



EXTENDED HANDOUT

Nicola Ellis and Ritherdon & Co Ltd: No gaps in the line

13 June 2021 — 1 August 2021

Nicola Ellis was introduced to Ritherdon & Co Ltd (est. 1895) by The National Festival of Making's Art in Manufacturing programme in 2018. Following that Ellis has spent a further two years to date as artist in placement at this family-run manufacturer of specialist steel enclosures based in Darwen, Lancashire. Ellis has been working closely with experienced members of the Ritherdon team; observing, participating in, and at times, disrupting the ecosystem of the factory.

The nature of Ellis's project resonates with the activity of the Artist Placement Group (APG). Founded in 1966, the organisation sought to reposition the role of the artist within a wider social context, including government and commerce. The success of this current situation, where both artist and manufacturer can observe, learn and benefit from each other, is testament to Ellis' ability to build enduring relationships, as well as the openness of Ritherdon & Co Ltd to the placement of an artist in their working environment.

Some elements of the works in this exhibition are dictated by the nature of the materials, processes and systems that made them. Ellis' working methodologies have been informed in particular by studying the application of Lean Manufacturing philosophy – a philosophy aimed at the reduction of waste in the form of time, energy and materials. Other elements of the exhibition have been dictated by the dimensions, capacity and context of the exhibition space. The works create overlaps and new relationships between two separate geographical locations, organisations, and industries. Creating new ways of seeing: the gallery, the factory the artist and their potential.

Castlefield Gallery has supported and followed Ellis's work over several years. She has taken part in numerous exhibitions at the gallery including: *LAUNCH PAD: Meanwhile See This* (2012), *Nicola Ellis & Aura Satz* (2013) and *Oh, it is easy to be clever if one does not know all these questions* (2018). In 2019 Castlefield Gallery celebrated our 35th anniversary with the exhibition *No Particular Place to Go? 35 years of sculpture at Castlefield Gallery* which included work by Ellis, and later that year we took her work to the Manchester Contemporary Art Fair where *Dead powder series: Yellow*, (2019) was selected by The Manchester Contemporary Art Fund for acquisition into the public collection of Manchester Art Gallery, where it is now on display. *Nicola Ellis and Ritherdon & Co Ltd: No gaps in the line* is her first major solo exhibition in a public gallery. In 2020 Ellis has been the recipient of an Artist Award Scheme established by the Henry Moore Foundation and designed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nicola Ellis and Ritherdon & Co Ltd: No gaps in the line has been supported by The Ronnie Duncan Arts Foundation and Castlefield Gallery Commissioning Patron Prof. Chris Klingenberg.

Nicola Ellis would like to give a special mention to: Ben Ritherdon, Danny Hartley, Nigel Ormerod, John Wright, Brian Derbyshire and every member of staff in the Ritherdon team. You have been extraordinarily generous with your time, resources, knowledge and skills.

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