

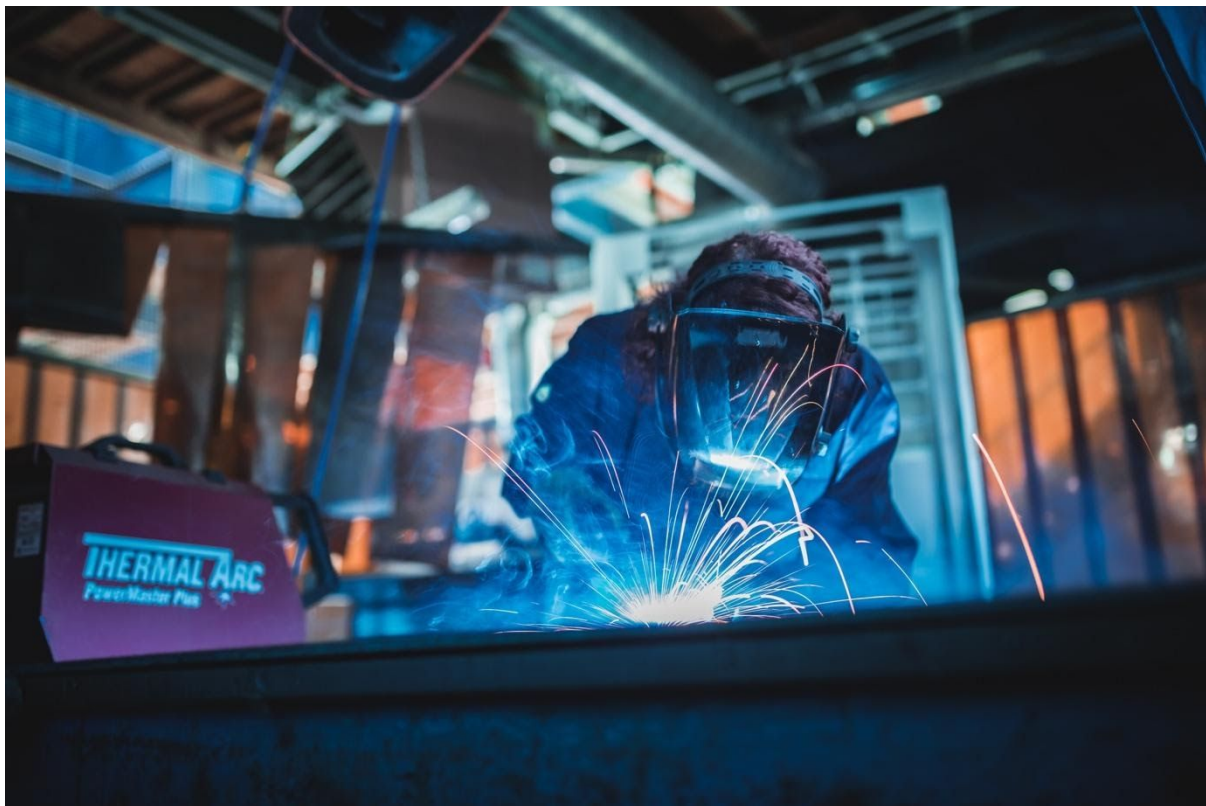
PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release

UPDATED: 28 January 2021

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

New exhibition dates: 13 June – 1 August 2021

Preview, Saturday 12 June 2021 (pre-booking, tickets to be released)



Nicola Ellis working at Ritherdon & Co Ltd Photo: Daniel Allison for the National Festival of Making

Nicola Ellis' first major solo exhibition will feature site-responsive installation, sculpture, painting, drawing, video and photography; works which bring the rhythms, sounds and material of manufacturing into the gallery space in unexpected ways.

First introduced to Ritherdon & Co Ltd (est. 1895) by The National Festival of Making, Ellis has spent two years in Darwen, Lancashire, as artist in placement at this family-run manufacturer of specialist steel enclosures.

Working closely with experienced members of the Ritherdon team, Ellis has been observing, participating in, and at times, disrupting the ecosystem of the factory, relying on their knowledge and ability to operate machinery at the edge of its potential. New works developed during Ellis' time at the factory expose a brutal beauty in the factory's minimal waste materials and explore what happens when industrial processes are pushed to their limit. Ellis has previously used industrial materials that are often perceived as low value or waste. This practice started through necessity early in her career where she was supplied with cast off materials by her father, an engineer in the steel industry. Her ability to work ambitiously with what is to hand enabled Ellis to make a large site-responsive piece for DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, in 2018, as part of an artist exchange organised with Castlefield Gallery.

The exhibition will include a large site responsive work reaching up into the gallery's double height space interacting with its architecture and towering over visitors, commanding attention through the large gallery windows that face Manchester's Deansgate and its transport hubs. The work is being developed by feeding a CAD programmed machine instructions to punch out a drawing of itself into thick steel sheets which will then be sprayed the same bright industrial colours as the machine. In order to make the work Ellis and the factory will need to drive the machine beyond the normal parameters of its operation.

The nature of Ellis's project speaks to 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 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. The company's founding history demonstrates a long-standing commitment to creativity and experimentation, and Ellis has found a real home with the manufacturers. The works in the exhibition will offer audiences an insight into the artist and manufacturer's ongoing relationship.

New works from Ellis' 'dead powder' series - metal panels coated with 'dead powder' (the leftover paint from the factory's daily jobs and a mixture of standard industrial colours and vibrant one offs), exploit the qualities of accident and excess. The paint is sprayed onto the panels until the paint slips and drips as it dries. These works have the potential to be understood as paintings and documentation of jobs processed in the paint shop. Other new work will see industrial strip lights in the gallery linked to light sensors in Ritherdon's factory that will communicate the rhythm of welders working in real time. A video installation will display documentation of the factory's industrial processes, showing how pace and rhythm is set, changed and communicated.

During her time in the factory, Ellis has been challenged to scale up and be more ambitious as she has observed the entire manufacturing process. These new works and 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.

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For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact: Jennifer Dean, Communications and Audience Development Coordinator at Castlefield Gallery, on jennifer@castlefieldgallery.co.uk / 07766046672

Notes to editors:

Nicola Ellis is interested in systems of value, function and circulation within places of industry and research. With her practice Ellis responds to relationships between people, materials and processes. Ellis' work often features loaned or exchanged waste materials, transforming them into a form of currency. This temporary appropriation creates an additional micro-cycle within the materials timeline, referencing recyclability and fluctuating physical states. Ellis is currently in the early stages of working with Para-lab Manchester to develop a long term collaboration with material scientists based at Manchester University. 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. 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.

At **Castlefield Gallery** (Est. 1984), we make new art possible. We are dedicated to the advancement of contemporary visual art. We are artist facing. We work with artists and creatives in Greater Manchester and beyond, at all career stages. We support them to develop their practice and careers, and to find ways not just to make art, but to make a living. We do this through: our gallery, and its free exhibitions and events that are open to all; through tailored career and practice development support; through our 200-strong artist Associates scheme; through the provision of low-cost studio and project space; through commissions and co-commissions; and through collaboration with universities, including annual graduate programmes that provide mentoring, coaching and more. For 35 years, we have supported young and older artists, new graduates right through to established artists, connecting them to each other, and to our international network of curators, arts organisations, artists and collectors. Castlefield Gallery's international work is focused on exchange between artists in the North West of England, and the rest of the world. We have an established track record in public art commissioning and public realm animation and activation. We are a female led organisation and a registered charity. Castlefield Gallery is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and Manchester City Council Cultural Partner. Our Artist Patron is the celebrated Ryan Gander, OBE.

Castlefield Gallery, 2 Hewitt Street, Manchester, M15 4GB

Admission is FREE

castlefieldgallery.co.uk

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Opening Times: Wed to Sun 12noon – 5.30pm

NB. Castlefield Gallery will be closed Easter weekend, Friday 2 April – Monday 5 April 2021 inclusive.

The gallery is fully wheelchair accessible, including provision of an accessible bathroom.

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.

With special thanks to:

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