

Turning backwards, sometimes downwards, *pass shadow, whisper shade* forms an assembly of knowledge, labour, bodies, materials and territories that have been deemed incompatible with the imperial, late capitalist logics of this period, and asks how they continue to shape us nonetheless. The works conjure ghosts made in formative moments of history in which some bodies are assigned powers of possession and belonging, and others are condemned to obliteration, dirtiness, irrelevance or unbelonging. Light has long been a byword for the kind of knowledge – pure, clean, illuminating – these dominant belief systems hold dear. In turn, shadows, the darkness that comes with sunfall and dominates below ground, are a fitting home for what Athena Athanasiou calls the ‘unarchivable spectrality’ of the dispossessed.

pass shadow, whisper shade stands in the shadow of the current genocide in Palestine and the historic and ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people that precipitated it. Were it not for the artists’ refusal to accept any institutional connection to that genocide, and the collective action they took to ensure that would not happen, each of them would have had solo shows at this gallery.¹ Instead, their presentations have been condensed and placed together. Through this act of refusal, these artists have ended up demonstrating that experiences of dispossession in the late liberal era are all tangentially and spectrally connected. They have suggested that shadows, created by forces of containment, banishment or repression, may provide a source of resistant political knowledge: something to grasp at, to lean toward, to live among.

In an effort to pay tribute to that idea, the following is a short series of dates for happenings that preceded, although did not necessarily lead to, the creation of *pass shadow, whisper shade*. They draw attention to what is beneath or behind us, shaping our actions in ways we do not always fully understand.

1812

The sun is falling. A group of men enter a textile workshop belonging to George Ball on the outskirts of Nottingham armed with pistols, hammers and clubs. There, they destroy five stocking frames: mechanical knitting machines designed to imitate and augment the movements of the human hand. Wide looms, manned by less skilled weavers, are the protesters’ main target. A warrant is released for the arrest of all involved.

1840

Around 7:30pm on a November evening in Comrie, rural Perthshire, villagers witness a small black cloud appear in the sky. Long dark streaks shoot out of the

cloud in all directions, gathering again into another cloud positioned eastwards on the horizon. Behind this formation comes the northern lights. They move between the shadows in arrangements a reporter for the *Perthshire Courier* describes as ‘merry dancers’.

This area of Perthshire is the site of a number of supposed Bronze age landmarks, many of which are associated with the Cailleach, a prominent Celtic goddess of healing. In 1838, census data recorded that the population of the nearby Parish of Fortingall, like many others, had halved over the course of the previous century, in a process which had deeply eroded the Gaelic traditions of the Highlands. However, unlike elsewhere, here many ancient stones and mounds had managed to retain their spiritual significance. Carn na Marbh, for example, a turf-covered mound and standing stone hailing from the Bronze age, stands around thirty miles north west of Comrie, near where the first cloud was said to have appeared on this night. It was said to have been created in honour of an old woman who buried infected corpses at this location during an outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1340, corpses others were too scared to touch. Every Samhain – the Gaelic festival marking the end of harvest season – the remaining villagers of Fortingall light fires around the base of Carn na Marbh, smoke and embers unfolding through the low mist and down into the empty valley beneath.

1931

Visiting tourists and residents of Dyserth, North Wales, gather beneath a waterfall at the edge of the village. Until recently a set of Talargoch mines had diverted the river overhead into local mills used to power the underground extraction of metallic ores. After the downturn of many of these mines in the late 19th century, the river’s leats were blocked up, allowing the waterfall to flow off the limestone cliffs toward Dyserth once more. In the hopes of attracting some tourism, The North Wales Electricity Distribution Company decided to install a number of floodlights to illuminate the resurrected waterfall tumbling into the village by night. Now, as the lights come on for the first time, a reporter for *Prestatyn Weekly* observes how a side wall of one of the old mills, ‘half in the shadow’, is brought alive by the light filtering through the black water and the mist that rises off it. For a moment, he writes, the river beneath turns pale gold, before ‘roaring onwards’ into the darkness of the fields beyond.

1940

In preparation for the potential invasion of London by Nazi German forces, the entire collection of paintings held at London’s National Gallery are relocated on

¹ For context, see Hussein Mitha, *Art is a Weapon - Whose Hands Is It In?*, commissioned by the artists in Satellites Programme, 2024.

lorries to a disused slate mine in Manod, North Wales. Empty of artworks, a set of grand rooms in the gallery overlit by a large glass dome are temporarily handed over to the pianist Myra Hess, who holds lunchtime concerts for local residents and the stationed home guard. The heavy shelling starts in September, just as the leaves begin to turn. Day after day, Hess's concertgoers make their usual midday trip to the Gallery to find Hess still seated at her piano, fur coat on to protect herself from the cold shooting through broken windows. The crackle from sandwich wrappers as revellers unpack their lunch threatens to drown out her arrangement of Henry Purcell's Saraband-Minuet-Air. There is talk of moving the concerts underground.

1981

Female garment workers march through the streets and onto Market Square, Nottingham. They are protesting the collapse of the hosiery industry in the East Midlands, which has been the linchpin of the local economy for centuries. They wear large round rosettes in claret, white and royal blue, emblazoned with the slogan Buy British, Buy British, Buy British. Among the crowd, a woman in a white A-line coat brandishes a tall white sign on which she has drawn a skeleton, bones cast in black biro. She has labelled it 'No Future'. Others hold up Union Jack flags in pairs, cloth sagging and swelling like lungs with each stride. In the middle of the square, two women present a vast red banner which in the middle reads 'Meridian': a famous textile manufacturer, founded in Tewkesbury in 1815, which now has threatened production sites all over the region. A television correspondent at the head of the crowd reminds audiences it is not just textiles the national trade unions' 'Buy British' campaign concerns itself with. Instead, he remarks, they say every time you buy anything at all, whether a foreign washing machine, car or television set, 'someone, somewhere in Britain is being put out of a job.'

2020

A metal detectorist scans a field in Buriton, Hampshire, and discovers a copper alloy Chinese coin of the Northern Song Emperor Zhenzong, presumed to date from the early 11th century. Copper alloy is picked up by the detector with a soft, wide sound, reflecting off the donut-shaped coin in a series of tics. Hampshire has just entered Tier 2 lockdown restrictions – 'High Alert' – in an effort to contain the Alpha variant of the Covid-19 virus. All hospitality venues are closed and most socialising both indoors and outdoors is prohibited. This coin is the second to be discovered in England, casting doubt on early assumptions that the first was a lost artefact from a curated collection rather than a genuine ancient relic. Together with a piece of Chinese bronze earlier found lodged in the north bank of the river Thames, and fragments of a porcelain tea bowl discovered in Winchester, the coin provides conclusive evidence that some kind of cultural exchange between Britain and East Asia had taken place much earlier than was first thought. During

the first Covid-19 lockdown, amateur metal detecting had witnessed a surge in popularity. In a brief BBC interview, new detectorist Owen Thomas describes walking the same hills and valleys all his life, with little consideration, prior to the pandemic, of the 'lives now gone' beneath his feet.

2022

Audiences gather on the grounds of Stirling Castle to watch cabaret performer Rhys Hollis, pole dancer Kheanna Walker, dancer Divine Tasinda and opera singer Andrea Baker perform OMOS, a film inspired by the plays which took place at this site for the entertainment of King James VI in the late 16th century. An acronym of a line from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – O monstrous! O strange! – the show adopts the format of a queer cabaret, riffing on performances of Shakespeare that were once staged here for the King, often using a small cast of his African 'favourites'. In the film, Hollis, Walker and Tasinda first appear in Puck's Glen in Argyle, a dense, man-made woodland commissioned by the sugar merchant James Duncan in 1870. They stage a journey through the forest, each dancing their own dance, toward Stirling Castle's Great Hall. Here Baker, a mezzo-soprano, greets them dressed in purple velvet robes and a red wig teased into the shape of a mane. They stand to attention as she tells the story of an African servant made to dress as a lion and drag a chariot into this same room over 400 years ago, roars echoing off the limewashed walls.

2024

A piece of black card is placed at the centre of a gallery space on Calton Hill, Edinburgh. The eastern portion of this site was once pockmarked with large, ancient sandstone mining pits, named the Quarry Holes, which were filled by order of the council in the late 1700s. Grassy verges either side of the hill also conceal the remains of a medieval Catholic monastery, converted into a leper colony during the Scottish Reformation; the 18th century mausoleum of Jewish dentist named Herman Lyon, bricked up for drainage in the 1850s; and the stone and timber cottages of St. Ninian's row, destroyed by the erection of the Regent Bridge in 1811. The black card is folded, given dents at even points so one message is visible from one point of view and another from elsewhere. It is placed on a plinth. In the middle of a building spared from ruin in the 1980s, rising straight out of the floor, the card is like a monument or headstone for the ruins beneath, or for more recent losses elsewhere: for the shattered remains of Gazan art gallery Shababeek; or of Eltiqa, the youth arts project space in Gaza City; or of the Rafah Museum, its stores of coins and jewellery thrown apart; or of parts of Al Qarara Cultural Museum, scant remains of Bronze age life in Palestine returned to the earth. Written in soft graphite, the message on the card is dark, difficult to see.

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