

Los Angeles. In inquiring into his family's history, Revereza is gradually confronted with the transformative recognition that his personal identity is intimately imbricated with larger geopolitical forces that reverberate across generations and national borders: from the post-9/11 US immigration policy that derailed his parent's visa claim to the Spanish and US occupations of the Philippines. As with the other standout works featured at the festival, the film's interrogation of the uncertain frontier between documentary and fiction serves to affectively draw us in to reflecting on those dense sites where social reality and the spectres of history meet.

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Reports

Going for Broke in Glasgow

Oxford House in Laurieston, central Glasgow, is a large, neoclassical, sandstone-and-brick building dating back to 1895. Its decorative facade faces the south bank of the River Clyde while it turns its back on the area to the south-east known as the Gorbals (overlapping with Laurieston), at one time one of the most densely populated and deprived neighbourhoods in Europe. At some point, the whole bulky structure was done up in a matt shade of pink. No one seems to know why. Perhaps it was simply to hide the grime of urban pollution that has gathered there over the decades.

In any case, Oxford House is now the home of Patricia Fleming Gallery and this repurposing suggests striking ways of engaging through art with local histories of urban decay, regeneration and failed state management. 'When Tessa Lynch first came to the city,' Fleming says, referring to an artist she represents, 'she saw the building and remembered that very particular shade of pink. Now she uses it in a lot of her work, so I'll always think of it as a Tessa Lynch pink.' The artist herself notes: 'the building has been quite influential on my work. It was located on my commute in 2014 while I was investigating the idea of the flaneuse. The place was being re-painted and the process seemed endless, always at a different stage, like it was a face being made up, or a body showing its innards.'

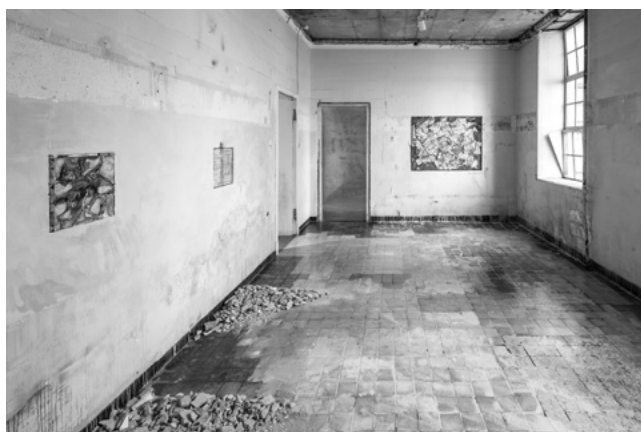
Fleming was formerly based in Merchant City north of the river, but was struggling to pay rent during lockdown and closed the site - leased by studio-development charity WASPS - in 2020. After two years of pop-up shows, the gallerist took up a lease at Oxford House partly after seeing her friend Paul Stallan find

a home there for his socially engaged architectural practice. She had staged a sculpture show by Kate V Robertson on the first floor in 2016, and subsequently housed the archive of late collage-artist Kevin Hutcheson in the same space, so the progression to a permanent relocation felt natural.

The warren of rooms Fleming inherited was 'full to the gunnels with crap', she remembers. This reflected its mercurial range of former uses, including, most recently, as a hoarder's burrow. The place was built, however, as a police station and barracks and, initially, a makeshift jail and courthouse, according to Stallan. He also points out that Oxford House was at the centre of a three-square-mile area that, for a period prior to the seismic shifts of the post-1945 era, contained a fifth of Scotland's population. After the law moved out the former training rooms were used for underground raves, a ventilation shaft ripped from one side-wall to let in air from a central courtyard.

On encountering the masses of loose wire strewn around the space, Fleming immediately thought of inviting painter and sculptor Sara Barker to devise an inaugural show. Barker's work has, for several years, incorporated metal cable and wire, often jutting forth at eye-height from abstract painted surfaces or containers (such as shallow boxes and trays) to create immersive installations at the threshold of two and three dimensions. Moreover, if the space and its contents suggested formal possibilities for Barker's work, the Glasgow-based artist's previous output for Fleming promised similarly fruitful ways of manifesting the character of the gallery. 'Sara's works at NADA Miami last year used archaeological find trays which she described as stand-ins for rooms. I thought there was an opportunity here to do something that brought that same idea to life-size spaces, creating a kind of total artwork that the audience could actually walk into.'

Bearing in mind the role of the building's architecture - and state of semi-decay - as potential conceptual foundations, Fleming invited Barker to work directly into the walls and floors of the mid-restoration space, leaving processes such as plastering and whitewashing until after the exhibition's closure in July. The artist's interest in archaeology was thus given free rein to express and expand itself. Barker carved out recesses and hollows from vertical and horizontal surfaces, fronting some with glass. Within, miniature constructions of bent metal rod, antique watch faces, and various other post-industrial materials and detritus - much gathered onsite - alluded to the past lives of the site. In particular, Barker's exhibition, entitled 'Watch Movements', evoked the different forms of timekeeping that might have held



Sara Barker, *Watch Movements*, 2023, Patricia Fleming Gallery, Glasgow

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sway within, from the serried hours and minutes of the trainee's working day to the notches scratched in cell walls or the pulsing beat of techno. Artworks were also rendered on a grander scale, stretching across entire complexes of rooms. In a former shower area, coloured washes were spread over interior surfaces. Sections of tilework were removed, the grouted spaces behind them worked into, or the porcelain rectangles altered to create rough friezes inserted back into the spaces from which they had been extracted.

'Watch Movements' did not offer explicit social or political commentary, but the way it presented real and speculative micro-histories of Oxford House alluded to wider narratives of industrial and urban decline and regeneration implicit in the story of the building; not least because in many major cities the physical traces of those histories would long since have been erased by gentrification. That, at least, is the case for Stallan, who found clues of the police's presence when his firm, Stallan Brand (which is currently working on a regeneration project for the area) moved in: 'There was a radio room and all sorts, lots of evidence of them just having been there.'

The architect, who, like Fleming, is from a working-class west-coast background, notes that the history of Laurieston and the Gorbals is one of extraordinary peaks and troughs of population. 'When you recognise the cycles the area has been through, it's just mind-boggling. I'm 55 and there have been three phases of drastic change in my lifetime. I've seen the tenements being torn down, the high-rises go up in their place, and the high-rises coming down themselves. Now we're putting things back in there.'

The changes he alludes to were the result of various botched post-war town-planning initiatives, including the 1945 Bruce Report, which recommended the wholesale rebuilding of Glasgow within its existing boundaries. The city corporation had visited Le Corbusier's Marseille estates and scores of copycat tower blocks went up from 1953 onward: high-rises comprise a much larger proportion of postwar social housing in Glasgow than in any other UK city. The new builds included those at Stirlingfauld Place and Norfolk Court, in the vast gaps left by razed Gorbals tenements. Like many other Glasgow tower blocks, they became synonymous with bad design, gang culture and inter-generational trauma, and they met their end through controlled explosions in the 2000s and 2010s.

This lingering reputation of this riverside district among pension-fund managers might account for some of the lack of inward investment in the area to this day. More generally, because speculative private expenditure on Glasgow's architectural stock has traditionally offered poor returns, it has been hard to attract more,

and many of the city's grand colonial-era buildings are in a state of ruin. Ironically, the lack of incoming funding is one reason why Glasgow has not faced the kind of rampant gentrification seen in other post-industrial conurbations such as Manchester.

Stallan also points to the break-up of Strathclyde Regional Council in 1996 as a vital moment in Glasgow's socio-economic history. Covering a vast stretch of western Scotland, from Argyll in the north to Ayrshire in the south, the administration gathered taxes from richer, rural authorities to spend on social infrastructure in the central belt. Tory gerrymandering divided it into 12 separate councils in 1996. In a 2022 lecture, Stallan argued that 'a lot of the issues that we face right now are to do with this redrawing. Glasgow's bankrupt, it has no money. The council is in tonnes of debt'. (A November 2021 report by SANE Collective placed the council's total debt at £1.4bn.)

Glasgow Life, the arm's-length body that distributes cultural funding for the council, has been asked to deliver £7.1m in savings during the 2023/24 financial year. The effects of the council's negative bank balance are thus writ large across Glasgow's current cultural scene, despite its international reputation for contemporary art. In recent weeks, for example, protests have been staged outside the Gallery of Modern Art and the recently refurbished Burrell Collection, after Glasgow Life announced plans to slash 37 posts from its 128-strong museum staff. Meanwhile, iconic council-owned assets such as Kelvingrove Gallery were sold off last September to City Property, an estate-management company owned by the council, and rented back to fund a pay-dispute settlement.

Set against this kind of direct cultural and social cost, the architectural impacts of underinvestment might seem insignificant, but they merit mention here because, in almost any other UK city, a structure as characterful and centrally located as the pink building would long since have been stripped bare and converted, perhaps into highly prized city-centre flats. Instead, it is one of many edifices to a grander past scattered across Glasgow's cityscape, and in far better condition than most. (Many of these structures stand as monuments to the city's eager participation in the Transatlantic slave trade.)

For an independent gallerist championing contemporary art to be able to occupy a space such as Oxford House is one of the silver linings of the vexed cultural and socio-economic narratives that have played out across Gorbals and Glasgow over the past half-century and beyond. The conversations Fleming has inaugurated with the ghosts that haunt the district offer a thought-provoking testament to that past.

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