



Detail of "Untitled" (Throat), 1991, Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

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Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

My guys, modelling:
Sketching the importance of queer models for weird sisters
by
Becky Beasley
Professor of Fine Art
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Following Limburg's example in *Letters to My Weird Sisters* - which followed Woolf's example in *A Room of One's Own* - in which manner Limburg 'thinks through' several women as a way of understanding the gendered nature of her own autistic experience, as well as the social and cultural history which informs it, today I will think through my guys, three queer intergenerational artists whose work cleared space in which I felt myself and within which I found I made a clearing of my own in which to think, work, live.

The Life & Times of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,
Laurence Sterne
(1759–1767)
Volume III, C H A P. XXIV

As many pictures as have been given of my father, how like him soever in different airs and attitudes,—not one, or all of them, can ever help the reader to any kind of preconception of how my father would think, speak, or act, upon any untried occasion or occurrence of life.—There was that infinitude of oddities in him, and of chances along with it, by which handle he would take a thing,—it baffled, Sir, all calculations.—The truth was, his road lay so very far on one side, from that wherein most men travelled,—that every object before him presented a face and section of itself to his eye, altogether different from the plan and elevation of it seen by the rest of mankind.—In other words, 'twas a different object, and in course was differently considered: This is the true reason, that my dear *Jenny* and I, as well as all the world besides us, have such eternal squabbles about nothing.—She looks at her outside,—I, at her in—. How is it possible we should agree about her value?

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queer (adj.)

c. 1500, "strange, peculiar, odd, eccentric," from Scottish, perhaps from Low German (Brunswick dialect) *queer* "oblique, off-center," which is related to German *quer* "oblique, perverse, odd," from Old High German *twēr* "oblique" (from PIE root **terkw-* "to twist").

Many years ago, in Belgium, someone came up to me at an opening of a show of mine and said that they had thought I was a man, by my work. I didn't really know what they meant, but I instinctively liked that there was some confusion. *"It seemed to me that many of the moments when my autism had caused problems, or at least marked me out as different, were those moments when I had come up against some unspoken law about how a girl or a woman should be and failed to meet it."* (Joanne Limburg)

My work has always been quite queer, quirky.

I know now that I am officially, statistically, demographically strange,
peculiar,
odd,
eccentric,
oblique,
off-center,

As I said, quirky

"Consider a room impersonating a body, an inverted volume with naked walls quivering in plain view of the town, naughty little walls needing to be covered, needing to be draped and dressed. There are more codes to apply to rooms, particularly rooms like this, rooms like this that swagger and sway and ask to be looked at, but not touched, asked to be admired, but never fondled. Consider promiscuous rooms with promiscuous walls, naughty little teasing walls that exist to be seen, exist solely to be looked at again and again."

Tom Burr, Promiscuous Pleats, 2008

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Tom Burr, Promiscuous Pleats, 2008



Installation View, Sussex Modernism, 2025, Towner Eastbourne. Photo by Rob Harris.

Yesterday I was reading Hermione Lee's biography of you, specifically the chapter in which she examines the crises of physical and mental health that recurred throughout your life. She shows how much your understanding of the ways in which you were oppressed as a woman was bound up with your experience of oppression as a patient. The roles inflect each other, but in Mrs Dalloway you chose to give your experience of this particular kind of oppression to a male character: Septimus Warren Smith, the shell-shocked returning soldier. No longer able to perform his identity as a husband a duties and father, his doctor sits by his bed and tries to jolly him out of his funk with a reminder of his duty to his wife....p61 Limburg

...It seemed to me that many of the moments when my autism had caused problems, or at least marked me out as different, were those moments when I had come up against some unspoken law about how a girl or a woman should be and failed to meet it." p56

Reasonably Sheltered Position

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, David Jones painted a series of paintings from a rented beach house near Portslade that together read like a kind of diary. Here he also started writing his modernist prose-poem *In Parenthesis* (1937), which was based on his First World War experiences.

Jones used watery metaphors to describe memories he was not quite in control of: *the memory lets escape what is over and above as spilled bitterness*. Looking out to France, the location of his war memories, the sea sometimes seems perilously close to spilling into his room.

Jones wanted to look 'out on to the world from a reasonably sheltered position'. His wish for shelter connects with novelist Virginia Woolf's idea that a writer needed a 'room of one's own'. For Woolf, retreat was not opposed to activism but was rather a precursor to it, allowing one to think.

The theme of dissident retreat continues to resonate today. Hastings-based Becky Beasley creates protective enclosures in her sculptural installations. Her work challenges normative ways of seeing while resisting the desensitising bombardments of modern life.

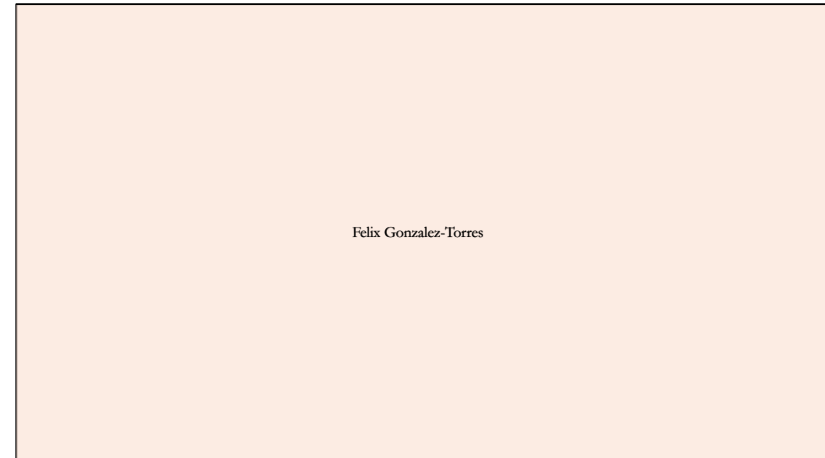
Wall text, **Sussex Modernism**
Towner Gallery, Eastbourne
Curated by Dr. Hope Wolf

In her wall panel to the exhibition accompanying the same-titled book, *Sussex Modernism*, Dr Hope Wolf, describes a 'Reasonably Sheltered Position':

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, David Jones, also shell-shocked, made a series of paintings from a rented beach house near Portslade ...and he also started writing his modernist prose-poem which was based on his First World War experiences.

Jones wanted to look 'out on to the world from a reasonably sheltered position'. His wish for shelter connects with novelist Virginia Woolf's idea that a writer needed a 'room of one's own'. For Woolf, retreat was not opposed to activism but was rather a precursor to it, allowing one to think.

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The first guy. Felix Gonzalez-Torres who spatialized the experience of others' bodies and loss: his father, his partner, as he succumbed to AIDS related illness, weight loss and death...



with everyday items such bead curtains...



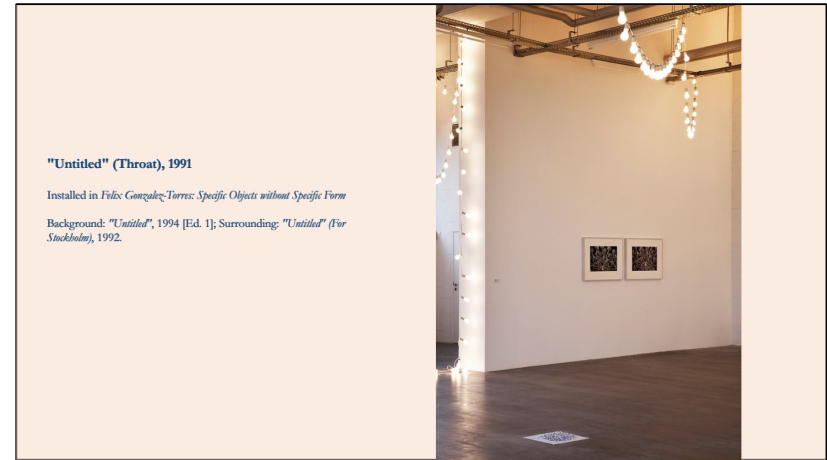
translucent baby blue curtains...



...and wrapped candies.

He was always precise and tender in his formal and conceptual decision-making -

...here raised on a plinth.



Sometimes on the floor, intimate in scale...



returning to a thought or subject or figure, with the freedom of iteration...



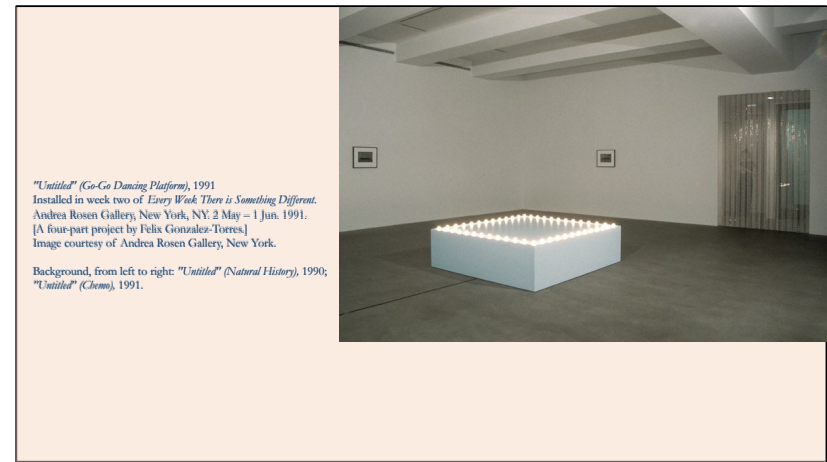
Mourning and sharing and memorialising through art the loss of his partner, Ross's, untimely death from AIDS related illness in 1991.

Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A. (1991)

Candy ideal weight 175 Lbs.



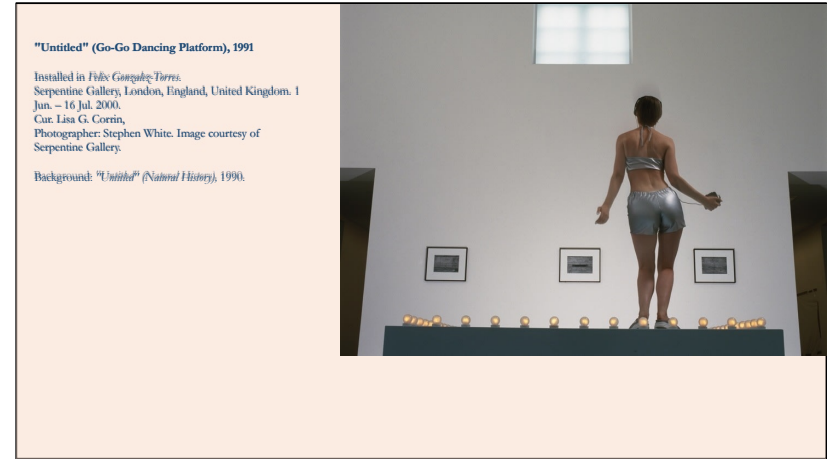
Untitled (Portrait of Dad) 1991



Thank you for making a stage



So I don't have to be put on show



Unless I want to when no one is looking.

Jimmy Robert



Jimmy performed 'Suspended closure, suspended' in Munich in a group show we were in together. He told me he chose his soft pastel clothing to compliment my yellow pastel glazing (seen behind him in this photo). Jimmy here queers an early work by Bruce Nauman in his walking elegantly around the demarcated black taped out quadrilateral. Reclaiming of formerly straight spaces, making space, taking up public space.

Limburg (p62) sets out what minority groups must do as follows:
Establish our right to exist
Define ourselves
Carve out and protect our own spaces
Organize and speak on our own behalf

**Yvonne Rainer's Trio A
with Jimmy Robert, Ian White
& Pat Catterson**

¹⁹Trio A is a well-known dance sequence by Yvonne Rainer. Since its first presentation in 1966 as part of the larger performance *The Mind is a Muscle, Part 1* at Judson Memorial Church in New York, it has been performed repeatedly in various forms and contexts by dancers and nondancers alike.

The piece comprises a sequence of unpredictable movements that unfold in a continuous motion, deliberately opposing familiar dance patterns of development and climax.

Trio A is performed at MoMA by Pat Catterson, a professional dancer, and Jimmy Robert and Ian White, two visual artists and nondancers, in front of a projection of a historical recording of Rainer's own 1978 performance of the piece.²⁰ - MoMA website

Performed: March 2009, Museum of Modern Art, New York



6 things we couldn't do but we can do now, or when we allowed ourselves to become dancers without being trained. I remember someone distinctly saying to us: how dare you dance? Adopting the punk strategy of going for what we didn't know with no fear but immense drive, we switched the dynamic...Death was always around us as a theme, as decor, as a drive. It loomed over us. 'The AIDS generation,' it was said. It did not define us, but it became a form we embraced before it embraced us. (p213, *The Man Who Envied Women*, Jimmy Robert)

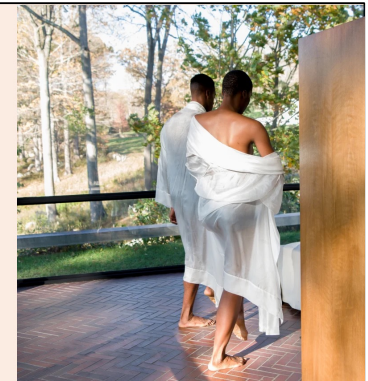


Jimmy Robert
**The Erotics of Passage X,
2025**
Paper



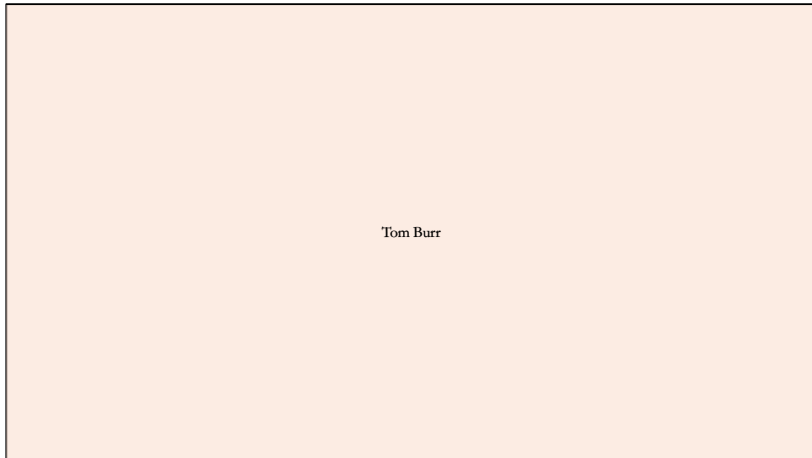
Jimmy Robert
**European
portraits, 2017**

*Performance at peer,
London, 22 June-26
august 2017*



Jimmy Robert, *Imitation of lives, 2017*

Performance at Performa 17 - The glass house, New Canaan CT, 3-5 November 2017



Tom Burr



“To a certain extent, my work indicates the ways in which it is possible to inhabit one’s own history, one’s own desires, through the vicarious inhabitation of others’ languages, styles, and identities. This allows me to operate simultaneously in relation to biography and autobiography”

Tom Burr, 1000 Words, Artforum, February 2008, Vol. 46, No. 6
<https://www.artforum.com/features/1000-words-tom-burr-187325/>

Tom Burr,
Slumbering Object of My Sleepless Attention, 2009
Wood, white paint, men’s pajamas, antique mirror, push pins
39 × 24 × 138 in | 99.1 × 61 × 350.5 cm
Hammer Museum
Los Angeles

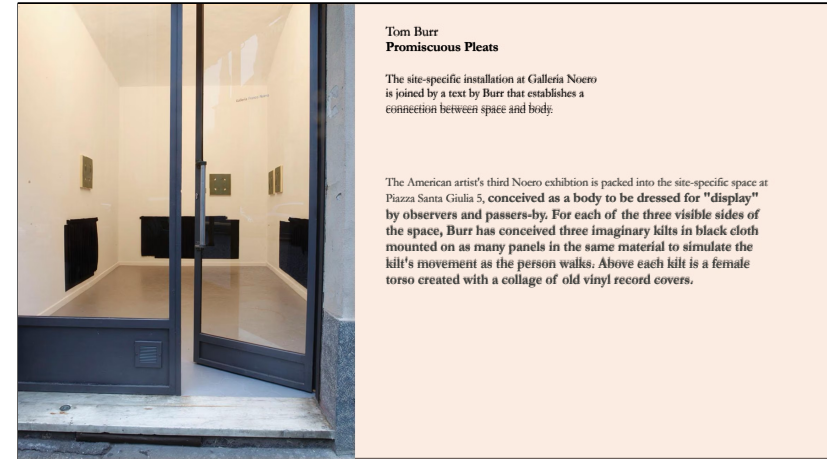
“To a certain extent, my work indicates the ways in which it is possible to inhabit one’s own history, one’s own desires, through the vicarious inhabitation of others’ languages, styles, and identities. This allows me to operate simultaneously in relation to biography and autobiography” Tom Burr

“The path to my own autism diagnosis began with reading the lives of others” Limburg p56

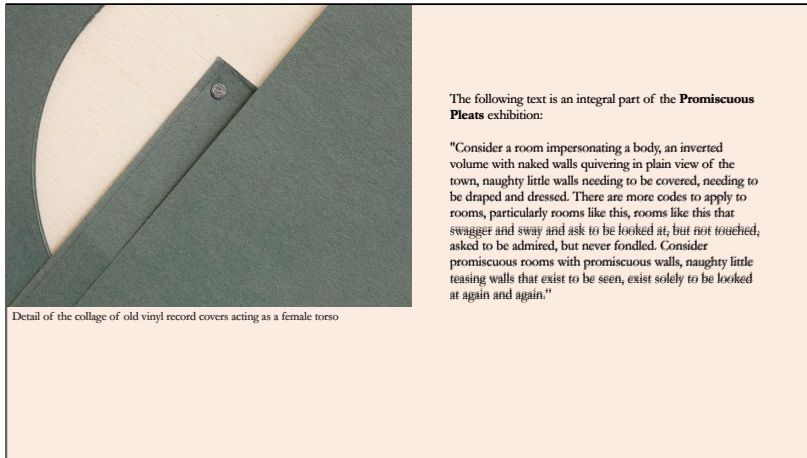
Soft men's pyjamas, satisfying push pins, an awkward hinged prone form...



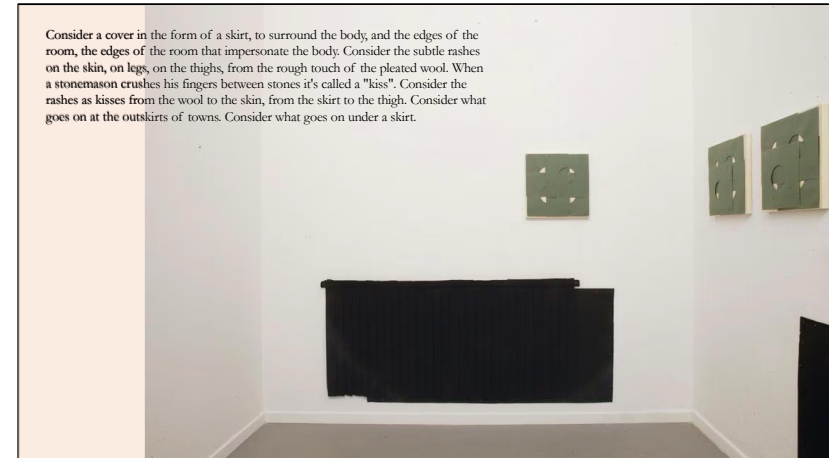
soft worn t-shirt, push pins again.., satisfyingly square...these sensory visual stims...



Burr's exhibition, Promiscuous Pleats, took place in a site-specific former shop now gallery space at Piazza Santa Giulia 5, Turin, conceived as a body to be dressed for "display" by observers and passers-by. For each of the three visible sides of the space, Burr has conceived three imaginary kilts in black cloth mounted on as many panels in the same material to simulate the kilt's movement as the person walks. Above each kilt is a female torso created with a collage of old vinyl record covers.



Here is the specific text Burr wrote to accompany the installation - Tom Burr, Promiscuous Pleats - "Consider a room impersonating a body, an inverted volume with naked walls quivering in plain view of the town, naughty little walls needing to be covered, needing to be draped and dressed. There are more codes to apply to rooms, particularly rooms like this, rooms like this that swagger and sway and ask to be looked at, but not touched, asked to be admired, but never fondled. Consider promiscuous rooms with promiscuous walls, naughty little teasing walls that exist to be seen, exist solely to be looked at again and again."



Consider a cover in the form of a skirt, to surround the body, and the edges of the room, the edges of the room that impersonate the body. Consider the subtle rashes on the skin, on legs, on the thighs, from the rough touch of the pleated wool. When a stonemason crushes his fingers between stones it's called a "kiss". Consider the rashes as kisses from the wool to the skin, from the skirt to the thigh. Consider what goes on at the outskirts of towns. Consider what goes on under a skirt.

"Consider a slip, for instance, under the skirt, as it twists and moves and shifts in and out of view. It moves with, and without the skirt; it slips. Hemlines go up and down, economies change. Waistlines expand and contract. Futures rise and fall. Skirts rise and fall. To the ground, leaving exposed bodies and walls and rooms. Consider scattered skirts and quivering walls, promiscuous pleats and empty rooms."



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Becky Beasley

10 secs per slide



New pastoral landscaping

Given, 2013

Linoleum (Black & Wellness Green)

The black silhouette is a 1:1 copy of the interior floor dimensions of Marcel Duchamp's last work, *Etant donnés* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas (1966) copied precisely from Duchamp's paper maquette and measurements.

Collection Leal Rios, Portugal

In view, **'Cucumber Hand, (I)'; 'Would I have See A White Bear (North-West Passage AUXI)'**



'Cucumber Hand, (I)', gelatin silver print, 2013, from the exhibition, Spring Rain.



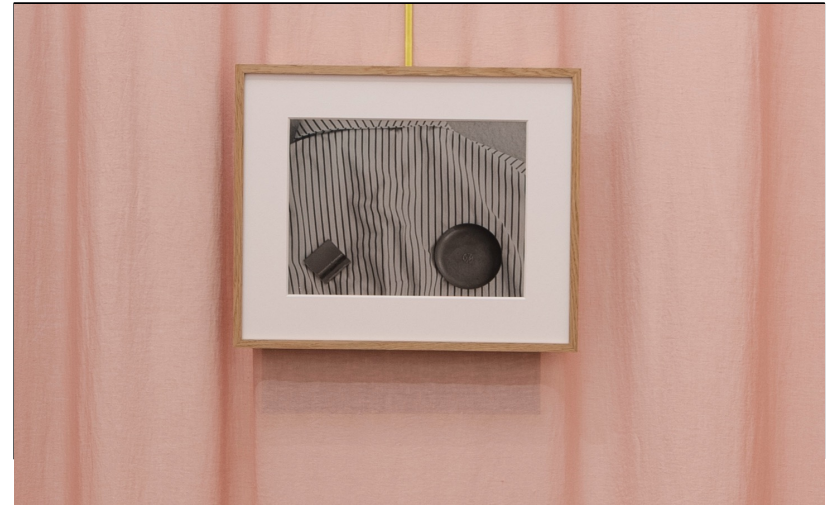
Depressive Alcoholic Mother, 2018, from the exhibition, Depressive Alcoholic `Mother, Gallery Plan B, Berlin, 2018



Highly Sensitive Person, 2021, from the exhibition, H.S.P. (or Promising Mid-career Woman), 2021, Gallery Plan B, Berlin



Installation view from the exhibition, H.S.P. (or Promising Mid-career Woman), 2021, Gallery Plan B, Berlin



BACK! (*DUSK II*)

2021

Gelatin silverprint, Oak frame 31 x 38.5 cm



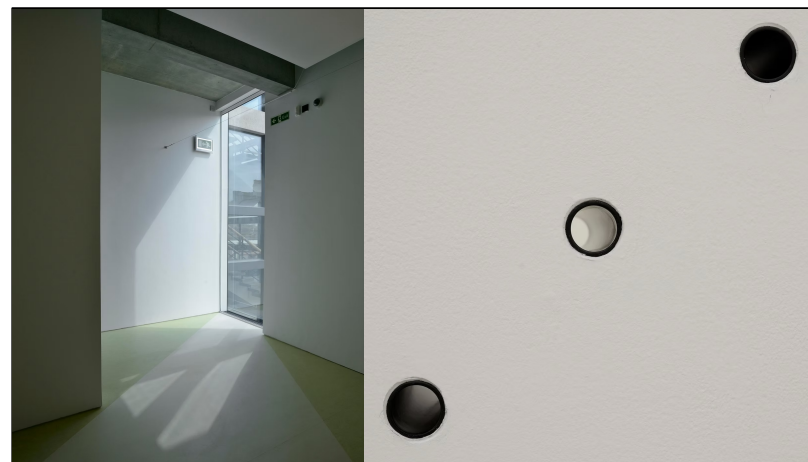
Installation view, Ous, Towner Gallery, Eastbourne, 2017

Room 2

Interior (Day)

Linoleum (Moon & Wellness Green);

The Bedstead by Eric Ravilious, 1939, watercolour on paper, 44.5 x 54.5cm (frame 78 x 88cm); Untitled, 36 extruded powder-coated steel tubes (inserted into wall in pattern copied from The Bedstead by Eric Ravilious, 1939)



Installation view, Ous, Towner Gallery, Eastbourne, 2017



'Our' (A Mourning Work),
Velvet (Sedge & Sterling), MDF, foam, man's watch and man's reading glasses (wedged
into the join between the two velvet elements of the sculpture)
Installation view, Ous, Towner Gallery, Eastbourne, 2017



Installation view, A Gentle Man, 80WSE Gallery (NYU), New York, 2017



Installation view, A Gentle Man, 80WSE Gallery (NYU), New York, 2017



Installation view, A Gentle Man, 80WSE Gallery (NYU), New York, 2017



Installation view, 'Tip of the Iceberg' group exhibition, Focal Point Gallery
(left) (detail) Aerial Flowers (I)
(right) Aerial Flowers (I) and Aerial Flowers (II), 2021

Photograph Anna Lukala, courtesy the artist and Focal Point Gallery



BACK! (DUSK I)
2021
Gelatin silverprint, Oak frame 38 x 31.5 cm



Walnut Hand, 2014, Gelatin silverprint, Oak frame 38 x 31.5 cm

Thank you, my guys, for clearing queer space for this weird sister

Becky Beasley

Currently on show in, *Sussex Modernism* at Towner Gallery, Eastbourne

Forthcoming

A Gentle Man (Part II) (1975-2029)

A touring solo exhibition,
QUAD Derby (Spring 2026),
Bluccoat, Liverpool (Fall, 2026)
John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (Late Winter 2027)

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