

Out of Hours Art

BLURRING THE LINES

British Art Show 8

Curated by Anna Colin and Lydia Yee,
Leeds Art Gallery, free entry.

From 9 October 2015–10 January 2016

Then touring to venues in Edinburgh,
Norwich, and Southampton in 2016–2017

Sixty years ago my dad wandered the polluted streets of Leeds looking for respite from his life of textile mill drudgery. These days he hardly recognises the place: shiny canal-side developments, host for the Tour de France, and now the venue for the opening leg of *British Art Show 8*, showcasing 42 artists chosen to provide an overview of the best contemporary art currently being produced in the UK.

The exhibition has taken over almost the entire gallery space, with sculptures sitting beside immersive installation pieces, paintings, photo-collages, and 'participatory work'. In the latter, the line is blurred between artist and audience, such as in Martino Gamper's exploration of shared craft techniques as social activities, including weaving and chair caning. Indeed, some of the artwork is initially not recognisable as such, like Alan Kane's *Welcome doormat* or his gravestone benches, the latter drawing on the tradition of *memento mori* while also providing functional objects that again remove the usual physical and conceptual distance between artwork and viewer.

Large-scale industrial techniques are apparent in some exhibits, but many artists use digital or electronic devices to present

their work, and there are also pieces inspired and part-constructed by the natural world, such as Jessica Warboys's massive multicoloured canvas hanging over the main gallery staircase. In this piece, pigment scattered into the sea and the movement of the waves helped to 'paint' the canvas.

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's *Every piece of dust on Freud's couch* is both beautiful to look at and also rather disturbing. Large coloured woven tapestries have been created from high-resolution radiographic images of strands of hair and other samples, after the artists employed a police forensic team to gather microscopic items from Freud's original couch. The juxtaposition of the intrusive, modern investigatory techniques with the natural materials of the couch, as well as the microscopic subject material with the sizeable final artwork, are not easy to reconcile.

A central theme of the exhibition is the examination of how we think about material objects and how artists engage with their subject matter in a world where the boundary between the real and the virtual is less clear.



Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, *Every piece of dust on Freud's couch*, 2015. © Broomberg & Chanarin 2015. (Foreground: Alan Kane, *But.*, 2015. © Alan Kane 2015.) Installation view: *British Art Show 8*, Leeds Art Gallery, 2015–2017. Photo © Jonte Wilde Photography 2015.

Not only does this multi-artist show manage to explore a coherent theme, but it also does so with a varied mix of overwhelmingly engaging and thought-provoking, while often beautiful, pieces of work. Look out for it when it's coming your way.

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Catch the show in the following cities:
Edinburgh, Feb–May 2016; Norwich, June–Sep 2016;
and Southampton, Oct 2016–Jan 2017.
<http://britishartshow8.com/page/about-exhibition-1514>

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