

CModS Artistic Practices:

# *Creative Responses to Covid-19*

## *Videos, Performances, and Music*

Countervoices (@cmodspgforum1)  
Centre for Modern Studies  
University of York  
29 June 2020

### 1. JORDAN HOLMES

#### *'Is self-isolate enough?'*

**Explanation:** I made this video at the beginning of April as things were really ramping up in the UK. I love playing the piano and musical comedy, and I'd seen a few of this sort of video floating around on Facebook and I thought – hey! I could do that. So I sat down and quickly wrote the lines (it took me much longer to learn the words than to write them!) and set it to Adele's Make You Feel My Love for a bit of tragi-comic effect. I only wrote it to make people laugh in a time when most are stuck inside, miserable, but I'm also very aware that it's a serious subject and those stuck at home are the lucky ones. Just wanted to make my mates laugh, really.

**Bio:** I'm a first-year biology PhD student who plays the piano. I won't be putting 'singing' on my CV though.

**Department:** Biology, University of York

## 2. KATE LEDGER

### 'Tappers'

**Explanation:** *Tappers* (2020) is the first piece of music I have ever written and is my response to COVID-19. By day I am a pianist who is interested in individual responses: to musical scores (as a performer or composer) and limitations. The diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations that may arise are explored in *Tappers*. The piece was written for Texas-based percussion trio Line Upon Line as part of their response to COVID-19, "Quartets For The End Of Time". Using an international network of friendships and personal recommendations, they seek new artists to write a piece for a separated trio plus the recently-introduced artist. Despite the limitations of lockdown (e.g. low-tech recording equipment, limited instrumentation, lack of physical contact) the results are varied, representative of individual situations, and unifying. Despite our distinctions (composer/performer; pianist/percussionist; York/Texas), our

connections remain strong, and are celebrated.

**Bio:** Kate Ledger is a pianist and interpreter of new music. She is a first year Music PhD student looking at the movement-based, awareness-focussed practice of Feldenkrais and its effectiveness for piano technique in new compositions. Collaboration and cross-discipline are a constant productive influence on her practice.

**Department:** Music, University of York

## 3. LYNETTE QUEK

### 'cb'

**Explanation:** *cb* is a series of responses towards the circuit breaker period that Singapore is undertaking as part of the lockdown process due to the Covid-19 situation. *cb* is a series of electronic circuits presented as sculptures, created with materials sourced only during the circuit breaker period.

Singapore is undergoing a lockdown termed as "Circuit Breaker" (CB). How Singapore is using the term is strategic, not causing any panic or unrests whilst taking precautions to curb the spread of the virus. This term that is used to replace "lockdown" in a way is community driven, where every person in the community is playing a part towards minimising infection, keeping friends and family healthy and sane, keeping active and maintaining our everyday activities, as if components in electronic circuitry. The term "circuit breaker", in electronics, means "stopping the flow of current in an electric circuit as a safety measure." Branching from the term's original usage as well as circumstances of the current situation, I started to construct small circuits from the start of the CB that somehow reflect my thoughts and desires of making and crafting.

**Bio:** Lynette Quek is an audiovisual maker from Singapore, currently based in York (UK), but is now again back in Singapore temporarily. Her work includes audiovisual installations, composition through sound manipulation, as well as cross-disciplinary

performance with the computer. Her current work examines the synchronisation and interaction within audiovisuality, challenging the notion of the heard/unheard, seen/unseen.

**Department:** Music, University of York

#### 4. ELI AUSLENDER

##### ‘Clocks and Flowers’

**Explanation:** A song I wrote during my lockdown time. I've been stuck in another country with my significant other, away from my actual guitar, which used to be my mother's. It's partly about being inside, and partly about benefiting others.

**Bio:** I'm a PhD in politics, 3rd year.

**Department:** Politics, University of York

#### 5. SOPHIE WILSON

(@sophieannaw)

##### ‘drift’

**Explanation:** I have written a monologue which was inspired by the intertwined feelings of disconnection and connection I've felt throughout the pandemic. The piece was developed as a response to being made redundant from a job I loved, after almost two years of service with the company. Though isolating, this actually stopped me from continuously fixating on the future and allowed me to use the lockdown to focus on the options I have ahead of me. I wanted to convey how disconnection and connection can be felt so simultaneously, yet so separately. I wrote it to display the entanglement of emotions that Covid-19 developed for many people, and it resonates around the idea of understanding personal struggles and appreciating the struggles of others, without comparing the two.

**Bio:** I am currently studying for my MA in Playwriting at the University, having studied my undergraduate degree in

Drama at the University of Exeter. I have spent a long time watching and writing for theatre, but also very much enjoy film and television as sources of inspiration. My main inspiration is drawn from dystopian fiction and altered realities.

**Department:** TFTI, University of York

#### 6. JAMES REDELINGHUYS

(@jnm\_red)

##### ‘Isolation offices’

**Explanation:** Since the start of the isolation, the soundscape in York has changed dramatically. Fewer people, fewer cars, and in between, new sounds emerge: birds, wind, distant rumblings of traffic, the beeping of the pedestrian crossing down the road. Environment, cultures, cities, humans can all be understood, all be known through sensing. Our place in the world is produced and reproduced by what we hear; we are not apart from this. A new soundscape both reflects and creates our new situation. Between the quarantines, the ennui, and a lack of

physical interaction, we are afforded an opportunity re-evaluate, re-know, and re-critique our environment, and reform our relationships with each other; and to actively listen, and understand our situation not through grand intellectualisation, but mundane sensing.

**Bio:** James Redelinghuys is a South African-born composer, and performer, and musicologist based in York, UK. They completed a BA with Honours at the University of Cambridge, and an MA by Research at the University of York. They are continuing with a PhD in Composition, supervised by Prof. Roger Marsh and Prof. Bill Brooks, focussing on embodiment.

**Alternative bio:** James was born in 786 in Styria, and sired as a vampire by the Karnstein family. Fleeing to Britain, they adopted the identity of Morgaine of the Fairies. Finding their way to South Africa in the 1950s, they fed indiscriminately on National Party members. They are studying for a PhD in composition, blood magic, and necromancy, ironically with the

notable vampire hunter Prof. Williams Brooks.

**Department:** Music, University of York

**7. STEPHANIE ORNITHARI ROBERTS** (the lead singer from *Everything After Midnight*) (@EAM\_Band)

**‘Home and All the Spaces In-between’**

**Explanation:** *Home and All the Spaces In-between* hopes to explore the fondness and repulsion to the spaces we are constantly living in. The video compilation incorporates moments of escapism and serenity, each one of us captured times of naturalistic rest and being detached from our homely surroundings. The idea of home is in flux as the nation is in isolation, it is no longer a place of returning but a place of constant being, one that may warps the fondness people may have originally placed with it. Spaces can become suffocating, so the series of videos hopes to capture when we are able to

disconnect from entrapment and simply be. The video’s soundscape uses recorded sounds from our own musical experimentation as well as the surrounding noises of our places of living. Magnifying the sounds we are continually hearing, thus the track illuminates the soundtrack to our isolation period; birds, cars, television dialogue etc. Our compilation hopes to find the spaces between the sometimes detested hated walls that determine the outlook of everyday, finding those moments that exist at home whilst our minds are elsewhere. Discovering the space between home and somewhere else, a place we much rather be.

**Department:** English and Related Literature, University of York

**8. BEN EYES**

**‘Quip Quaranstream’**

**Explanation:** The concert was performed as part of Xylem Records Quarenstream series of concerts with musicians from all

over the world.

<https://xylemrecords.bandcamp.com/>

About the gig: For this concert I used mostly vintage analogue equipment that I can no longer tour with as it is fragile and heavy so it is very rare I get to play with it live these days.

**Bio:** Ben Eyes is a composer, sound engineer and researcher currently studying a PhD in Composition with Federico Reuben at the Department of Music.

**Department:** Music, University of York

## 9. MEGAN SCHLANKER

(@meg\_sch)

**Explanation:** I've been following along with the escapril poetry challenge this month, and some of the prompts have inspired me to write about the current situation. It's hard to stay positive right now but I'm trying my best.

**Bio:** I'm a 23 year old MSc Bioarchaeology student new to York this year who dabbles in art and poetry. I also have two really stupid cats.

**Department:** Archaeology, University of York

## *Poetry and Prose*

## 10. RUTH KELLY

'Garden song'

**Explanation:** This poem reflects a sense of uncertainty as what I had expected for the next few years seems increasingly unlikely to happen. Over the past weeks I have spent more time in the garden, hearing children play and watching things



grow. I adapt the meter, rhyme and alliteration of the children's rhyme Ring a Ring o' Rosie, which is now popularly associated with the plague, although evidence on when the rhyme originated and when it acquired that association is sketchy. The final lines refer to butterflies and mice, but also to early summer flowers: Siberian iris (flight of butterflies) and myosotis (mouse-ear, or forget-me-not).

**Bio:** Ruth Kelly is based at the Centre for Applied Human Rights. Her PhD research looks at how storytelling can help activists in Bangladesh and Uganda re-imagine development and human rights. She is working with colleagues from ActionAid, the literature department at Makerere University and Chittagong Institute for Fine Arts.

**Department:** Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York

## 11. MING LIN (@MingLin88310968)

**Explanation:** It is a true story during this unprecedented time. It shows the detriment COVID-19 brings to normal daily life and the kindness and love people use to respond to it.

**Bio:** I am a masters student from the Department of Education at University of York.

**Department:** Education, University of York.

## 12. KYVELI LIGNOU-TSAMANTANI (@KyveliLT)

**“A Man with a Dog.”: A ‘textual image’**

**Explanation:** COVID-19: daily briefings on suffering and death. Yet, how was the situation for all those of us who were lucky enough to not get sick? Repetition and monotony were the key parts. At the beginning of the lockdown, everyday life became very challenging: the

process of finishing a PhD, the loneliness of living alone during the lockdown, being afraid for the health of my loved ones who live abroad, and a constant refresh of news pages flooded with suffering. A difficult combination that many people found themselves in. Some days were better than others – those bad ‘non-days’. Yet, paying attention to the small things was giving me comfort; small exercises of ‘observing’ the mundane through my window, were leading to little moments of creativity. That is how this ‘textual image’ was written. A ‘textual image’ of monotony; a neutral exchange of gazes that was carrying with it the safety of some kind of stability. The stability of repetition.

**Bio:** Kyveli Lignou-Tsamantani is an art historian, currently finishing her PhD in the History of Art Department, University of York. Her research focuses on the visibility of photographs of death, suffering and violence in 21st c. contemporary art and the ethics of spectatorship.

**Department:** History of Art, University of York

### 13. TOM MCLEISH (@mcleish\_t)

#### 'SARS-CoV-2'

**Explanation:** The poem was a response to a reflection the connectedness we have with the virus through the tree of life, and how that larger perspective might help us think about it. I write in both the sciences and humanities, so this sonnet was also a partner to the computational biophysics work that I have also been engaged with.

**Bio:** Tom McLeish, FRS, is Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Department of Physics and also in the Centre for Medieval Studies and the Humanities Research Centre at the University of York, UK. He has won awards in the UK, USA and EU for his interdisciplinary research in 'soft matter and biological physics,' and also works across science and humanities on medieval science, theology, sociology, and philosophy of science. The author of *The Poetry and Music of Science*, he regularly appears on BBC radio.

**Department:** Physics, University of York

### *Drawings, Painting, and Visual Art*

### 14. RONGKUN LIU

**Explanation:** Masked people floating around a lonely cruise ship with disturbed animals in sight, a painting in brush and ink with reference to the major event in 2020.

**Bio:** Rongkun Liu, Linguistics PhD

**Department:** Linguistics, University of York

### 15. ROSAMUND PORTUS (@RosamundPortus)

#### 'A Time to be Still'

**Explanation:** Over the last couple of months I, like many, have retreated indoors. It has been a moment of stillness in my life, with trips cancelled, events postponed, and the daily activities of my life put on pause. This period of slowing down has been surreal and, at times, anxiety or fear inducing. Yet, it has also given me an opportunity to indulge in experiences which I would have never

normally prioritised: revisiting old books, taking the time to experiment with new recipes, and watching the plants in my backyard wake up to the spring weather. And so, through this painting I seek to capture this moment of retreatment from the outside world, in which people have taken their work and their existences behind closed doors in a shared effort to protect both themselves and others around them.

**Bio:** Rosamund is a third year PhD student at the University of York. Her research examines the decline of bees, exploring how and why this process of loss has been narrated, responded to, and challenged through creativity. Rosamund is also a keen painter, and has previously exhibited at the Royal Academy.

**Department:** TFTI, University of York

## 16. RUI QI CHOO (@ruiqi26)

### ‘Hold on to Rainbows’

**Explanation:** Rainbows have been the colourful spark amidst the darkness of the past few months in appreciation of the healthcare workers and other key personnel in the UK. However, I want to acknowledge that the rainbow has long been a symbol of hope for the LGBTQIA+ community way before this. In this difficult time where people are told to #stayhomesavelives, I hope for peace for people in the LGBTQIA+ community who are confined in homes they do not feel comfortable being in and have had to put up a front the past two months. It must be tiring not being able to be out, in every sense of the word. But there’s hope – look to the plethora of rainbows around as signs of hope. Some day we’ll get to the other end of the rainbow and there we’ll find – the lovers, the dreamers and you.

**Bio:** Rui Qi Choo is in her third year of pursuing a PhD in Applied Linguistics in the Departments of Education and Language & Linguistic Science. She studies the language acquisition of bilingual

children learning Mandarin and English. She dabbles in baking, doodling, improv comedy and calligraphy when she’s not chipping away at her research data.

**Department:** Education / Language and Linguistics, University of York

## 17. GWENDOLINE PEPPER

(@gwen\_pepp)

### ‘Mourn 2.2.’

**Explanation:** Being an international student in the UK during a time of crisis is a strange experience. I find myself frustrated by the tension between the stillness required to control the spread of infection and the impulse to "keep calm and carry on". Collective Trauma is the phrase I keep coming across in relation to Covid-19 and this rings true. At a time like this, we need ways to find calm, but carrying on as usual is not just reckless, it robs people of the chance to mourn, something that is needed as we try to process the tremendous loss of life that is still happening around us. But not all of us are able to be still. This piece was a way for me to reflect on another source of



tension: the sense of duty to stay home, at odds with guilt over being privileged enough to do so.

**Bio:** Gwendoline Pepper is a first year PhD student in the department of Archaeology. She holds a BFA from NSCAD University and an MA in Medieval Archaeology from the University of York. Her research interests include medieval textile production, experimental archaeology, and in exploring art as a means of communicating research.

**Department:** Archaeology, University of York

## 18. EMMA BRYNING

(@EmmaVBryning)

**Explanation:** Throughout lockdown, I have slowly created a window display outside the front of my house. First, I made this rainbow as a symbol of hope inspired by the #chasetherainbow campaign. Influenced by my PhD research into historic and contemporary graffiti, I then created a mural quoting Maya Angelou who once said, 'be a rainbow in

someone else's cloud'. I had one rule when creating the mural, I could only use items that I already had at home. It's made of leftover plasterboard, markers, acrylic paint and various household paints. I then added a sign in support of key workers, 'Please don't just clap for them, demand fair pay for them'. These symbols of hope and gestures are important but they also need to be backed by effective support for better conditions, protection and pay. Finally, I added my contribution from an online zine workshop, 'A Little Feminist History of Art'.

**Bio:** Emma Bryning is a PhD student in the Department of Archaeology at the University of York. Her research focuses on the contemporary significance of graffiti at historic sites, in collaboration between the University of York and English Heritage. She is also a Heritage & Community Impact Manager at the Monastery Manchester and has previously worked in museums and heritage sites predominantly across the North West of England.

**Department:** Archaeology, University of York

## Photography

## 19. CHENG LI

**'learn from a guinea pig, highly sensitive always stay alert'**

**Explanation:** This guinea pig, called Teddy, is very cute and has an innocent face all the time. Because of the Lockdown and the fast spread of the virus, I often feel stressed and stay at home with a gloomy face. However, Teddy's face never changes, always this innocent face looking at anyone near to him. Also, he is highly sensitive, always stays alert, and any noise nearby would alert him to back to his little wooden house, and stay at his home quietly. I wish I can have the same detective ability to sense any danger and stay away from them. More importantly, replace the gloomy face with a calm and innocent one.

**Bio:** Cheng Li, third year PhD student in the History Department. I study the history of law reform and Jeremy Bentham's role in the reform politics in early nineteenth-century England.

**Department:** History, University of York

## 20. ROSEMARY ALEXANDER-JONES (@RosemaryAJ1)

**Explanation:** Covid has forced me back into my parent's house to work on my PhD in my father's study. As he is a scientist, I am surrounded by books outside my field, and the heirloom clocks he is restoring hang over me from both sides of the family. They all tell a different time, and none of them are wound. This stillness of time is an echo of the paused world outside. The items on the bookshelf are a reminder of my father's varied interests and my family's eccentric nature... Though I am confined to the house and garden this space provides focus and a chance to make progress in a paused world.

**Bio:** Rosemary Alexander-Jones is a PhD student focusing on English historical buildings in heritage film and their effect on the heritage sector. She is also a filmmaker and photographer, creating immersive 360 films such as 'Mission to the Stars' which was accepted to the 360 film festival in Paris in 2019.

**Department:** TFTI, University of York

## 21. THOMAS SHILLAM (@tomshillam)

**Explanation:** I was conducting research in India at the time that COVID-19 began spreading around the world. I took this photo of two pigeons I spotted from afar in Delhi in March. They turned out to be yellow-footed green pigeons, a species which forms part of the Columbidae family that includes birds like the collared dove and wood pigeon seen in the UK. During the worst phase of the lockdown I compiled an album of my very amateur bird photographs taken in India which also included the treepie and white-throated kingfisher. I would be happy to share more of these with anyone else who finds similar solace in birdwatching from such stressful times!

**Bio:** Tom is a 2nd year PhD student in the History Department at the University of York studying internationalisms in mid-20th century South Asia.

**Department:** History, University of York

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