

PERFECT LIVING

*Some notes to accompany the exhibition of the same name
at South Parade, London.*

(2021)



Editors note Bear in mind that these notes are not necessary to show or talk about my work, but it is necessary for me to make it—to stay with the work—I'm as keen to develop and evolve *the way to work*, as much as the individual works I put out. It's what defines the conditions for living, after all. I'm interested in operating without set research themes, or exploratory topics. Instead developing relations between certain dependable materials and production processes, certain histories, and then introducing some *bad actors* into this formulation that change the course of the work in ways that cannot be pre-planned. Of course there is a social context, a political context, but really it's about total involvement. Someone once told me that showing work is like showing your bare ass, and this is true, letting this text leave my possession feels like both cheeks blowing in the wind.

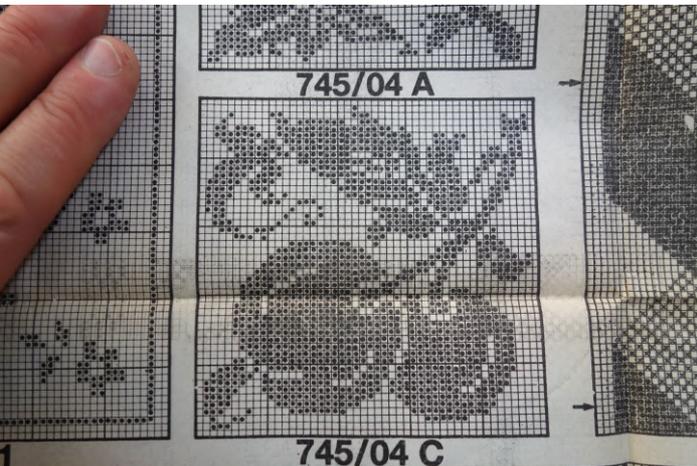




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Someone else said that you are only as good as your last work. Which is probably true, why not.

Starting a strand of work based on a couple of different collections of cross-stitch, lifestyle and embroidery magazines circa 1970 to 1990, is not how I imagined my year to go, how do any of us get anywhere. Pages and pages of instructional content, idealised visions, a flickering of faux-baroque for the cold-war everyday. *Are these images harmful, are they violent. Or are they harmless, or contain some kind of docile aggression.*



Domestic placemaking, not knowing the future, only that there is light and dark. What kind of world we want(ed) to build for ourselves, passive or participatory. And the push and pull of this, the push and pull of working or sleeping, knowing and not wanting to know. Making as an emancipatory experience, or a trap that locks in a set of ideas. And then they come around again, as they get released back onto street level through death or abandonment one morning. The letting go, of a collection, a habit, an interest, of something physical but also likely of your self. How do we decide what's in and what's out and *when*—and when it's out, it enters not into this slick slipstream of recycle or bury, but something much more chaotic.

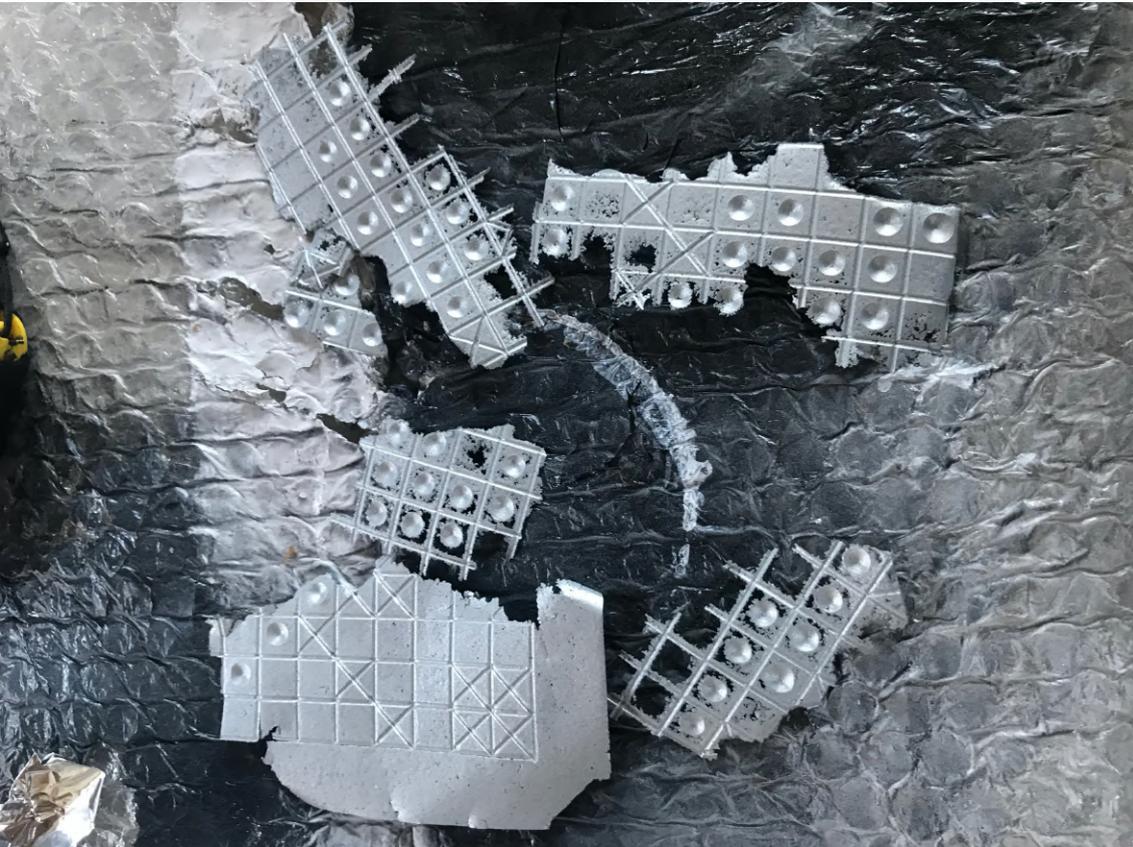
When something vacates your possession, it becomes a free radical—to break down, to interact, to collaborate, to pollute. Some of it ends up here and some goes onto become something else again. A repossession of information, once you lose control it becomes liable for manipulation. The starting point for hundreds of hours more work - head, hand and machine. This is really what is at the core, an insignificant beginning, leading to probably an insignificant ending but with a potency and rigour that at least anchors these works into new dialogues and forms out there in the world.



So although they don't feature directly, these collections of embroidery magazines, because they are not the *subject*, their repeated exposure has kind of choreographed the show. The mass of the potential, to pick and choose your own topographies into non-human volumes. To mix and match without respecting convention or expected aesthetics. To stimulate reliefs and collisions, hollow waxy volumes that are able to collide craft and industry, but not for such a finalised vision. Something much more open. To read the instructions differently and apply their ornamental spirit towards other ambitions. Mark making, pattern cutting, the basic nature of an image. Also how the incredible complex craft nature of these documents reflects back into these *harmless* objects. It's a mirror of how I like to work, enacting a complex procedure and production that can end up back with a simple, almost familiar object but both are tinged with discomfort too. *What is this discomfort?* Harmless objects can also be discreetly oppressive, ecologically destructive, mentally afflicting, metaphysical.

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Let's think about these as a family of works, tied together through the good and the bad, tensions and relations that are fragile, tenuous but inseparable. You know really these works are not supposed to be clinical, they are precisely rough. I don't want them to represent a science-fiction-future. But I do try to make singular works, *that are all involved* in the present, without a lot of additional bells and whistles. That have a difficult silhouette and a complex relationship with physicality.

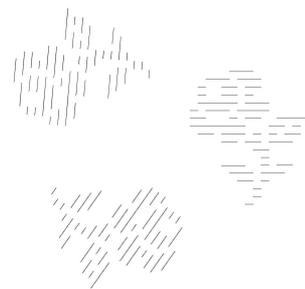
There is a leanness to the materials, skins and hollows, dissolved objects and surfaces to spring back as something lighter but we should say that this is not necessarily an ecological exercise, it does not shy away from the petro-chemical rituals that riddle our visible and invisible lives—candles—oils—balms—scents—sensations.

It's the simple things that become mythical overtime. Transcend their form, the excitement over a kids erroneous finger print on the oldest known figure. Seeing the show should be a bit like slipping through the pages of these magazines, through different times and spaces, styles and possessions. Through ideals and collections, arts and crafts, pleasant and despicable. The embroidery mis-translated and infecting other surfaces.

A set of provocative objects sucked into the orbit of production, a lone soft floor crash mat panel leaning against a tree. A collection of broken bread baskets from a closed bakery, decapitated yucca stumps and the embroidery instructions. Mostly, right now.

Dependable and reoccurring.

Dependable and reoccurring.



There is a tipping point where something that was already existing in the world, can be experienced totally differently, without losing its micro-details, it's features, it's known spirit. So total transformation yes, but only so it can speak multiple languages, it must still retain the mother tongue.

Although I like the principle, works must still demand more than being just a marker in time. We are already really good at this, just by living in the way that we do, it's nothing remarkable. As these surfaces and objects become malleable, flexible— slipping through skins of silicone and soft surfaces of wax, they can become co-opted into different positions. Blank canvas, relationship builder, co-conspirator. They become networked. But like all networks they are liable to break down.

So a family of works where aesthetic traits get carried over, ideologies get passed down and around— problems become amplified later and totally new elements enter at unforeseen moments. A wax and mineral mixture developed for the casting of interlocking aluminium sections (as yet unfinished, since 2019), becomes the driving force with the trunks in developing the rotomoulding as a mean to produce singular works, before reappearing as a carving medium for the large zinc panels. Or some left over Mexican denim offcuts, not discarded, but packed back with the finished work, which now enter the roto-stitched works - alongside the crash mat and the baskets. It doesn't need to be tight and sown up, they are all related through the labour.

A patchwork of sources, of materials, but also a patchwork as a concept. Something that allows into its continuous surface a multitude of styles, textures, colours. A unifying idea capable of consuming all other parts.

But these works remain fragile, sensitive to environmental changes, being dropped or poked, but they are momentarily in a stable communion in your care.



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A jacket-less revolution.

I've been working for a while on some very hollow works that pass through the same type of choreography as some other hollow objects in your life, a water tank, a ship's buoy, a kayak, an easter egg—something like that. It's a mimicry. As ever, developed for military application to produce artillery shells with an even wall thickness, before diversifying this small innovation into other materials, mostly thermoplastics now.

You know it's important to think about the lineage of where you are and the connecting tissue between an artillery shell and a kayak, and their similarities too—one to sink you and one to keep you afloat. They are about as contrasting as you can imagine, but they are united by a technical innovation that diverts off in all necessary (and unnecessary) directions. And on one of these diversions is the work in the studio to produce these twisted complex stitched forms.

It's a simple concept, to roll material around the surface of a mould in all directions at an even tempo so the material becomes more or less evenly distributed until hardened but I've found it kind of a reactionary way to produce, even though its historic and has already its own well established mass manufacture and niche scale uses. We are in a place where replication comes so readily, where something can be scanned and 3d printed in the same breath. But this is still a very lossy environment, and I'm much more interested in working with the true surface of an object. The silicone skins facilitate this and the well adapted methodology for the roto-moulding process means that this choreography, bar some shifting environmental factors that effect quality, produces with a singular effort, the finished unified work. Which once un-peeled, is final. I like all the time to set the conditions for success or failure, and then let it just slip out into the world, and how it feels in the end is a true representation of how good or not you were as co-conspirator or understood your task. This double gyration—swinging in or out of control stays with the works. The relation between the choreographed action and the static object, present in the thinness of its walls and smoothness of its **guts**.

These stitched works, made from thin patchworks of flexible silicone skins are constructed from an idea of a whole volume, but there is no set form. The leanness, the skimming is much more total, in keeping with how I think about the objects I'm producing. There isn't a whole block of material or waste behind them, they're really a skin—of a skim—of a plate. They combine and flop like a collection of moments, a flick of the eye, the corner of an image. This is how I like to think about them actually—keeping the passing sense of their physical nature, a finger running over them, what it would feel like to put your face into them, these kind of things. Different from their social and economic context.





I decided a while ago to stop talking in the third person as much as possible, it's of course not healthy!

I find myself thinking more and more about a warm open fire, a cast iron log burner, candles flickering away—all in the the same spirit as running an engine inside in terms of toxins and carcinogens. That new car smell from the adhesives off-gassing for months after creation, how sweet. Synthetic micro fibres from activity sports wear floating in the fresh city air. The comfort through toxicity. Everything is demanded in moderation, even art making, dodging bullets by varying exposure, or maybe this is worse, less exposure but to more hazards. It's probably an ageing thing, or maybe this is too dramatic, but I also feel sensitivities developing and a body struggling.

The relationship between flesh and sculpture is inseparable, even with a screen often in-between. It's almost as if to make the work is to very vividly experience ageing. To become conscious, or at least paranoid of your intimate relationship to raw materials—solvents, acids, powders. And the growths on skin, sores in the nasal passages. Some natural, some provoked. And I work safe, but it is just about repeated exposure.

I feel this having an impact—like the unfolding environmental catastrophe—with what I choose to work with and how, but I feel it also infecting the subject matter. Works developing like mutations, these comforting things found wanting.

Previously available-cash and truth were the key factors, I'd put health and environmental responsibility into that list now even if it's hard to live up to and makes you a hypocrite with every passing day.

