

the altar, here we see choristers singing Evensong whilst lying on their backs on the floor in the body of the church. The choir, conventionally organised in neat rows, is atomised as if to suggest an entropic inevitability. The horizontality of a human being is read as a submission to gravity – sleep and death – whereas verticality is a sign of life, consciousness and volition.

The following interview with Roger Hiorns was made in November 2016:

Often in your work objects and materials are adapted to address a particular issue. What determines the choice of what material to use?

Objects and materials are the presentational arena of an artwork, but also what has been more important to me is to present moods, attitudes and behaviours. That an artwork is simply not enough if it simply is an exploration of formal approaches such as colour, composition, and a status quo can be challenged at every turn. I have always been uneasy about art that simply proposes an artist's style. It displays limitations of communication, and collaborates with the status quo, with the market, and it presents an ivory tower separation from the real world. For example, *Seizure*, [an empty council flat transformed into a sparkling blue environment of copper sulphate crystals] presented a new pallet of moods to the viewer, where the psyche was somehow manipulated, enhanced. Perhaps the viewer was placed in a position of attuned-ness. The artwork is now most importantly a new place where a new model of thoughts can be experienced.

In some of your works you allow the physical creation of the work to be informed by chance procedures and processes beyond your control. Is this important to you?

I was very keen to say that artists' most important product is now the revaluation of behaviour. The artist should now present new forms of behaviour to the world. For example, if we talk about the burial of a 737 under Birmingham, and we let people inside this buried plane, we find that the human is now part of the composition of the work. Not simply reduced as a 'viewer' who will spend 3 seconds on average, parsing an artwork, but a human that, as I find most importantly, put back at the centre of the artwork, put back at the centre of the material choices of the artwork. They will bring their subjective view, their anxiety, their prejudice and their preferences. This bold idea is distilled also into the naked youth works, and especially the youth with the pulverised altar stone. That the primary and dominant form of the altar, as a *punctum* of faithful attention, has through a simple mechanical process been rendered into a sand and a powder. It's now a formless powder without authority: a new form that accommodates the material of the youth and his attuned presence. This process and its result is the exploration of the contemporary idea of the de-establishment of authority, a process in motion everywhere we look.

When working with certain materials, there is a process that is unseen in the final artwork. Is an understanding of the processes taken important to the viewer's experience of the work?

Process is really a means to an end. Perhaps the artist is pretending to be a supernatural force, addressing the shallow surfaces of the world, that now seamlessly interlink and which we may find less able to penetrate through to deeper thought and fuller life beyond.

You have said your work allows you to track and examine how social problems can be addressed through adaptation of objects. How does this manifest in your work?

vCJD was a disease that emerged in the early 90s. The media and a Conservative government conspired to create an environment of febrile public anxiety and a fogging of responsibility. To this day permission from the BBC to show a film of John Selwyn Gummer, now Lord Deben, feeding his daughter an ambiguous beef burger is declined due to 'political sensitivity'. We were all part of a material contamination of our food and pharmaceutical system for the best part of 20 years, and the victims of the disease woefully mishandled. This was real, a systemic abuse of the population by its leaders.

I made a work of inhabiting and delving deep into the archives of medical institutions and pharmaceutical foundations for the best part of a year. I made connections to the victim societies that still campaign regularly for truth, to the scientists who discovered the connection of the disease to the BSE crisis in cattle, who are looking to develop a cure for the disease vCJD. This material became, again a protean artwork, a sprawling mass of truth and information, a presentation of power left lying in the street.

What led you to the idea of pulverizing a jet engine into powder?

I wanted to make an artwork that had content and significance, but no definite form – a protean body of dust that can be installed loosely. The jet engine, the obsessive compulsive object that cannot fail, the dominant object that allows every human to have an altered reality to the surface of the world, had been somehow disenchanting by atomisation, but with its considerable significance still intact. Significance is the anxiety point of all contemporary artworks. Its location is thin, if non-existent in all art made now. Art has continuously pushed the human to the margins, has alienated the viewer to become simply a provider of pattern recognition and

an unknowing collaborator in neo-liberal value statements. We need a new self-awareness through heavy processing of the physical world, through insulting the objects of domination.

Jet engines often occur in your work. What drives your interest in aerodynamic machinery?

All engines are the by-product of power, and their by-product is power, metaphoric and physical, state and global. I further adapted the engines by adding to them brain matter and anti-depressants, had them prayed for by prayer groups, atomised them, mixed the engine with altar dust, buried the aircraft that carried the engines. This seems like a sustained assault on them. A sculptor puts an object in a room or into new circumstances and a power relation is presented, and then the sculptor presents a new behaviour against the object, attrition against a worldly object. This paradoxical vibration is the systemic energy that makes an artwork autonomous and makes it work without added electricity, robotics, light, theory, etc.

Associated Events

Untitled (2011)

15 December 2016 – 2–5pm

12 and 26 January 2017 – 2–5pm

9 and 23 February 2017 – 2–5pm

Untitled (2011) comprises found objects, including jet and car engines and tables, 'activated' through the presence of a naked young man. Visitors to Ikon on these afternoons will be able to see the objects and the young man together at timed intervals.

Artist's Talk – Roger Hiorns

Wednesday 8 February, 6–7.30pm – FREE
Booking essential

Join artist Roger Hiorns in conversation with writer and curator Tom Morton, touching on key themes and ideas behind his work. The galleries will be open between 5–6pm for visitors to enjoy the exhibition before the talk. Book online at www.ikon-gallery.org or call us on 0121 248 0708. All events take place at Ikon Gallery.

Exhibition Supporters

Roger Hiorns' exhibition is supported by Corvi-Mora, London; Annet Gelink, Amsterdam; Luhning Augustine, New York and the Ikon Investment Fund.

Find out more

Visit the Resource Room where you can find a selection of books, audio and film.

If you have any questions about the exhibition please ask the Information Assistants in the gallery.

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Ikon Gallery
Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708
www.ikon-gallery.org

Open Tuesday – Sunday
and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am–5pm
Free entry, donations welcome

IKON

Exhibition Guide

7 December 2016 – 5 March 2017

Roger Hiorns
First and Second Floor Galleries
and Tower Room

Through the transformation of materials and objects, Roger Hiorns' practice focuses on various aspects of modern life, analysing and unpacking knowledge and information that is often taken for granted. From growing vast amounts of copper sulphate crystals on objects ranging from car engines to domestic interiors, creating paintings using brain matter, to pulverising sophisticated machinery into dust, he is proposing alternative ways of seeing.

Hiorns is preoccupied with the implications of physical and chemical change. Working with substances that have their own unpredictable or uncontrollable growth patterns, he develops a basic structure using specific materials that then grow and develop organically, without the artist's hand. *Untitled* (2014) is one such work. A collection of found plastics are suspended from the ceiling, some of which are filled with soap detergent. Transparent silicon tubes located internally and connected to an air compressor feed oxygen into the vessels, mixing with the soap detergent to produce foam. The foam expands, bending to and beyond the plastic vessels, growing until it can no longer support itself before oozing onto the floor: foam becomes formless residue.

Jet engines often occur in Hiorns' work, and here when encountered by a naked young man it suggests not only a mysterious communion, but also melancholy. Ripped from the wing of an airplane and partly dismantled, the engine is like a remnant from classical antiquity, instilling awe as if being contemplated at some point in the distant future when air travel as we now know it no longer exists.

In the Tower Room *Untitled (a retrospective view of the pathway)*, (2016) is a film documenting Hiorn's major offsite project involving the choir of St Phillips Cathedral Birmingham that took place in June 2016. Rather than standing in stalls in front of