

PIECE WITH ARTIST

ARTISTS WITH THEIR WORK & STUDIO INTERIORS MAGAZINE JANUARY 2023 ISSUE 01

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RACHEL GARRARD

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NUCLEUS 2016 PAGE 47 **ORIGIN** 2016 COVER PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW NOEL** AND **TEGAN BUTLER**
STARRING @RACHELGARRARD WWW.RACHELGARRARD.COM DEVON ENGLAND

“The human being is a part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and his feelings, as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a kind of prison for us, limiting us to our personal desires and affection for a few close people. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature in its beauty.” Albert Einstein.

Although it is a personal and somewhat superficial theory, I have always thought that when scientists begin to believe in what they cannot demonstrate with all the laws and theories that have been demonstrated over time and that have made humanity prosper, at that point, and only then, will the true meaning of life begin to be discovered, as well as where we come from or where we are going and those types of transcendental question about humanity and the universe. It is an absurd theory, of course, as scientists have been studying all kinds of theories for years that my mind is not able to understand. I realise that when I read these words from Einstein, the most illustrious scientist, who speaks of the meaning of life, where the human being is part of a whole and we are all part of the same entity or the same energy. Something similar occurs when I look at Rachel Garrard's work, I observe, without any attachment or understanding, that it is familiar to me and does not require any effort to understand something that I feel as my own. My only concern when I look at her work is to enjoy the lines, her geometries, the energies that her works give off, without the need to look for anything else,

I simply let myself go and enter a state of meditation and acceptance.





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Rachel Garrard grew up in a scientist's house in Devon, England, which undoubtedly conditioned her way of creating. In her own words, her art is a journey in the liminal space between scientific research and esoteric practice. Through it, she has developed a symbolic language that intimately connects the internal with the cosmic and universal. Her work is a multidisciplinary practice made up of painting, sculpture, video, performance, installation and holographic projection. The paintings are composed of natural substances, such as quartz, ash or rock dust pigment, which she collected personally, ground by hand and applied to raw linen in a process of fine layers. They comprise a distinct language of geometric and symbolic forms that she has developed over many years, which are both personal imaginings and loose interpretations of propositions of quantum physics, such as M-theory and supersymmetry. She assimilates these theories with experiences she accesses through meditation. Her site specific ephemeral installations using nature as a medium interweave these forms in relation to specific natural phenomena, and their structure reflects the instability of form and the inevitability of change.

The cover of this article is part of her project "Collective Memories". We asked Rachel about this project and also about her work and life.

In terms of your project Collective Memories, where did the original idea come from and what was the creative process?

This project started very spontaneously. It was during the pandemic and I managed to spend a lot of the lockdown on the beach in Mexico. I was working on paintings in my studio, and spending a lot of time walking along the beach collecting different items that got washed up on the shore. One day I was frustrated with how my paintings were going and so I gave up and was lying on the sand and started to see the forms in my paintings in the sand, so I just started tracing them, creating mounds and carving the wet sand. I got into a kind of creative trance that continued for a couple of hours, my friend saw what I was doing and also spontaneously started taking photos on his iPad. This is the piece that I have now called "Collective Memories", and the image that you chose for the front cover of the magazine is one of the iPad photos. I had no plan to make it, it came out as a purely creative act. Looking back, it reminded me of my childhood, I grew up by the beach and spent most of my time playing with the sand, it is such a natural medium to work with. It also reminded me of the images I had seen years before of Joseph Beuys's drawings.

When sand is wet it holds together almost like clay, but it is not permanent. The beach is continuously changing, everyday it looks completely different. Whatever you create on a beach will very soon be washed away. It is a good metaphor for impermanence. I have worked with the concept of transition and ephemeral states a lot in previous bodies of work, with pieces that are not static but constantly evolving, growing or decomposing. I have also always loved the tradition of Tibetan sand painting, where complex and intricate mandalas are created over the course of a period of time, with immaculate detail and precision. Once the mandala is complete the whole thing is gently wiped away, without pause or ceremony. There is no celebration for the finished piece, however marvellous and accomplished, once it is finished it is simply wiped away.

I was really happy with the process and result of "Collective Memories", how it captured the elements of what I have been working on in my paintings, but in a more raw and spontaneous way. I love how





there is no distance between thought and creation, it just requires me to get into a certain trance-like, hyper creative state, and start to have visions for the piece, then I work very very quickly. I have continued to create more of these temporary installations on different beaches, and now I have also included sand installations as part of a couple of gallery exhibitions. It has been interesting to bring nature and this medium that is in flux into the white cube space. By juxtaposing the elemental with a man-made space it creates an interesting dynamic and a slightly unworldly tranquility.

Is there any special reason why you use different artistic disciplines to exhibit your work? What is the reason for choosing one or another?

Again this process is spontaneous. I do not associate myself definitively within any practice. I am more interested in getting into that state of inspiration in which creative ideas can flow. My inspiration often comes in words, or visions, they are never solid, but rather an essence of an idea, so this can then be interpreted in many different ways and in many different mediums. I think the ideas work well when they are expressed using a combination of processes. The sculptures speak to the painting, which speak to a video projection, which speak to an installation. There is a dialogue created throughout a space, a story is told that uses symbols and metaphors. It creates an energetic resonance throughout the exhibition that I believe people can attune to.

What is more interesting for you, the original idea, the process or the completion and seeing the finished work?

My joy comes from the initial idea. I work like a scientist, constantly in a search for understanding the details of this bewildering life, the elements, the quantum mechanics, spiritual insights and emotional discoveries. My work is my way of participating in the world, it involves a lot of research and contemplation, and then expressing symbolically some essential truths that I understand and want to express. This is the purpose of my life, something I will always continue. For the past twenty-something years I have worked every day in my sketchbooks, they are filled with texts, diagrams, ideas and concepts. Only a few of these ideas have been translated into physical artworks over the years. For me, this is my most important work. Once an idea becomes clear, I can start to get into the creative state where the work comes out almost automatically, and then when it comes to a completed state there is a sense of relief.

Regardless of the typical aspects of the current market, if you could choose a work of art to have in your living room, which one would it be and why? Just one.

I don't live with art. It is too distracting. There are many works I love, but no one thing I could see continuously. With my own work, while it is in process I need to live with it, because I am connected to it, I live as the artwork, but when it is completed I like to pack it away and start a new idea.







