Spit & Sawdust are pleased to announce their first Billboard Commission, *Crudely Plucking the Strings* by Chris Alton, which launches with an event on May 10th 2018. The Billboard structure will be sited in the outdoor yard space, as the first point of contact for visitors to Spit & Sawdust. The Commission’s aim is to provide a large-scale, site-specific platform for artists to develop new work, and increase the visibility of the creative programme within this multi-aspect venue. The first two Billboard Commissions are supported by The Arts Council of Wales and curated by Freya Dooley.

Throughout his practice, Chris Alton dredges up moments and ideas from the past, attempting to rethink them for and apply them to the contemporary world. *Crudely Plucking the Strings* reimagines the story of the 1607 flood of the Bristol Channel, which some hypothesise to have been caused by a tsunami. 2,000 or more people drowned, houses and villages were swept away. The local economy along the coasts of the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary was wrecked by the destruction of 200 square miles of farmland it’s livestock. It is believed that Cardiff was the most badly effected town. A woodcut print is one of the only surviving visual representations of the disastrous event.

“I’ve always thought that people living in the cosy suburbia of Western Europe and America never appreciated just how vulnerable we were to climate disasters.” JG Ballard to Travis Elborough, 1962*

For Spit & Sawdust’s first Billboard Commission, Alton has created a speculative reworking of this woodcut, re-telling the 1607 flood with a new cast. St. Mary’s Church, the image’s original focal point, has been replaced by Hinkley Point C; the yet to be completed nuclear power station that sits on the southern bank of the channel. When it is finally completed, Hinkley Point C will be the most expensive power station in the world. It will perch on the edge of a precipice, vulnerable to the increasingly prevalent instances of extreme weather that are being experienced globally.

By mimicking the style of the original woodcut print, *Crudely Plucking the Strings* prefigures that which is yet to pass, training a sceptical eye on nuclear power as an answer to climate change. In many ways, this science fiction inspired image operates as an “early warning system”** and a call to action.

Notes to editors:

Contact for press enquiries and high res images: Freya Dooley, Spit & Sawdust.
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Events:

A public launch event will take place on Thursday 10th May at 7pm where the commission will unveiled. There will also be drinks and free food from the outside wood oven. A new accompanying film by Chris Alton will be screened at Spit & Sawdust until 03/06/18 and then displayed periodically until November.

Billboard Commission:

The first commission, Crudely Plucking the Strings, by Chris Alton will run from 10th May – 12th November 2018. The second commission (Artist to be announced) will launch in March 2019. The first two Billboard Commissions are curated by Freya Dooley and supported by project funding from The Arts Council of Wales.
**Artist biography:**

Chris Alton is an artist and curator based in London, whose practice spans documentary film, music videos, online interventions, disruptive design, live events and exhibitions. Whether deploying disco music in opposition to fascism or playing table tennis in competition with aggressive architecture, his work interrogates symbolic manifestations of power, such as; coats of arms, Latin mottos, corporate identities, mythological weaponry and national flags. He works to destabilise or subvert their logic, undermining their shaky foundations through humour and play.

Chris is currently a participant in *Syllabus III*, an alternative peer-led learning programme. Commissions include; **Adam Speaks**, The National Trust, Croome, Worcestershire, 2017; and **Keeley Round**, Turf Projects, Croydon, 2016. Exhibitions include; **You’re Surrounded by Me**, Turf Projects, Croydon, 2017 (group); **Of the Sea**, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, 2016 (group); **Under the Shade I Flourish**, xero, kline & coma, London, 2016 (solo); and **Outdancing Formations**, Edith-Russ-Haus, Oldenburg, 2015 (dual, with Marta Papivoda). Awards, bursaries and publications include; Fenton Arts Trust Bursary 2017; Light Eye Mind Graduate Award 2016, A.P.T Graduate Studio Award 2016; Edith-Russ-Haus Award for Emerging Media Artists of the Sparda Bank 2015; Lewisham Arthouse Graduate Studio Award 2015; Catlin Guide 2015; and Collyer Bristow Graduate Award 2014.

Artist website: [www.chrisalton.com](http://www.chrisalton.com) / Instagram: @chrisalton

**Curator biography:**

Freya Dooley is an artist based in Cardiff. Her practice encompasses writing, moving image, sound and performance, as well as working collaboratively with other artists. Recent solo exhibitions include **Speakable Things: Litmus Commission** at Oriel Davies, Powys, (2018) and **Rhythms and Disturbances**, Unit#1, g39, Cardiff (2016). Freya has recently been awarded a Jerwood Visual Arts Bursary towards the research and development of a new body of work with the live and recorded voice. Freya has a collaborative practice with artist Cinzia Mutigli, making performance, broadcast and publication works since 2013. They are currently working on a new performance for Experimentica: About Time, Chapter’s annual live art and performance festival (2018), and were previously commissioned by Cardiff Contemporary festival for their project On Record; a platform for artists working with analogue sound and performance (2014).

Freya is a freelance project manager and has previously worked for a number of arts organisations in Wales including Chapter Gallery, Wales in Venice, Artes Mundi and Made in Roath. She is a member of *Syllabus III*, an alternative peer-led learning programme jointly delivered by Wysing Arts Centre, Eastside Projects, Spike Island, Iniva, Studio Voltaire and S1 Artspace. Freya has been a studio member at Spit & Sawdust since 2014.

Website: [www.freyadooley.com](http://www.freyadooley.com) / Instagram: @freya_dooley

**Spit & Sawdust** is an artist-led space in Cardiff which opened in April 2014, comprising of an 11,000sq ft indoor skatepark, café, artist studios and large outdoor yard, the space at Spit & Sawdust offers artists an interesting and challenging environment in which to make work. Located in a warehouse on the industrial outskirts of the city, visitors come from all ages and backgrounds. They are a not-for-profit social enterprise.

Website: [www.spitandsawdust.co.uk](http://www.spitandsawdust.co.uk)
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