and in more daring ways in the corners, fringes and recesses of counterculture alongside the *couture*-culture on show here. ▮

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The Science of Imaginary Solutions

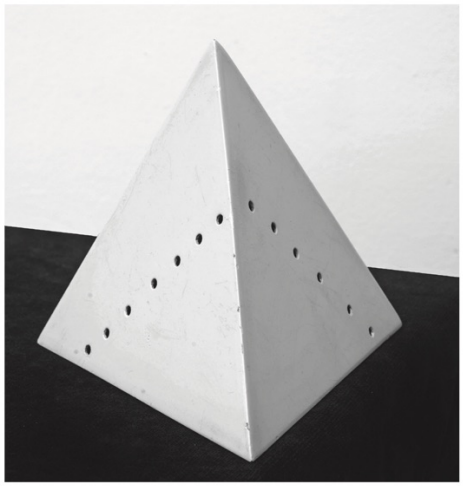
Breese Little London 10 June to 17 September

How do we differentiate between artefacts and works of art, and what might this tell us about the ways in which we value things? The first exhibition at Breese Little's new space contains a diverse range of objects from across time and space to address the overlapping spheres of contemporary art, ethnography and curatorial practices. The net is thrown wide open, immediately raising the question of how and why things are selected and categorised, whether for a temporary exhibition or within more permanent museum collections. Every item included is a fascinating thing, because of its history as an object, its production methods or its place in an artist's body of work.

The exhibition explores not only the effect of the gallery space on an object but also the ways in which what is not visible shapes how we value and understand things. Items as diverse as a Neolithic stone grinding basin and pestle from North Africa, a Lucio Fontana pink lacquer metal *Piramide*, c1967, and a Yayoi Kusama *Untitled (Silver Soft Shoe Sculpture)* of 1976 are brought together in the same space. How do we think about and value such diverse objects? All three are temptingly tactile, especially the stone pestle, darkened many years ago from human touch. This simple, everyday item is powerfully suggestive, immediately transporting the viewer to a time and place about which very little is known but which such items, through their quotidian simplicity, are able to evoke. Powerful fragments of history like these highlight the huge knowledge gaps that are filled by a combination of carefully researched historical data and the viewer's imagination; both, arguably, do so in unstable and contingent ways. Other items carry more readily accessible but equally compelling back stories. A humorous arrangement brings a small dinosaur face to face with a collection of brooches. Although all the items are made of bronze, they are clearly from different times and places, with the brooches dating from the first to the sixth centuries, although the dinosaur is harder to place. One side of it looks like it has been chewed, its material strangeness indexically marked by its own history. *They Shall Never Pass, Bonehead*, 2013, is a cast bronze by Ruth Ewan of a salvaged plastic dinosaur partially melted in a firebomb attack on the Freedom Press Bookshop in Whitechapel. This small compact object effectively and visually presents not only its own history but also that of a specific social environment. Each item in the display case is valuable, but for different reasons and to different people.

An enduring classical heritage is mined by George Henry Longly and Steven Claydon in complex mixed-media works, while Charles Avery explores the fictional alternative through works from his Onomatopoeia project. Matthew Darbyshire's *Bureau (tableau vivant)*, 2016, challenges the strength of the Farnese Hercules by using industrial prototyping to transform the hefty giant into lightweight cork, which in turn is studied by an even smaller marble-like plastic figure. In drawing on the classical tradition, the work deftly highlights cultural subjectivity.

Travelling lightly across time and space, the 19th century features in the exhibition in the series of vintage albumen prints of Antiquities of Britain produced by the British Museum in 1872. As early museum



Lucio Fontana
Piramide c1967

systems developed alongside early photography, the new institutions needed methods of recording and cataloguing their stock. Produced to fulfil both scholarly and commercial interests, the photographs are indicative of things that were considered worth photographing, from medieval Lewis chess pieces to Anglo-Roman leather shoes and Venetian glass. But why are the beautifully inscribed captions written in Spanish using red ink? These photographs now have a new value not only as images of fascinating artefacts but also as material objects in their own right with their own mysterious provenance.

The 19th century is returned to indirectly through the inclusion of a work by Marcel Broodthaers, who channelled a 19th-century aesthetic through his late-20th-century practice. In a two-part print, *Les animaux de la ferme*, 1974, Broodthaers neatly combines arbitrary labelling systems with dry conceptual humour. Absurd juxtapositions return in Albert Renger-Patzsch's *Cows grazing with steamship behind (Landscape in Northern Germany)*, 1930. The title of Renger-Patzsch's second book, *Die Welt ist schön* (The World is Beautiful), 1928, fits both the diversity of his practice and of this exhibition, while *Die Dinge* (Things) is thought to have been the artist's preferred title for the collection, and works even better here; the exhibition is full of fascinating things.

(Dis)ordering, (re)valuing, labelling, all of these concerns underpin the exhibition, while absurd humour is evoked through its title and is succinctly portrayed in works by Barry Flanagan and Alexandre da Cunha, both of whom transform easily overlooked, found materials into visually engaging, hybrid forms, while Andy Holden's *Felt touches only observed*, 2016, is a riot of the haptic, with bulbous blobs of coloured building plaster built up in an amorphous mass. A sensitivity to unusual materials and working methods can be found throughout the selection of works, from Ella McCartney's meticulous *Photogram*, 2016, to two beautifully crafted wattle-and-daub panels by David Thorpe, and to the classical elegance of Ian Hamilton Finlay's slate chiselled *Barque*, c1987, situated alongside the handmade aesthetic of a woven tapestry wall hanging and three white-on-black and black-on-white patterned platters by Katie Schwab.

Conventional categorisations found in both traditional museum and in contemporary art displays are dispensed with in this rigorously thought-through and richly stimulating exhibition which encourages us to reconsider the ways in which we imagine and reconstitute the past. Fact and fiction are neatly interwoven and equally destabilised. As a result of well-chosen juxtapositions, all kinds of connections emerge between strange

and beautiful things that would not usually meet, enabling productive new ways of thinking about how we value objects and materials. ▮

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Sean Lynch: The Weight of the World

Spacex Exeter 14 May to 2 June

The obscure history of municipal stonework, forgotten Irish folklore, metal detecting and a load of old road-side rubbish find themselves the subjects of Sean Lynch's curiosity at Exeter Phoenix and Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery. His enthusiasm for anecdotes and the almost forgotten is boundless; he appears galvanised by the task he sets himself to breathe life and new meaning into apparently obsolete scraps.

Lynch represented Ireland at last year's Venice Biennale with an installation of *Adventure: Capital*, 2015, the film part of which is included in the show in Exeter. From pre-history to the 21st century via a series of stories that connect stonework, town planning, regional airports, public sculpture, Greek myth and capital through a sequence of deadpan camera shots, it winds its way between London, Liverpool and Cork, with a lyrical voice-over as our guide whose tone ranges from rousing romanticism to a playful parody of the aggrandising tendencies of art writing (beware!).

'The Weight of the World', curated by Spacex, brings Lynch to the south-west, an area he finds himself increasingly drawn to because of the way 'its history manifests itself in everyday life', as he put it on opening night. This is most keenly developed in two film works from this year, *The Vermiculation of Exeter* and *The Weight of the World*, both concerned with the specific history of stonework in the city. Most successful is the work on *Vermiculation*, a little-known architectural motif of pitted stone blocks whose surface appears to be crumbling, the result of burrowing worms. Much to Lynch's clear amusement, and bemusement, this stonework has become a linchpin of municipal architecture across the UK. The film dwells on its use across Exeter, particularly in buildings in which bankers, estate agents, stockbrokers and chain restaurants take up residence. The implication is that these capitalist conglomerates are unwittingly housed in architectural forms that suggest not strength and dependability but inevitable demise. Lynch's point is made through a low-grade, deliberately 'artless' montage of dour architectural details – reminiscent of 1980s BBC documentaries. Though a mere two minutes long, I wonder how many viewers will stick with it in order for Lynch's point to sink in.

Sean Lynch
Adventure: Capital
2014-15

Lynch's interest in the south-west continues in his newest film, the ostensive theme of which is metal detecting. The discovery of a hoard of 22,000 Roman coins in Devon in 2013 by amateur detectorists, soon to return to the museum in which Lynch's film is exhibited, leads him to score a path, by association, back to Ireland. *Campaign to Change the National Monuments Acts*, 2016, a cross between a low-budget amateur documentary and a party political broadcast, calls for the decriminalisation of metal detecting in Ireland. It often appears visually dull, lacking in narrative momentum; one shot lingers on a dishevelled man who emerges from his car outside Maplins on an industrial estate and enters the store and the shot continues (for longer than your average art consumer's patience might allow) until the man reappears with, it seems, a new detector under one arm. Later, while the female narrator addresses the camera, comes a painfully stilted staging of the bearded detectorist's discovery of the shattered remains of a red prohibition symbol, a patent representation of the proposed disintegration of Ireland's strict laws against metal detecting. The impetus for Lynch to make a film from such an obscure national law, however, is no empty gesture; it mirrors his own approach to investigating and uncovering hidden histories. Detectorists for Lynch are important players in the role of small-scale historical and archeological unveiling, democratising historical interests and discoveries, making them not just the domain of the museum or academic experts.

Much of Lynch's material is contextualised in the show's accompanying publication and, without this text, I'm not always sure how much the work alone is able to communicate his underlying arguments. With his nose for lost or hidden knowledge, some of which might seem abstruse or unappealing, Lynch manages, in part, to animate his subject matter with astute and unexpected humour. This isn't a dip-in-and-out kind of show, however; there is little glamour, few seductive aesthetic trimmings. It is rather old fashioned, in fact, with a respect for the slow-paced accrual of knowledge born of research, gathered in the archives of libraries, museum stores or by word of mouth. Its wit and insight are subtle though its implications far reaching, making it worth investing the time to let Lynch's connections, metaphors and allegories take hold. ▮

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Katie Paterson: Hollow · Syzygy

Royal Fort Gardens Bristol 9 May onwards

The Lowry Manchester 29 April to 21 August

Tucked away in a corner of a lush Royal Fort Gardens in Bristol is a newly commissioned timber grotto. It is made from substantial untreated squared-off columns of peach-hued douglas fir that jut straight out of the ground at various heights like an organic growth on the gently mounded grass. Its entrance – there for you to find, rather than be presented with – doesn't welcome you with open arms. It is slight, in height and width, forcing you to make a physical adjustment before entering: you duck, turn three quarters and tread carefully. You find yourself anticipating and adapting to the unfamiliar environment in a way that we seldom have to these days. This is *Hollow*, 2016, a new public artwork by Katie Paterson (Profile *AM*338), designed in collaboration with architects Zeller and Moye