crewdson's picture becomes a seductive site of potential relief, freshness and murky roads. The sense of out-of-space location is created by the Americana-like city, reminding of the long road trips and occasional stops in small towns. Light glow. Even when the earth does not quake under the cars anymore, you indulge the dark bits behind houses. Maybe the gulls are crying. It could be a place where we rejoin. What do we have instead? At last twitter, facebook, instagram and snapchat. I read it, watch it and respond but rather go for a walk in the familiar streets.

Zlata

Writings on Home

Home is not a physical space, it's family but sometimes and right now for me more than ever, it's an idea, a topic, a bond, that has created a confined and limited space that I can't grow in. Ironically, it's not a physical space but has created one. Life is full of questions, and I shouldn't be held back for asking them.

Akraam

Rushed breakfasts on the chipped counter, midweek dinner guests and Sunday morning strolls to get coffee. Meaningless knick-knacks and endless blankets and way too many candles. Sleeping-in past noon because the thought of leaving hurts and that warm feeling of sliding away your shoes when you get in. Coming home to a quiet that's not eerie and returning without guilt. I've missed it so much and I want it all back. **Aasiya**

Home is a place of creativity and energy rather than a bedroom where you sleep and have breakfast before university and work. I have started changing attitude and I guess it will go further. For example, there is a new topic to discuss with grandma about a small home garden by the window. This is a proper conversation with exchange of advice and opinions. Also, I got into tarot readings (with my grandmother's interference). I am not exactly sure how this direction would help me but we have now new topics and perspective to undertake. This artificial confinement and restrictions serve as an activating force, from what we have seen in 2020. Yes, it is about opening up possibilities

and roaring towards them from the passive but not static transgression. **Zlata**

It's a sticky thing, full of all the messy bits that hang on to me. I try to wade through the drama of it all.

The clanging from the kitchen, the toys on the floor. A constant ringing of sound. That rhythm is familiar. But sometimes I want to change the channel. To forget the ugly things, edit them out. Not permanently. But for some clarity.

Sara

A cocoon from the world, full of portals so we can be in two places at once, our thoughts flying to other homes and other worlds while our bodies remain inert and secure.

Josh

My reluctance to return to the family home has eased. I realise now that time with my family will be a far more positive thing. I'll finally have a proper bed and mum's cooking. Never again will I have to empty out a mousetrap, deal with my chump of a landlord or worry about living in our shithole. I'm still apprehensive about any possible tensions flaring up and the potential restriction of freedom, and will be sad to no longer live with my new family that has grown in just a few years, but it's far from the end. Some time back in the family home, I hope, will reground me. **Sonam**

To me, only the last two days have happened, to me happiness is the easiest thing to forget. So, let's say I forget this room, would it bother me? No, it would not. But one day I'll wake up and think 'oh no, I remember my old room, the

windows rose so high and the light was so bright', and I will realise that I did drift every time I looked out the window, I did see every time I looked into the mirror. **Sammara**

What is the future of this home?

When it one day becomes the home of someone else? Will they become archaeologists, detectives As they find traces of the things we left behind? **Maya**

I've come to realise, I feel an attached detachment from my Home. It will always hold significance because I have always lived here... there is a bond forged with this place that I believe will last a long time. Yet, I do not feel this is something which pulls me; it does not constantly draw me back. But I like that. **Ellen**

Home will begin again when I am newly displaced. When I have to make sense of my surroundings and move from one way of living to another. Only that way will I know if I left a home or began a new one. **Iñaki**

Duchamp & Sons are Whitechapel Gallery's youth collective. We are a group of thirty members from across London who meet regularly to explore art, curate exhibitions, music and performance events. Our name combines a reference to artist Marcel Duchamp and to a shop on Whitechapel High Street, Albert & Son.

Instagram/ Twitter:
@duchampandsons