

Ruth Helen Smith

And They Knew They Were Naked

25th April – 23rd May 2019



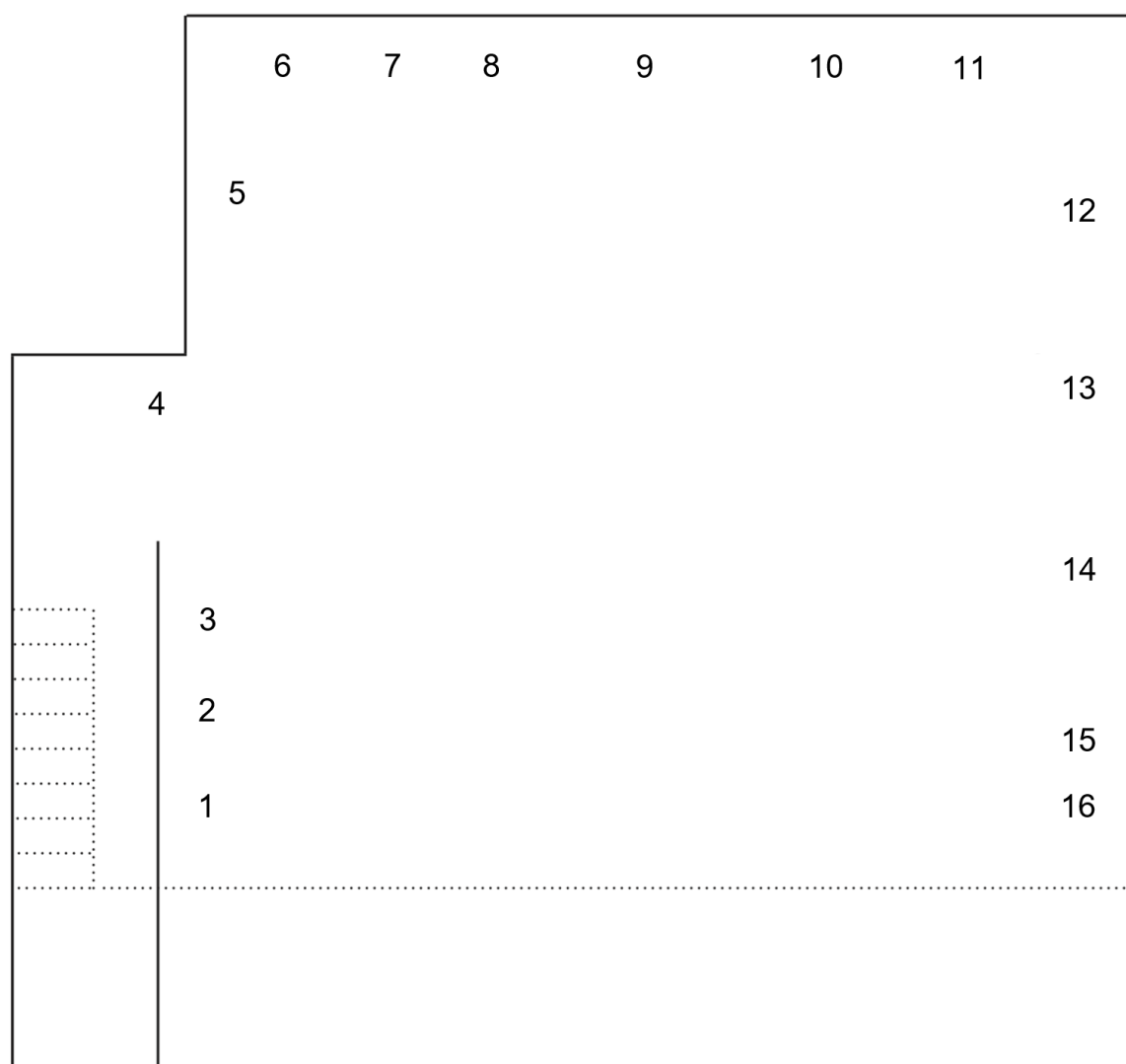
And They Knew They Were Naked presents a selection of new works by Ruth Helen Smith made over the last six months on the Continuum residency at Husk. Paintings of construction sites and roadworks resemble surgical interventions and dissections, where the skin is pulled back revealing the pumping arteries inside. Skeletal cranes erect and resurrect more bones while eruptions of earth resembling congealing and clotting blood are piled high beside holes in the ground, simultaneously embodying wounds and orifices. Orderly interconnected grids encircle and cordon, build and support while their ominous counterpart, chaotic heaps of disconnected rubble, struggle against inevitable mazes of chapter 8 barriers and diversion signs, threatening to dominate and wreak havoc.

The line painters who come out in the quietness of night to write love letters. But they don't mean the letters they make. Following instructions, they neither read nor tell the lines. The lines speak.

Though utterly inseparable, materiality and interpretation arguably inhabit different places in a hierarchy of thought. Ideas are often understood as lofty, immaterial and clean, while raw matter is seen as base, a puzzle to be arranged into something of meaning and rise above its chaotic state as *materia prima*. Smith is interested in this particular act of creation *ex materia*, and the relationship of humans to the materials they manipulate. There is a sense of intrigue in the agency of materials in this relationship and a wonder at their steady objectiveness, a thing that in many ways rises above interpretation. This objective materiality, therefore, is deeply unknowable as any understanding necessarily becomes interpretation arising from frameworks of human value systems. In this way, materials have the final word, whilst saying nothing at all.

The ones who listen to the water pipes beneath our feet. 'Hear that pulse? That's the Brixton water pumps.'

Utmost thanks to James Clow, Kylie den Engelsman, everyone who has welcomed me on construction sites, and Noah Smith.



- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Weavers
£480 | 5. Eruption
£1400 | 9. Cross Below
£1300 | 13. Lava
£1500 |
| 2. Super Sewer at
Vauxhall Bridge
£480 | 6. 65 Missed Calls
£440 | 10. Inside the Belly
£470 | 14. Materia
Prima
£500 |
| 3. Lowing
£480 | 7. Battersea Sunset
£470 | 11. Battersea
Power Station
£460 | 15. Letterbox
£500 |
| 4. From Bridge
£240 | 8. Jewel
£240 | 12. Broken Easel
£480 | 16. Through the
Super Sewer
to Battersea
Power Station
£500 |