

Watch Movements solo exhibition by Sara Barker now open at Patricia Fleming Gallery



Sara Barker, Oxford House, 2023. Mortar, tiles, household, automotive and oil paint, 33.5 x 29 x 3.7 cm. Image: Keith Hunter.

GLASGOW.- [Patricia Fleming Gallery](#) announce Watch Movements; a solo exhibition by Sara Barker and the launch of a new gallery space in Laurieston's growing arts district, 9 June - 16 July 2023. Join us, to celebrate the opening of our new gallery space. We are delighted to be adding to a growing number of galleries on the south bank of the Clyde.

The programme starts in June, with a solo exhibition by one of Scotland's leading contemporary artists, Sara Barker (b. 1980). Watch Movements is Barker's first solo exhibition in Glasgow for six years, and captures a unique response to the distinctive Victorian building, before the full renovation of the gallery.

Manchester-born Sara Barker has built up a singular body of work since the early 2000s, occupying the space between painting and sculpture while consistently establishing relationships with language and poetics. Previous solo shows have been held at Fruitmarket in Edinburgh, Ikona in Birmingham, Leeds Art Gallery, Campsie Line in Dumfries, and The Baltic, Gateshead. Over the last few years Barker has completed major outdoor works for Leeds Art Gallery and Clyde Place, Glasgow.

In contrast to the clean lines of a traditional art gallery, Barker was invited to engage with derelict environments, filled with the detritus of previous occupancy. The invitation to work in this in-between space allowed the artist to make works that embed themselves in, and emerge from, the fabric of the building itself. In so doing she converts the interiors of the former police station, designed by Alexander Beith McDonald's (1847-1915), into a kind of found artwork.

The location now housing Patricia Fleming Gallery, which Barker describes as "loaded and atmospheric," was previously a shower and changing area servicing a police training academy. Preparation for the exhibition involved an exploratory process of working with and against the confines of the space, using external materials where needed to prize creative potential from existing features of the walls, doorways and floors.

Barker states: "I began thinking of the whole gallery (corridor with four spaces) as an artwork, experimenting with

surfaces, heat-gunning off layers of paint, chipping away tiles, cleaning parts, leaving others.”


The site-specific nature of the exhibition has allowed Barker to develop a new set of compositional approaches, with the idea of recessed space running throughout. Several works, for example; ‘Oxford House’, take as their basis, sets of tiles dug out of walls by the artist. Combined with rubble, paint, foil, and other materials, bound with poured mortar inside a frame, these jewel-like slabs or tableaus read as paintings, spatial drawings, bas-reliefs, or cross-sections of miniature excavations.

Some have been inserted back into the gaps created by their initial removal. These pieces establish suggestive relationships, with the grids made by the ceramic tiles, within an individual square or rectangle and the proportions of the room as a whole.

Sara Barker’s work is characterised by its breadth of literary allusion—reading poetry and prose often spurs her creative processes. An enduring reference for Barker is the work of Virginia Woolf, where Woolf alludes to a room as a metaphor for a kind of autonomy. For this exhibition, the artist’s interest in exposing and framing apertures within this historic building, is also informed by ideas of time-space shifts and otherworldly, subterranean settings in science-fiction and fantasy, such as Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials. The motif of the clock or gauge, which recurs throughout the exhibition, speaks to this subtext, while also alluding to secret or in-between periods in the history and routines of the site, including its past use for underground raves.

Watch Movements converts Patricia Fleming Gallery into a single, multifaceted artwork. Its constituent materials and architectural features are customised and repurposed to become elements of an inhabitable sculpture, site-specific installation, or shadow-world of imagination.

Watch Movements is Sara Barker’s first solo exhibition in the city since her solo show at the popular Mary Mary Gallery in 2017. Since then Barker has had solo exhibitions at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, AZ, USA; Leeds Art Gallery; Cample Line, Scotland and The Annexe, London, England. A selection of works from the exhibition All Clouds Are Clocks, All Clocks Are Clouds have been placed in Leeds Art Gallery Collection. Leeds Art Gallery commissioned a permanent outdoor sculpture in 2020 and in 2021 Barker completed a major new outdoor work for Clyde Place, Glasgow, commissioned by Patricia Fleming for Drum Property Group and Barclays. Sara Barker is a lecturer at The Glasgow School of Art.

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