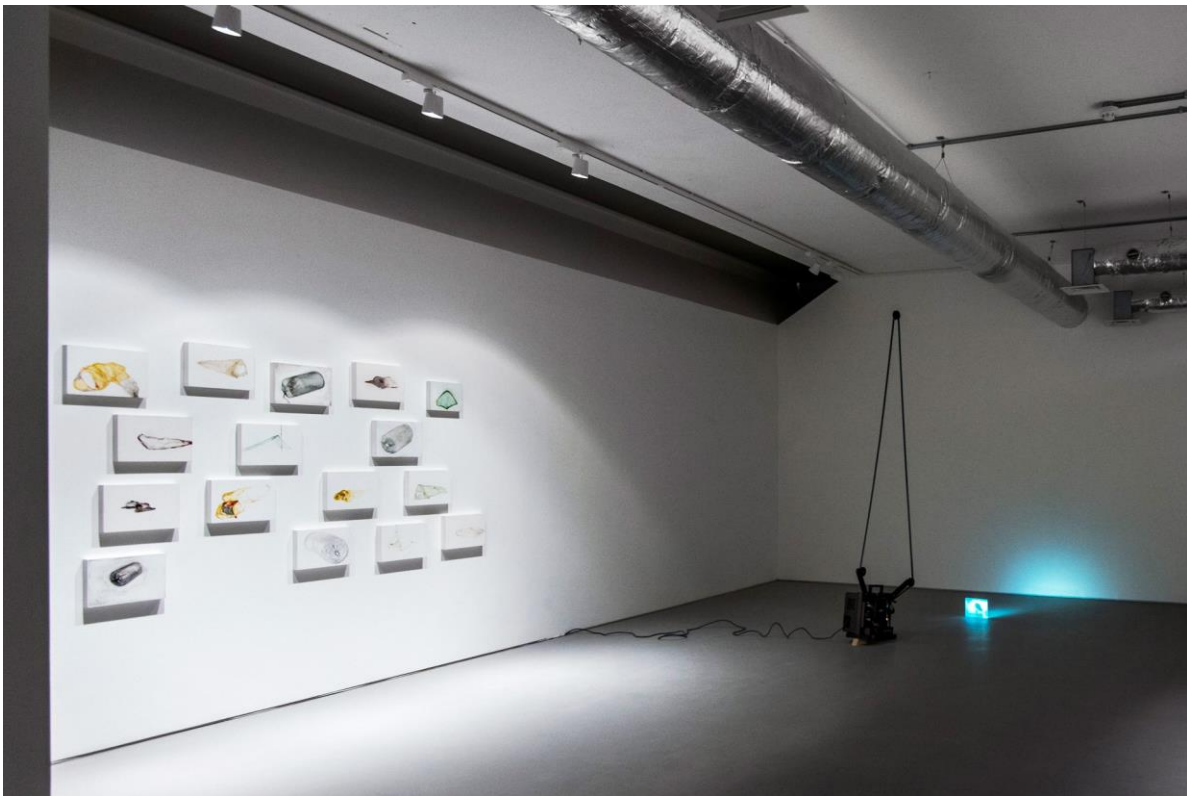


Meeting Artist Louisa Fairclough

VOGUE Blogs - The culture Edit
by Phoebe Robert

The work of British artist Louisa Fairclough is having a moment. Her sculptural film *Song of Grief* was recently shown in Guy Sherwin's acclaimed *Film in Space* exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre, and now many of her other multimedia works can be seen in a solo show at the Contemporary Art Society's new space in Clerkenwell.



Louisa Fairclough at the Contemporary Art Society

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In this exhibition, there is the unusual sight of 21 watercolours hung alongside a sculptural film. This is one of the many appeals of Fairclough's work, the breadth she achieves from a willingness to explore such different media. "The process of drawing is really important, it's a core element for me," she told us. "I just need to draw."

And there is a lot of Fairclough in these drawings, her time: she makes the gesso boards herself, sanding and layering them over several days, but also her own body. "I use my spit to draw with, so you can really see the trace marks of it. For me, it's the process of becoming the drawing, with my own bodily substance being part of it." The importance of the body is apparent in the subjects of the watercolours too, which while retaining a certain ambiguity, all in some way recall bodies or parts of bodies.



Louisa Fairclough, Watercolours from the series *Ground Truth*, 2009

The drawings displayed were done over a four-year period, during which time Fairclough suffered a personal bereavement and went on a journey of mourning which led to her spending a lot of time by the River Severn.

"The start of the work was my going down to the river to perform these very specific gestures, be it a calling or a shout across the river," she explained. "I would sleep by the river with my back sunk into the ground and my face towards the water, as a performative gesture."

These gestures relate to the poem *Dart* by Alice Oswald, the work of the composer Pauline Oliveras and her idea of deep listening, but also to Maurice Blanchot's *Sleep, Night*.



Louisa Fairclough giving a performative talk at the Contemporary Art Society

The result of this time spent by the River Severn is *Bore Song*, a sculptural film that shows the moment that the tidal surge is held in suspension with the natural flow of the river, before overwhelming it as a wave. Fairclough asked actress Nancy Trotter Landry to sing over this moment. As in her drawings, Fairclough's presence is viscerally apparent in this latest piece of work and, as you walk across the space and trigger the film loop's charged and mournful cry, you too cannot escape her grief.



Louisa Fairclough, *Bore Song*, 16mm film loop projected onto float glass