

alabamathirteen

[on becoming a ghost...]

25 May – 17 July 2022

[on becoming a ghost...] is an exhibition of new work by the artist alabamathirteen. She lives in Leeds. Her artwork focuses on the barriers she experiences as a disabled, working-class woman.

She makes sculptures, sound art, photography and films. This exhibition explores the impact of isolation. It also explores what it feels like to be excluded from society. Many disabled people often face these issues.

This exhibition explores the artist's relationship with not being able to visualise a space in her mind. This is a condition called aphantasia.

Because the artist cannot mentally visualise images, her instinctive feelings direct her relationship with spaces. This has an impact on the art she makes and how it is displayed.

The photographs here were made after alabamathirteen spent a month staying and working on her art at The Art House in 2021.

Photo developing chemicals can be harmful to the planet and for people with low immune systems. The artist has health conditions that make her immune system low. And she is also aware of her impact on the environment. So, she is moving away from traditional photo processes that use chemicals to fix and set the final images.

Instead, the artist uses more sustainable techniques. She does this by using plant-based chemistry during the development process. However, the final photo changes over time. Sometimes the image disappears.

The artist uses this idea to think about photos as a temporary object – that nothing lasts forever. She likens her process to the brief nature of our own existence.

The film in this room looks at the short-lasting nature of humans, and the traces we leave behind in the world. The audio has been purposely removed, and played at various times around the gallery. This highlights different ways that art can be experienced, particularly by disabled people.

Because the artist lives with ongoing medical health issues, she must protect herself from illness. So, she makes work using materials that she can access easily from her home. Her art includes views from her windows. It sometimes represents the movement of light shining on walls in her house. Her photos sometimes highlight unseen marks found in places, such as walls or floors.

The artworks are restricted in size. They reflect the smallness of daily life felt by many disabled people. You might have related to isolation and exclusion from society during the recent national lockdowns. But the artist reminds us that this is an ongoing reality for many disabled people.

Interpretation glossary

Aphantasia – a condition that prevents the ability to form mental images in the mind, such as people, places or things.

Excluded / Exclusion – to prevent or restrict the entry, the participation, or the consideration from a place or society.

Instinctive – actions or reactions that are not thought about or planned.

Isolation – to be set apart from others. The condition of being alone often not by choice, especially when this makes people feel unhappy.

Sustainable – made in a way that causes little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a longer time.

Temporary – passing through or by a place for only a brief amount of time.

Visualise – to form a picture of someone or something in your mind, in order to imagine or remember them or it.