

Work in Progress

Victoria Lucas

Before I embarked upon the video commission for *National Memory – Local Stories*, the First World War felt like a distant, inaccessible dark memory lurking deep within the collective conscience. Overshadowed by the events of the Second World War, the carnage and brutality experienced by those who were engaged in the conflict seem to be so atrocious and inhumane that the thought of delving in to the subject became quite a daunting prospect. As an artist, responding to something so notoriously monstrous is challenging, and creating a piece of work that communicates the significance of the past in a way that doesn't become clichéd or naive is a thought-provoking task.

The initial stage of the creation of my video for *National Memory - Local Stories* was my involvement in the project of workshops as artist in residence. Learning alongside the workshop participants from Wanstead High School, the visits to Redbridge Museum and the National Portrait Gallery were an invaluable introduction to the collections and the themes of the project. My research with Redbridge Museum's collection and the National Portrait Gallery's Archive allowed me to respond to selected collection objects in the realization of my film. Once fully immersed in the accounts of the First World War, I felt a cognitive shift as my perception of everything I thought I understood about humanity, history, and current global situations altered. For a time I felt uncomfortable with the new knowledge I had acquired, and digesting the horrors of war became a part of the journey.

In my work I often create unintentional monuments to past happenings that seem insignificant at first glance. A dilapidated building and a series of empty billboards have all featured as subjects in previous works as a way to illuminate or commemorate the happenings they come to represent. Addressing the enormity of the First World War through an unintentional monument of some sort has been my focus over the past month since gathering my research. The summer has been spent drafting storyboards for the video, scouring the countryside for suitable film locations, and assembling a team of actors, dancers, and camera operators. The film shoot will take place in the muddy fields and wastelands of West Yorkshire. The final film will be exhibited at the Redbridge Museum from the 11th of November 2014 - 30th May 2015 as part of the xxx exhibition, and will also feature on the National Portrait Gallery's *National Memory – Local Stories* microsite, www.npg.org.uk/nationalmemory.

Victoria Lucas (b. 1982) is a Sheffield based artist, and works at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston as a Fine Art lecturer. She graduated from a Fine Art Sculpture Degree in 2004 from Norwich University of the Arts, and in 2007 she was awarded a MFA Fine Art Degree from the University of Leeds. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally, including a recent solo show at Grizzly Grizzly in Philadelphia, and group shows at Casa Maauad in Mexico City and Bolsky Gallery in Los Angeles. She also co-ordinates Hanover Project, a contemporary art gallery in Preston.