

## Open up your loving arms, watch out here I come

On the 11th April, a bird fell down the chimney in our flat. It clattered around behind the metal grate in the wall where the fireplace once stood, leaving the cracked hearth covered in brick dust and whatever else matter has been living in the chimney breast for over a century. I called Glasgow City Council pest control service who told me it sounded like a bird had in actual fact` made a nest at the very top of the chimney. Did you know that it is illegal to remove birds nests, and that all wild birds and their eggs are protected by law? The pest control guy tells me to call him back in July if I can still hear the bird, once the babies have flown the nest. My partner tapes a blanket over the grate and over the top leans a framed collage of a cat.

As a new mother myself, you'd think that I'd have more empathy for the bird and her imminent chicks, but it was mostly just an irritating coincidence that a bunch of baby birds might keep me even more awake than my own three month old baby currently was. At that time, throughout the night, aforementioned baby was waking up every forty-five minutes. This is something that occurs when babies are struggling to connect their sleep cycles — which each last roughly forty to fifty minutes, about half the time of an adult's sleep cycle. This exhausting phenomena is often comically anthropomorphised (one of my typical late night paranoid Google searches tells me) as 'the forty-five minute intruder'.

'Tom's House', an audio work by Jacob Dwyer that plays out in this exhibition you may be currently, or might have earlier been standing in, is not forty-five minutes, but a slightly longer fifty minutes. a *blizzard in slow motion*, is a collaborative exhibition by the artists and siblings Jacob Dwyer and Florence Dwyer in the warehouse at David Dale Gallery. In 'Tom's House' we hear Jacob returning to, reflecting on, and recording the sounds of the home of his old friend Tom whilst Tom is seemingly not there. It is an audio diary that is littered with chopped recollections on the circle of life — from Boozy Suzy telling us about the pressure on her 'poo pipe' during labour, to Jacob's obsession with an overheard phone conversation on the train on his way to Tom's cottage about a baby who is 'legit upside down', to the dust that floats around the house that Jacob proposes is made up of Tom's old dead skin. It is hard not to look for clues or to question the authenticity Jacob's fable-like narrative, before deciding that it doesn't really matter what is real; it's Jacob's (Tom's) world (house) and we're just briefly living in it.

He observes idly, remembering when he was here before just filming stuff, while, for want of a tele, the friends stared at the flickering fire for entertainment. Florence's domestic ceramic firebacks, created in response to Jacob's audio recreation of Tom's house, define a lofty architecture in the

warehouse. In the 16th century, cast iron firebacks, usually decorated using household objects and tools, were often installed within chimneys to help retain the heat from the fire. The firebacks were also often decorated with religious symbols, such as saltire crosses and the letters 'M', 'W' and 'V' evoking protection from the Virgin Mary – drawn by placing lengths of twisted rope into the casting sand – in order to ward off evil spirits from entering the house through the chimney, generally considered the most vulnerable point of the home.

Stagnant domestic debris from Tom's house appears as apotropaic algae on the surfaces of Florence's firebacks: beads, years, red flowers and other talismanic objects that have long been edited out of Jacob's script — mutating versions of which were sent to Florence on a monthly basis over the past year — sink to the bottom. In Medieval pottery, copper pipe filings were mixed into glazes to make a rich emerald green, as Florence emulates on the firebacks' swampy surfaces. There's a subtle and satisfying nudge wink here that even the glaze of the works contains the spirit of a conduit. In a *blizzard in slow motion*, we are passing through, or passing over, but always going deeper underground. The siblings Dwyer have created room within a room within a room; a place where time stands still and we might still find Tom sinking slowly into his bed like the yellow yolk oozing down his chin. Sensitive and dynamic lighting design by Robbie Thomson gives the installation an almost ecclesiastical vibe, that makes you feel more like you've stepped inside the vibrations of a radio play than an exhibition, a crypt than a warehouse in Glasgow's east end.

Tom's house rattles with dust and memories. It is a landing place, where, while he was staying there fifteen years ago, Jacob says he could truly feel happy. But the Tudor cottage feels damp and melancholic now. It is a rich humus excreted by the king of the soil, the earthworm of whom the siblings' mother later sings a deathly song. Jacob waits for a smile to creep up on the side of Tom's face which might never come, which probably never came or at least he wouldn't know anyway because he didn't hang around to find out. We are like worms crawling through Jacob's brain wondering where are we going and where on earth, where the hell, where in this life, is our absent old pal Tom. And did Jacob ever buy that Swiss roll?

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Did you know that if a baby hasn't turned head down into the cephalic occiput anterior position by 37 weeks then your midwife will offer a manual turning procedure called an external cephalic version which even if it is successful it is possible that the baby could promptly turn itself back around again. When my own baby was not yet legit upside down at 36 and a bit weeks, I read on [spinningbabies.com](http://spinningbabies.com) that one way to help turn a baby was to play them music by your vagina so they

might rotate out of aural interest. Another musical suggestion was to sing to the baby, specifically Dead or Alive's 80s pop anthem, 'You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)'.

Going back to the beginning, I first listened to 'Tom's House' walking around the park while aforementioned baby naps underneath my raincoat strapped to my body in the Ergobaby 360. It makes me look like I'm heavily pregnant again. I bump into an acquaintance who tells me that she had a dream a year after she had given birth in which her doctor told her that the birth of her child was all a mistake — the baby was going to have to go back in. Sucked back inside her body, in reverse, bum first. Imagine getting sucked back up, back inside, ready to start all over again.

Text by Caitlin Merrett King

Written as a response to a *blizzard in slow motion*

David Dale Gallery

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