

CANDY CONCRETE by Gary Scholes and Ali Clarke
An interview with Ali Clarke by Siobhan Lynch
Wednesday 9 June 2021

Interested in space and structure expressing human emotion, Ali Clarke has architectural influences and says 'I would always want to do both sculpture and installation'. The emotional impact on human emotion is another focus of her work. Gary Scholes is predominantly a mixed media visual artist producing paintings and sculpture inspired by landscapes, popular culture and military history.

How did you find this gallery?

The showing artists are local to One Paved Court and knew about this gallery before the proposal was accepted, from attending some of the private views to having visited previous exhibitions.

Route into art

Both artists have undertaken further education within art schools- Gary has a degree in fine art at Maidstone and Ali studied 3D spatial design degree at Buckinghamshire and has an MA in public art from Chelsea College of Art & Design.

What was a milestone for you in your artistic journeys?

Gary: 'Meeting other young artists as a student and realising that producing art was a valid, meaningful and exciting thing to do in life.'

Ali: 'I would say a 'milestone' was the residency I did at Orleans House Gallery in 2014'. Within 3 months she created structures for the woodland which brought together sculpture and the surrounding nature. Spatial relationships have been a recurring theme since and she enjoyed responding to the outdoor space there.

Collaboration

Ali and Gary are partners, they live locally to the gallery and this is their first collaboration project. Over the years they have influenced each other which comes from sharing a studio. They both have a love of 'bunkers, military history and industrial structures'. This exhibition created a space for understanding one another's processes. Through sharing skills and engaging in each other's techniques- incorporating painted elements into Ali's sculptures led to the works' realisation. An exchange of industrial sketches and diagrams helped combine elements of their work which formed the pavilions -initially from card.

Audience

During the exhibition the artists have discussed their ideas and the pieces with visitors. The art is for anyone and everyone, but introducing more curators and gallery owners to see the work would be ideal.

What are the themes of your exhibition?

Bringing together the fun pop art colours & motifs from Gary's paintings with the hard brutalist work, Ali questions what it is to be human through her structures. Contrast and contradiction with the inclusion of fragility is a theme within the exhibition.

Process to the final pieces.

Ali: 'I play around with objects and materials' which helps produce preliminary creations. Experimenting with materials and creating sketches is how works are produced.

Which piece is your favourite and why?

"We love the pavilions. They are a nice scale, you can hold them in your hand, and yet feel that you can shrink down and inhabit the space. Children who've been to see it can imagine different things going on in the spaces. We really like the playful ones so 'Kiosk' appears as an ice cream stand, yet also a bunker so that contrast is really interesting. The use of sugar cubes in the piece is surprising and again takes the seriousness away. It actually created a really great texture on the concrete".

In what ways do you think you'll progress with this work as you move forward?

Ali has always been interested in using concrete, the materiality of it was something she explored during her degree course, once covering a sketchbook in concrete! Moving forward, she'd like to experiment with different materials in order to create more environmentally-friendly works but maintain harsh brutalist pieces.

One idea could be to use clay or rammed earth. Experimenting with new materials and ways of working will be something to focus on for future works.

In what ways did you make this body of work specific to One Paved Court?

The space is beautiful, artist run and local. Once the call out for proposals was received, they immediately wanted to apply as a duo. 'It's more interesting than a white cube space'. The work was made for this exhibition and pieces were designed for this space specifically. They liked the fact there were two floors to separate their individual bodies of work whilst simultaneously bringing it together in a central display. The rawness of the materials of the space complimented their work.

Do you like selling your work

'I would never want to be an artist just to make work to sell' Ali states. For her, it's important to be happy with the work and to reactions & achieve positive feedback. Having said that, it is nice to sell as that means that someone is buying into your work and ideas.