

## ONE NEED NOT BE A CHAMBER

*One need not be a chamber to be haunted,  
One need not be a house;*

— *Emily Dickinson, 1924.*

Sometimes, to be haunted, one simply needs to be a (forsaken luxury car) garage in the middle of Kensington. “I can disclose that Her Majesty’s Jaguar garage is to close down after supplying and repairing her cars for more than forty years because of new demands imposed by the firm”, informs the newspaper of January 2016. In my turn, at my presence at this abandoned venue two years later, I can disclose that forty years of dwelling can hardly pass without a trace once the dweller leaves. They can hardly be rubbed away from the surfaces of a building — no matter how hard the new occupant pushes to scratch away the golden lettering “R.A. Creamer & Son”, old telephones and opening hours from the glass door. When she is done with letters, she may use her jumper sleeve to finish the job: now the surface is clean, it seems to welcome new letters, awaits the new numbers, and names and hours. Why, though, as she steps back and opts for a humble door sign EXPOSED ARTS PROJECTS that will be partially hidden by the thriving ivy climbing the door. No shiny vinyl title in Century Gothic 325 pt, as she initially wanted. Why not?

When you first arrive at this venue, as its proud new occupant, feeling and behaving as if you are the one, you start with calling your new purpose here aloud — chanting: “A new charitable art space in the middle of Kensington, for research-led artistic and curatorial projects!” When you attempted to settle, you ambitiously tried to fill the space with the bubble of your own narratives, visions and plans. You surely failed to do so — since this building has never been empty and neutral, and the old bubbles of memories and stories were here way before yours. For the last forty years they crystallised, obtained armour, grew into the walls and ceiling; made some cross-looking holes in the floor; intertwined with the plants in the back garden(s?) and the aforementioned stubborn vines/ivy on the front door. Every time you arrive here to do some exhibition planning and organise things, you would discover a new room, why? These unfamiliar rooms are immediately disconcerting to you. They must be tamed through the familiarity, which habit conveys to places (so you think; so they say). Troubled with their strangeness, you repeat your visits, make them more frequent and invading. One day you bring your project’s poster and attach it to the front window, so those who pass by will know who is the new master of these premises. Another day you would come and do some cleaning. You would find countless objects that tell you stories you were not expecting to discover. No wonder you fail: unable to throw any of these talkative things away. Inevitably, you find more rooms. And even more rooms during your next visit. And you find many, many stray keys all over the place.

Occasionally, you would give up your subjugation-managerial duties and learn to listen to the place itself. You understand the place better, and even find some comfort in the idea that some places just cannot be domesticated, and some buildings are simply not designed to have a fixed number of rooms (and the rooms are allowed to have uneasy tempers). Perhaps (although unlikely) you would start thinking that this is OK. You pay attention to the quirky personality and structural mutability of this building. You animate it in your imagination and invest it with life by the addition of spirit. Finally, you invite the artists to meet this building in person. At some point, the building too would start responding, and things progress.



a.



b.



c, d.



e.

““Space” and “place” are related terms’, suggest environmental researchers Irwin Altman and Ervin H. Zube, ‘with “space” becoming “place” as it gains psychological and symbolic meaning’ (Altman and Zube, 1989). In the case of EXPOSED ARTS PROJECTS, where the old meanings are embodied by the architecture of the building itself, you deal with a place of a secondary order: a haunted place, a historically/emotionally/olfactory-charged building. No wonder that you decide to approach the making of your first exhibition here as a kind of a ritual: on the one hand, to use it as a means of communicating with the spirit of the building, introducing yourself and your agenda to it, while on the other hand, to identify the ways in which the old psychological and symbolic meanings (“the ghosts”) were assigned to this location, so the new ones — the ones that represent the art space you are aspiring to set up here — can be added to the existing ones. Buildings inscribe themselves with their occupants; so do the exhibition spaces. They socialise and structure the relations with their exhibitors, providing room for expression and realisation of a complex interactive relationship. An art gallery built from the scratch, for the purpose of showing art, has a complex ecology of past and present, interior and exterior; it configures a certain kind of relations between the concrete structure and those who inhabit it. But a “haunted” gallery is a scenario of confrontation between the two narratives — of the building, and of its new inhabitants: artists, artworks, audiences, curators. In this sense “haunting” implies a temporal disruption of the narratives that alters the perception, attitude and physical appearance of the place.

In order to trace and locate the source of this disturbance, the haunted gallery must be explored — although the exploration suggests an entry into something other than a purely spatial dimension. If performed as an exhibition, this process of exploration may be undertaken by way of co-presence, seizure, edit, mimicking, repurposing, replacement and installation of the (often discontinuous) objects and relations in the space. The process would involve decisions on how to arrange relationships between what is already in place (the original marks and features, the traces of previous inhabitants), and the changing demands of its new everyday existence. It will involve a kind of archaeology, uncovering, understanding, and remediation.

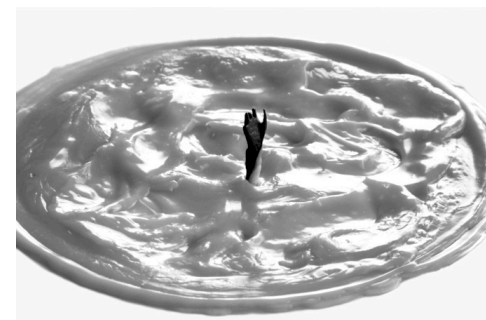
— Sasha Burkhanova-Khabadze, 2018.

To conduct this on-sight research you would invite four artists, experienced in addressing the untamed venues in their practice:  
a film-maker Lara Smithson, a place-maker Simona Sharafudinov, an image-maker Rhona Eve Clews, and an object-maker Maria Positano.

In her practice **RHONA EVE CLEWS** captures the unseen dimension of places that have become so familiar to the beholder that they fail to actually “see” them beyond their obvious contours. To adjust her vision, to go past the personal and collective recollections, Clews works with cameraless photography. She attempts to ‘pick up’ the places’ aura with photograms, exposing light sensitive paper to fire at night — turning the site itself into both her darkroom and her protagonist. The series of life-sized photograms, resulting from the artist’s recent explorations in the garden of her childhood home (*Mother Night / Go into her totally*, 2017), are installed on the gallery floor, echoing the earth on which they were created — endlessly reproduced by the mirrored walls. In this repetition, as the two temporalities clash, the two narratives come to visibility: the room becomes the garden; memories slip out of the paper and impersonate the building. At the exhibition opening Rhona will perform and dialogue with site: transforming night into darkroom, making photograms in the gallery garden and calling latent images to arise from the developing tray.



img. 1



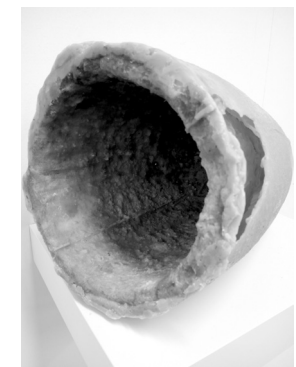
img. 2

**LARA SMITHSON** is concerned with the relationship between cinema and painting, the concept of a poetic, still time and the infinite creation of the image within this juxtaposition. *Spitting is a language in itself she said*, 2017 is a series of films and objects made following her research trip to the Karst region of Southwest China while also looking at the history Chinese mural painting. With the experience of being an outsider within the highly coded culture of China, she examines how myths and magic are simultaneously eroded and embellished throughout history. The visions of red feet and gloved hands act as metaphors for disembodiment, but also perform in the films as symbols, heightening gestures imbued with ritual. Poetry runs through the films as a voice into and out of their constructed worlds as if in dreams. In the exhibition the objects and costume details, made by the artist, are displayed together with the films, implying their continued employment in confronting old narratives, which haunt EXPOSED.



img. 3

Interested in human urge to explore the unexplained things, **MARIA POSITANO** connects the gradual process of developing knowledge with creation of physical artefacts, capable of marking the boarder between the two realms: of comprehensible and not-yet-grasped. Invested with this mission, Positano’s artefacts look like monuments, monoliths and objects of worship, constructed of burned wood, clay and sculpted metal. When installed in the gallery, the artefacts expand their powers: from marking borders of the unknown — to corrupting our perception of the familiar. The first series of Positano’s sculptures on display — *VOID* — suggests the presence of the unknown through the lack of familiarity of forms and symbols used in their production. Positano’s new series — *The Transmuting Agent* — follow a different strategy: they overload the viewer with information, streamed through the multiple layers of symbols from various cultures, contexts and times, that, once again, turns the mechanisms of understanding dysfunctional.



img. 4

For **SIMONA SHARAFUDINOV** the project at EXPOSED is in many ways affective and symbolic on personal level. For Sharafudinov, whose father is a mechanic, the space of a garage happens to be automatically charged with family history and myths. Hence her choice to use the cars repairing area for her site-specific installation and performance — that comes in response to the artist’s perception of own identity, heritage and exile. In *Disappointment* (2018) the artist aspires to bring the building to life by launching three threads of processes — that of making, performing, and recording; and inviting the building itself to follow and respond to the established rhyme. Importantly, prior to her intervention, Sharafudinov familiarised herself with its history, accepted the weight of it, and is this way enabled herself of calling “the wonderful ghost to dance with” (the artist’s own words).

*Dissapointment* (2018) is performed by:  
Klara Schumann (cello) @klaraschumann / Giovanni Vetere @jeanjacquesvetere / Lucrezia De Fazio @lucreziadefazio / Simona Sharafudinov @ssstroika / Claire Pearce @sexy\_buggery / Aaliyah @god.herself