

Niru Ratnam

IN PASSING

Juliette Blightman, John Cage, Ryan Gander, Bhajan Hunjan, Rita Keegan, Matthew Krishanu, Laila Majid and Louis Blue Newby, Cornelia Parker, Keith Piper, Charlotte Posenenske, Daniel Turner, Bill Walton

In Passing brings together thirteen artists who turn toward the fragile, the provisional, and the contingent. Working with paper, residue, found matter and ephemeral forms, they resist the art world's preference for permanence and legibility. Their works remind us that what fades, what resists assimilation, or what seems slight, may endure with unexpected force. Impermanence here is not a deficiency but a condition of creative power.

For some, this turn to transience was forged in earlier decades, when impermanence itself became a language of resistance. Charlotte Posenenske's palette-knife paintings of the late 1950s mark the shift in her practice from the immediacy of gesture toward the serial logic of system, anticipating her later modular sculpture while retaining the urgency of touch. John Cage's monotypes made with smoke and branding in the 1980s treat accident as structure, turning silence, residue and chance into image. Bill Walton's *Creek* works are equally modest and exacting, distilling landscape into small combinations of wood, metal and paint that register time and place without depiction. Each turns fragility into form, demonstrating how little is needed to hold presence.

The exhibition also revisits artists for whom impermanence was entangled with visibility itself. Rita Keegan's photocopy collages layer images of herself, her mother and grandmother with ornamental fragments, transforming a medium associated with disposability into a language of memory and survival. Bhajan Hunjan's paintings and prints of the 1980s, recently reclaimed in *Women in Revolt!* at Tate Britain, combine South Asian iconography with feminist politics, articulating identity through quiet intensity rather than loud assertion. Keith Piper's *Pan Afrikan Paintbox* (1983), made within the BLK Art Group, positions paper as a tool of dissent, confronting exclusion with a visual vocabulary of urgency and critique. These works embody a politics of impermanence, chosen or imposed, as a means of survival and resistance.

In other practices, fragility becomes a register of intimacy. Ryan Gander's drawer, wall plaque and discarded letter exist in shifting states of access and disappearance, proposals that resist commodification as they circulate between presence and absence. Laila Majid and Louis Blue Newby use photographic paper, resin casts and coded substances such as Crisco to create works that hover between touch and image, materialising queer desire in fragile, contingent forms. Matthew Krishanu's watercolours and drawings capture family and childhood scenes in delicate washes that blur recollection with dream, while Juliette Blightman's diaristic drawings preserve everyday encounters with immediacy, refusing monumentalisation in favour of fragments.

Elsewhere, transformation itself becomes the subject. Cornelia Parker's *Lost Chords (Found)* presents zinc plates once used for music printing as silent scores, corroded surfaces where sound survives only as trace. Daniel Turner's bars, cast from the material of a psychiatric institution, are reductive yet dense with cumulative history: austere witnesses to architectures of care and confinement, reconfigured through processes of erasure and re-formation. Both artists remind us that destruction and corrosion are not endpoints but generative forces.

Across the exhibition, materials are treated as carriers of time: paper that holds memory, metal that rusts into silence, smoke that becomes image, institutional remnants reformed into mute presences. *In Passing* gathers works that inhabit thresholds — between presence and absence, memory and erasure, permanence and disappearance. Together they suggest that art often speaks most powerfully not in what it shows, but in what it allows to slip away.