

James Lewis (b.1986, South London, UK)

jameslewisstudio@gmail.com

jameslewisjameslewis.com

Lewis' sculptures and installations respond to the pervasive cognitive dissonance that permeates our quotidian lives, as social and political intricacies are often distilled into statistical data, measurements of time, percentiles, and rigid categorisations. At the core of his artistic practice is an exploration of the empirical boundaries that shape our comprehension of the intricate interplay between humans, animals, and objects. Through this, he challenges the confines that limit our engagement with a given environment, inviting viewers to reconsider their perspectives and question the established norms that govern our perception of reality.

He has been widely exhibited internationally, including at Mostyn, Wales (2022); Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria (2022); Fondazione Imago Mundi, Treviso, Italy (2022); Capc Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France (2021) and his work is part of the collections of Wiener Städtische, Vienna, Austria; MARE (Museum of Recent Art), Bucharest, Romania; Collection Frédéric de Goldschmidt, Brussels, Belgium.

He completed his studies within the Fine Art Department at the Royal College of Art in London (2010 - 2012) and has taught at The University of Applied Arts, Vienna; The Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna; Leeds University, UK; Norwich School of Art, UK; Kingston University, UK; Paris College of Art, Paris, France; and is currently a Lecturer in Fine Art at AVU, Prague, Czech Republic and an Associate Mentor at Conditions, an artist studio complex in his hometown Croydon, UK.



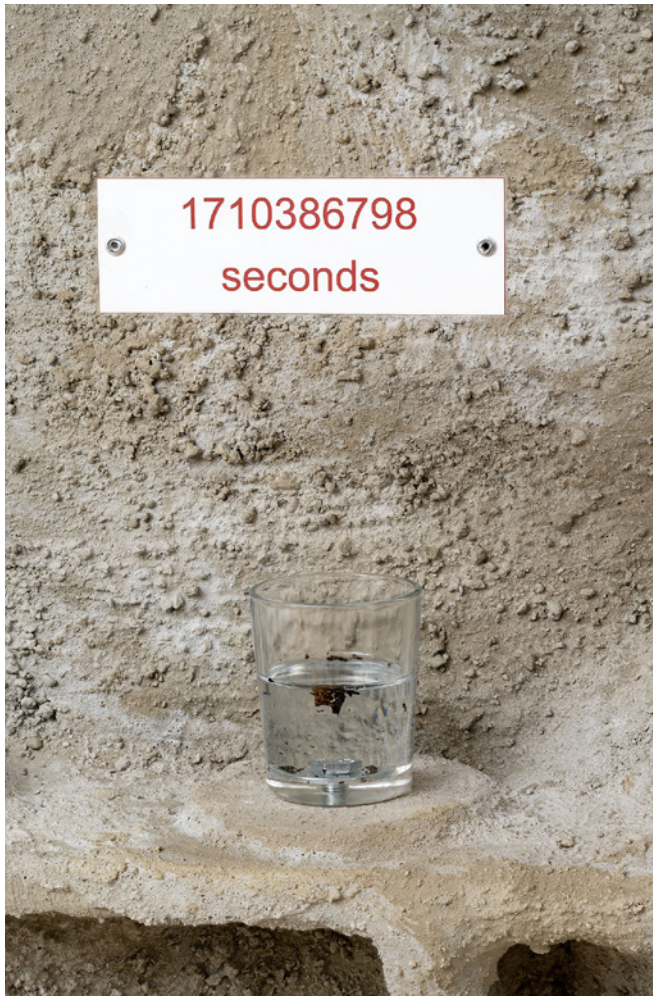
Top: *Frieze London, Focus Section* (installation view)
Stand H20 w/ Nir Altman, Munich



Top: *Sediment*, 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey
254 cm x 140 cm x 92 cm



Top: *Two Branches* (1681985542 seconds, 1710386798 seconds, *Einkorn*, 1713542494 seconds, 1726165274 seconds), 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass, resin, pewter, dried leaves
193 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm



Top left and right: *Two Branches* (1681985542 seconds, 1710386798 seconds, *Einkorn*, 1713542494 seconds, 1726165274 seconds), 2023 (details)
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass, resin, pewter, dried leaves
193 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm



Top left: *Two Branches (Snuppy, Dolly, CopyCat, Prometea)*, 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass,
resin, pewter, dried leaves
184 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm

Top right: *Two Branches (Sawmill River, Wien River, Sunswick
Creek, River Westbourne)*, 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass,
resin, pewter, dried leaves
184 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm

Ruderal

Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich

James Lewis' solo exhibition *Ruderal* at Nir Altman is rooted in a sensitive environmental awareness. Like flowers turning to the sun, free-standing sculptures peer at passersby through the gallery's street-level storefront window. A yellow PVC curtain along the window separates outside and inside. It evokes the shrink wrapped vegetables in supermarket shelves. It's unclear whether the onlookers on the outside or the sculptures on the inside are the packed, protected goods and whether the foil contains or emits the acidic ambient haze that illuminates both sides of the window.

Outside and inside are linked through electrical switch cases in the curtain. They are differently labeled and each offer two options, perhaps recalling the omnipresent two button meme. Illustrating the agony of choice in an intense state of insecurity, it features a comic character attempting to push one of two red buttons labeled with interchangeable or contradicting statements. This frames Lewis' concern with datafied reality, here proposed as alternating states that can be turned off and on at will.

Most people know that statistics are wrong the minute they are made, but what other ways are there to relate to the world? 47% of people believe in fate.¹ Facing a wasteland of information that can't be controlled, channeled or processed by human capacities – switch on probability. Enjoy the ride. 274 km/ h is the average speed of nerve impulses.² Your portal to manifest thoughts into one of the probable realities behind the curtain. We used to have skin in this game. Consider the average surface area of skin is 22sq/ft³ – our barrier to the world, growing thick.

Lewis' ruderal flowers shaped into forms of hanging branches have developed a thick skin, layers and layers of cells. Their stiff bodies demonstrate vitality and vulnerability at the same time. Manufactured from concrete, a building material, the flowers seem to have grown from the debris of human construction and simultaneous environmental destruction. Plantlife lives through exchange and these species endure although the gardener has failed to recognise the interconnectedness of living things. They coexist with the hum of an electrical light which, although invisible, insists on its material textures. Composed of archived sounds sourced from a sample library of field recordings, it repeats the commitment of stacking and layering fragments of repurposed material. This is perhaps how we will remember the world outside - canned and classified. A strange simulation.

Text by Sarah Johanna Theurer, Curator, Haus der Kunst, Munich

¹ What do people believe in? Available at: <https://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/british-public-reveal-beliefs-new-survey/>

² 99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>

³ 99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>



Top: *Ruderal*, 2022 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich, Germany



Top: *Ruderal, 2022* (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich, Germany



Top: *Not just suffering, but all forms of consciousness (Resend)*, 2022
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, steel
209 cm x 78 cm x 102 cm



Top: *Not just suffering, but all forms of consciousness (Reposition)*, 2022
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, steel
170 cm x 55 cm x 80 cm



Top and bottom: *Ruderal*, 2022 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich

Injury

Solo exhibition, Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna

Lewis' work is focused on how entropy and chaos structure the world we inhabit, how tiny, interrelated events create reoccurring patterns that are then distilled into notions of time, space or history.

*Injury*¹ addresses the impossibility of fellow feeling¹ and the works call for a different kind of inhabitation based upon the possibility that society cannot be reconciled, pain cannot be shared through empathy and that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one.

Lewis's landscape is immersed in estrangement. A crackling soundscape interrupted by machinelike beeps and buzzes emanates from *Imaginary Counter Power* (2021). This architectural work with an exhaustively long sound piece creates an atmosphere which oscillates and vibrates over and through all types of bodies and things, producing a complex ecology of matter and energy, subjects and objects.

Narrowly true but broadly misleading (2021) pose propositions for a new set of conveying emotions, attitudes and the understanding of a body in pain or dissonance. These sign or token-like pieces can be decoded into statistics; the average surface area of human skin, how long it takes for food to be digested, the average amount of unique words spoken per day and so on. Thus, creating a strange poetic proposition for the language and understanding of dissonance.

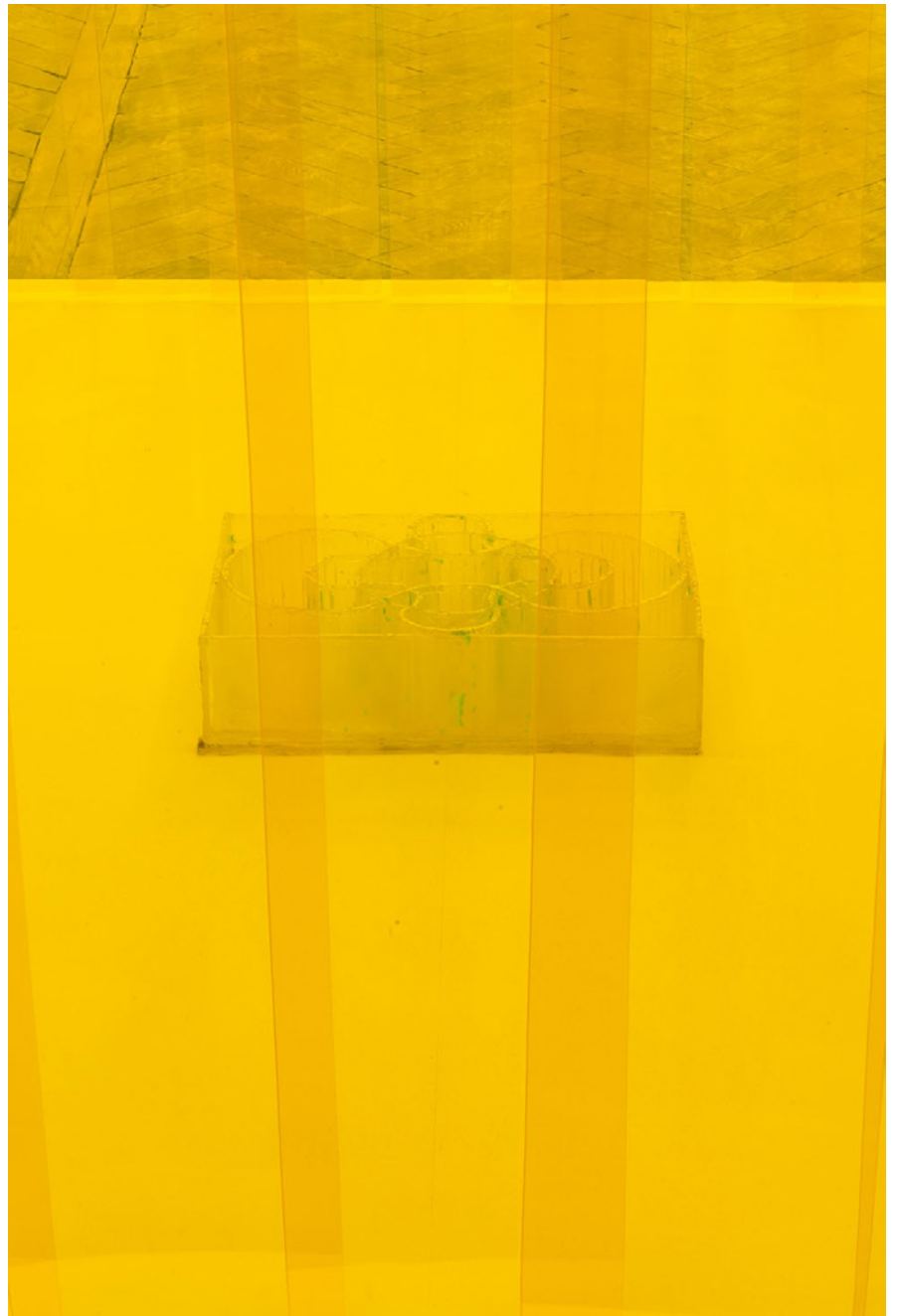
Accumulations of layers, networks of tumorous growth, encapsulate and fossilize over soft furnishings in *Diluvium* (2021). The concrete encrusted strata of this domestic scenography are polluted with sound and the odour of cheap whiskey, each adding additional layers of sensory data, one over another, evoking the portrait of an absent body detached and extracted from the connecting temporal tissue. It is exactly this horror temporis—the ruptures, scars and proliferations of (humanly conceived) time—that James Lewis addresses in his works.

¹ See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 39.



Top left and right: *Imaginary counter power*, 2021
Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip light, clay, acrylic paint,
stainless steel, epoxy resin, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
215 cm x 205 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sound-Extracts-Imaginary-counter-power>



Top: *Imaginary counter power*, 2021 (detail)
Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip light, clay, acrylic paint,
stainless steel, epoxy resin, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
215 cm x 205 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sound-Extracts-Imaginary-counter-power>



Top: *Injury*, 2021 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna



Top: *Narrowly true but broadly misleading (CONTEMPT)*, 2021
Cast aluminium
69 cm x 69 cm x 8 cm

Bottom: *Narrowly true but broadly misleading (LANGUAGE)*, 2021
Cast aluminium
64 cm x 64 cm x 2 cm



Top: *Diluvium*, 2021

Wood, foam, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, strip light,
clay, acrylic paint

200 cm x 200 cm x 215 cm (sofa 155 cm x 100 cm x 75 cm)



Top: *Country of Error (FAECES FRAUD)*, 2021
Cast aluminium, lead
102 cm x 60 cm x 3 cm



Top and bottom: *Cafe Heaven, 2022* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria



Top left: *The Age of Decanting (Biscuit Tower)*, 2023
Cast aluminum
70 cm x 70 cm x 3 cm

Top right: *The Age of Decanting (Curb Appeal)*, 2023
Cast aluminum
70 cm x 70 cm x 3 cm



Bottom right: *The Age of Decanting (Zombie Contingency)*, 2023
Cast aluminum
70 cm x 70 cm x 3 cm



Top: *Coming home, cleaning up, making dinner, 2023*
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, electric cable,
light fitting
85 cm x 85 cm x 55 cm



Top left: *Panic Landscape: Rock/Mineral*, 2022
Wood, poly filler, plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Top right: *Panic Landscape: Yellow 'blob'*, 2022
Wood, inkjet print on photographic paper, aluminum tape, poly filler,
plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Bottom right: *Panic Landscape: Wild/Poultry*, 2022
Wood, poly filler, plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Top left and right: *The Odour is Oily*, 2022
Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip lights, acrylic paint, stainless steel, cast aluminium, lead, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
225 cm x 300 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sound-Extracts-The-Odour-is-Oily>



Top left and right: *The Odour is Oily*, 2022 (detail)
Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip lights, acrylic paint, stainless steel, cast aluminium, lead, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
225 cm x 300 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sound-Extracts-The-Odour-is-Oily>



Top: *A History of Animals (Scattered Particles)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
63 cm x 63 cm x 12 cm



Top: *A History of Animals (Star Winds)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
83 cm x 83 cm x 12 cm

Centre right: *A History of Animals (They break)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
36 cm x 36 cm x 10 cm

Bottom right: *A History of Animals (The Emergence)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
62 cm x 62 cm x 13 cm



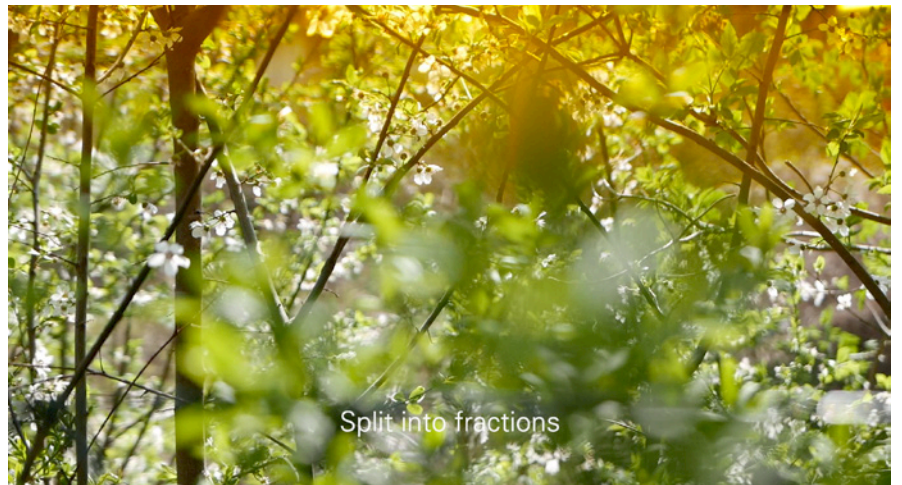
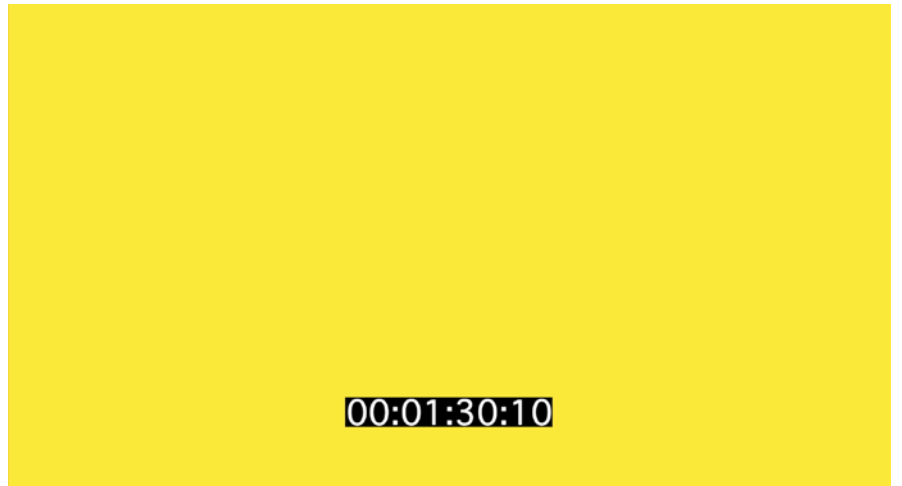
Top: *Le Club du Poisson-Lune/ The Moonfish Club* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Capc Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France



Top left and right: *Dusk Slug III*, 2021
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, strip light, clay,
acrylic paint
90 cm x 75 cm x 75 cm



Top: *Dusk Slug IV*, 2022
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey
90 cm x 85 cm x 85 cm



Top: Sagas, 2019
HD Video, 38'41"

Link to extract: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sagas-2019-HD-Video-38-41>



Top: *Sagas*, 2019 (installation view)
HD Video, 38'41"

Link to extract: <https://jameslewisjameslewis.com/Sagas-2019-HD-Video-38-41>