



Press Release

Issued: Sunday 28 June 2020

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO until 00:01 BST Monday 29 June 2020

Artists' virtual degree show has all the vision and vigour of real thing

A vibrant new wave of creative talent is showcasing its skills as never before in Edinburgh College of Art's first virtual Degree Show.

Some 2,500 works by graduating University of Edinburgh students are being presented in an online gallery, which – despite the constraints imposed by Covid-19 – has the potential to reach a far wider audience than previous shows.

As well as hosting a captivating array of exhibits by ECA's artists, film-makers, designers and architects, the online hub will promote a series of events, including virtual exhibitions, concerts and live performances.

Highlights will include players from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra airing work by music composition students and an online catwalk showcasing creations by fashion students, followed by a Q&A with industry professionals. ECA is also launching a Cultural Criticism Prize, open to all graduating students. Results will be announced in August.

The web platform will be home to other exciting initiatives involving ECA students, which include the annual Degree Show purchase prize. The five winning entries will be acquired for the University of Edinburgh's permanent collection.

Curators at the University's Talbot Rice Gallery are supporting the show by having discussions online with students about their work – replicating the conversations exhibitors might have with visitors to a degree show on campus. Senior staff also remain committed to staging a physical show when that becomes possible.

Featured in the online platform will be work from 28 degree programmes – including paintings and drawings, architectural models, animated films, photography, textiles, jewellery and interior design. A key element of the hub is the creation of online portfolios for each of the 300 graduating students.

The show is the result of a fruitful collaboration between students and staff. When it became clear that a physical show could not take place, academic spoke with graduating students to rethink what might be done instead.

ECA Principal Professor Juan Cruz said: "It has been amazing to re-imagine all of this with our students, and so much of what we have thought about will shape our future. The class of 2020 has responded with vitality, energy and enthusiasm."

Among those helping to shape the virtual show has been postgraduate Architecture student Scott Hunter. He said: "How the artists have reacted at such short notice is highly commendable. I'm looking forward to seeing innovative methods of exhibiting work and holding events."



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Also contributing is Sculpture student Annabel Cucuz: “You have to make the best out of a bad situation. Exhibiting online means so many more people will be able to view our work than if they had to physically travel to Edinburgh. I can’t wait to see everybody’s work!”

Flexibility has been key, says Architecture student Eireann Jannetta MacKay: “As a student body, we are very versatile and used to producing digital work. This exhibition could open up new possibilities for current students and future degree shows.”

ECA alumni and other key figures with links to the College will also be engaging with the show. They will send messages of support and offer feedback on the students’ work, creating a dynamism that can be absent in online events.

The arresting display of students’ work includes Daniel Anderson’s architecture portfolio, which offers solutions to the UK’s struggling town centres. He takes an under-utilised shopping centre on Falkirk High Street as his inspiration.

Jacob Brown’s landscape architecture focuses on the rejuvenation of forgotten and redundant landscapes, and addresses questions around sustainability and climate.

Becky Hollis’s performance costume designs refashion the haute couture of Mary Queen of Scots into something more contemporary, combining 16th century silhouettes with classic 1980s streetwear.

Graphic designer Hsiang-Ping Huang’s work explores the grief prompted by her grandfather’s death and the Covid-19 pandemic. She is also inspired by children’s books designed by Finnish illustrator Lotta Nieminen.

Hannah Lim’s sculpture explores cultural identity and the relationship between East and West, creating furniture-like structures that combine motifs from Chinese and European design.

Twins Caitriona and Eimear McClay created a media project called *Magic Isn’t Working*, which centres on a dog called Charles Saatchi who plans to throw a rave in his eponymous gallery.

Illustration student Catriona Phillip’s work is a picture book telling the forgotten story of Bessica Raiche, an early female aviator who built a biplane in her living room in 1910.

Kiera Saunders’ paintings incorporate a range of mediums including photography, digital collaging and 3D animation, to create a series of works that present mythical worlds.

Fashion student Amelia Wang has designed a collection based on the memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and how these recollections can be preserved within clothing.

Jamie Watt’s art uses historical symbols and narratives to critique contemporary notions of class and identity. His darkly comedic work incorporates sculpture, drawing and music.

To access the degree show, please go to <https://www.degreeshow.ed.ac.uk>.

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