

What Grows in Between

Dan Booth, Abraham Babajide Cole, Hannah Rollason

10 July — 11 October 2026



Exhibition guide

What Grows in Between is a group exhibition of newly commissioned work made during the third iteration of Assembly, an annual development programme for local artists held in partnership with arts organisation Multistory. Initiated through Multistory's artist development programme *Blast!*, the opportunity platforms emerging artists from across the region, and makes space for them to push their practice and experiment with making new work. Participants receive development support and mentoring from both organisations, alongside a commissioning fee and access to a production budget.

This year we have supported Dan Booth, Abraham Babajide Cole and Hannah Rollason. Through painting, sculpture and installation, the artists explore connection and transformation as ways of navigating uncertain times.

As part of the programme, artists invited a guest mentor for a mentoring session. Special thanks to mentors Daphne Chu, John Newling and Hardeep Pandhal.

Dan Booth

Dan Booth uses figurative painting to explore place, memory, the performance of masculinity and class dynamics. His paintings often stem from found images and collage, assembling fragments and sketches until the composition reveals itself through the process. Figures such as the football hooligan appear as recurring archetypes, signifying alienation and belonging in male spaces, as well as the absurdity and humour of everyday social rituals. Booth has recently found himself drawn to the more personal subject of family life, which is the focus of new works created for the Assembly programme. Tenderness and threat coexist in these paintings. While depicting intimate domestic scenes, Booth uses light, colour, and the presence of shadowy figures to evoke a subtle sense of unease.

Here Booth references compositions by artists such as Caravaggio and Degas to reimagine traditional narratives around family, using art history as a reference to challenge assumptions around gender, tenderness and emotional vulnerability. In *Plaiting of the hair*, the artist is seen tending to his daughter's hair in a changing room, an act of care conventionally depicted between women. In *Nativity*, Booth places his family within the framework of Caravaggio's *Nativity with Saint Francis and Saint Lawrence*. Rather than



Dan Booth, *Plaiting of the hair*, 2026, oil on canvas. Courtesy the artist.

focusing on the mother and child, here it is the father whose experience and emotional state are centred. The artist gazes out of the frame with an expression of concern, a portrayal of fatherhood defined by vulnerability rather than a more traditionally impassive, authoritative presence.

Across works depicting public swimming baths and town centres is a wider concern with social inequality and the erosion of public and community spaces. Moments of community unfold against a backdrop of decaying, under-resourced public infrastructure, spaces which once fostered social connection. Characters are positioned humorously - in a series of paintings titled *Disinfectant*, two girls hold hands and a man slides himself across a wall, in order to avoid having to walk through the disinfectant pool. In his collage works, surreal figures and artists occupy and transform an otherwise deserted underpass. These acts of defiance and play enliven the ghostly, liminal environments the characters inhabit, a hopeful vision amidst precarious times.

Biography: Born in Stoke-on-Trent and living in the Black Country, I am an artist

using figurative painting to explore narrative, place and memory as well as themes of belonging, threat, alienation and class dynamics – drawing on both a dialogue with art history and elements of autobiography. My practice involves developing compositions from drawing and collage, working from found images, memory and life. My source material has included football hooliganism, darts players, industrial landscapes and my family. I'm interested in exploring images, words, phrases, signals or customs which identify membership of a particular group or culture, which form a spectrum from celebrations of dialect, unity and belonging to division, persecution and violence. I have exhibited in and around the West Midlands for the last ten years, and am currently studying for a Masters in Fine Art at the Birmingham School of Art, 17 years after completing my degree.

Abraham Babajide Cole

Abraham Babajide Cole's practice investigates themes of migration, cultural heritage and collective memory, and reflects on the fluid nature of identity. Drawing on personal experiences of migration, his work explores movement as a psychological and spiritual process of becoming. The tower-like sculpture *Elsewhere Has Entered the Body* is central to his new series of works, which consider the body as a vessel where identity is shaped over time, and trace the journey towards psychic liberation and transcendence. Migration is understood as an exchange between landscape and people, in which both place and individual are transformed through their meeting. The passer-by leaves traces of themselves wherever they travel and carries the marks left by their encounters along with them.

A fragmented colosseum embedded within the work evokes struggles for liberation and self-determination, while cowrie shells draw on symbols connected to Yoruba cosmologies around ancestral lineage and destiny. Rather than offering a fixed narrative, Cole intentionally constructed the sculpture to shift depending on the viewer's position, encouraging movement around the work and inviting the viewers to imagine the experience of journeying themselves. Different perspectives of the piece reveal new symbols, suggesting that there is no singular route towards belonging or fulfilment.



Abraham Babajide Cole, *Elsewhere Has Entered the Body*, (detail), 2026, terracotta. Courtesy the artist.

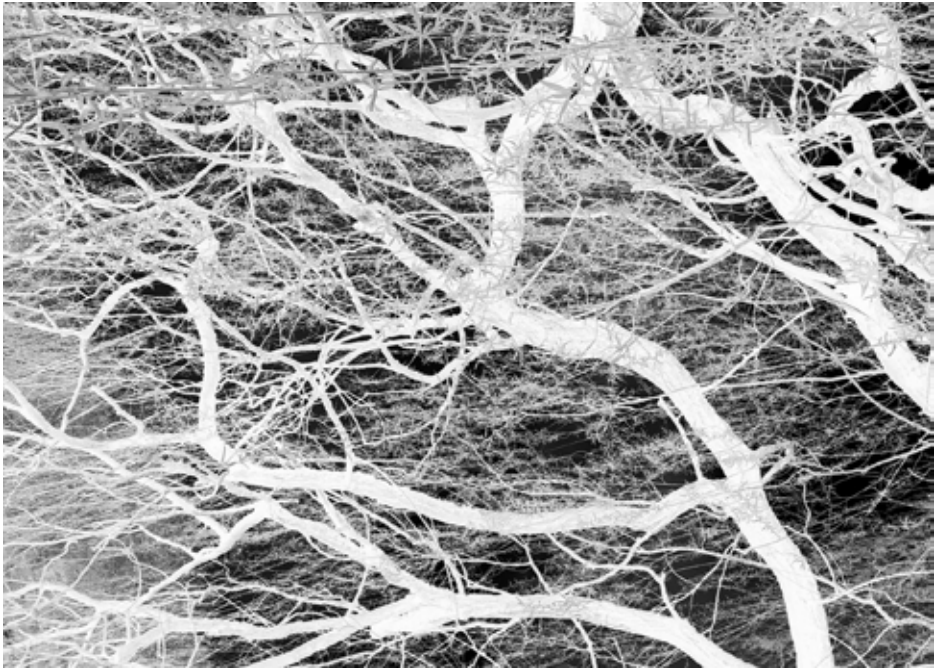
Nature is central to Cole's practice. Deeply drawn to forests and ecological systems that exist outside of, or despite, human control, he often works with organic materials such as beeswax, wood, charcoal and clay, chosen for their capacity to degrade over time. Preferring these materials over synthetic alternatives such as acrylic paint, the artist views their fading and deterioration as signs of their vitality. For a new series of paintings and drawings made with raw clay, charcoal and handmade oil sticks, human identity and plant matter merge to form new meanings. These works reflect on the transformative force of moving beyond the confines of national borders, and of reconnecting with the natural world.

Biography: Abraham Babajide Cole is a Nigerian-born, UK-based visual artist working across painting, drawing, and mixed-media installation. His practice investigates themes of migration, identity, and cultural heritage, weaving layered visual narratives that connect personal memory with collective history. Rooted in Yoruba philosophies of selfhood beyond the physical, Cole employs abstraction, fragmentation, and material experimentation to explore the unseen forces that shape human experience. His evolving practice incorporates sculptural elements such as clay and textured surfaces, creating multi-dimensional works that reflect the fluid nature of belonging.

Hannah Rollason

Hannah Rollason is an artist educator whose work explores the intersections of ecology and knowledge production, and the tensions between 'human' and 'nature', urban and wild. Drawing on her experience as a teacher and her PGCE training, she is interested in the potential of arts education to widen access to public discourse around urgent contemporary issues and build civic power. Her contribution to the 2026 Assembly programme develops from her long-running *Pepper Project*, which uses familiar classroom exercises, such as drawing a pepper, to examine the role of arts education in shaping future artists. It is rooted in Rollason's belief that artistic talent is not innate, but instead access to education, resources and support determines who gets to call themselves an artist.

Working interdisciplinarily across installation, sculpture, drawing, photography and ceramics, she interrogates the ways knowledge is produced and shared, seeing the climate crisis and unequal access to arts education as issues which are inextricably linked. Her installation practice is centred on an ongoing exploration of the tensions between site and non-site; how natural materials and living systems become commodified when represented within gallery contexts. The work she has produced for Assembly explores plants and more-than-human networks as models for alternative learning and connection, while critiquing



Hannah Rollason, *Within this framework*, 2026, print and intaglio. Courtesy the artist.

how capitalism reduces the more-than-human world to a mere abstraction - a pale echo of its full complexity.

Suspended plaster sculptures draw on the philosophical concept of the rhizome (originally a term for a type of horizontal root system) to imagine knowledge and culture as shifting and decentralised, rather than having a singular origin or top-down structure. In transforming the living matter into commodified objects for display, devoid of their likeness, the artist invites us to reconsider our relationship to nature. Accompanied by prints and lightboxes, the works propose non-linear, interconnected ways of being in the world, while challenging the hierarchical structures that exclude many from the conversations shaping our shared future.

Biography: As a conceptual artist, I create large-scale installations to engage audiences physically and psychologically. My multimedia work includes drawing, photography, film, and ceramics. Embracing form and aesthetics, the manipulation of media draws out symbolism, metaphor, and myth within the context of the work. Focusing on Climate Change, my work explores the relationship between humans and nature, specifically the interactions, connections, and disconnections of urbanisation, agriculture, rural, and wild. Initial inspiration comes from personal exchanges and everyday visual influences, often drawing in subjects such as history, ecology, and social politics to create an interdisciplinary practice.

EVENTS

In Conversation

26 September, 2-4pm

Join the artists in conversation with Jess Piette of Multistory and Deborah Robinson of The New Art Gallery Walsall.

ABOUT MULTISTORY

Multistory is a community arts organisation based in Sandwell in the West Midlands, UK. Since 2006, our work has been shaped by the people and places here. We work with communities, artists and partners to reimagine the local area, platform underrepresented voices and explore how creativity can support social change. Rather than working from a single site, we move across Sandwell and the wider Black Country; you'll find us in libraries, parks, community centres, galleries, high streets and other public spaces. Our programme is place-led and unfolds over time, ranging from; community gatherings, social and ecological arts projects, festivals, workshops, events, exhibitions, commissions.

www.multistory.org.uk @multistory



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