

## HELEN CAMMOCK: CONCRETE FEATHERS AND PORCELAIN TACKS 15 OCT 2021 – 13 FEB 2022

*Concrete Feathers and Porcelain Tacks* is a new film and installation project from artist, Helen Cammock, co-commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella, Contemporary Art Society (with support from the Mbili Foundation) and The Photographers' Gallery, in partnership with Touchstones Rochdale. The project is supported by Arts Council England.

Continuing a practice which harnesses film, photography, print, text, song and performance to explore social histories and interrogate mainstream historical narratives, Cammock brings together residents and community groups of Rochdale, Greater Manchester to articulate both individual and collective experiences as a way of considering what it means to exist as part of a community.

Taking the ideals and ethos of the influential Rochdale Principles of Co-operation established in 1844 as a point of departure, Cammock looks to reconnect with these ideas which did so much to inform the growth of the Co-operative Movement through open dialogues with residents of Rochdale. The physical and historical landscape of Rochdale town and its surrounding areas form both the backdrop and foreground for a film work that celebrates and interrogates what the principles of social collective cooperation can bring to a community.

The film also traces the artist's and participants' encounters with a variety of objects drawn from the public art collection and archive at Touchstones, Rochdale's chief public gallery and museum. The collection (established for, and by, the people) offers an open, shared resource for the protagonists to access and engage with a century of eclectic artefacts - a selection of which they are then invited to resituate in a variety of locations in their local area as a way of creating new meanings and connections. The objects chosen are highly idiosyncratic, including a bust of the singer Paul Robeson, a vintage sewing machine, a collection of walking sticks and a wooden box camera.

The people picking out these objects are equally diverse, encompassing families that have lived in the town for generations as well as younger groups who look towards the future; from Rochdale's former mayor; a local artist; a retiree joiner encouraging biodiversity; local community activists making childhood sweets, to a Ukrainian women's choir. The places that the protagonists take the objects (and Cammock) to, reveal strikingly different facets of Rochdale; their woven stories demonstrate how personal, social, political and cultural conversations intersect.

*"The spaces we inhabit are different shapes to everyone. The comfort we enjoy is not the same from one community to the next - from one home to the next. But some strive more for a sense of collective parity. The Rochdale Principles embody this notion of a shared role, responsibility, and stake in what little or great opportunity and subsistence a community generates."* – Helen Cammock

The Photographers' Gallery  
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The title, *Concrete Feathers and Porcelain Tacks* is suggestive of industry and nature, the empirical and the abstract, strength, fragility and vulnerability. The exhibition at The Photographers' Gallery presents the film across twin projection screens, alongside a selection of the featured objects, paintings and screen prints. It is an intimate expression of a spirit of community made, like all good collective endeavours, from the inside.

The work has been commissioned for the collection of Touchstones Rochdale as part of Equal Shares, a collaboration between Film and Video Umbrella and Contemporary Art Society, supported by the Mbili Foundation, to enable museums and galleries in the north-west of England to commission, exhibit and acquire new moving image work by artists.

There will also be a concurrent display at Touchstones, Rochdale from 23 October 2021 - 13 February 2022.

The exhibition opens alongside *Helen Levitt: In The Street*, a retrospective spanning fifty years of work by the landmark American street photographer, Helen Levitt (1913–2009).

**-ENDS-**

### **Press Contacts**

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[grace@margaretlondon.com](mailto:grace@margaretlondon.com)**

### **Notes for Editors**

#### **About Helen Cammock**

Born in Staffordshire in 1970, currently living and working between Brighton and London, Cammock's practice is characterised by fragmented, non-linear narratives. She is motivated by her commitment to questioning mainstream historical narratives around blackness, womanhood, wealth, power, poverty and vulnerability. Mining her own biography in addition to the histories of oppression and resistance, multiple and layered narratives, reveals the cyclical nature of histories. Her work makes leaps between different places, times and contexts, forcing viewers to acknowledge complex global relations and the inextricable connection between the individual and society.

Cammock was the joint recipient of The Turner Prize 2019 and the 7th Max Mara Art Prize for Women. Recent exhibitions include Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK (2020); Collezione Maramotti, Italy (2020); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2019); Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2019); VOID, Derry, Northern Ireland; The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2019); Reading Museum, UK; Cubitt, London (2017). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany; Somerset House, London; Hollybush Gardens, London, and Firstsite, Colchester, UK. She has staged performances at Turner Contemporary, Margate; Collezione Maramotti, Italy; The Showroom, London; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Cubitt, London; VOID, Derry, Northern Ireland and the ICA, London.

#### **The Photographers' Gallery: 50 Years**

2021 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Photographers' Gallery. Founded in 1971 by Sue Davies, OBE, as the UK's first public gallery dedicated to the photographic medium, TPG has over the last five decades played a pivotal role in championing photography's position as a leading artistic and cultural form as well as providing an invaluable centre for the exhibition and support of photographers and photography from across the globe.

Over the course of 2021, the Gallery is staging a special series of exhibitions and events to mark this significant anniversary; reflecting on its legacy and impact over the last five decades and looking towards the future of photography in a rapidly changing world.

#### **The Photographers' Gallery**

The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Great Newport Street, London, as the UK's first independent gallery devoted to photography. It was the first public gallery in the UK to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009, the Gallery moved to 16 – 18 Ramillies

Street in Soho, the first stage in its plan to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century home for photography. Following an eighteen months long redevelopment project, the Gallery reopened to the public in 2012. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past four decades has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture. [www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

#### **Film and Video Umbrella**

Film and Video Umbrella commissions, curates, produces and presents artists' moving-image works that are staged in collaboration with galleries and other cultural partners. Since the late 1980s, FVU has been at the forefront of this vibrant and expanding area of practice, promoting innovation through its support of some of the most exciting figures on the contemporary scene. During this time, the organisation has commissioned and produced nearly 200 different artists' projects, ranging from ambitious multi-screen installations to shorter film and video pieces, as well as numerous online commissions.

[fvu.co.uk](http://fvu.co.uk)

#### **Touchstones Rochdale (part of Your Trust)**

Housed in a historic Grade II listed building Touchstones Rochdale has five stunning temporary galleries hosting a programme of exhibitions showcasing regional, national and international talent.

Touchstones is part of Your Trust, also known as Rochdale Boroughwide Cultural Trust - a charity that works in the heart of the Rochdale Borough community, inspiring people to live more active, creative and healthy lifestyles. The charity connects people with their cultural heritage, encourages creativity and fosters wellbeing for each and every member of its diverse community.

[www.yourtrustrochdale.co.uk](http://www.yourtrustrochdale.co.uk)

#### **Contemporary Art Society**

The Contemporary Art Society champions the collecting of outstanding contemporary art and craft in the UK. Since 1910 the charity has donated thousands of works by living artists to museums, including the first works by Picasso, Matisse, Bacon, Hepworth, Caro, Antony Gormley and Damien Hirst to enter UK public collections. More recent acquisitions have included works by 2016 Turner Prize winner Helen Marten in 2012, Phyllida Barlow in the same year and in 2016 the first works by Glenn Brown and Kader Attia to enter a UK museum collection. Sitting at the heart of cultural life in the UK, the Contemporary Art Society brokers philanthropic support for the benefit of museums and their audiences across the entire country. Their work ensures that the story of art continues to be told now and for future generations. [www.contemporaryartsociety.org](http://www.contemporaryartsociety.org)

#### **Visitor Information**

(As of 2 September, please check website for latest opening information)

Monday (& Bank Holidays): Closed

Tuesday – Wednesday: 10.00 – 18.00

Thursday – Friday (Lates): 10.00 – 20.00

Saturday: 10.00 – 18.00

Sunday: 11.00 – 18.00

#### **Social media**

Instagram: [@thephotographersgallery](https://www.instagram.com/thephotographersgallery)

Twitter: [@TPGallery](https://twitter.com/TPGallery)

Facebook: [@ThePhotographersGalleryLDN](https://www.facebook.com/ThePhotographersGalleryLDN)

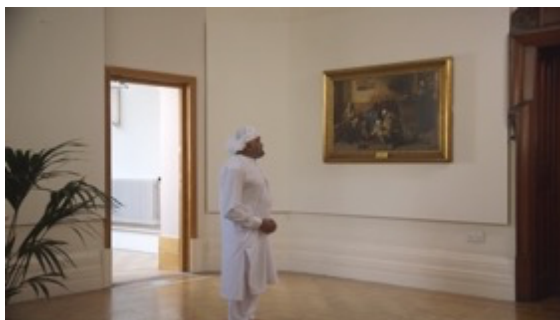
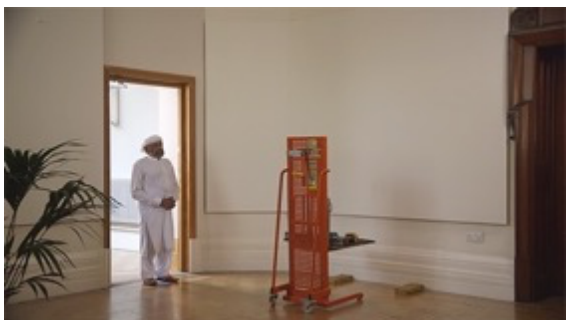


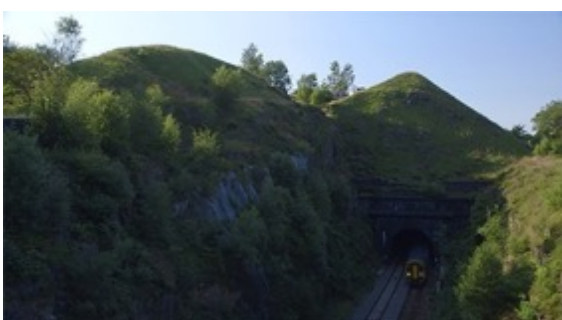
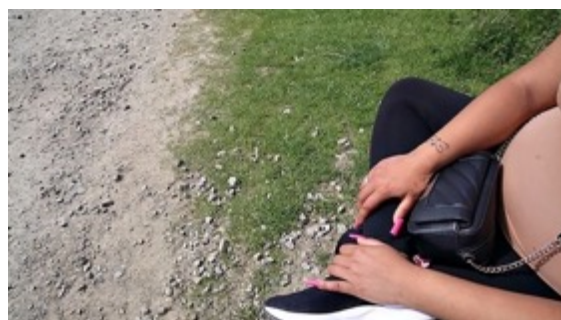
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# THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

## Helen Cammock: Concrete Feathers and Porcelain Tacks

Image Caption for all:  
Still from *Concrete Feathers and Porcelain Tacks*, 2021 © Helen Cammock  
Courtesy of the artist







### **Press information**

For further press information and image requests for exhibitions please contact:  
Grace Gabriele-Tighe at Margaret: [grace@margaretlondon.com](mailto:grace@margaretlondon.com)

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