

# Issue 05 – Rosie McGinn

SOS / Sculptors on Sculpture is a series of weekly condensed interviews with early career contemporary sculptors.

Rosie McGinn is an artist interested in unpicking heightened moments of euphoria and despair through a range of mediums including kinetic sculpture, inflatable installation, video, text and print; from a monstrous 9ft Paul Gascoigne puppet to stuffed Torvill and Dean figurines reliving the Bolero [shuffling around a fake ice rink on robot hoovers]. Her recent work has gravitated towards British sport and leisure whilst observing the communities where rituals, such as Bingo, going ‘out out’ and football, provide a sense of faith and escapism.

SOS: At the time of conducting this interview we are in the fourth week of lockdown. How have you adapted to life in lockdown? Are you able to make work at this time?

RM: I feel really lucky compared to a lot of people who’ve been left in a really difficult situation, I’ve been furloughed from my gallery tech job so have come out of London to be with my family. I guess we’re used to being in constant evaluation of everything all the time but there’s no solid answer at the moment and it’s scary but it’s also freeing. All we can do is ride the wave and stay sane. I’ve actually really enjoyed slowing down for a bit, walking the dogs and taking a break, I’m really bad at doing that in London. There’s a few little things I’m working on, these newspaper poems I’ve been doing with tracing paper, they’re quite slow and quiet, not sure what I’ll do with them. Bit of embroidery, looking through some old family footage, me and my sister are thinking about this script idea. I’ve mainly been giving myself a break though.



‘Gazza’, 2019, Lycra print, thread, stuffing, joints, wig, socks, shin pads, studs, steel wire rope, crimps, pulleys, geared hand winch. 190 x 300 x 290cm

SOS: You have been working on an artist book as of late entitled ‘Observations of an invigilator’ can you talk about how this came about?

RM: Yeah COMING SOON! I actually got these finished and printed a few days before lockdown so there’s 100 of them sat in my flat in Catford – I’m looking forward to getting them out as soon as I’m back. I worked in two big London art galleries as an invigilator for a bit, it was the strangest job I’ve ever had, my mate Catherine

used to call it ‘invagilating’ which made me laugh and it stuck. It’s basically a book of sketches and overheard conversations and general observations that I collected on the job. I did it originally to keep myself entertained and, especially at the beginning, it was a really new and funny experience, all my jobs before had been in pubs or cafes or hotels and so watching people watching art felt like I was in this weird, white walled skit show. Obviously the novelty wore off and it became really boring but I’ve turned that initial excitement and human insight into a book/artwork.

I hope it demystifies this idea of going to the gallery and looking at art, cos sometimes it’s amazing and you can see people getting goosebumps in front of an artwork and that gives you goosebumps but then sometimes it’s just someone chin scratching in front of a painting for an hour, meeting these high-brow expectations to be cultured and intelligent, when really they’re thinking about what’s for tea. It’s quite an intimidating place to walk into if it’s not what your used to but everyone has the capacity for art, it’s not like there’s some secret or inside joke that people are missing. When I go to galleries I like some art, I love some art and I don’t understand a lot of art. Hopefully by giving an honest account it makes it all seem a bit more accessible and familiar cos surely we will become less culturally interesting if we keep getting the same stale points of view.

SOS: It’s refreshing that this project speaks openly about what you do alongside your art practice to make a living. I think there’s a tendency for artists to present how productive they are being and perhaps hide the realities that actually it can be quite a precarious existence. How do you find working in London? It can be quite an inhospitable place to be an artist.



‘The Mountain’, 2019, Lycra, stuffing, thread, plastic joints, armature wire, mini geared hand winch, steel wire rope, pulley. 80 x 90 x 15cm

RM: Yeah I’m glad you asked about that cos it confused me for a while after the Masters. The reality of surviving as an Artist in London [without an unlimited allowance from your parents] is working enough to pay the rent, buy materials, buy food and then having enough days [and energy] left over to make art. I think it’s important to think long term, be smart with money and be persistent. With sculpture the materials cost a lot and my work doesn’t sell, which is freeing in a lot of ways but it means I’m hoarding the work. Up until now with the tech job I’ve been in minimum wage jobs so last year [when I was invagilating] there was no way I could afford a studio on 4 days work a week.

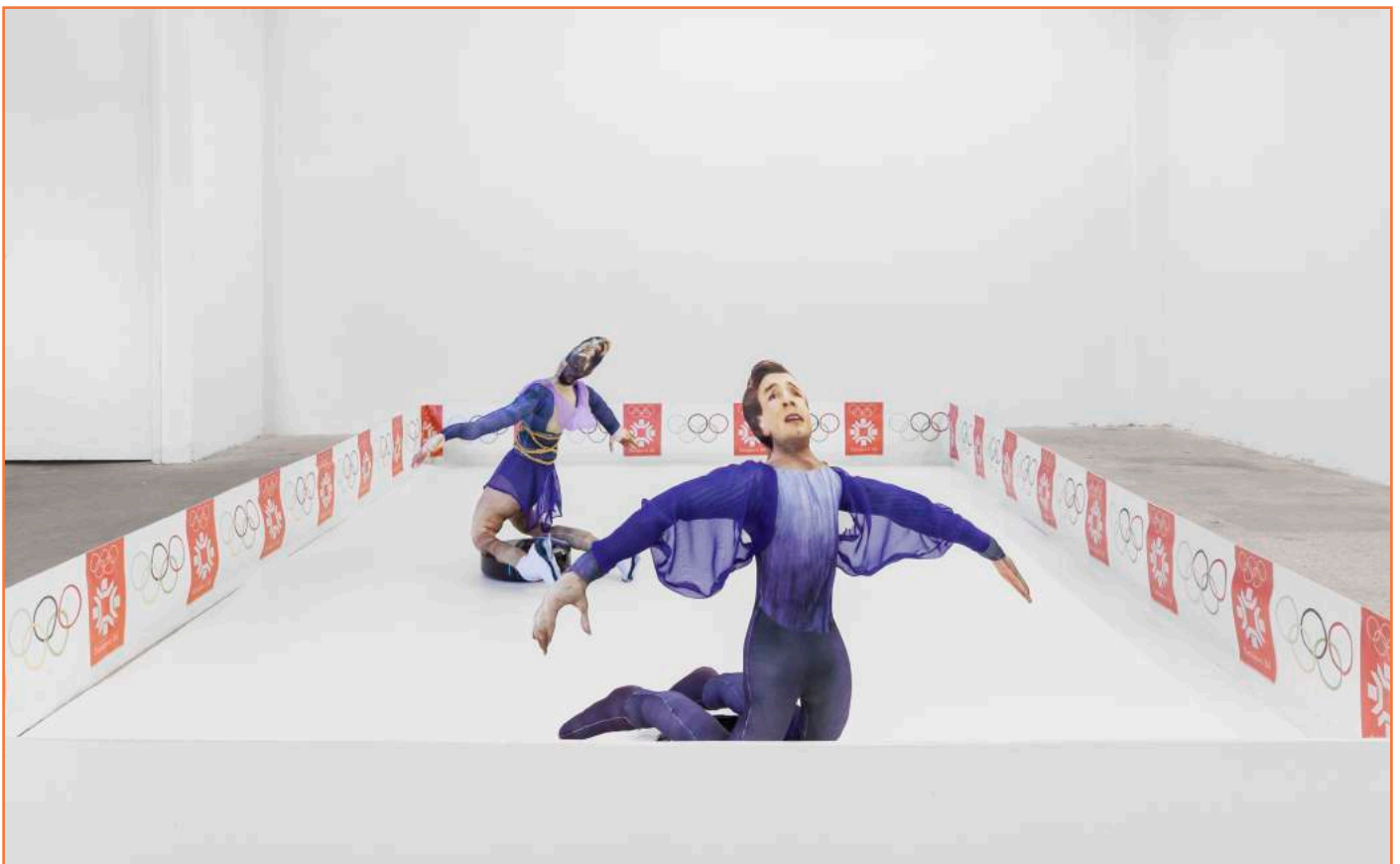
I made 'Gazza' and the 'Ravers' and 'Torvill and Dean' in my bedroom. Winning the Lewisham Arthouse Award was amazing because it's given me my first studio.

I've got it free for the year so I can work less and be in there more, it's massive and I'm not going to sleep and waking up with Gazza's head next to me thinking I need to sew this, this and that. It's given me a healthier mindset and made me switch off at home. But yeah as you've said it's precarious and after this year I will have to make sure I'm in a position to afford a studio again. Basically it's really hard and I'm still trying to work it all out... completely winging it but if there's a will there's a way and if it means I can do what I love everyday, that's what it's all about.

SOS: What are you currently fascinated by and how is it feeding into your work?

RM: On YouTube I've been watching lots of Buster Keaton stunts and Charlie Chaplin speeches, I feel like their simple silent comedy gestures are still funny now, this sense of danger and pushing things to the limits. And then I'll watch a load of outtakes, Vic and Bob Catterick outtakes, Hot Fuzz Bloopers, Derek outtakes, people laughing when they're not supposed to. Last night I found 'Rilkes Letters to a Young Poet' which had some beautiful lines in it and then I watched 'Million Dollar Baby' which got me researching into Irish Gaelic love sayings.

I keep thinking about peoples faces on rollercoasters, upside down hair with this look of terror. Sport always seems to turn up as well, it stirs up this frenzy in people, an outlet maybe, so it's weird not having any of that at the moment, no live events, these chat shows where there's no canned laughter and it's really static cos of



'The Bolero', 2019, Lycra print, thread, stuffing, armature, chiffon, gold elastic, velcro, robot hoovers. [full installation: white paint, MDF board, Olympic PVC banner, double sided tape] 300 x 300 x 50cm





the lag on Skype. Craving a bit of live action. It always comes back to this obsession we all have to feel awake and alive, to chase these ‘euphoric experiences’. I think I’ll never stop being fascinated with humans and that will always feed into the work.

‘Howse’, 2018, Ripstop nylon, thread, MDF, bouncy castle blower, micro-controller board. 330 x 70 x 250cm

SOS: How important is humour to you in your work?

RM: It keeps appearing when I don’t want it to so I’ve just learnt to embrace it. Guess it’s just my manner, I’ve grown up with a family who love to laugh and have a good time so I’m glad that it appears in the work.

Humour is quite a powerful provocation for thought. It makes people comfortable and more likely to listen.

Guest Question: Cy Twombly in conversation with Nicholas Serota in Rome in 2007. ‘Are you most happy when you’re in the studio?’

RM: If things are going well yeah. I’d say when I’m having a really good day in the studio I feel at my most content. But then the danger is if you stay away from real life too much you miss out on loads of happy moments that aren’t to do with being in the studio or making art. If I was in the studio 7 days a week without a job, not seeing other people I’d really quickly lose all my inspiration and joy.

Interviewer: Josh Wright



‘Get In There’, 2019, 493 jumping jacks; card, ink, string, football beads, pins.

