

You are acclaimed for your large-scale works made in response to specific locations. With this in mind can you start by describing your initial response to the Duveen Galleries?



King George VI opening the Duveen Galleries, 29 June, 1937 © Morning Post, 30 June, 1937

I was interested in the fact that the Duveen Galleries were the first public galleries in England designed specifically for the display of sculpture. My vision was of the Duvenens littered with the remnants of a past world. I was drawn to the idea of concentrating on the post-war era of my parents and of my childhood, of Britain in the latter half of the 20th century. My initial thoughts focused on the huge knitting machines worked on by my father. Along with my grandfather, and initially factories in the East Midlands, witnessing through the 1970s and 80s. Elements of this epoch's decline, along with aspects where people could come and wonder at the sheer physicality of sculptural objects, in this sense I imagined the process work, and I was worried that the process could have gone unnoticed if it were not suggested somehow. In focusing on the manufacturing industry, it seemed particularly pointed that I should access the industrial material through the era that has superseded it – that of digital technology. That is why I used the online auctions of asset strippers and companies of architects – to create a scene similar to that of an archaeological site.

core of my frame of reference as it was a world into which I was born, and one that I expected to continue in a linear trajectory. However, the vision of post-war Britain, its welfare state and its attempts at social equality seem long gone. What I see ahead, particularly in the art, is a new Victorian era of wealthy patronage in the wake of state decline, spanning lavishly and inequally. The idea of the Duvenens becoming a warehouse to house idiosyncratic monuments to a historically brief and visionary moment in time somehow seems strangely apt.



Duveen Galleries, 1937

Yes. The extension was funded in 1937 by Lord Duveen who had made his fortune by selling works of art to industrialists.

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halls for monumental sculpture. Places where people could come and wonder at the sheer physicality of sculptural objects, in this sense I imagined the process work, and I was worried that the process could have gone unnoticed if it were not suggested somehow. In focusing on the manufacturing industry, it seemed particularly pointed that I should access the industrial material through the era that has superseded it – that of digital technology. That is why I used the online auctions of asset strippers and companies of architects – to create a scene similar to that of an archaeological site.

Were there other considerations?

Underpinning this I was interested in how Britain and its empire historically came to be in such a position of power – that also suggests a narrative potential like a Harold Pinter play – *The Caretaker* or *The Birthday Party*, for example, a kitchen sink drama or piece of social realism tinged with the absurd.



©Robert Thomas
Cophorne Barracks, Shrewsbury, 2019

So, are you right in thinking that this careful selection of objects is reflective of Britain's shift from manufacturing to a service industry?

To some degree, but I've also focused on agriculture and infrastructure as well – not allowing the visitor to navigate and decipher. I wanted to explore the shift of scale that is found in such places – spaces full of artefacts – to create a scene similar to that of an archaeological site.

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Does this represent a change in your practice?

Of late my work has shifted its focus from large architectural constructions that immerse the viewer in an alternate reality that all but renders the buildings they were in invisible, to a more sculptural emphasis. What I've made for the Duvenens is in many ways quite traditional as it deals with material very much as sculpture – the symbiotic relationship of machine to sculpture and back again seems very evident when you view these objects together or in close proximity. It brings to mind a lineage of sculpture through the twentieth century that were both made possible by machinery and whose influence was two-way, industry feeding art, art feeding industry. I'm interested in the way objects ship to this work in that it was made at Yes, *Lionheart* has quite a strong relationship to this work in that it was made at a certain point in time. I don't want to make a work that's purely about the current political situation, but you can't help but reflect it to some degree. It's a particularly strange time because obviously the show is opening ten days before Britain is meant to be leaving Europe.



Mike Nelson, *Lionheart*, 1997. Installation view, The New Art Gallery Walsall, 2018. Photo: Jonathan Shaw. Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York, Galleria Franco Noero, Turin, Matt's Gallery, London, and neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

MIKE NELSON

THE ASSET STRIPPERS

TATE BRITAIN COMMISSION 2019
18 MAR – 6 OCT

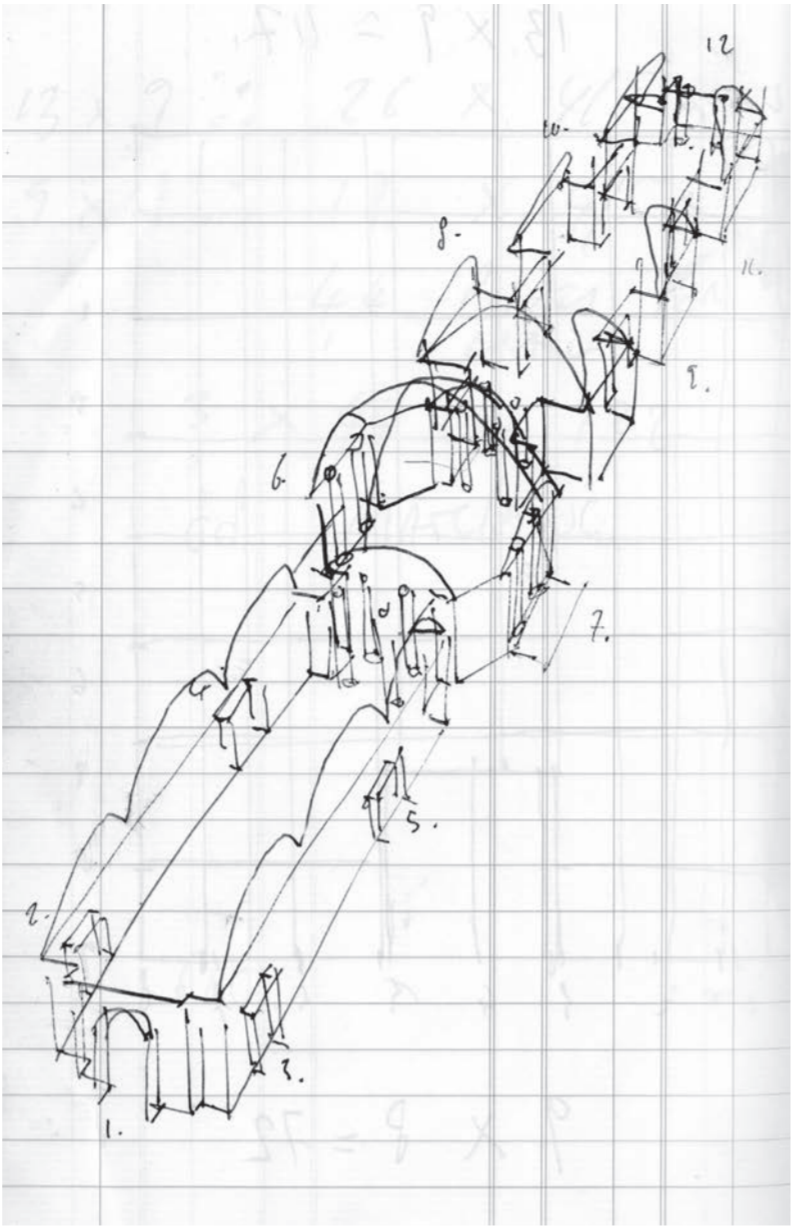


Group shows include: 12th Gwangju Biennale 2018; *250th Summer Exhibition*, Royal Academy of Arts, London 2018; *Wanderlust*, The High Line, New York 2016; *La Vie Moderne*, 13th Biennale de Lyon 2015; *INSIDE*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2014; *September 11*, MoMA PS1, New York 2011; Singapore Biennale 2011; *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, Tate Britain 2009; *Psycho Buildings*, Hayward Gallery, London 2008; *Eclipse: Art in a Dark Age*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 2008; *Reality Check*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 2008; Turner Prize, Tate Liverpool 2007; Frieze Projects, Frieze Art Fair, London 2006; and Turner Prize, Tate Britain, London 2001.

geometry, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö 2012; *I, IMPOSTOR*, British Pavilion, 54th Biennale di Venezia 2011; *Quiver of Arrows*, 303 Gallery, New York 2010; *A Psychic Vacuum*, Creative Time, New York 2007; *AMNESIAC SHRINE* or *Double coop displacement*, Matt's Gallery, London 2006; *Triple Bluff Canyon*, Modern Art Oxford 2004; *Nothing is True. Everything is Permitted*, ICA, London 2001; *The Deliverance and The Patience*, a PEER Commission for the Venice Biennale 2001 and *The Coral Reef*, Matt's Gallery, London 2000.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Solo exhibitions and projects include: *L'Atteso*, Officine Grandi Riparazioni, Turin 2018; *Lionheart*, New Art Gallery Walsall, Walsall 2018; *Re-bar, wire-mesh, cross-hatch (Romanian heroes)*, Sandwich, Bucharest 2017; *A52*, CAPRI, Düsseldorf 2017; *Cloak of rags (Tale of a dismembered bank, rendered in blue)*, Galleria Franco Noero, Turin 2017; *tools that see (possessions of a thief) 1985–2005*, neugerriemschneider, Berlin 2016; *Cloak*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco 2016; *Imperfect geometry for a concrete quarry*, Kalkbrottet, Limhamn, Malmö 2016; *Amnesiac Shrine* or *The Misplacement...* Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam 2016; *Gang of Seven*, 303 Gallery, New York 2015; *Studio apparatus for Kunsthalle Münster*, Kunsthalle Münster 2014; *Eighty Circles through Canada*, Tramway, Glasgow 2014; *Amnesiac Hide*, The Powerplant, Toronto 2014; *Mike Nelson*, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver 2013; *More things (To the memory of Honoré de Balzac)*, Matt's Gallery, London 2013; *M6*, Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK 2013; *space that saw (platform for a performance in two parts)*, neugerriemschneider, Berlin 2012; *408 tons of imperfect*



Preparatory sketch of the Duveen Galleries, Mike Nelson, 2018

Design by Tate Design Studio

To the memory of Eric Nelson

Cover image: Photo: Mike Nelson and Matt Greenwood
Poster image: Work in progress, February 2019.
Photo: Matt Greenwood

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Curated by Clarrie Wallis, Senior Curator of Contemporary British Art and Elsa Coustou, Curator of Contemporary British Art

EVENTS

Artist's Talk
Friday 21 June 2019
18.30–20.00
£10/£7, Clore Auditorium

Audio Description Tour
Mon 15 April
11.00–12.30

BSL Tour
Sat 20 April
11.00–12.00



The *Asset Strippers* has been created for the annual Tate Britain Commission which offers an artist the opportunity to create a new artwork in response to the Duveen Galleries.

Mike Nelson has transformed the heart of Tate Britain into somewhere between a sculpture court and an asset stripper's warehouse. After scouring online auctions of company liquidators, he has carefully selected objects from post-war Britain.

Nelson has been inspired by the Duveen Galleries' origins in 1937 as the first purpose-built sculpture galleries in England, turning them into a warehouse of monuments to a lost era.

28 February 2019

