



School: Bath School of Art

Researcher: Camilla Wilson

Project Title: About the Heads

UOA: D32 Art and Design - History, Practice and Theory

300-Word Statement

About the Heads was an exhibition curated by Camilla Wilson and David Waterworth at the Heritage Gallery, Royal Naval College, 17 April – 24th May 2019, within which site-related works respond to a set of 18th century heads, originally intended for the façade of the building, which have lain interred beneath the Gallery for 300 years.

The exhibition explored unique historical works in the place of their origin, bringing them to visibility through a reflexive process of making, writing and curation. Two artists and a writer, Camilla Wilson, Jürgen Mester, and Rosie Dastgir responded to the heads' historic and continuing interment through the means of painting, sculpture and an artists' book.

About the Heads originated in the exploration and representation of architecture in transition through my painting practice. Architectural sites embodying a conflicting or discursive position between their original purpose as a project, and their future use, are of particular interest. Here the site itself became a cause for an unveiling of something hidden, lost to sight. The paintings used a process analogue to stone carving, since they were made by removing monochrome orange paint to conjure selected Heads, and recall the retinal after image. The Artist's book featured a dialogue between the Heads, as a Whatsapp conversation, developed visually as an illustrated contemporary Chapbook, informed by a research into 17thC Chapbooks and reflecting upon the unreliable history of the Heads themselves. The sculptures expressed the ruinous state of the heads, through fragmentation and incongruous materials.

Evoking historical context and contemporary readings in a hybrid reflection across works, held in the gallery as the locus and origin of the Heads, the exhibition recalled projects curated by bodies such as Artangel, responding to the environment in which we live.