

Project Abstract

The purpose of this project was to use the setting of an archaeological dig as a lens through which to observe the aura of objects. The desire to pursue this line of enquiry stemmed from an interest in material culture and how it has changed and evolved in tandem with humanity. Combining ceramics with other, less traditional, media, I staged an exhibition of sculptural work which explores the changing nature of our interaction with material, by positioning the viewer within an imagined archaeological dig-site.

The title of the project and the exhibition is *Relic Screens*. This title carries two levels of meaning: it is a descriptor of the objects included, in the sense that a 'relic screen' is the name for the type of apparatus used to separate soil from archaeological finds, but it is also a reflection on the fact that one day, our many digital screens may become relics themselves, small fragments from a bygone era.

The concept of unearthing and excavation can easily be applied to artistic practice and research - we dig down and brush away the dust whilst searching for answers to questions. But the unearthing of matter is also the starting point for many production processes. Unearthing is a universal activity; almost everything that we own has also been unearthed at one point; we rely so heavily on material which we take from the ground (oil for plastic, ores for metal, coltan for our smartphones) and eventually most of it will be retired there again, becoming part of the archaeological record.

Relic Screens takes place at the moment in which an object is unearthed, the moment an artefact is taken from the ground but before it moves to an archive, museum, home or landfill site. The works are a reflection on the lifespan of objects, and the way in which the archaeological record is changing as a result of the habits of contemporary humanity. It is also an examination of the production of aura, and the seemingly innate joy that comes with finding something in the ground. An homage to diggers both professional and amateur.