

The seed of this exhibition is a conversation I had with my boyfriend about the purpose of our shared living room. It was a conversation following Nadir Project Space's second-ever exhibition, an exhibition that - like the first - took place in our living room. Based on the grounds of him being a smoker he said a smokers lounge would be a more appropriate use of the space, designed and furnished to aid his smoking habit.

For NPS's latest exhibition, we present **Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)**, an exhibition about smoking. Objects and artworks from Holly Stevenson, Becky Beasley, Sandra Lane, Noemi Conan and Taryn O'Reilly play with the ritual of smoking. The works included explore wider questions on the role smoking continues to play in society and culture, and the lives and social exchanges it provides a backdrop for. The sensory experience of *lighting up* is imagined through cigarettes clutched between fingers, fag ends on the floor and the humble cigarette. Straights, packets, cigars and ashtrays tell stories of family members who smoked, smoking's psychoanalytic nuance, and art historical heritage. The assertive femininity of women with cigs in hands and mouths draws upon the habit's perceived independence, glamour and coolness, which for a long time have played out within our cultural psyche.

Kitty B

Holly Stevenson

Holly makes ceramic forms that explore Sigmund Freud's favourite ashtray and last cigar as an analytical metaphor. Her sculptural vessels diligently embody and re-configure the ashtray and cigar as though they were gendered male and female forms, the yonic ovular dish representing the female and the cylindrical phallic cigar the male: These forms are clearly present in *The Three Graces* and also in *Pearl* where they become figurative. Obliquely and invariably the work considers the act of smoking as a time-based obsessional activity that encompasses many of the same desires making art embraces; hands and eyes drawing smoke rings, making clay coils, that think through our bodies as they burn out.

Becky Beasley

Astray is a brass cast of a cheap plastic hotel ashtray with the word 'Astray' added in Gloucester MT Extra Condensed lettering. Technically a malapropism, the omission of the letter 'h' from the word ashtray (a nod to Richard Hamilton's iconic addition of the letter 'h' to a French Ricard ashtray to write Richard) opens up a wild new dimension to the work, whilst also highlighting the Greek root word, *Astra*, meaning 'from the stars'. An untimely object in light of smoking bans and public health campaigns the production of an ashtray in 2014 is both about loss and celebration, but also about the repurposing of a type of object which, in eBay searches, one finds regularly described not only as ashtray, but also as small pot, bowl, or tea-light holder.

Sandra Lane

I was eight when I walked down to the sweetshop, a £10 note (I think) to buy cartons of 200 Lucky Strike and 200 Camels. The graphic red white and green target and the camel by the pyramid in contrast with the leafy Sussex background, incongruous and American like my grandmother. Years later, those images formed in clay along with platform shoes I'd worn later. Cigarettes, the pleasure of the smoking ritual, of stubbing it out with your pointy toe or spikey heel, new things to do with your hands and mouth that recalled the gin scented granny with the long red nails. The stubbed shapes of the cigarettes reminiscent of writhing bodies, girls in tight skirts. dancing.

Taryn O'Reilly

I have always found the act of smoking to be at the intersection of grit and glamour. From those who

smoked in classic films to the people I met coming out of a dingy dive bar late at night. Growing up the motif of a cigarette and more importantly the representation of the women who smoked them, embodied the disruption of mainstream femininity. She was always a little bit dangerous, a part of underground culture, and cunning. There was something about watching the likes of Mae West and Marlene Dietrich light up a cigarette and taunt the men in their films that felt inherently powerful. It was an act of defiance and autonomy as these women were in control over what went in or out of their body. This is a theme that has always been at the forefront of my practice. My sculptures and installations are meant to explore our conceptions of queerness, sexuality, and femininity through the use of dark humor, macabre and camp aesthetic. Nothing upholds this more for me than a woman smoking a cigarette.

Noemi Conan

I paint smoking ladies with a bad attitude and a disregard for customer service standards since 2018. They are inspired by the women I knew growing up, in small town Poland of the 90s, when everyone was smoking, everyone wanted money but jobs were precarious and hard to find. Around me the towns were dominated by women, single mothers and each was a business savvy survival artist, managing the conversion from real existing socialism to the gilded promise of capitalism imported from the West. The men were largely absent - consumed by the pursuit of money or defeated by unemployment and everything depended on the resilience of these chain smoking Amazon warriors (having Xena on TV helped to make the mythic analogies). Bread and cheap smokes from the East to calm one's nerves and stomach.