

## It Wouldn't Be Worth It Without The Struggle

Many art students aspire to make it big in the art world, but sustaining a career in that industry can be an uphill struggle. Featuring 18 alumni of the Cardiff School Of Art & Design, this exhibition showcases work by those for whom the struggle is starting to pay off.

Babette Martini's spooky-looking wax heads have chilling, deadpan expressions; their lifeless gazes seem to glare right at you. More faces watch from James Allen's painted portraits imitating the styles of Rembrandt, Sargent and Velásquez. Allen's virtuosity is assured, but his mimicry lacks vitality. Far more engaging are Eve Dent's performance-based photographs (pictured), in which she squeezes her body into some impossibly tight spaces. Whether she's tightly packed into a hole in a wall, or up a chimney flue with her dangling legs just visible, it's clear that Dent struggles quite literally for her art.

Other highlights include Natasha MacVoy's sculptures using clusters of coloured wooden poles; and Sam Aldridge's life-size skip made from painted cardboard.

*David Trigg*  
*Metro Newspaper*

What happens to art graduates?

It Wouldn't Be Worth It Without The Struggle is an ambitious artistic project by curator Neil Jefferies. It explores the diverse ways artists from a common start point sustain themselves and their practice upon graduation. Incorporating two exhibitions, a text and a symposium the project starts with an exhibition at the Howard Gardens Gallery of recent work by some of the most talented artists to have studied in Cardiff during the last decade.

This exhibition is born out of the curators interest in the amount of continued dedication needed to sustain an artistic practice once graduated. The project seeks to investigate how artists incorporate the creation and exhibition of work into their daily lives and how they feel about the role educational, artist-led and governmental institutions play in the process. The project brings together eighteen artists who's only link is their time spent at Cardiff School of Art and Design and through interviews and symposia will uncover the different ways each has navigated such crucial tasks as seeking funding and gaining exposure.

To initiate the project an exhibition to showcase the work of each of the selected artists will take place inside the CSAD campus. The eighteen artists have been selected to participate by the curator, from a shortlist of over a hundred and twenty Cardiff School of Art & Design BA, MA and PhD Fine Art graduates nominated by University tutors and local gallery directors.

Included artists are located across the UK, and span a plethora of mediums and styles. They include South-Wales based mixed media artist Carwyn Evans who grew up in rural wales before moving to Cardiff to further his artistic career, and who draws on this personal experience in work that reflects on the process of migration in the Welsh social and political landscape.

Juxtaposed with this will be the sublimely crafted paintings of London based artist James Allen, who stands on the shoulders of giants by recreating portraits of the courtiers and noble men contained within the works of masters such as Velasquez's and Sergeant. The transcriptions are not only telling of the subject but reveal the individuality of the styles of both Allen and the original painter.

In contrast some artists will be working directly in the space such as Bristol based Natasha MacVoy who's delicate installations are imbued with a sense of unease as they teeter on the brink of collapse. While other artists will draw directly from their time spent at the campus such as Cardiff based sculptor Sam Aldridge who constructs imitations of mundane objects from corrugated cardboard and coloured paper. Objects that are not recreated verbatim but built from memory, the new constructions both reflecting and distorting the original subject and revelling in the enjoyment of the manipulation and transformation of materials into something they are not supposed to be.

*Welsh Art Now*