

## *Defence Cascade*

Artist: Harrison Pearce

2020.04.14

The sculpture and kinetic sound installation 'Defence Cascade' was first exhibited in the UK in 2018. The full video documentation of it is shared here for the first time, but with renewed significance.

The work is a collaboration between Pearce and composer Alex Mills. They began with a discussion around brain physiology and the ostensibly misaligned 'fight or flight' response that underwrites so much modern anxiety. The result is a kinetic installation composed of a hybrid factory and theatre automation system, medical prosthetic materials and a musical score. Sitting somewhere between figuration and abstraction the installation touches on ideas about the fragility of embodiment, posthumanism and biotechnology.

The sculpture was inspired by Pearce's own brain scans, hospital experience, clinical discussions and lab based stress-testing apparatus. In the simulation of touch, and controlled by sound and air pressure, the work exerts and is exerted upon like a body undergoing an investigative procedure that can appear ambiguously to be both an act of care and harm, of life support and of torture. Pearce has been exploring what is meant when medical procedures, labour and coercion are described as dehumanising; this exploration is compounded by inviting composers to lend a musical score to materials explicitly considered non-human.

*"Although the work is not intended to be over determined it has jumped back into my mind these past few weeks. It feels more emotionally laden now than when I devised it in response to my personal medical experiences. At the time I struggled to accommodate rational, abstract ideas (the things I could not see but was asked to believe about my body) alongside the fear my imagination would induce and how these beliefs would continually change my felt experiences, both physical and emotional. I ended up with epistemic and empirical mistrust. I wanted to make a work that could house this set of sensations for me so I could almost restage them and watch from a distance.*

*To an extent I feel like I have returned to this cluster of sensations witnessing the spread of Covid-19 but what is more potent now is that they are likely shared so completely by humanity.*

*At the time of it's making I recognised that in its reductive abstraction this work seeks to imply all biological organisms at a level below race, sex, gender or even species. Now, however, I recognise that never before have I had such a convincing sense of humans as a single organism – and thanks to technology, as though with the nemocentric intelligence of slime mould. In the extraordinary collision of the micro and macro there is something unifying in the cascade of our biological fallibility stretched across the planet. And now I wonder aimlessly how we will reimagine the system in which we find ourselves and what this will mean for human empathy."*

## About the Artist

**Harrison Pearce** is a London based artist who works in sculpture and installation. He studied Fine Art at Winchester School of Art (2007) and City & Guilds of London Art School (2016) as well Philosophy at University of London (2014). His installations often include theatrical kinetic works and sound compositions that combine psychological drama with scientific research and industrial materials. Pearce's work has been shown at galleries and institutions nationally and internationally and has been acquired for private and public collections.

## KWM artcenter

The KWM artcenter opened on 20th October 2016. It is located on the second floor of the WFC centre CBD in Beijing. The art center is supported by the law firm King & Wood Mallesons. The KWM artcenter presents and promotes artists both domestically and overseas as well as building up its own collection. In particular, it acts as a rare art institution at the heart of the economic central area in Beijing. It provides high-quality art educational activities and courses aimed to cultivate art lovers and collectors. It serves to improve the international influence of Chinese Art and become a powerful communicator of Chinese Contemporary Art.