

firstsite

14 october – 22 december 2006

residue: a programme of independent commissions, projects, performances, residencies and events marking firstsite's transition from the Minories Art Gallery after ten years

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residue

residue: a small amount of something that remains after the main part has gone...¹

Residue is a programme of independent commissions, projects, performances, residencies and events marking firstsite's departure from the Minorities Art Gallery after ten years habitation. A rich legacy of activity will remain as firstsite's doors close; residues in the form of physical imprints, emotional responses, intellectual stimuli and social experiences.

The complimentary strands of Residue are an invitation to reflect on firstsite's particular history, the preceding legacy of the Minorities Art Gallery and number 74 High Street, while also looking at more abstract metaphors that consider our relationship to shared experience, memory and place. Contributions range from direct, static site-specific responses to abstract, dynamic interpretations.

Over the past ten years, more than one thousand artists and makers have left their mark on firstsite, both physically on the building and, more subtly and less visibly, on visitors' consciousness. These are residues that may have had lasting impact on individuals beyond the viewing experience itself; impact that firstsite is unlikely to have tracked or have ever been aware of.

Each artist's presentation within Residue exists

independently. However, while introducing personal perspectives, they share at least one commonality: each offers the opportunity and space for viewers' reflections and the building's presence. The projects are all 'residues' in themselves, formed from: projected light, dust, absent subjects, fading sound, painted fragments, ground-down pigment, performance relics. At times there is almost nothing there or nothing happening: intangible, insubstantial, transparent, ephemeral. Together, this is a space for personal recollection and contemplation, shared memory and nostalgia.

This archival box is a lasting document of these transient interventions. The tone and tense of the texts that follow indicate the range of Residue's individual parts; residencies are necessarily discussed in terms of a potential outcome, while more determined parts are considered in a reflective way. We are indebted to the artists for their valuable perspectives and commitment to the project. Gratitude too is extended to the writers, made up of both firstsite staff and outside contributors.

Annabel Lucas, Assistant Director, firstsite
1 Oxford English Dictionary, second edition, 2003.
cover image: *Prickings* (Victorian headdress)



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jevan watkins jones

song

For Jevan Watkins Jones, song is distinctive. It does something different. It is a form of expression, engagement and emotion with residual qualities. Songs are easily remembered, can exist as traces, and evoke specific feelings and memories upon being heard. At firstsite he intends to explore these ideas by creating a song inspired by the organisation, its current home at the Minorities Art Gallery and the broader notions of 'residue'.

The artist's current direction has been informed by a recent work; in Spring 2006 he installed *Bladder-wrack* on the beach at Aldeburgh, Suffolk. This work was a remarkable hybrid of performance, pseudo-science experiment and sound. The artist positioned a 'mother-pod' on the shore and connected it to 'feeder-pods' scattered across the beach; constructed from various sized, turned-out tyres these became receptacles for listening – each one presented an opportunity to hear words and noises associated with the sea. Joined as a network, sound originated from the mother-pod and travelled out to the feeders; this journey affecting and distorting the quality of the final sound much as any musical instrument shapes the noise it makes. The piece recalled experiences of listening to the sea through shells. Pods demanded active listening – participants had to bend, strain and want to hear, the sea and shore seemingly real containers of an underground noise.

Swan Vigil (2005) is another example of the artist merging sound, performance and visual elements to create something akin to poetry. Responding to the regeneration of Ipswich docks and its impact on the swan community, the artist created a vigil. He spent a night on a boat observing and filming their behaviour. The final piece comprised a screening of this footage, accompanied by a performance echoing the swans and sounds produced by pouring, splashing and tumbling water.

Watkins Jones' work is defined by its subtlety and beauty. Both *Bladder-wrack* and *Swan Vigil* were created collaboratively and it is this aspect of working that he wishes to develop during his Residue residency. The artist does not yet know the direction or final outcome of the new song's composition; will it have a genre? How many voices will it need? What kind of chorus or harmony will it have? His residency is thus a process; music and lyrics may be written, acted out, sung loudly or performed finitely to an audience, to then be altered or rejected as a result. The life of the song lies afterwards, when the artist intends to explore recording and disseminating it, possibly finding an audio or virtual space where it can continue residing.

Kath Wood, Director, firstsite

cover image: *Between the Moon and Trees*

