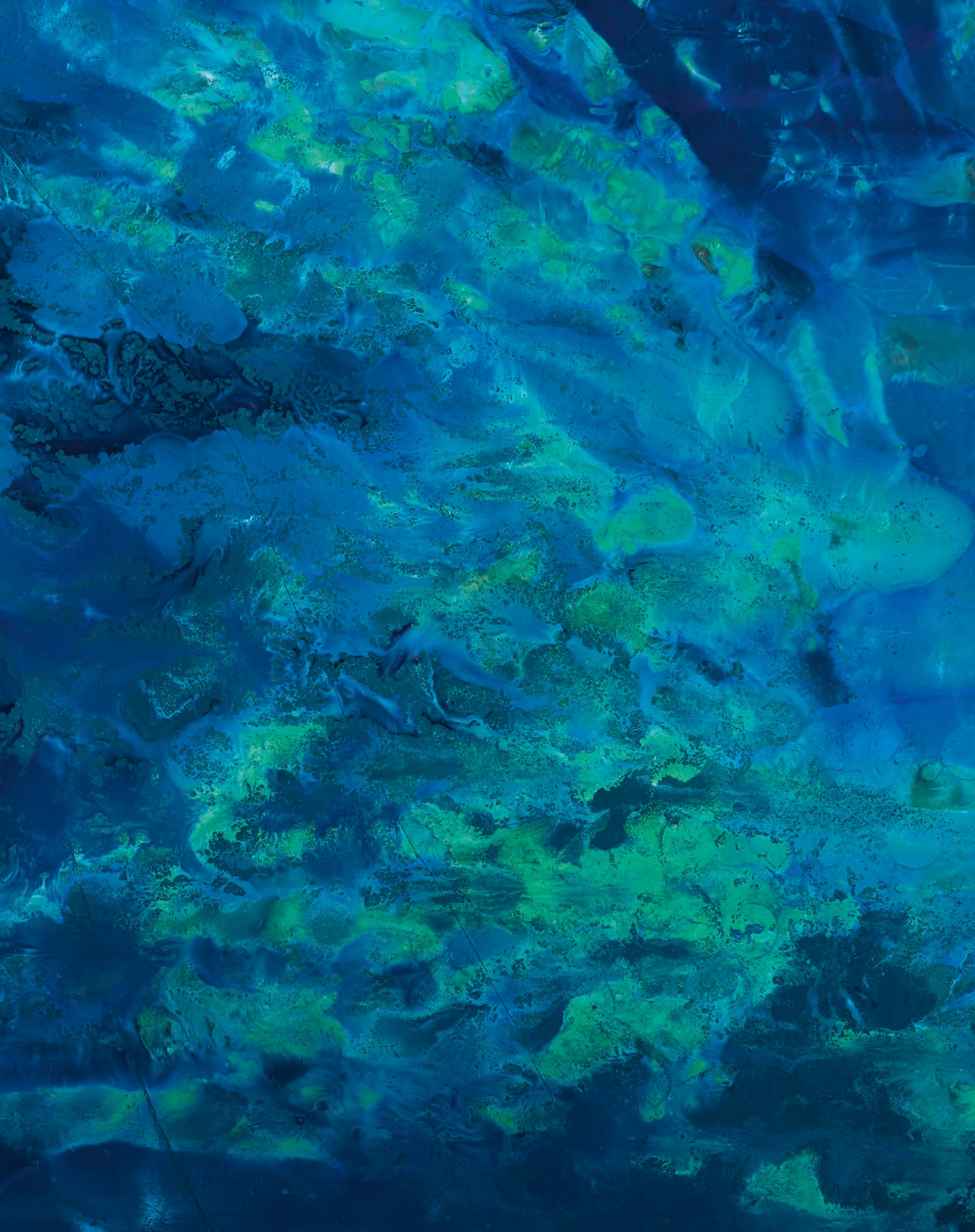


Kevin
Harman





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Harman

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Glassworks 2014-2020

Introduced by a conversation
with Irvine Welsh

INGLEBY

Kevin Harman
in conversation with
Irvine Welsh

Irvine Welsh: *I'm fascinated by the way people make things, the way they put things together. And, I'm just thinking that there's no one way to do anything, and everybody mixes it up, but when you create a piece of art, do you conceptualise it in your head, and then try and make it, or do you kind of mess about with different things: one thing here then something else there – is it more physical in other words, or is it mostly happening in your mind first?*

Kevin Harman: There's a fair bit of messing around, I think, quite a bit of play. And then there's all these things coming through the studio, all these different concerns and conversations. I take notes and work out a way to make something physical out of all these bits and pieces. And there'll be certain objects or events that then snowball. One of the most inspirational times was when I was working in a charity shop, the thrift shop up on Gilmore Place, and there was just a mad amount of stuff coming in, so random, and I'd be going through the bags, and being surprised by the amount of different things that exist in the world that people don't need, or that they did need or want, and then they don't. It's this moving museum where it's not just for display. There's a constant turnover. We'd get, like, loads of knives in. Which we couldn't sell, cos you can't sell old knives in the shop, and we'd get loads of snow globes, foot spas, old speakers, just everything. And books of course, hundreds and hundreds of books.

IW: *And you used those as materials?*

KH: Aye, the books, and the knives... the knives led to what was maybe the first serious sculpture that I made when I was at the College, end of second year maybe, or start of third. We had all these knives from the shop that couldn't be sold on, we weren't allowed to sell them so they'd be thrown away, and I was interested in making things from objects which couldn't otherwise be used – assemblages. And I was thinking about all these chefs knives and blades. There was something very personal about it. My dad had knives, he was a butcher. He had a cupboard at home that no-one was ever meant to go into, which meant you went into it didn't you? And I remember when the parents were out the house, I'd go rummaging and there was a flick knife and I'd get it out and flick the knife out, put it back in, flick it back out. I'd been watching all these sort of gang films when I was really young, and I thought I wanted to be a gangster. Christ, I remember taking this flick knife to school. Anyway, there were all these knives coming into the shop that somehow connected to my past. I used a bucket from a digger as a container for them. The bucket is a beautiful object that gets attached to this colossal machine and does similar things to the knives really, carving into the land, so in the right hands, with the skill of whoever's operating the machine, it's another kind of precision tool.

IW: *Where did you get the bucket?*



Fig 1.

of namby-pamby comments, turning up at football and your old man's saying 'dinnae rip your tights' and having a laugh about it. But this was a thing. Something solid made of knives and tools, and for me it was a sort of Eureka moment from thinking about art as something traditionally delivered, to something that can be being pretty much anything, a story perhaps about something a little more personal – about my relationships with people close to me.

IW: Aye that makes sense. And what about the books?

KH: There were all these crime fiction novels, so I started thinking that if people are interested in that genre, criminal puzzles, that sort of thing, I might give them a little mystery, like a real investigation. And so I'd choose a book by its title, so the title might have a reference to the gesture of taking, or going missing: *A Thief in the Night* or something like that, and I'd go to the back page of the novel and very carefully cut that page out and add it to a book of my own that I eventually had bound, the whole thing consisting of the last pages of mystery books from the shop, and other charity shops, and then I'd sign and edition the original book with its missing page and disperse them back around all the charity shops. My bound book was called *The End*. I've made two of them now, and they are a work – the evidence of the work if you like – but the work itself is ongoing, with the people who become a part of it when they get the crime novel home and read to the end and find the end not there.

IW: The unwitting audience?

KH: Aye. It's probably quite annoying for them as they didn't ask to be a part of it, they don't get to find out what happens at the end of the story they're reading. I like the sense of their involvement. With my work, I like the idea that the audience feel like witnesses rather than just spectators. The audience, the people, are what's important. The shop was

KH: From, um, a work site, very late, three in the morning. I showed this sculpture at the college and it won a prize, but more importantly to me I knew I'd made this thing that gave me purpose and which was about me, or had at its core a sense of something about me. And it said to everyone, everyone in my family, I dare you to engage with the physicality of this, with the labour of it, but also with the fact that it is something beautiful at the same time. Cos you know there was always a bit of taking the piss about me being at art school, sort

Contents Page

1. The Guilty, David Baldacci 2015 p. 591
2. A Most Wanted Man, John le Carré 2008 p. 416
3. The Know, Martina Cole 2003 p. 504
4. A Thief in the Night, John Cornwell 1989 p. 342
5. Acts of Violence, James Craig 2016 p. 307
6. The Meursault Investigation, Kamel Daoud 2014 p. 143
7. A Deadly Deception, Margaret Thomson Davis 2005 p. 225
8. Last Seen Wearing, Colin Dexter 1976 p. 349
9. Tell No Tales, Eva Dolan 2015 p. 379
10. Stolen, Tess Gerritsen 1995 p. 330
11. The Confession, John Grisham 2010 p. 450
12. The Truth, Peter James 1997 p. 495
13. The Prodigal Spy, Joseph Kanon 1999 p. 436
14. Blood Libel, Philip Kerrigan 1989 p. 399
15. No Way Out, David Kessler 2010 p. 516
16. Blind Eye, Stuart Macbride 2009 p. 533
17. The Jury, Steve Martini 2001 p. 401
18. Fatal Command, Joseph D. McNamara 1988 p. 266
19. Stolen Souls, Stuart Neville 2011 p. 418
20. The Truth Commissioner, David Park 2008 p. 370
21. A Question of Blood, Ian Rankin 2003 p. 438
22. A Judgement in Stone, Ruth Rendell 1977 p. 218
23. The Suspect, Michael Robotham 2004 p. 400
24. The Good Liar, Nicholas Searle 2016 p. 360
25. Never Tell, Claire Seeber 2010 p. 390
26. A Not So Perfect Crime, Teresa Solana 2006 p. 286
27. The Lie, C. L. Taylor 2015 p. 461
28. Nothing Sacred, David Thorpe 2015 p. 373
29. Cold Kill, P.J. Tracy 2016 p. 372
30. Fingersmith, Sarah Waters 2002 p. 548

Fig 2.

really do that on trains. People are sort of in their own space on trains, but on buses everybody's kind of there, you know. Downstairs you find all the old fuckers, and upstairs, you've got all the young cunts playing up, and it's just great, and you think, this is fucking brilliant there's a story here writing itself and it's just firing my imagination.

KH: Aye.

IW: You're just thinking... well, this is what they're saying. What if this happened? What if that happened? What if this character came in here? What if the bus crashed? What if it wasn't a bus? What if it was a train? What if it was the Orient Express? What if it was a plane, and so, you've got all these possibilities. See, shops are a great place, cafés are great places, because you've got all this going on.

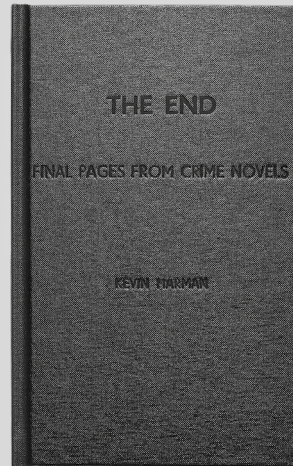


Fig 3.

great for people, for meeting the most amazing people, cos in charity shops, you get them all in there – they could be multimillionaires, they could be homeless folk, antique dealers, you've got just the whole spectrum, and you're having to banter with them.

IW: Public transport's great for that too, particularly buses – I hate buses because they make me feel sick going on them – but people interact on buses. They don't

KH: I had an idea for a series of shops which I was going to open up and down the country, with various themes. So, like, a euthanasia planning clinic that you could go into and, err, we'd advise you on...

IW: *What would you... what...?*

KH: Almost like a Thomas Cook of the...

IW: *Would you think of doing something like that?*

KH: Oh, completely. I mean, I'd...

IW: *That would be fabulous. I mean imagine people's reactions to that. I bet they would be kicking down the doors, and be trying to get into it, and find out all about it, wouldn't they?*

KH: Aye, the idea was we'd get something socially controversial, like an abortion clinic in a well-to-do part of the city, and develop it right up to the point of opening – building a façade of the shop, printing flyers and adverts – right up to the point where we could implement it and open for business and watch it unfold, but then we'd not fully action it – it was called *Shops that Never Open* – we'd just leave it with the suggestion of it happening, and see what reaction it generated. So, it was about creating a situation, but I'm more of a physical artist, I like action. There was one idea for a shop that I thought I could take a little bit further, so we actually did one in Glasgow. Well, it was a kind of shop. It was a private detective agency in the Nithsdale Road. It was called 'Mr Honourable'. The slogan was 'Seeking truth, delivering justice'. We had, like, all these certificates of authenticity from the polygraph testing that you could see through the window, and a webcam trained on the window 24/7 to record in real time people's reaction to it.

IW: *You had people come in?*

KH: Aye, well, we had people come outside, but it was not really open to the public, there was never anyone manning it, it was just the webcam recording the street outside. It was only set up as a sort of piece of theatre, basically, a bit of street theatre with a box of tissues next to the reception desk, and signs saying we offered lie detection facilities, DNA testing, that sort of thing. We put some fake testimonies near the window, saying, you know, 'When I found out that Jimmy was my dad,' all that, all that kind of stuff, so people would peer in from the street and all that, like, 'What's going on in there?' So, we were not a fully-functioning private detective agency for the public – the substance of the work was the reaction to it –



Fig 4.

IW: *How did the people feel about that?*

KH: Being followed?

IW: *Yeah.*

KH: I'm not sure. I've not spoken to them. The Director of the Modern Art Gallery, Simon Groom, we had him followed. We had all his background checked, where he'd studied, that kind of thing.

IW: *You made any enemies through this project then?*

KH: Probably, aye, aye, but it's part of it - if the work isn't making me feel uncomfortable, I'm not cool with it. I'm in a constant state of friction.

IW: *Yeah, I understand that myself, like. It's something that you need. Sometimes we've got to look back at something with a sense of 'what the fuck - I'm going to get fucking torn apart for this'. People are going to think this of me, and think that of me and I'm like 'What the fuck's my mother going to say when she reads this?'* That's a great feeling.

KH: *Yeah.*

but meantime I was actually commissioning a private detective myself to follow people that were in position of influence and power within the government-funded arts sector. So, so, we were...

IW: *This is the most bizarre fucking art project ever man. It's crossing a lot of boundaries, isn't it?*

KH: I know. We exhibited the results in the show I had down in Leith Docks. We mocked up the shop front from the Glasgow building and let people go inside, and had a mix of fictitious reviews and actual surveillance reports on display.

IW: It's so counter-intuitive, but you need to have it, I think, to do something worthwhile. You really need to have it.

KH: Mr Honourable has his own website, which is getting constructed at the moment, so it's not live. So, we're doing, basically, a façade of what looks like a legit private investigator's website, but we'll have a proper interactive section where we ask for suggestions of actual people that we should be following within the world of contemporary art – asking who's maybe up to no good – and if a name keeps coming up, we'll do a full-blown investigation and show the results.

IW: It's quite anti-establishment. Literally, questioning, or in this case following, the establishment.

KH: Aye, maybe. And maybe it might seem a bit flippant, or perhaps quite funny. And that's a thing in some of the work, that it might be perceived as a bit of comedy, but actually beyond this it's deadly fucking serious, the frequency tips from comedy to drama. And sometimes people assuming it's a bit of a prank allows me to keep doing it and to get deeper and deeper into it. I have to have a twist to access emotions that are deeply real, and whatever these emotions are come through. There is a responsibility on my part, but my intention is never to upset folk, just to reveal something.

IW: Aye, but not all your audience, or your collaborators, maybe, if you can call them that, have a had a say in whether they want to take part, have they? What were you telling me about a piece called Gumtree Nights?

KH: Yeah, maybe that links back to the charity shop thing and all the weird and wonderful stuff that people get rid of. Advertises for random stuff. They put them up on the website Gumtree with the most bizarre explanations of whatever it is that they're selling. And it's gold, I mean it's absolute gold. They'll tell the story of this object, and I'll show a bit of interest, and ask a few more questions, and the story gets coloured in. So, then I'll get into character, I'll become different people so I can absolutely believe in the object... sharing the belief that the seller has in it. All sorts of objects. It is story telling. We've got this unicorn with a rainbow mane that was being offered by someone in Edinburgh who had painted it for her niece, and we had this beautiful email conversation about it, and I'm trying to get her down from £35 to £30, and she's like 'absolutely not'. And I said to her 'that's not very unicorn of you' and she's very dry, and very serious about it, which is perplexing in away. I'm sort of, obviously, trying to tease her about it. And she says 'Absolutely not. My niece is going to be devastated anyway so it's £35' and I'm like, 'your niece is going to be devastated? I don't think you should be selling

this.' And so I go out there, and pay the full whack, no discount, and she's very stern about it, and now I've got this unicorn, and this beautiful conversation, which I'll use, but yeah, the people I'm dealing with don't know that they are part of a work that I'm making.

IW: Which some people might not like.

KH: The [Ingleby] gallery has a few concerns about some of the things I'm doing, especially with the websites and the line of enquiry into misinformation – what's real and what's not. It's an ongoing project replicating the websites of various art galleries, which are gradually and incrementally manipulated. I mean they understand, cos they've got a bit of the background about the project, but there are people who are affected by it who maybe don't have all the background and who can't see the way to the end of the project: they're kind of affected by being in the middle of it, and so these people are very critical or worried about how they are presented. I suppose what's going on is an enquiry into how to question, in an art context, the pitfalls that we are all stepping into all the time about information, and maybe to demonstrate to people about how easy it is to make mischief, to create a false website or whatever that might hoodwink people into thinking it's real. It's an anxiety that we all feel the whole time, about our security and our identity. And of course, human beings are involved, so however complex our emotions are, that's as complex as the work can be, and we will try to access those bits. But if folk are angry about it, I guess that's a part of it. I mean, like I said, definitely the intention is not to hurt anyone. Oh my god, if you wanted to hurt people it would be so easy, but that's not what it's about. It's about the work reflecting and dealing with what's going on in life, and my hope is the outcome of it will override any negative aspects and lead to a positive situation, with clarity. I mean maybe in the making of it, before it's been worked through, it might feel like a bit of a stunt, which some folk will say is a bit silly or wrong, but for others it will draw them in, and when it's delivered there's no room for that because it will be so precise. And familiar and I hope understandable.

IW: Sometimes you need to be challenged by people. I like people that are critical, you know – not so much the professional critics, they're just doing their job, but the punter in the street who's fucking hyper-critical, often in a cuntish way, but it's kind of good, you know what I mean? You get this thing, like, 'Fuck, maybe-, yeah, maybe he's right. Maybe he is. Maybe there's something in that, yeah.' And that tends to stick home a bit more...

KH: Aye.

IW: Yeah, so it's good to get that kind of feedback. It's not always comfortable, but it's good. Again, it's what you were saying about discomfort. It's a fucking great thing.



Fig 5.



Fig 6

KH: Aye, and just, you know, give me both barrels. I'm built for it, you know what I mean? I would not be making this if I was not.

IW: *It's like – this is food – You know what I mean, this is the kind of nourishment that you need, cos you wouldn't be in this game if you didn't have that thick skin – by its nature it's all criticism. It's all self-criticism and you're just filling or refilling the swimming pool for me to jump in every day.*

KH: Yeah. It's, it's good. It's good to be liked, and it's good to be hated as well. It's fine.

IW: *Yeah. It's indifference that's the killer man. You don't want indifference, but I think it's good to get cool people really liking what you do, and it's good to get wankers fucking hating it, you know? I sometimes toy with which one's the best. I think it is better to have cool people liking it than wankers hating it, but the wankers hating it is like a bonus. It's just a nice little bonus that comes along with it.*

KH: I'll show you this thing that we did with the homeless guy that's had its share of hate as well as love. *Signs of Life* it's called. There's a guy, Stevie, homeless, sitting outside the shop that I go to regularly near the studio, and he's making these amazing signs, you know, *I need £20 for a B&B, God Bless and Thanks*, and so I'm looking at this sign, at the labour of it, the composition, I mean it's beautiful, and so I buy it off him. Rather than just giving him money, I bought it. I genuinely wanted it because of its quality. He made it with pens from the bookie. And then next time I saw him he had another, and I buy that. And then he asked for a loan to get some coloured pens, because he wanted to express himself a bit more. For every sign I bought I gave him a tenner and we have had a great dialogue over a couple of years. I've got about 300 of them now.

IW: *Yeah. They're fucking amazing. They're just, like, he's put so much effort into them.*

KH: So, then I got loads of the 'To Let' and 'For Sale' signs that you get outside houses, and we took them into the studio. We put all of Stevie's signs onto them. Backed them onto the signs, and then put them on sticks, almost like they were ready to go on a demonstration and then took it a step further, turning some of the images into luxury fabrics and cushions. We made a four-poster bed, with drapes and all the pelmets.

IW: *That's absolutely brilliant. Are you going to do a commercial line in this stuff?*



Fig 7

KH: Yep. Yeah, but we have to watch. It's quite tricky – it's a tightrope, when you've got an artwork that you could exhibit, but the content comes from a person's life. But we've had these ideas about making stuff with a portion of the sales going to the charities that help Stevie.

IW: *Museum gift shop type stuff?*

KH: Mugs, and lampshades, and, aye, things to sell, pillows, duvet covers.

IW: *I think it's brilliant, but again it's going back to this thing about, why we do what we do, and the uncomfortableness of it, and this must be a permanently uncomfortable zone, with the whole, kind of, moral conundrum of it, but instead of shying round it you're just diving straight into the whole thing. I think that's kind of what art should do really. It should make you ask all these questions, like, you know, there's this whole thing about a homeless guy and luxury bedding made from a homeless guy's signs which forces a kind of engagement, doesn't it? It forces an emotional engagement. It's a fact that everybody's walking around in their own heads, with their own stuff, and their own issues going on, and suddenly you're forced, emotionally, into this engagement. I'll respond differently to somebody who's just going round the street, looking for money, than to somebody who's right underneath the cash point, when I'm trying to get money out, but you know, it can happen to anybody at any time, and you think if I hadn't have got myself cleaned up and sorted out, you can just see all these things that could have been, this could have been me so easily, and it still could, you know, it still could if something happens.*

KH: Aye, it's such a large issue and you think how can you make an impact? How can you make a change? What little thing can you do, just to maybe ease it a bit? And I think, as an individual, you can spend a little bit of time talking to someone, extracting something, some kind of skill maybe, and sharing, showing the world that skill. But it's dark. I mean, it's a dark work, but I can relate to it because I have a background that does not make me a foreigner in that territory. I wouldn't do it if I couldn't relate to it, it wouldn't make sense. It would be fantasy.

IW: *Yeah, in a way that makes sense to you, coming from your own emotional landscape.*

KH: It does, yeah. And it's about people again. It's like when I do the skips. We go and we meet the most wonderful people whilst doing these things. We go in on the weekend, and find a skip on the Friday night, and start emptying it all, cleaning it up, breaking it all down into categories, all the plastics, woods, metals, all the different categories of stuff and then clean the empty skip, wash it with soapy water, and then spend the weekend stacking it all back in, really neatly. It takes about 48 hours to do each one. It's really, physically demanding, and a really nice exercise for the mind, trying to compose it, but you meet so many people. At the start you're a, sort of bin raider, and folks treat you as such, but then they start seeing a bit of order, and they come over, and they'll start having a chat, and you tell them what



Fig 8

you're doing, and then they meet some other people that come around, cos they're interested in it. You introduce them, and then suddenly you've got this dialogue going on about what each person's up to. It could be a doctor, could be a homeless person, could be another artist, and on a Sunday night, when it's done, everyone chats and has a couple of beers round the work, and then they leave, and that's it. The workmen come back on Monday, and they're like 'What the fuck is this?' It's like a crop circle or something, you know? And a lot of the workmen can't touch it, so on the Monday morning they leave the debris they're supposed to be dumping on the outside of the skip, instead of the inside, because they're kind of frightened, or respectful of the structure, and then eventually that's it. It goes away.

IW: *And what's the view of the people who come back to the skip, whose stuff's in the skip?*



Fig 9

KH: In Edinburgh we had a lady come out, a German lady, and it was about a day in, so there was a good form starting to happen, and she says, 'What are you doing with my bathroom?' and I explained it, or tried to explain it, 'I'm just taking it out and putting it all back in.' And she says, 'Beautiful, it's beautiful. This is my bathroom.'



Fig 10. Skip 16, before



Fig 11. Skip 16, after

This is my bathroom.’ And she started telling her neighbours ‘Look what’s happened to my bathroom.’ So, people started coming down the stairs, and having a look, cos she obviously knew a few people in the street, yeah, she loved it and just showed a lot of interest. But I suppose it’s not an offensive work. It’s not graffiti. Although I’ve been challenged by the police when I’ve been in them, doing it, and they can be funny. You’re definitely guilty of something, and you’re treated a little bit disrespectfully.

IW: *Aye?*

KH: Aye. And you’re like, ‘there’s no need to be like that’ and I’m not allowed to give anything back, and they’re all ‘what’s going on here?’ And it makes you feel a wee bit defeated.

IW: *That’s quite disruptive as well though, isn’t it? But you know, when you’re doing projects that are as interactive as that, that are involving people, and people’s reactions, I think it’s a great thing for an artist getting that immediate feedback, and people’s reactions and emotions when they’re confronted with something unusual. I notice when I write book, it’s very satisfying because you put everything into the book, and it’s just you, basically. And when you do a film, it’s satisfying in a different way, but it’s a collaborative thing, with loads and loads of people. So, there’s a dilution, in a way, of what you are about, but you do get the buzz from working with different people too, and you get a lot out of it. A kind of nourishment. So, they’re two very different things, but with the book you don’t instantly know how people are reacting*



Fig 12

to it. You can see somebody on the Tube reading, you don’t even know which page they’re at, or which part they’re reading, and maybe you want to ask them about it, why they’re pulling all these faces, or some of them are laughing, but in the cinema you can hear them going (gasp). There’s a collective experience, and you actually get the reactions of people in real time, as they’re watching, and that’s incredibly rewarding. And it must be rewarding for you, even if it’s sometimes negative emotions that you’re experiencing – again we’re going back to the discomfort thing – but it must be a great thing to experience that.

KH: Yeah, cos if they are angry there is the very fact that they need to work out what they’re angry about, because what I generally do is something that is legal, but maybe just fringing on the edge of illegal. There was a piece *Love Thy Neighbour* that I made for my

degree show at the end of my BA which came out of making the skips and of seeing how people would interact with other people around the work, the random audience that you gather across the weekend, and I realised that in Bruntsfield, where I stayed, I didn't know anyone else who lived on the stair. The only sign of them was their doormat, with pictures of dogs or cats or 'welcome' messages, but which is out there – just in that territory *before* you get into their domain. So I went around Bruntsfield, I had a massive suitcase, and I started going into all the stairwells and taking all the doormats, until I had about 220 of them, and took them down to Edinburgh College of Art and laid them down as a kind of pathway across the sculpture court. We let them sit for a bit, for a few days, and then we went back and posted loads of letters and leaflets and put posters up in shops saying if you've lost your doormat, here's what's happened to it, and inviting them to come to the degree show, have a glass of wine, meet their neighbours and admire their mats and everyone else's in this sort of tapestry. But by that point there had already been an unusually busy community meeting about the mystery of the missing doormats and I got a call from Constable Hopper, who was the beat officer in Bruntsfield during that time, and got called to the police station and had to get onto the lawyer to make the case that it wasn't theft because it was done with the intention of giving them back. So, the intent was to borrow not steal, and all of them were carefully labelled with the address and the stair it came from.

IW: *And what did the owners say?*

KH: On the opening I was there, ready to take the flak, and there was a fair bit of 'You're the bastard who took my doormat' except they never swore, this was polite Edinburgh, but they wanted to get in and rip your throat out, but there was a lot of people coming around and looking at it and seeing that it was actually quite a beautiful thing. Having conversations with

us and with each other. So, there was anger, but there was also delight and folk who were activated by it to meet and speak to neighbours they wouldn't otherwise have ever known.



Fig 13

I got into a bit more trouble a couple of years later with my MA degree show and a piece called *Brick* that involved smashing a gallery window on Cockburn Street. All I did was write them a letter saying, 'Congratulations, you've been selected to host my eagerly awaited

2009 winter project, 'Brick'. I'm going to be smashing your window, and I'll be replacing it with a new one'. So, I give that letter to the gallery, and congratulated them on being selected, and then, it all kicked off, 'You're not smashing our window.' And I was like, 'Oh, no, no, I am.' And that was it. That standoff – when you neuter this control of what's going on. And it's not like I'd chosen them at random, it was a very deliberate engagement with their stated ethos – their mission statement that they're adventurous, and they celebrate debate and embrace emerging artists and the diversity of artistic practice.

IW: *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

KH: It's like, 'Great, I've got a work for you. I'm going to take that ethos. I'm going to show you it. I'm going to smash this window. I'm going to replace it with a new window straight away, but you don't get to say whether it's happening or not'. So, it's a case of the artist coming to them, and delivering their ethos and in a sense transferring the decision making about what they exhibit away from them. I went up to Cockburn Street, smashed it with a scaffolding pole, put the pole down, walked into the gallery, and I was like, 'Look, I've just executed my new work'. It was all timed beautifully. The gallery was closed to the public, shutters were down behind the glass, so there was no shards going near any work, or anything, and I'd got signatures from all the artists inside the gallery as well, sort of, acknowledging that it wasn't going to be an act of disrespect to their work or anything, it was a separate act with the gallery.

And, so they were like, 'You – you're an idiot. This isn't art. This is vandalism. And we've phoned the police and the police are coming.' And I'm like, 'That's your choice. That's absolutely fine, but this is art, this is my work'. And they're saying 'We can't believe you've done this to us.' and they are upset about it, which I can understand, but all I've done is follow through on what I'd told them in advance that I was going to do; change the state of one thing to another. I mean, really, that's what I've, physically, done. And we took the broken window away and replaced it. The glaziers had measured it up the week before and were there waiting with the new window. By the time the police came, the glaziers were already siliconging in the new window.

So, the police were like, 'What's gone on?'

They reply 'He smashed our window.'

He's like, 'What window?'

They're like 'This one, but it's on the van.'

And the police is like, 'Right, let me get this straight. So, what's happened?'

So, I say, 'I smashed the window. It's an artwork. The gallery are a wee bit upset.'

And he says, 'Where did they... where did they go?'

So, I say, 'No, it was me.'

Interview

Q. WERE YOU OUTSIDE THE COLLECTIVE ART GALLERY ON COCKBURN STREET (EDINBURGH) TODAY?

A. YES.

Q. BETWEEN HALF PAST TWO? BETWEEN THESE TIMES AN INCIDENT OCCURRED WHEREBY A WINDOW WAS SMASHED. WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS?

A. I BROKE A WINDOW AT THE COLLECTIVE GALLERY.

Q. HOW DID YOU DO THIS?

A. I USED A POLE AND PUSHED IT THROUGH THE WINDOW.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR INTENTIONS?

A. IT WAS TO USE THE GALLERY AS AN ART PIECE ITSELF.

Q. DID YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO COMMIT THIS ART?

A. IT WASN'T MADE CLEAR TO ME DURING MEETINGS IT WAS ALLOWED TO OR NOT.

Q. WHAT WAS DONE WITH THE POLE YOU USED?

A. IT WAS TAKEN AWAY BY ONE OF THE PEOPLE I WAS WITH.

Q. WERE YOU AWARE THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE GALLERY AT THE TIME?

A. YES I KNEW THERE WAS PEOPLE THERE BUT THE ROOM I SMASHED THE WINDOW IN WAS CLEAR.

Q. DID YOU INFORM ANYONE EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE INCIDENT THAT YOU HAD SMASHED THE WINDOW?

A. YES, I WENT INTO THE GALLERY AND TOLD THE PEOPLE THERE THAT I HAD SMASHED THE WINDOW.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE WINDOW THAT YOU SMASHED?

A. I REPLACED IT STRAIGHT AWAY.

Q. WHO COVERED THE COST OF THE WINDOW?

A. I DID, IT COST £350.00.

Caution/Charge

CAUTION AND CHARGE KEVIN WILLIAM HARMAN

CHARGE NO 1

At 18:35 on 23/11/2009 the accused was cautioned and charged with the crime offence libelled, by PC 11432 ROSS NORSWORTHY in the presence of PC 5742 CHRISTOPHER BOYD and he made no reply

CHARGE NO 2

At 12:19 on 04/12/2009 the accused was cautioned and charged with the crime offence libelled, by PC 5045 MISHECK MUCHEMWA in the presence of PC 5406 MARK MORRISON and he made no reply

Fig 14

And he's like, 'right, okay, we need to come in here and chat', and everyone's standing around, and you can see the police officer's thinking 'what the hell?', but the gallery folk are, like, 'we can't just let him get away with it'. And so, they do what they need to do, and that was it. I got put in the van, taken to St Leonard's Police Station, but I'd already given everyone instructions and Finlay Pretsell from the Documentary Institute was filming it all, everything going down. Erlend Clouston was there from The Guardian, writing it all down. The glaziers were told to keep the broken window. So, subsequently, I exhibited the film footage, the window getting smashed, all the documentation, all the letters and the legals and the responses, and the scaffolding pole itself, and the smashed window.

IW: Brilliant.

KH: So, the police turned up at that exhibition. It all happened over a couple of days. I'd just got out of the police station. I'd been in for the day. I'd got out, and then, two days later, I exhibited this and everyone's at the exhibition, going, like 'What's going on? ... it's art, eh?... and they're saying it isn't?'. And then the police come down, and they're:

'We need to take evidence.' I'm like, 'What kind of evidence? ...I've told you it's me that did it' And they're: 'I know, but can we have a copy of the DVD?'. There's a transcript of the statement that was taken which we exhibited as part of the documentation. And there's a typo where the policeman asks: 'Did you have permission to commit this art?' That's my favourite line.

I wanted to exhibit it for my Masters at Edinburgh College of Art, the degree show, and they wrote to me in very stern terms saying I wasn't allowed to show it. They told me, 'You can't show this. It's going to affect our relationship with the satellite galleries, our future students' relationships with these places.' I was like, 'And that is part of the problem, and it's actually nothing to do with me. This is a work, it's a piece of institutional critique,' and they're like, 'You can't show it.' So, I showed the lawyer the letter. The lawyer read over it, and he went, 'Hmm, no, you can show it.' So, against the heads of the art college, I took it in, exhibited it, and it split the teaching staff in half. Behind the curtain, people were shaking my hand, some of the tutors were delighted, saying it was the most interesting critique of an institution they'd seen and then the other half, were 'I can't talk to you. I can't see past the cruelty' and I was saying that's absolutely fine, but we need to discuss it. Now it gets presented to students as an exemplary piece of work by a past student.

IW: It's funny how things turn out, especially when you've had that visceral reaction. It's like when Trainspotting first came out, it was all sort of 'This is terrible. This is portraying the city in this bad light. This is horrible.' Then within six months, every single Scottish health education, anti-drugs advert was basically a fucking out-take from Trainspotting. It's like, once they get over the shock of it, they assimilate very quickly.

KH: Uh-huh.

IW: *And that's I suppose that's where you think, right, well, I'll move onto the next thing. Talking of which, tell me about your new thing, these paintings you've been doing, these big glass ones that'll be in this book.*

KH: Aye. Well, I've been making them for a while. Maybe nearly ten years, but it's only in the last five or six years that they've become a really important part of things. There's a link I guess to the skips and to some of the other work that deals with discarded materials, because the paints I use, they are all mis-tints and throwaways from paint shops in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the glass units themselves – they are window units. Double glazing units that have maybe been wrongly measured or ordered. Not always, sometimes I'll get one made specially, but every few months I'll get a delivery to the studio of windows that nobody wants. I suppose I'd liken it back to the skips in another way in that they are built with a purpose to be filled with stuff, argon gas in the case of the window unit, a cavity that we empty out and work inside.

IW: *So how are they made?*



Fig 15

KH: We split open the windows and paint on both of the inside surfaces of the glass. Layers and layers, letting them dry, adding more, and so on. And eventually seal them back together. They are almost more like sculptures than paintings, but there's also that sense of subverting the material so the window loses all transparency and becomes this other thing to be looked *at* rather than *through*. It reminds me that a window is a thing that deals with internal and external space and that these relationships can literally fracture. I guess making *Brick* used the material of a window to cross over that threshold, like the doormats going in and coming out, and I started to want to take elements of that relationship between different kinds of space and apply it to the work. I'm thinking of a little piece I made with a padlock a few years ago, sort of connecting everything together using this

little lock, the outside, inside, and everything in between. I guess I wanted to acknowledge the glass as that space but also the paintings themselves, if we are going to call them that, as a place in which to think and respond to things. And the physical process of making them, the weight of the glass laid flat on the floor, and the natural behaviour of the paint when poured is an important element that sometimes leads to thinking about other things. I mean there's the obvious reference to Pollock pouring onto the canvas, but the colour palettes can also be a nod to something else, to thinking about other artists, to Monet perhaps, his waterlilies and the fluidity of what is being depicted. And so of course it's not an accident that these ingredients come together and create things that people will reference. But every time, every new work, I'm learning I suppose. I'm learning what works and what doesn't work. Scale is a massive learning curve, and one of the most exciting, especially in the biggest ones that I've been making over the last few months.

IW: Good on you man. Brilliant. I can't wait to see them. Well buddy, I'd better take off and head up town, but there's loads there to transcribe. That will be fucking pages and pages and pages, right? Fabulous. It's going to be great.

Illustrations

Fig 1. Knives in Bucket, 2007, metal, plastic, clay, wood, 84 x 60 x 55 cm. Courtesy the artist

Fig 2. The End, 2011, contents page, detail, hardback book, 21 x 14 cm. Photo: John McKenzie

Fig 3. The End, 2011, hardback book, 21 x 14 cm. Photo: John McKenzie

Fig 4. Mr Honhourable, 2017, mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Eoin Carey

Fig 5, 6 & 7. Signs of Life, 2017/18, mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Christopher L. Cook

Fig 8. Skip 11 (Edinburgh), 2009, mixed media, 160 x 183 x 120 cm. Photo: Christopher L. Cook

Fig 9. Skip 13 (London), 2013, mixed media, 150 x 200 x 140 cm. Photo: David Fernandez

*Fig 10. Skip 16 (Mt. Vernon, New York) Before, 2018, mixed media, 150 x 200 x 140 cm.
Photo: Christopher L. Cook*

*Fig 11. Skip 16 (Mt. Vernon, New York) After, 2018, mixed media, 150 x 200 x 140 cm.
Photo: Christopher L. Cook*

Fig 12. Love thy Neighbour, 2008, doormats, detail, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist

Fig 13. Brick, 2009, still from video, dimensions variable. Film by Finlay Pretsel

Fig 14. Brick, 2009, transcript, detail. Photo: John McKenzie

Fig 15. Everything, 2011, glass, metal, 3 x 2.2 x 1 cm. Courtesy the artist

Glassworks







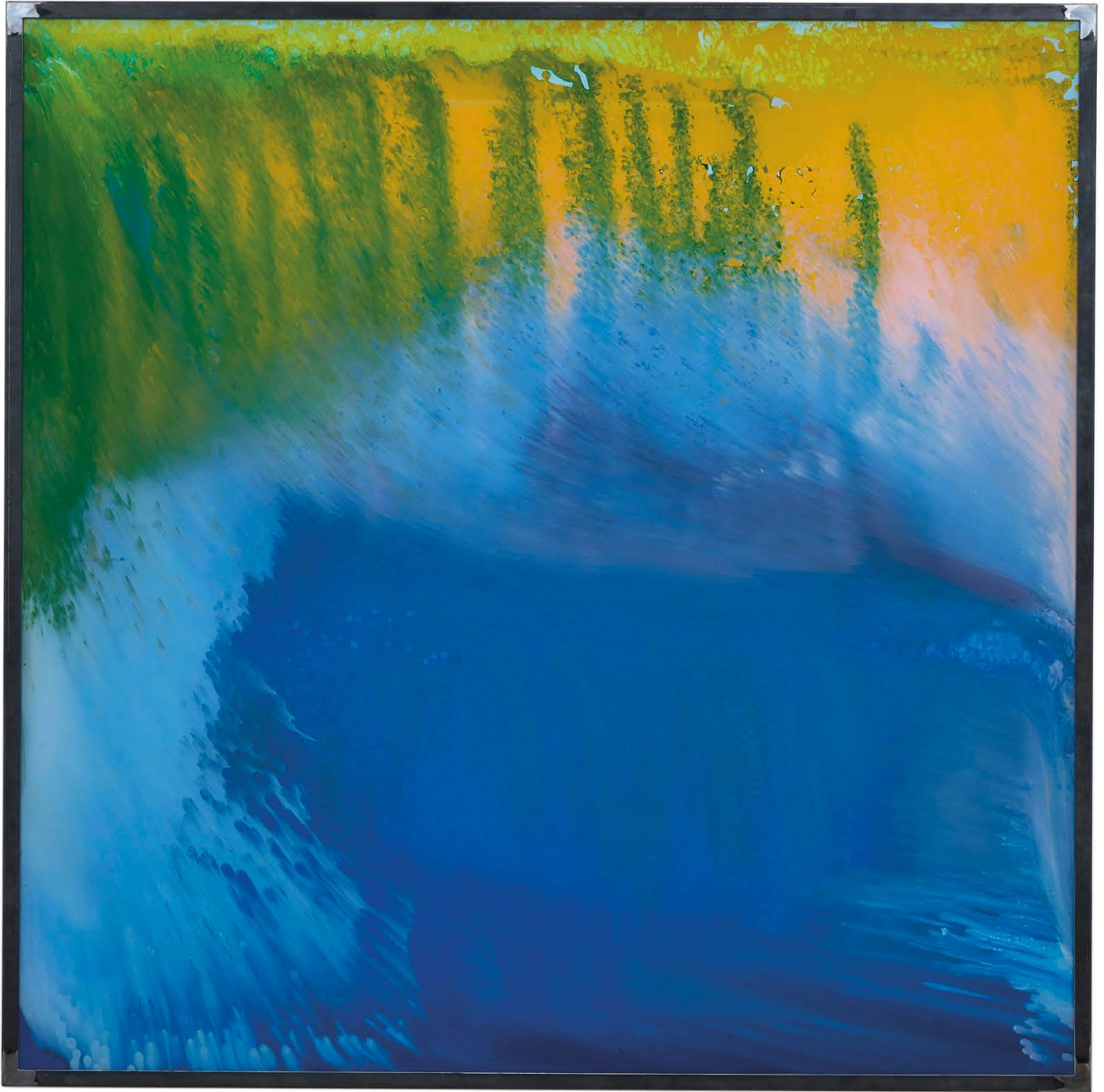










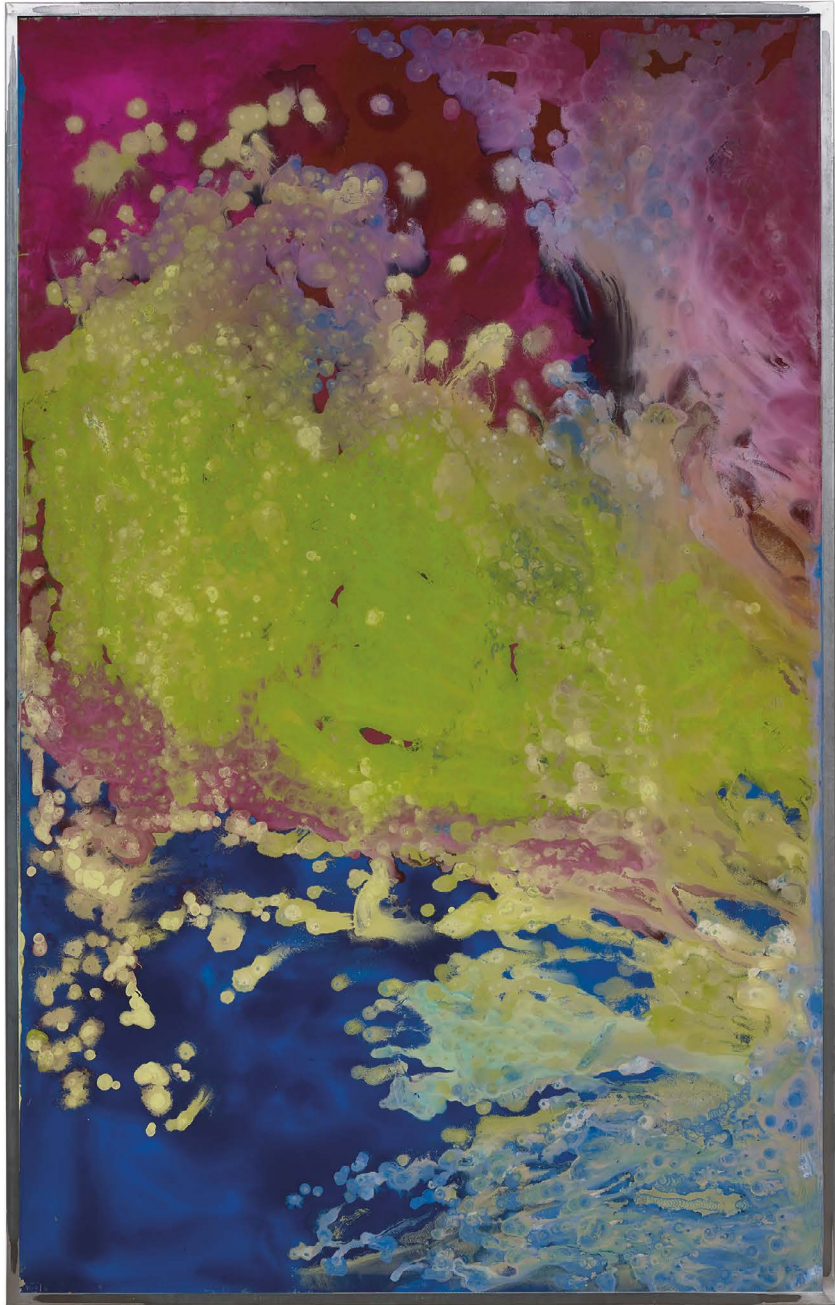










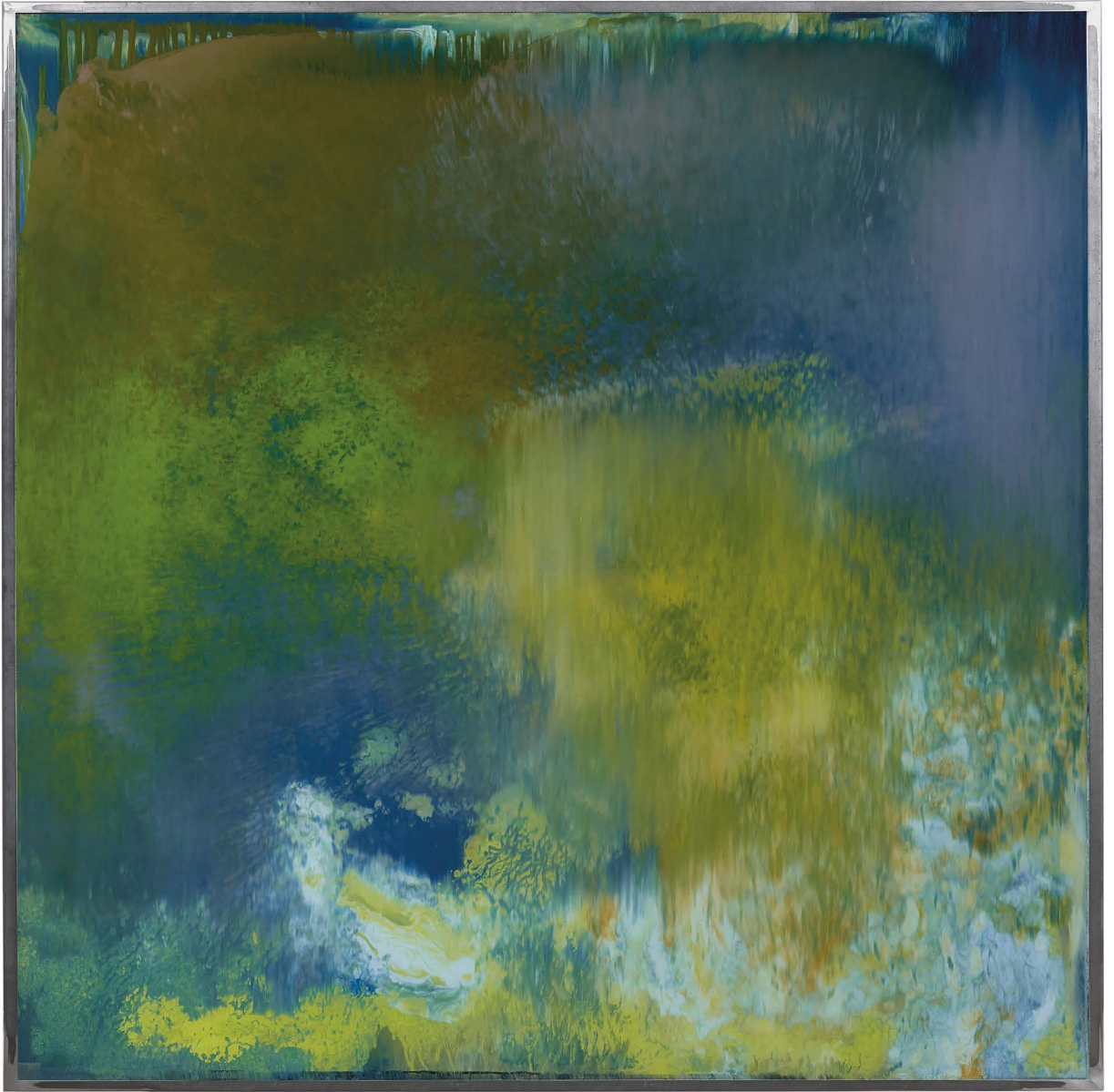


Taking shelter from the ancient worship patterns of a motivational raver, 2017.

52 197 x 108 x 5.5 cm. Private collection, UK

























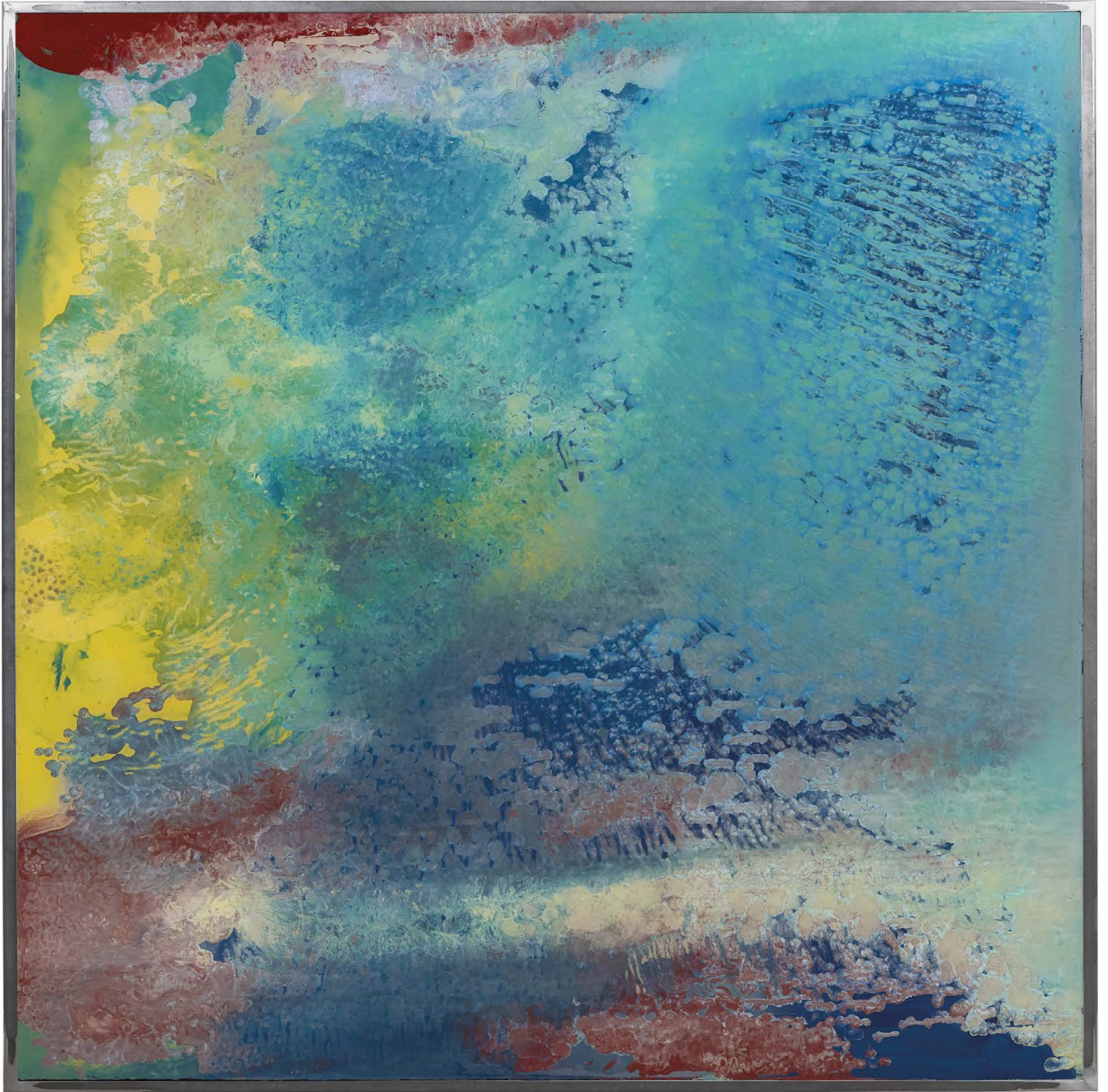
































104 *Good Shepherds' Walk*, 2020. 201 x 401 x 6 cm













114 *Nightshift*, 2020. 195 x 82 x 5.5 cm (each panel)











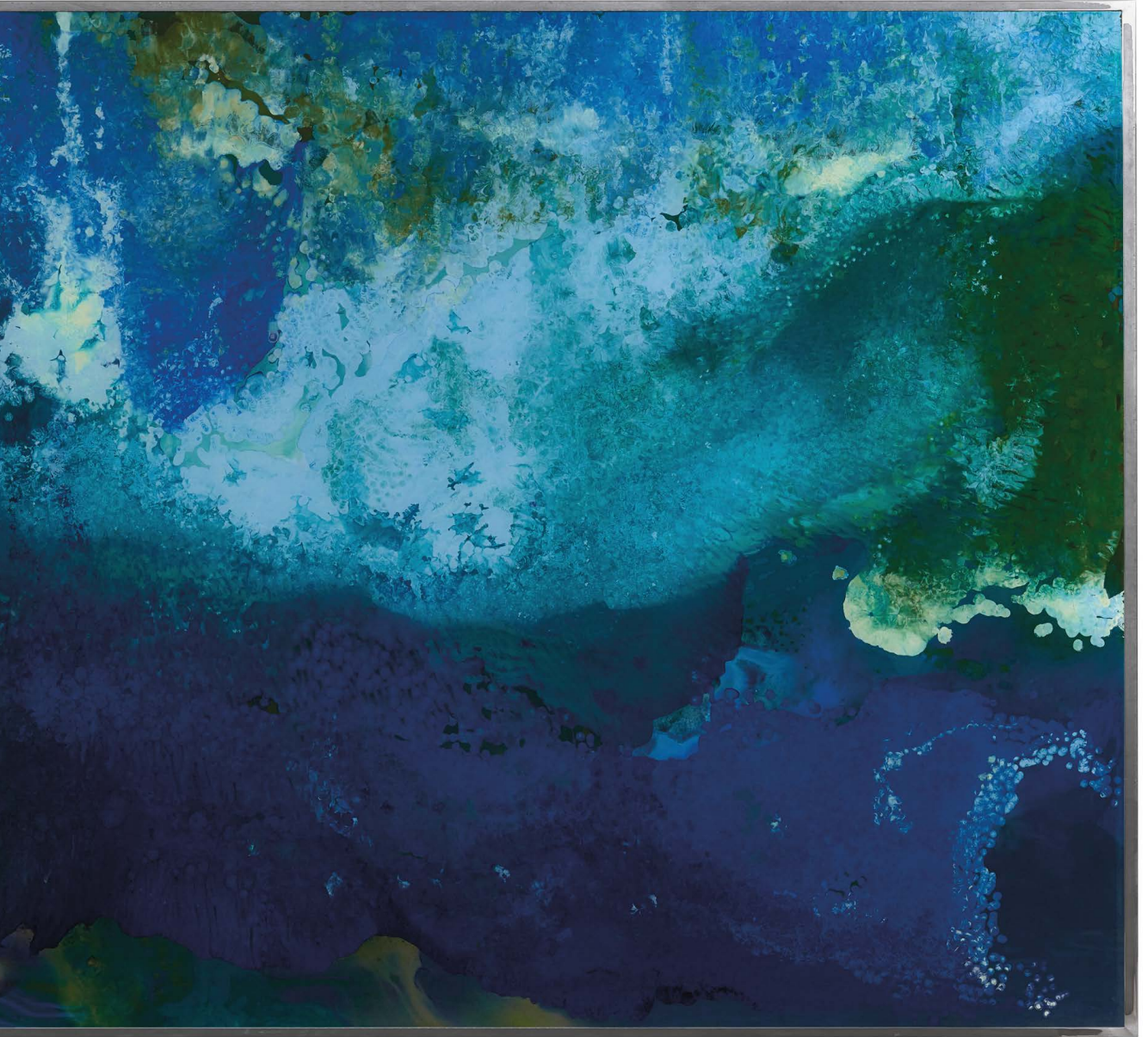








130 *The Rolling Doldrums*, 2020. 201 x 401 x 6 cm





132 *Where water breaks its silence*, 2020. 201 x 401 x 6 cm











140 *The Hunt*, 2020. 195 x 82 x 5.5 cm (each panel)



KEVIN HARMAN was born in Edinburgh in 1982 and grew up in Wester Hailes on the south west edge of the city. He studied at Edinburgh College of Art (2003-2010) where he obtained his MFA and BA Hons in Sculpture. His works have been shown internationally since 2013. He received a Demarco Travel Award from the Arts Trust for Scotland in 2008, a Cultural Engineer Award from Honda in 2011 and was a selected artist for 'New Positions' at Art Cologne in 2013. Harman has said, "I like the viewer to be involved at every level; conceptually, technically and physically". His work has elements of performance and an engagement with found materials and environments, he describes himself as a "creator of situations". Kevin Harman currently works and lives in Glasgow, though he is frequently to be found in his hometown of Edinburgh, where he is the founder of the Limited Ink Corporation.

IRVINE WELSH was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, growing up in Leith, West Pilton, and Muirhouse. He shot to fame in 1993 with the publication of his first novel *Trainspotting*. Since Danny Boyle's film adaptation of *Trainspotting* was released in February 1996 Welsh has remained a controversial figure, whose novels, stage and screen plays, novellas and short stories have proved difficult for literary critics to assimilate, a difficulty made only more noticeable by continued commercial success. His book of short stories *Ecstasy* was the first paperback original to go straight in at No1 on the Sunday Times best-sellers list, a feat repeated by *Filth*, Welsh's highest selling book after *Trainspotting*. Books such as *Glue*, *Porno* and *The Bedroom Secrets of the Master Chefs* increased his profile in America and Canada and his most recent novel *Dead Men's Trousers* was published in the spring of 2018. He lives mainly in Dublin but retreats to Miami Beach for a large part of the winter. He visits his home city of Edinburgh regularly, usually to visit friends, family and Hibernian FC at Easter Road.

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