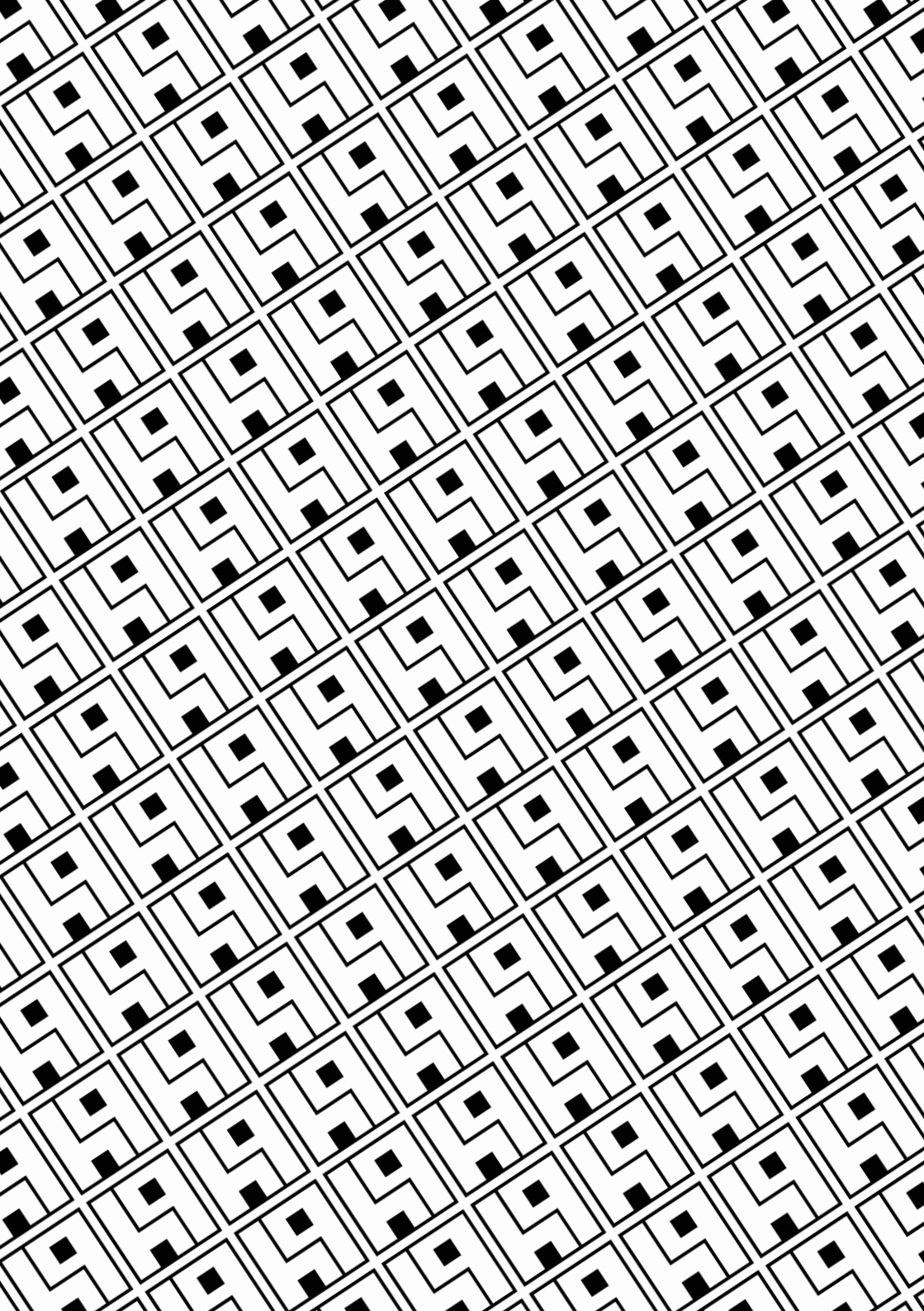


GUIDE TO OBSERVATIONS

31 / 10 / 2026

28 / 02 / 2027

[illegible]



The New Art Gallery Walsall is delighted to present *Vibration Calibration*, a collaboratively conceived exhibition by artists Claire Buckerfield and Tom Hicks (Black Country Type). Developed over the past two years, the exhibition brings together new works by each artist alongside ambitious sculptural installations that reimagine the Black Country's post-industrial landscape through a shared aesthetic.

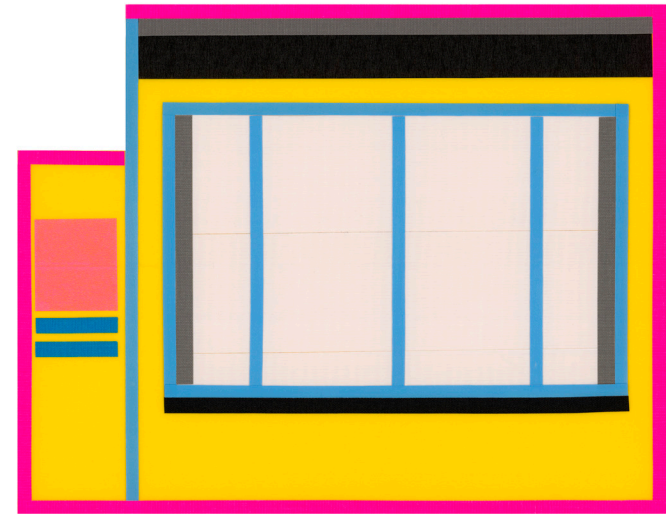
Drawing inspiration from the built environment, the artists transform familiar surroundings through a bold interplay of form, colour, and composition. By bringing the often-overlooked qualities of ordinary places into focus, their work encourages us to re-evaluate the spaces we inhabit and to shift in our perception of them. In their commitment to living and working in the region and continually producing work in response to the area, they assert the value of the Black Country and the locale as being rich in material worthy of artistic enquiry.

In the search for their subject matter the artists explore their surroundings on foot or by bicycle and are able to work intuitively when identifying buildings, sites or objects of interest, instinctively recognising those that will translate effectively into an artwork. Hicks engages with the ideas of psychogeography and the *dérive*: the act of drifting through a place, allowing yourself to get lost and remaining open to the element of surprise.

In the studio, Buckerfield transforms her photographs of building exteriors into drawings constructed from industrial tape, picking out architectural features to be re-rendered in a vibrant colour scheme. Just as significant as the details

Buckerfield chooses to include are the elements she purposefully omits. Through a process of selection, erasure and re-composition, the building facades undergo a striking metamorphosis.

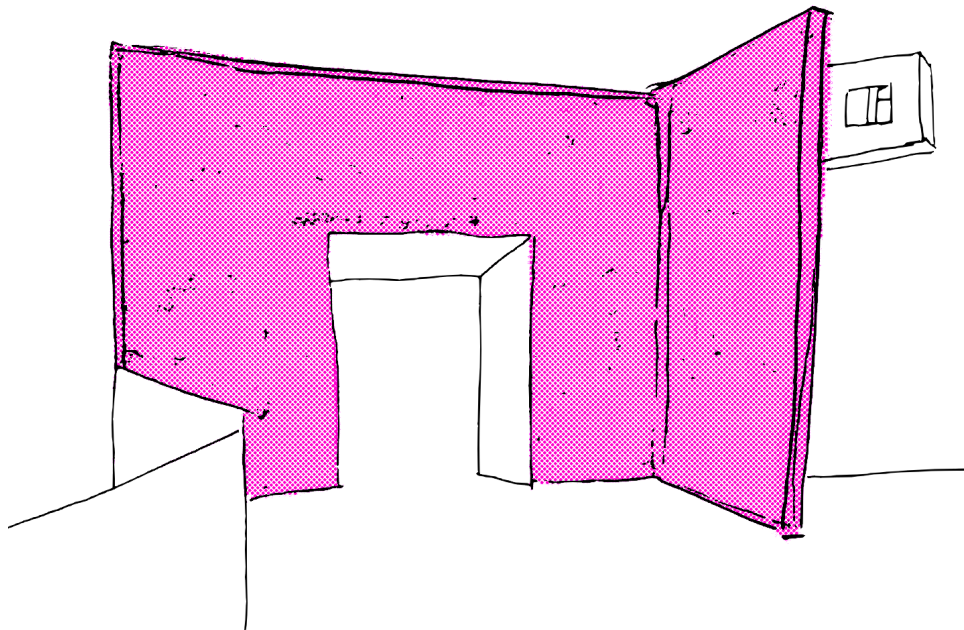
Hicks begins composing his images on his smartphone before digitally refining them, cropping each to a square. Through this uniformity of framing he assigns equal significance to every observation, from shopfront typography and comical graffiti to the tonal variations of a tiled underpass and the symmetry of a corrugated metal roof. Through these photographs of buildings, objects and surfaces, he constructs a visual portrait that reflects on the area's distinctive character.



VC-CB37



VC-BCT07

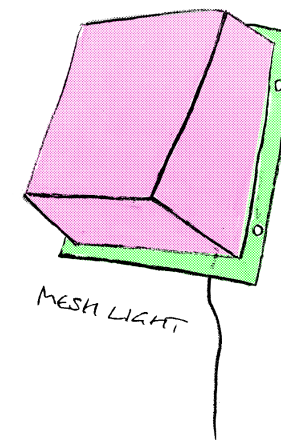


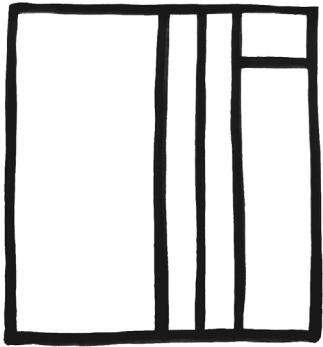
A sense of ambiguity permeates the exhibition. This sense of uncertainty has been deliberately cultivated by the artists through the combination of the exhibition's title, a newly constructed entranceway to the gallery space and the presence of a logo.

In engineering, 'vibration calibration' is a mechanical process used to measure the accuracy of vibration sensors. In the context of the exhibition, the term evokes ideas of recalibration, making reference to the process that underpins the artists' practices - the reworking of the environment around them.

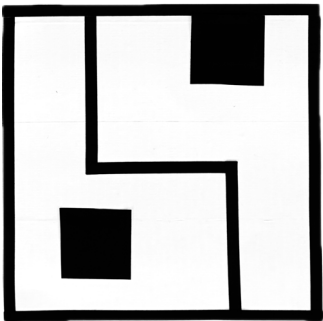
Echoing Buckerfield's brightly coloured works, the gallery entrance has been reimagined as a neon-pink facade designed to disrupt its setting and provoke curiosity. Beyond this threshold, the approaching corridor becomes a transitional space, lit from behind a metal grille and lamp to evoke the atmosphere of liminal spaces found in nightclubs and music venues.

Returning to the principles of psychogeography, the artists use this entryway to investigate how environments shape our perceptions and seek to alter the visitor's state of mind before entering the main gallery.

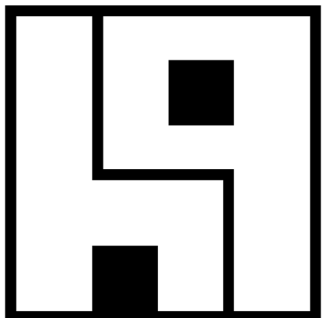




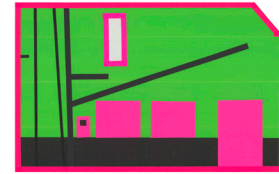
The logo, designed by Buckerfield and Hicks, was established early in the development of the exhibition as a visual marker for the artists' collaboration. Combining their initials, it is a nod to the logos used by regional factories in the 1970s and 80s. Operating under the guise of a fictional corporation provided Buckerfield and Hicks with a framework in which their practices could intersect, reinforcing the exhibition's shared authorship.



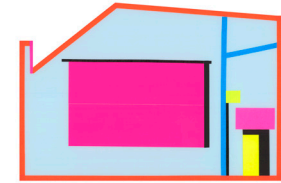
The logo recurs in different guises: in a poster, on a lightbox, as a supersized wall drawing and embedded within an artwork, serving both as a wayfinding device and a tool of indoctrination, immersing visitors in the show's visual language before they enter the gallery space.



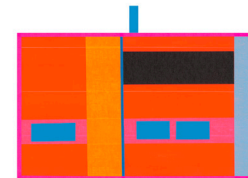
For the exhibition, Buckerfield has transferred her tape drawings onto cut Perspex, introducing a sculptural dimension to the works. Ranging from squares and rectangles to the silhouettes



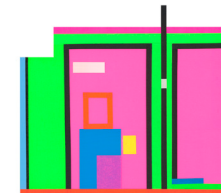
VC-CB01



VC-CB03



VC-CB08



VC-CB12



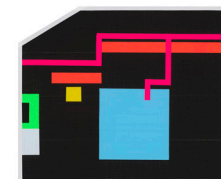
VC-CB41



VC-CB22



VC-CB07



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VC-BCT28



VC-BCT04

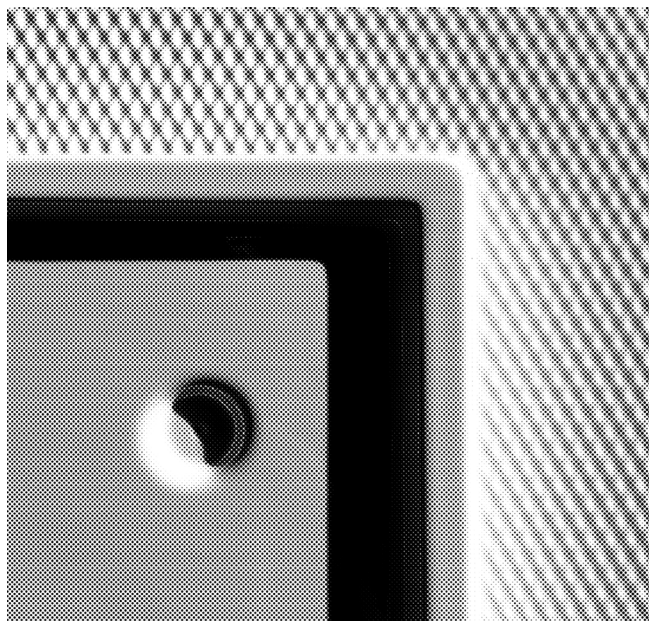
of domestic and industrial buildings, onto these forms she has chosen whether to translate the entirety of a facade or partial details of one. Interspersed amongst the multicoloured studies are large white Perspex panels - untouched except for a fluorescent outline, they deconstruct her process of looking by focusing purely on shape. Arranged across shelving, their composition is evocative of a suburban skyline, however, leaning unfixed against the wall, their precarious positioning alludes to a more temporal existence and a configuration with the potential to shift and evolve.

A large grid of previously unexhibited photographs by Hicks explores form, colour, and texture. Functioning both as a unified abstract composition and as a series of individual studies, the arrangement creates a continual push, pull effect, drawing viewers from

brightly coloured building edifices into subtle details such as a plant creeping into the frame or the linear qualities of a mangled metal vent. Characteristic of Hicks' work, blue skies transport the subjects to sunnier climes reminiscent of Miami, challenging stereotypical associations with the region's industrial landscape.

For the first time, Hicks has chosen to exhibit a small selection of images in frames, and in doing so, separates them out for our attention. Selected by the artists together, these photographs echo the palette and formal qualities of Buckerfield's compositions, bringing their practices into dialogue and highlighting affinities across colour, form, and materiality.

Influenced by the mass-produced modular boxes that house electrical units on the street, Hicks used vacuum

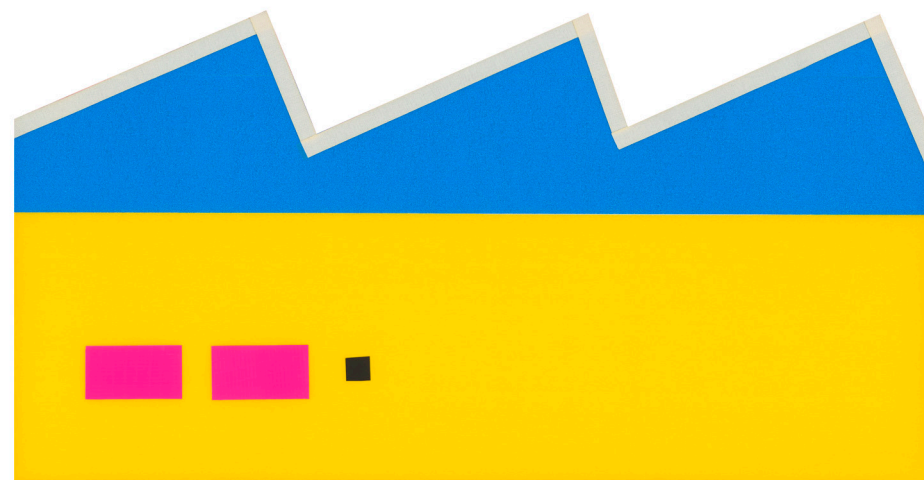


forming to fabricate his frames. Although he initially intended to trim the plastic into sleek tray frames, seeing the prototype led him to keep the textured perimeter of excess material. By leaving the pieces untrimmed, he allows the process of making to remain visible and subtle variations to emerge, creating a deliberate tension between the object's raw state and an imagined 'finished' version.

For the exhibition, the artists collaboratively conceived new sculptures in metal, directly inspired by features encountered in the built environment: improvised security bars informed the shelving for Buckerfield's works, a vent cover was reimagined as the entranceway lamp and security screens led them to create a triptych of powder-coated mesh panels.

Responding to the gallery's large windows, the artists have installed a luminous orange laser-cut metal screen, its pattern derived from an iconic mid-century decorative concrete block. Commonly used to partition spaces and frequently encountered by Hicks on his walks, including along a factory boundary wall, its positioning at the periphery of the space enables a discourse between the work, the exhibition, and the urban setting of the town centre below.

To fabricate the new sculptures, the artists expanded their collaboration to a network of skilled regional manufacturers. Factory visits and in-depth discussions with fabricators opened up the possibilities of welding, laser cutting, and powder-coating, enabling the artists to reimagine everyday urban objects as sculptures that elevate their inherent qualities. By connecting contemporary art with established local industry, the exhibition affirms the vital role of the region's



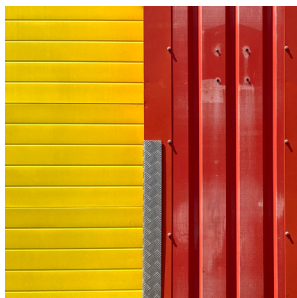
VC-CB18

manufacturing capabilities and demonstrates how its industrial heritage continues to shape new creative production.

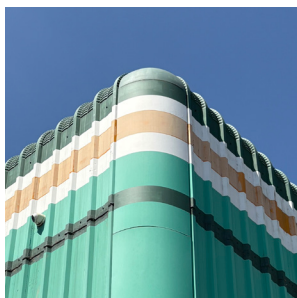
The artists employ a vibrant palette throughout the exhibition, directly challenging conventional perceptions of the region's post-industrial landscape. Often dismissed as cheap, tacky, or frivolous, these lurid hues signal danger in nature and sites of manufacture. These luminous colours are intrinsically linked to mechanised production, not naturally occurring, they are dependent on synthetic pigments and industrial processes.

Conceived as a homage to the Gallery, the artists' hyper-local triptych reflects on the architecture of the building. The two outer panels bring the artists' practices together in the form of photographic collages.

Images of the Gallery's architectural features have been digitally spliced and recomposed, onto which Buckerfield has applied tape in her



VC-BCT16



VC-BCT06



VC-BCT02



VC-BCT22

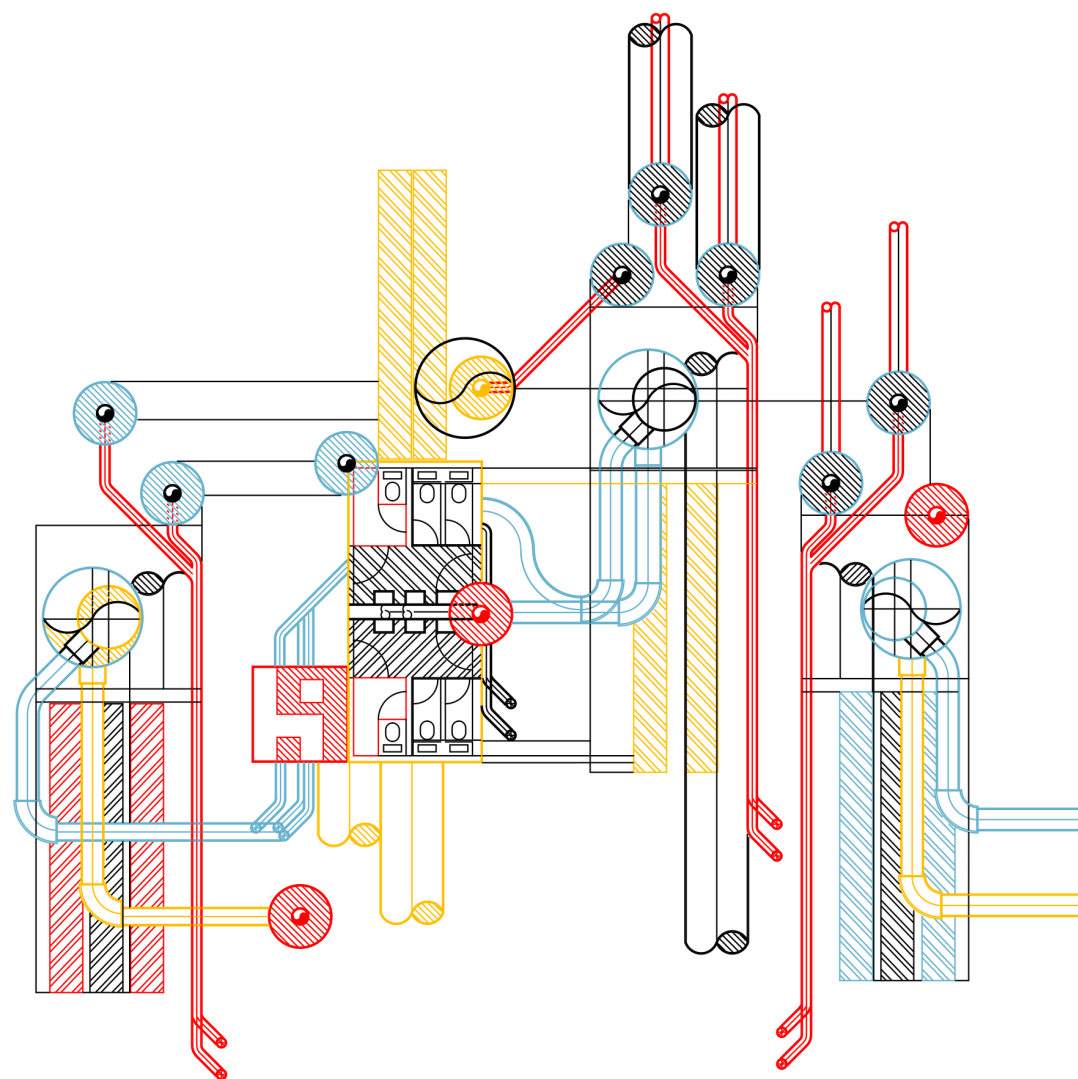
signature colours. In a final layer, the collages are positioned behind screens, the images still visible yet partially obscured, their appearance altering depending on the angle they're viewed from or the shadows cast across them by the mesh.

Referencing the religious origins of the triptych as an altarpiece, the central section consists of hinged doors that conceal an

artwork. When opened they reveal a 'control' panel designed from the Gallery's floor plans. Although non-functional, the panel creates the illusion of an operational system through a switch, lights, coloured buttons, and fictional functions such as 'stimulating reflectance', 'analysing luminosity', and 'optimise fluorescent'. These phrases playfully appropriate the often-obscure language of industrial processes while alluding to concerns and methods central to the artists' practices.

In an extension of the exhibition title, the artists have named the panel the 'Vibration Calibration

Initiation Substation'. Within this metaphorical 'nerve centre', they position themselves as integral components of the panel through the incorporation of the exhibition's logo and their names. Their initials, given as BCT (Black Country Type) and CB, are displayed next to the key switch, effectively becoming the two settings of the device. By aligning themselves with the mechanism responsible for initiating systems and setting programmes in motion, Buckerfield and Hicks affirm their collaborative activity as a catalytic force, through which alternative modes of perception are activated and made possible.

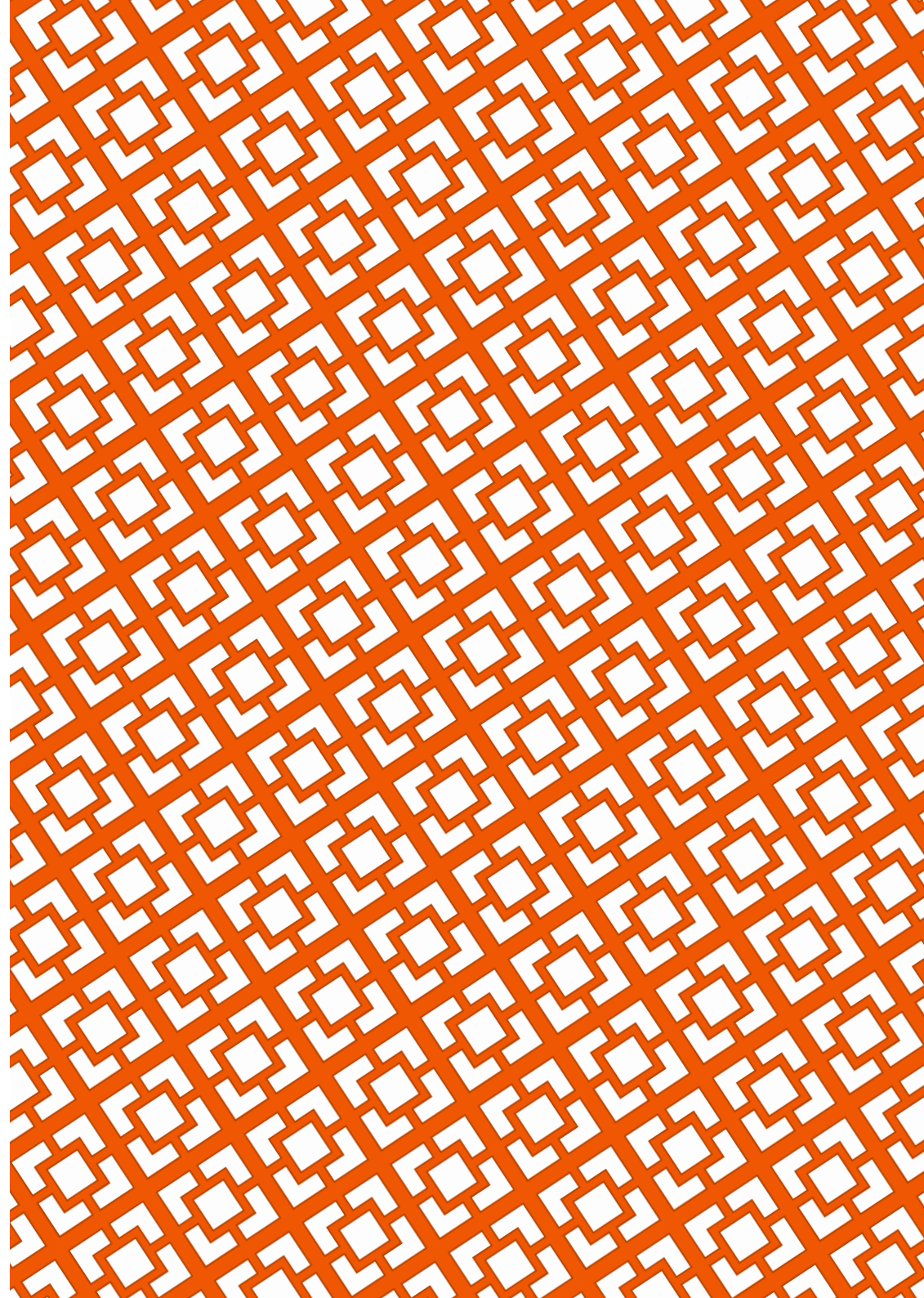


Hannah Anderson

Exhibitions & Collections Coordinator

Curator of Vibration Calibration

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VC-BCT22	Wednesbury
VC-BCT28	Oldbury



A large print version of this guide is available on request.

Resources

Publication

A new publication published on the occasion of the exhibition is available to purchase in the Gallery Shop for £12.00

Film

A film offering an insight to the artists' practices and the development of the Vibration Calibration exhibition is available in our Resource Area and online from November 2026.

Events

Photowalk and Workshop

Saturday 5 December 2026, 11am - 3pm
£20 / £18 concessions. Ages 18+

Photowalk & tape drawing workshop with Black Country Type (Tom Hicks) and Claire Buckerfield

Spend the day with the artists for a hands-on insight into their practices.

Artist and Curator Tour

Saturday 23 January 2027, 2pm - 3pm
Free, booking required.

Join artists Claire Buckerfield and Tom Hicks along with curator of the exhibition Hannah Anderson, for an informal tour of the exhibition in the gallery space. Stick stools available.

Please book via Eventbrite.



Walsall Council

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