

Focal Point Gallery is pleased to present Paul Johnson's exhibition *The Sunless Sea*, a series of new work by the British artist, presented in FPG's main gallery, window space and display cabinets.

Inspired by south Essex's history of attracting utopian thinkers and the artist's continued interest in the failed historic attempts to fulfill such visionary ideas, Johnson presents an ostensibly ritualistic series of sculptures and wall works, seemingly shaped by their processes and history.

*A Sunless Sea* attempts to imagine how we might look at the present in the future. In Gallery 1, Johnson presents a collection of artefacts that give the impression of salvaged fragments of a marginalised existence. In this space, artworks stand precariously in an upright position, resembling ancient standing stones. One, a large decaying vehicle, *Dune Buggy* sits at the centre; a symbol of a failed utopian ideal, these vehicles were traditionally made from salvaged parts from other machines and featured prominently in post-apocalyptic fiction and cinema. This rusted object sits alongside a small wall sculpture, formed inside the artist's pocket over a period of five years and considers the processes involved in making sculpture.

*Dune Buggy* is accompanied by a number of other fragile sculptures, also constructed from pulped paper and pulped photocopies. Motifs such as the bases of plastic drink bottles and beer crates mimic a ritualistic symbolism on the surfaces Johnson creates. Representations of genuine historic artefacts, including a paper copy of an ancient Sabaeon sculpted face, installed in the Window Gallery, are intertwined with the fictitious, creating an overriding impression of a space of ritual activity not grounded in a specific time or space.

The Display Cabinets in the gallery's entrance present materials and references which provide insight into the works' recent production. Not fully available to the viewer, these are obscured by the chaotic display structures assembled from left-over wood found in the artist's studio.

The resultant fragile structures shifts our thoughts to future impressions of today's actions and the peculiar assemblages echo the collection and recontextualisation of historical material. The sense of significance bestowed to the objects, which would more commonly be disregarded, offers optimism that these moments of utopia will be regarded in the future and offer a glimmer of hope that such thinking could exist once more.

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