

# *don't let the bastards grind you down*

*Foreword by Jenny Tipton*

The context in which this exhibition was initially conceived has completely altered from the one it was intended to exist in, in the spring of 2020. The world has changed, as have the practices of Liv Fontaine, Paul Kindersley, Huhtamaki Wab. In many ways the realisation of Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down is more pertinent now than it was last year. This big pause has presented many challenges, both personal and professional, but with it has also come a vast expanse of time in which to reflect, adapt and change - as true for this exhibition as it is for our lives.

As an artist-led platform, Cabbage seeks to support artists to create the work they want to make, sharing resources, partnerships, and opportunities to achieve a strength in numbers, without the constraints or pressures that an organisation can sometimes create. However, prior to the pandemic, this was done largely within the fast gig economy of the arts - where freelance exhibition, performance and moving image opportunities came and went, with one off injections of cash providing limited stability. The ambition to work with artists more over a sustained period was a key strategy to providing ongoing support and opportunity for those Cabbage engaged, but this was limited as we were dependent on when and where we could do events or exhibitions. The last 12 months has provided a chance to delve deeper into what sustainable support for artists can look like, and how artists as individuals can collectively develop their own opportunities and structures of support. In Autumn 2020, Cabbage worked with six artists to develop a Resilience Programme, a collaboratively designed programme of tailored support for artists to continue developing their practice and navigate challenges due to Covid-19. Three of those artists are in the show you see here today.

Prior to this exhibition, Cabbage had worked with Fontaine, Kindersley and Wab since 2017, primarily to exhibit their moving image and performance, and this show was billed as a chance to see the drawing and painting practices that underpinned these three performers' practice. It was always a lot more than that, but that felt like a sexy tagline at the time. Now - it seems

a melancholic serendipity that performance practice has largely, for the past year, been forced to hibernate, while painting and drawing practices have flourished as their form lends itself well to an isolated and solitary existence, an existence in which much of the work in this exhibition was made.



Fontaine, Kindersley and Wab are storytellers. They each create their own worlds of symbolism, iconography and recurring characters in which their practices and they, as artists, exist. Within Wab's painting and sculpture, forms including spirits, animals, and humans influenced by Japanese *yokai* folklore, populate dream like landscapes where the physical boundaries of our conscious world have dissolved, and beings on a micro and macro scale are constantly transforming between the ethereal heights and visceral grubbiness of existence. Wab's painted imagery and sculpted characters depict a strong sense of animism - the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess their own distinct spiritual essence, seen in the face bowls Wab plays in his performances, to the found-rope sculpture snaking its way across the space. Wab highlights the life-forces and spirits that these objects - some discarded and some not yet made - hold within themselves.

Fontaine too, brings or discovers life within supposedly inanimate objects within her drawings. These are captured primarily from her own vast personal collection of ornaments and objects, which she uses to depict a personal and political narrative spanning chronic illness, representations of women, and cognitive behavioural approaches. In a style reminiscent of a teenager's scrapbook or bedroom cork board, contrasting imagery and recurring characters are depicted within the compulsive and cathartic act of drawing, documenting Fontaine's relationships, sickness, and teenage memories, while referencing pop culture and the artist's own study of counselling therapies. Swirling text and bubble-written phrases denote pockets of narrative; things we imagine the persona of Liv Fontaine might have said or have said to her, that also act as critique for society's treatment of women, mental health or disability.

Kindersley's symbolism draws on the patron saints of western iconography and fantasy to inform his own world of saintly incarnations and surrealist personas. Each figure he depicts exists within their own narrative, with characters interacting as if situated within a renaissance painting or stage

backdrop; naked nymphs holding hands dancing, child-(or in this case yellow balls)birth, or whimsically entwined in sexual caresses - while the gods watch over from the clouds. Kindersley himself brings his many performance personas into these tableaux, filling the cut out faces of his icons with that of his own and his collaborators, allowing him to step into and participate in the world he has made, as we peer through the holes he has made for us in his fabric pieces to watch.

On the gallery's pillar, Kindersley depicts Saint Roch, known for his wounded thigh, patron saint of epidemics and plague, and namesake of the former St Rollox area of Glasgow. Plague saints were said to offer hope and healing during and after times of plague, and St Roch's wound - a scar from having suffered bubonic plague himself - is said to represent the hope and resilience that recovery from illness can bring, something we have all felt as we have pulled this exhibition together.



## **HUHTAMAKI WAB**

"Wake up in van  
Sea come in van  
Swim with no words for Ocean Pala  
They look at my thoughts  
I feel u but eyes don't work  
Invisible makes me visible  
Eat cigarette and banana  
Eat diesel  
Studio smells like many yesterday  
Sounds like many yesterdays  
Cut fruit. Put in bowl for hungry ghost  
Poing Poing goes the bell  
Vibration in heart in wall from wall in sky from land in empty can of bye bye  
beans in  
All these pala's of paint n rope born in room of held smell and sound  
We going on the road  
Diesel, and rice balls, 12,000 years of it  
We make bye bye  
To say hello here  
We eat you and you eat us, yes?  
That's how the smoke work, how the hair work  
I'm me out me in you out you

A voice a breath a spirit”



## **LIV FONTAINE**

The majority of work was made during the first lockdown in spring 2020. Due to a compromised immune system I was shielding alone in my flat in Glasgow washing my shopping in the bath and sending desperate messages to my most unsavoury blasts from the past. In Counselling, strokes are defined by the founder of Transactional Analysis Eric Berne as “fundamental units of social action”. I had spent years defining my own existence by the strokes of others and now without physical recognition I began to question what context I actually existed in.

I had initially started to draw 2 years before because my illness had prevented me from performing. The drawings had helped me understand my abrupt situation of sickness and isolate it into something I could let go of. But in the midst of a global pandemic I wasn't letting go of anything. Hot thoughts of incompetence and a history of monstrous hypocrisy kept me up at night. The characters within the drawings became vehicles of incongruence. A hole in my skull which had been growing in size for some time. A canyon of stress and tension between my ideal self and my projected self image. Between my personal life and my performance persona. Both of which now seemed to be redundant and ridiculous.

The drawings started to have a consistency of spirits and theories. The green being who represents a woman who is victim to her own toxic behaviour. The crying clown who's devotion to self destruction and desire to be the fool teasing a fall becomes tiresome and the sick snake who sheds its skin leaving bits of itself in its own habitat therefore being constantly forced to confront its former self. These recurrence and comfort of these ideas begun to facilitate a cycle of catharsis and care - accepting loss and reality. A process in which control is relinquished in order to move forward. Self destruction becomes personality reconstruction becomes self actualisation.



## **PAUL KINDERSLEY**

The stage is set for story-time and you are the star, exulted against the worlds backdrops.

FreeFrom™ rules, internal regulations and self-appointed desires.

FreeFrom™ the restraints of thought.

Step to the front my shipwrecked fairies, goblins, pixie people, nymphs, moonstone sprites, elves, crystalline hobgoblins, naiads and dryads - all eyes and limbs and nipples. Now whisper - “as death is the answer for us all let us make the journey there undemanding”

The life of a fairy nymph is one long chain of distractions as coping mechanisms. It is not vital. It is existence through diversion. To quote the ejaculating Devil Faun “necessity is my comrade” And to quote The Shit “choices are always bad decisions in the making”

Now -TIME FOR A MANIFESTO -

Special effect dressing will take over.

Posing will replace walking.

Movement without assessment.

Pouting will replace talking.

It is the transmitted future.

Be prepared to demonstrate and gesticulate.

SloMo™ workout is your full time job.

Put performance ahead of procrastination.

Make reckless impulse king and the search for novelty his queen.

Prancing frivolously with nagging suspicion – it is time to take a selfie and hashtag #PaulKindersley – make this instant the present, the flash timeless.



*This exhibition was supported by Creative Scotland and Glasgow International, and curated by Cabbage. Cabbage is a nomadic artist-led platform for contemporary visual arts. Based in Glasgow, Cabbage programmes regular events and exhibitions throughout the year, as well as running an annual resilience programme for under-represented artists. Cabbage is run by artist and event-maker Jenny Tipton, and projects are the result of slow conversations and collaborations with other artists. For more information or to keep up to date with projects, follow us on Instagram @cabbage.arts or see our website [www.itiscabbage.com](http://www.itiscabbage.com). If you are interested in buying any of the works in this show, please email [cabbage.arts.scotland@gmail.com](mailto:cabbage.arts.scotland@gmail.com).*

*With much thanks and love to James Jimbo, Sean Patrick Campbell, Morwenna Kearsley, Tamara Macarthur, Liv Fontaine, Paul Kindersley, and Huhtamaki Wab.*

Glasgow  
international  
Fri 11–Sun 27  
June 2021

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