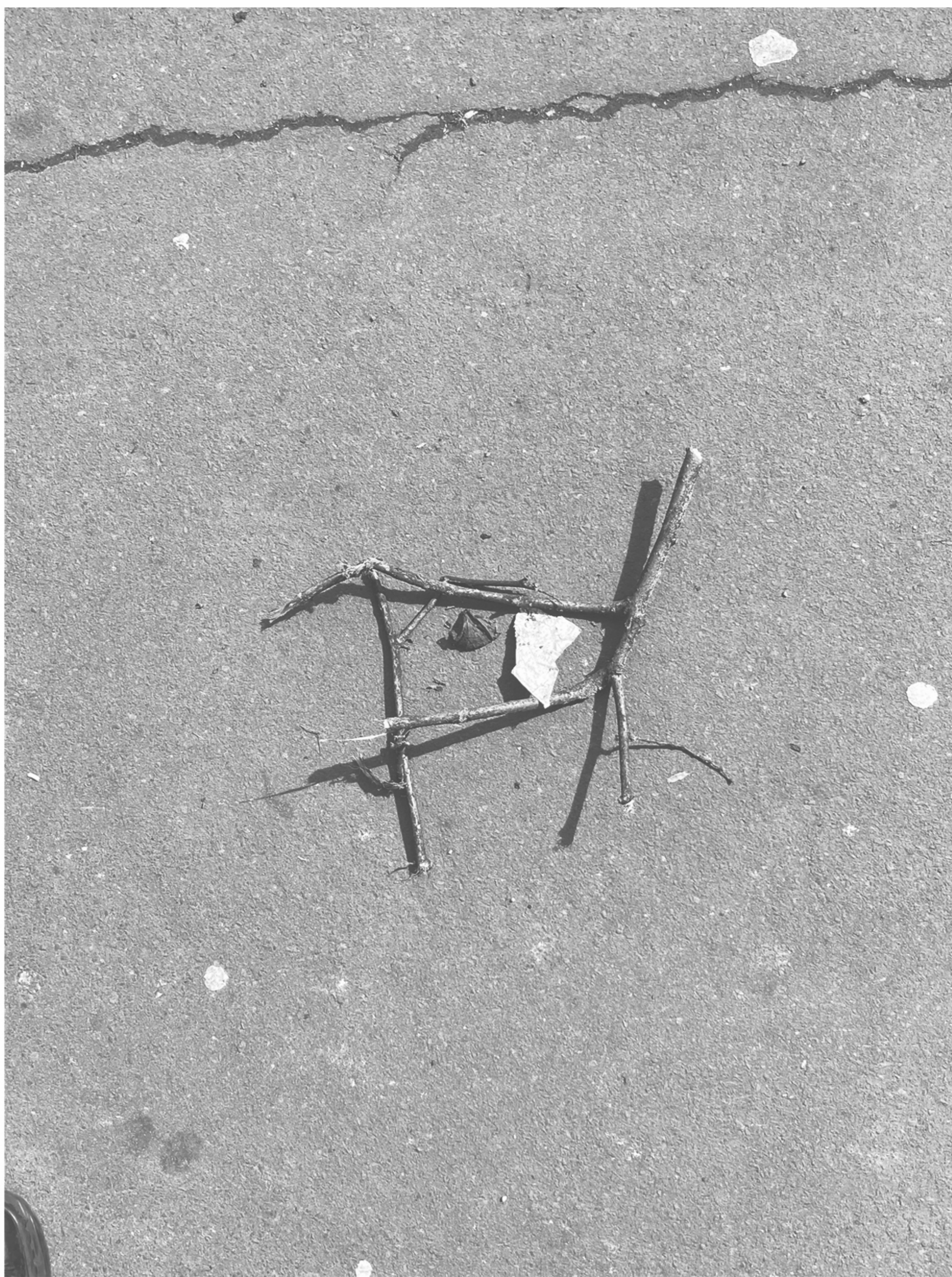


When I was nineteen I would write more regularly, now at twenty-one my experiences are measured in lengths of provincial park branches and wool scraps. Twinned with concrete isolations of girlhood bus rides, an ode to the familiar trawl of Smithdown road reclines on two meters of lace found in the attic of a family friend. Often when I am away from Liverpool I spend most of my time talking about it, strained from attempts to translate the presence of the place to a willing ear. The suburban streets I walk through when I'm home feel smaller now than the endless sprawl I thought I once knew, as I undertake a bi-annual pilgrimage retracing the routes of a retired version of myself. To return with fresh eyes to an old life; nothing has changed but the shoe does not fit the same, walking across the playing field where I turned eighteen and passing the fish and chip shops where I once stood with the people I will never see again.



Cornwall is ribbons on trees and picking pebbles, the boys jumping into the harbour from the pier because the council refused to build a skatepark by the marina. Those I have known tied the scraps from my hair to the stem of their desk lamps, Madron's ritual in the sacred site of the teenage bedroom. The same ribbons tourniquet my work, although where they remain in my physical absence resembles a trail alike to Gretel's breadcrumbs; a sign that I was ever there in the first place. Ireland is the maternal home; the lines drawn over land akin to the lines drawn around my life. Not Irish, Cornish or Scouse enough, but therefore severed from my roots and sentenced to a life's term of English cultural hegemony. The point of concurrency being myself, a jack of all but claimless to one.



I thought about how it takes a village to build an artist walking down Oxford Road listening to London Calling. Soothed by Strummer I flesh out the self in simple terms, aided by my friends, family, and technicians; oh, how such a selfish pursuit arrives with so many supporting hands. Rabbit Holes in the Playing Field feels like growing up, a communion of my craft. I was not raised a practicing catholic but feel as if it is my time to wear the white dress, legitimacy's First Coming being when the Atlantic Road shopkeeper remembered I was an artist when I saw him again on my last day in Brixton. This show sits in the shadow of a girlhood stretched out in Liverpool, heaven itself, framed by the waters my mother and ancestors crossed. I spoke recently to a friend I have had since I was a teenager about what it would be like to live and die on the banks of the river Mersey. I still visit her and pay my dues in the parks of South Manchester where she runs snug to footpaths and flows underneath the grounds of second league football clubs. He then talked about the woman he knows is the love of his life as I shed a skin thicker than a year and a half on the train home down the East coast. Liverpool was an echo chamber, but it was ours, and we knew each other before we knew anything else.



With another I discussed belonging and how it feels to exist in our minds, what runs around and burrows in the back corners. It was Solstice, daybreak over the Iron Age fortress, our tent pitched to face the sun as it rose. In Edale that morning I turned my head towards the pay and display machine to avoid explaining the tears welling on the waterlines of my eyes, Spencer the Rover playing as the Volkswagen polo climbed the glacial summit with two in tow. We had spoken of Albion and inheritance at the pub a couple of weeks beforehand, originally in reference to the great outdoors, car parks and teenage pyromania; life in the English towns cast in the shadow of mills now converted into luxury flats. I noticed the table number in the beer garden was the same as my parents' house, and I began to consult my own traditions, how inheritance can look across a face. I clean my glasses over the kitchen sink with fairy liquid just like my dad and tell people what you used to say to me about cranes. I am not in touch anymore with the person who taught me to make soul cakes (egg yolks, butter, sugar, flour, raisins, allspice) and I cannot remember when I began checking my horoscope in the daily paper as I leave the bus, but these habits form and punctuate a life.



I moved out of my fourth home in June, burying my ghosts in a short-term let. The repair man I met during the first three weeks we had in the house told me that the washing machine was older than I was, but despite the thin popcorn walls and cracked enamel taps this was home. I fell in love with being right there, my three best friends under one roof that my dad says should have been replaced fifteen years ago. I will lay my lapsed traditions and a recent past to rest in the overgrowth at the bottom of the garden, to curl up alongside the family of foxes that began to cut across the grass in April. Overhead the wood pigeons that I would see from the left side of my bed will resume their post, perched on the tangle of telephone wires keeping watch. I imagine in the lives of others I have been assigned a post all the same; a space carved out for me to sit and watch eternity slip by, perhaps between the folds of a duvet in a red-brick terraced house or a seat at a garden table. I will now pass this room that I once called mine from the pavement and peer in, narrowing my eyes. Craning my neck back I will look up in the chance that I catch a glimpse of a pair wearing borrowed jumpers stood in an embrace, framed by the cloudy double glazing. Reclaiming my gaze and continuing my path I will reconcile that what once stood on this hallowed ground will remain unmarked, as the landlord is selling the house anyway.

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is an artist based in Manchester, UK.  
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