

Issue 11 – Simon Linington

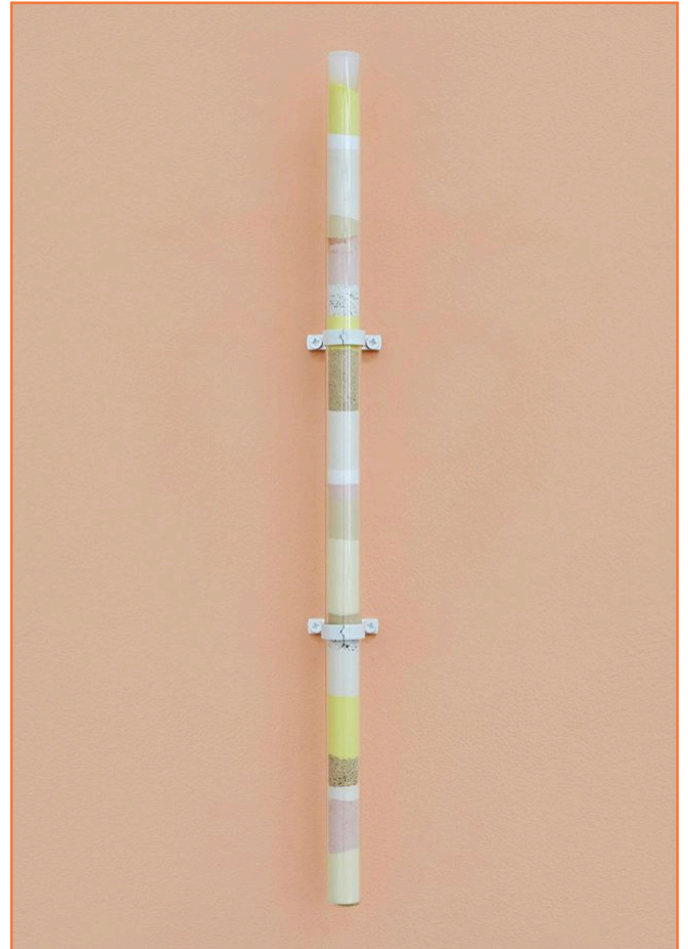
SOS / Sculptors on Sculpture is a series of weekly condensed interviews with early career contemporary sculptors.

Simon Linington's practice explores, through a range of media, ideas of personal and collective memory and the artists' role within and without society.

SOS: This series of interviews came to fruition during from the Covid19 lockdown, fostered by a spirit of generosity and finding new ways of supporting each other. As we enter a second lockdown, how have you adapted to the lockdowns? Have you been able to make work in these periods?

SL: In the first lockdown I was living in London, and in the beginning I was writing a short story called Ghosts which has since been published by Soanyway magazine. When I finished writing Ghosts, I started going to my studio more often, and I made 6/7 new pieces from the Souvenir series, alongside a number of drawings that was a completely new thing for me. I hadn't really drawn before, and certainly nothing like that. It was also around this time I started writing my first novella. I had only written short stories before, but I was encouraged to try writing something longer by Nita from Sunday Salon who published my first short story Evangeline Too, at the beginning of this year. I'm now in Andalucia, Spain, and in my second lockdown, and I'm still writing my novella, and I'm also making my first outdoor sculpture for a sculpture walk at Joya in the Parque Natural Sierra Maria – Los Velez.

SOS: : I first encountered your work through your 'Souvenir' series of sculptures. Can you talk more about this body of work?



'Souvenir', 2020, 2.2 x 2.2 x 50cm, Acrylic, chalk, clay, pigment, plaster and sawdust in glass tube

SL: I grew up on the Isle of Wight and my grandfather was a photographer, and he had a shop in each of the bigger towns that sold postcards and souvenirs to tourists. Many of these souvenirs were bottles of coloured sands collected from the cliffs at Alum Bay, which is also on the Island. My family started making these souvenirs during the Victorian period and you can still buy them today. The new ones come in different shapes, I have one that is a



skull and I like it a lot. A good friend, Charlie, bought me one of these souvenirs he found in a charity shop in Wales. It's the shape of the Isle of Wight, and at some point it got a small hole in it and some of the sand fell out, and what is left inside got shaken up. Anyway, I had never seen one like this before and I love it, and it was the inspiration for the vitrines I made in Mexico City. I poured the strata like I have always done, in horizontal bands, and when I finished doing that I shook them. It felt right for the place and the time, and I still like them a lot.

SOS: [Guest Question] Your dedication to process reminded me of Bruce Nauman's writings. Nauman is typically very private and I came across this originally unpublished interview he had done with Michele de Angus in 1980. Given your works relationship to memory and your childhood experiences on the Isle of Wight this

'Calle 5 de Febrero' (Top) and 'Calle Isobel la Catholica' (Bottom), 2019, 'Under the Volcano' curated by Brooke Benington, Studio Block M74, Mexico City

question felt appropriate. "What were the things you liked to do most when you were a child?" Did you always see yourself making art?

SL: When I was a child I lived by the beach and I spent most of my time there with my sister at my grandmother's café or at my uncle's beach hut. I wasn't a strong swimmer and the sea was a bit frightening to me, but I loved to stand in the water with my back to the Island and look at the horizon. I loved the sound of the gulls' overhead, and the feeling of my skin tightening as the seawater dried from my body, and I loved eating re-fried chips from the café at the end of the pier, and ice cream. I loved that it came in so many colours and each was a different flavour, and wanted to eat all of them at the same time, and

and I would eat as much ice cream as our grandmother would allow us, and more if I could get away with it. I would eat ice cream until I wanted to be sick, and I think this kind of obsession for something you enjoy is a good quality to have if you want to be an artist.

I didn't know any artists as a child and I didn't think one day I would make art, but I knew that my grandfather took photographs. My mother gave me a camera when I was really young, and it was looking through the viewfinder of my first camera that I started to see the landscape I walked in, in these boxes.

SOS: Within your practice you talk about your process of 'de-creation' where the residual matter of deconstructing exhibition spaces forms the basis for new work. When working in this way, how much of the exhibition is planned in your mind prior to the installation as opposed to responding in real time to material as and when it presents itself?

SL: Making these exhibitions new and unexpected things come up all the time. When we were making "In from the light" at Castor, I pulled out the ceiling and there was all this metal conduit behind it, and I didn't know what to do with it, and I ended up cutting some of it out and leaving other bits, and I can't tell you what the decision making was because I don't remember. When I was making "Everything can be broken" at Division of Labour I mopped the floor and the water was this yellowy colour that I thought was weird. Later that day I was removing a plasterboard wall and behind it on the brick, was a painted yellow patch, almost mustard, and it was a similar colour to the water in the bucket so I decided to keep the water and I put it in a clear bucket, and I placed it where it could be seen at the same time as the patch on the wall. I think I plan my exhibitions like I plan my holidays; I book an outward flight only and see what happens when I get there.



Installation view, 'Everything can be broken', 2017, Division of Labour, London



SOS: What's more exciting to you the idea or the execution?

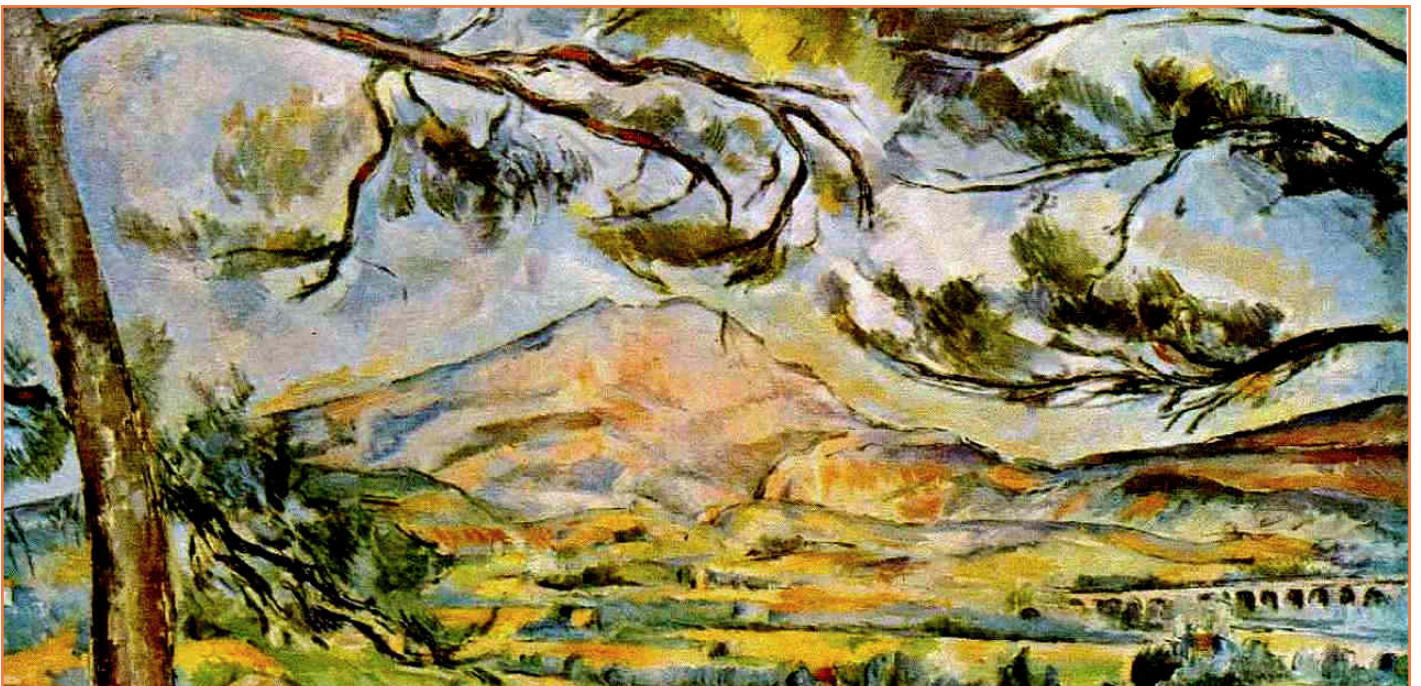
SL: Absolutely the idea, ideas are exciting. The execution is mostly finding solutions for an unfolding series of practical challenges, which when resolved, offers a degree of satisfaction.

SOS: To bring this interview to a close I would like to ask you about your influences, both within the arts and outside of it. Is there anyone in particular who has really affected you as an artist?

SL: There are so many people who have had an influence on, or inspired me. There are artists of course, you mentioned Bruce Nauman earlier, Francis Alys is another, the work he made in Mexico City was a big reason for me to visit that city. The first art I ever saw was in a Cezanne monograph on my parents' bookshelf. I was very young and hadn't travelled yet, and I wasn't only seeing paintings for the first time, but an entirely new world which was exciting, rich, and warm, and it was there in my hands. I

still love Cezanne, and I love the way in La Montagne Sainte-Victoire c.1887 the branch of the tree scoops at the air over the incline of the mountain, and I carry a postcard with this image around with me in my sketchbook.

I've seen every Samuel Beckett play and most of them I've seen many times. They are like the mountain opposite the house here in Andalucia, every time I climb it I see something different, and it surprises me. My grandmother liked to tell stories, and she would tell me about something that happened that morning, a dream she had the night before, or about an historical event on the Isle of Wight a few hundred years ago. She would go between each story without taking a breath, and I was never quite sure what happened when, and it was difficult to separate the dream from reality. I think about her storytelling a lot and I think it's inside of me, and I think we make things, anything, art, children, to try and make sense of the world around us, and this is how each of us writes our own story, and she and my memory of her, is a huge part of mine.



'La Montagne Sainte-Victoire,'
(detail) Paul Cezanne, c.1887,
The Samuel Courtauld Trust,
The Courtauld Gallery, London



Interviewer:
Josh Wright