

Joseph Buckley

WINDOW OF
APPEARANCES

Joseph Buckley
Artist-in-Residence
Fall 2025

Window of Appearances
September 23 – November 16, 2025
Black Family Visual Arts Center
Dartmouth College

This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the William B. Jaffe Memorial Fund and the Matthew Wysocki Memorial Fund

I Foresee Bleak Obscenities Jamie Sutcliffe

"Sometimes I think I'm dead to horror, but then some new abomination steps up to the challenge and shoves the truth down my throat: horror can never be sated and no man will ever be allowed his fill. There is always more and worse to come."
—Peter Fehervari,
Fire Caste

"Hope looks ahead and anticipates. It affords us a power to act and perceive of which neither reason nor understanding are capable. Hope sharpens our sense for what-is-not-yet, the not-yet-born that dawns at the horizon of the future. It is the *midwife of the new*. Without hope, there can be no *departure or revolution*."
—Byung-Chul Han,
The Spirit of Hope

I. DREAMS IN THE WARP HOUSE

"WORRY PEOPLE" OR "Trouble Dolls" are tools of sympathetic magic that originate in the indigenous hill cultures of Guatemala. These miniature effigies, fashioned from small pieces of sculpted wire or paper and attired in ancestral Mayan dress made from colorful fabric offcuts, are now sold globally as part of a new-age-inflected wellness trade. They come in hand-painted boxes and are often placed tenderly beneath bedroom pillows. Traditional use has it that we might whisper our anxieties to these kindly entities before sleep in the hope that they hear our daily concerns, quietly worrying about them on our behalf.

I was expressly reminded of this folk custom when, a few days before Christmas, 2023, the British-born artist Joseph Buckley sent me a short video message from his Brooklyn apartment. Filmed from a first-person perspective, it showed the artist emerging from his bed, bare feet landing on wooden floorboards, before his hand could be seen reaching a short distance toward a bedside cabinet. Inside the cabinet's drawer was a burgeoning stockpile of toy soldiers. Phalanxes of Imperial Guard, or more precisely "Astra Militarum," the ill-fated canon fodder of *Warhammer 40,000*, a "Grimdark" table-top war game set in the bleakest of all imaginable futures. Relics from the artist's childhood.

It hadn't occurred to me until the writing of this essay to mark Buckley's solo exhibition *Window of Appearances* at Dartmouth College, that these mass manufactured "war dollies" might have been an inverted form of worry person; vanguarders of a tarnished prescience that had been whispering their worrisome truths as the artist

slept. Corrupting the apotropaic function of the trouble doll, what if these injection-moulded figures had been broadcasting nocturnal cautions? Grim prognostications of the most uncertain futures? Dark dreams of cyclonic dread? What's more... what if they'd been whispering to him his entire life?

II. USE OF WEAPONS

BUCKLEY'S ART ISN'T just informed by a lifelong fascination with the blackened moods and irregular textures of science fiction. It actively deploys them as a uniquely honed conceptual and sculptural vernacular that's at once cautiously hopeful as it is frustrated, suspicious, despairing. As keen a reader of the theoretically considered works of Mark von Schlegel as he is the tech-hardened far-future novels of Iain M. Banks or Stephen Baxter, he's distinctly less interested in the genre's anticipatory foresights, cerebral schemas and heady solutionism than he is its heightened sensitivity toward absolute contingency, or the ineluctable frailty of the present.

Indeed, his embrace of science fiction feels firmly rooted in a mood of engaged distrust, looking beyond the oracular hyperbole of the genre to the ruinous circuitries of overheating servers and silicon wars that its exhausted prophecies have left behind. A lucid exposition that seeks an arsenal of interpretative weapons that might parse techniques of governmental dominance, persuasion, and betrayal, the metastatic traces of emergent fascisms, and, perhaps most importantly, the violent transformation of bodies into objects of commerce, servitude, and display. Or, as the artist himself has put it in a characteristically sobering phrase, "the speculative abuses that render people into chattel, orcs, suspects, and clones."

As such, he reads H.P. Lovecraft as an unrepentantly racist cosmologist in a world presently seduced by the recasting of the Cthulhu mythos as a depoliticised teen romance; locates aesthetic portents in the architectures of torment described by Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) as Hollywood re-directs attention from the book's anti-imperial echoes in Gaza; and perceives parables of ceaseless diasporic displacement in Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* (1989) as nested proxy wars drive civilian populations into calamitous hinterlands of terminal uncertainty. Buckley's art collapses science fiction then into a material confrontation with the

awful present, not through literature, but through the creation of sculpture that sits in increasingly uncomfortable proximities to the bleak world that envelops it.

III. STANDARD TEMPLATE CONSTRUCTS

LOVECRAFT, HERBERT AND SIMMONS found their mephitic lifeblood industrially siphoned by *Warhammer 40,000*, a British sci-fi pastiche written by Richard Halliwell and Rick Priestley, and first published in 1987 by British board game manufacturer Games Workshop. Since Games Workshop's corporate takeover in the early 1990s, the company has been effectively hellbent on a "Total Global Domination" of the miniatures market. This phrase was, in fact, de-bossed in silver with mocking facetiousness on staff handbooks, and similarly imprinted with sinister intent on shareholder reports circulating in boardrooms that certainly stank of demons.

Like many young men growing up in the grim darkness of 1990s Britain, Buckley was captivated by the bleakness of the game's lore, which channelled something of the acerbic irreverence, disenchanting class consciousness, and satirical skewering of authoritarian statecraft that Pat Mills' apocalyptic comic *2000AD* had made its stock-in-trade. Importantly, it was the dual effect of the game's distribution between narrative, rule set, and sculpted miniatures that would infect the artist's heart and mind for the next thirty years, and continues to provide a deep well of inspiration for his thinking around sculpture.

Warhammer 40,000 is a clanking replicator of extractive capital. A lore-driven tumescence that metastasises its gaudy world of intergalactic race wars into our own through the endless replication of injection-moulded petrochemical offspring. It is both toyetic and totemic. At once a completely ignorable commercial inanity and the most compellingly awful vision of a truly accelerated imperialism that we have available to us. A world of endless betrayals, celestial suffering, and mechanised death. A world in which planetary scale manufacturing process human corpses into an edible starch that can be pumped back into human populations. A world in which hatred of the hazily perceived "Xenos," "Alien," or "Other" drives entire species into the stars to extinguish their enemies beneath boot and blade, waging

ceaseless campaigns of malice that do little but indefinitely sustain the death knell of already extinguished empires.

These somnambulant and ill-fated campaigns, rendered simultaneously in the game's fictions and its plastic products, might provide Buckley with an allegorical echo of a Britishness drunk on the memory of its own imperial splendour. But they might also provide him with a fitting logic for the creation of a sculptural practice that takes replication and its attendant processes of sculpting, mould-making and casting as a material index of the social reproduction of racism, oppression, poverty, shame or any other hateful mechanism of capital.

Much like the plastic effigies we might find strewn upon the imaginary battlefields of the 41st millennium, Buckley's sculpture partakes in toxic industries of plastic production to render and visualise material realities and the martial energies that sustain them. Often rendered in high-molecular polymer plastic resins, works such as *plagues, fires, floods* (2021) or *Extinction* (2024) resemble ranks of Riot Cops, Private Military Contractors, mercenary Militia, armed Cartels or ICE squads adorned with a kind of protruding viscera. Enforcers of what trans-feminist scholar Sayak Valencia has defined as a kind of "gore capitalism" in which the spectacular disintegration of bodies has been commodified into its own serviceable product in the maintenance of a socio-economic system that strategically eludes and occludes its own barbarism.

"I can justify and explain away my actions, making the work that I do from the materials that I do, but when all is said and done, I have made ugly and evil figures from that which will kill us all," Buckley has suggested, situating his work directly in the slipstream of industrial extractivism. There's no redemptive sentiment here, no critical loophole that exempts the artist from various forms of layered complicity, simply the imminent dread of things glimpsed in the opalescent "clarity" of Smooth-Cast™ 326 resin.

IV. GOOD NIGHT, LITTLE HOUSE

YET FOR ALL of this apparent bleakness, it's easy to stand amongst Buckley's works and perceive a sense of genuine tenderness. A commitment to the interrogation of sculptural discipline, from

religious statuary to architectural edifice, and the ways in which they shape and condition emotion and belief. And a vaguely defined hope that our destiny as a human species might somehow be rerouted from its present course. Why else would he build all of this stuff?

As it happens, the works comprising *Window of Appearances* are perhaps his most tender yet, and they sit together in their own somnolent atmosphere, products of a dreamy illogic that oscillates between innocence and jaded worldliness, sleepy wonder and stark horror, playful curiosity and irrevocable bodily suffering.

The warmly illuminated *The Harrowing of Hell* (2025)—a work the artist described to me during its production as "a sculpture of God having a really bad time"—is a translucent effigy of Christ that commemorates the de-canonised story of the Son of God's journey into hell between his death and resurrection, a period in which he is alleged to have redeemed the damned and battled Satan.

As a humanoid proxy, the figure is so compellingly vulnerable in its prostrate arrangement that it begs a kind of animist concern. Sculpted in the 3D modelling software Z Brush as 2024 drew to a close, the work sat on Buckley's hard drive for a period, perhaps floating in its own form of digital internment, before being resurrected via 3D printer and providing the prototypes for over thirty moulded pieces. A composite of both material components and a rich bricolage of sculpted allusions to styles of joinery and articulation that characterise pre-protestant German statuary, the figure exudes a kind of "ecstatic shame," the crystallisation of a perfect torture in which the corpus of the resurrected Christ bears witness to his radical teachings repurposed as justifications for genocide, murder and pederasty.

Good Night Little House (2025) erects a sanctuary of sorts in defiance of these trespasses. It's a meticulous replication of the artist's Son's first sculpted object, a little house composed of MAGNA-TILES®, a kind of magnetic building resource for kids. In Buckley's 1:1 scale approximation, the model house is reproduced in Crystal Clear™ Series resins that betray the surface tensions of their exothermic curing process. The structure appears mineral hard and yet prone to breakage if subjected to the right pressures. It's both an exercise in intergenerational prefabrication, and a rudimentary evocation of the fundamental sculptural space in which something like a family might make a home and establish the conditions of its own continuity.

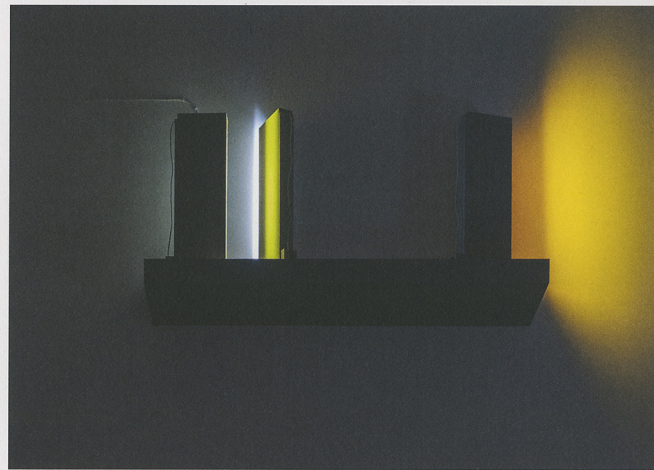
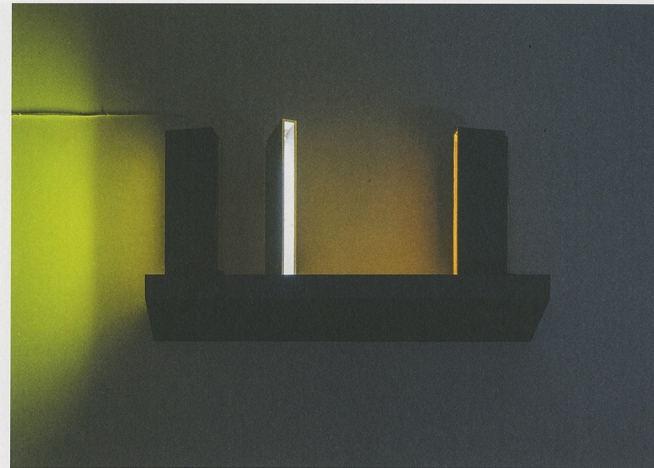
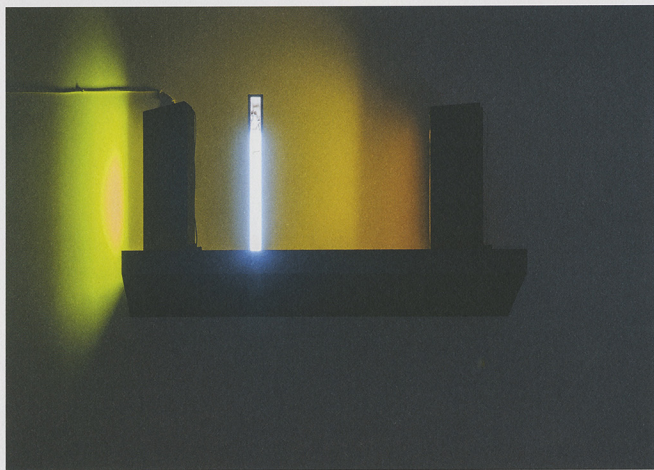
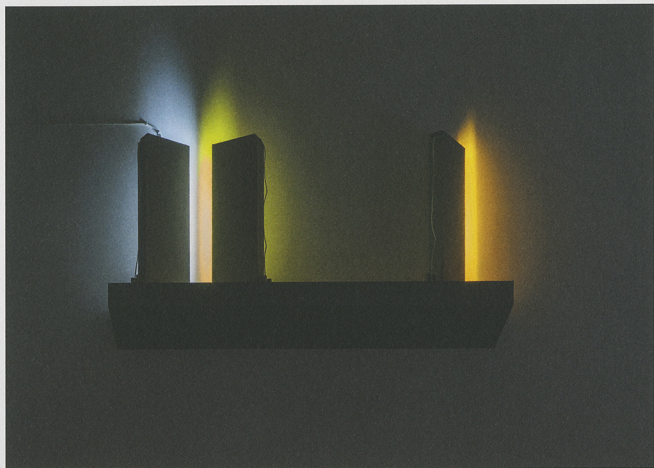
Both of these works are bathed in the gently pulsing radiance of *Motorway Machine* (2025), a luminous kinetic arrangement of encased bulbs that replicates the warm orange glow of low-pressure sodium street lamps used to illuminate British night-time roads throughout the 1990s. The work calls to mind both the effect and ethos of British-Canadian artist and artist Brion Gysin's *Dream Machine* (1959), an upright lamp that could emit frequencies capable of lulling those who looked at it through closed eyelids into a hypnagogic state of relaxation and contentment.

Allegedly conceived on a coach journey in which Gysin observed the psychedelic effects of sunlight dappled through the leaves of overhanging trees, Buckley's machine was similarly conceived in transit, albeit as a memory of the late night journeys he and his sister used to take along the motorway between Leeds and Ellesmere Port to the respective homes of his separated parents' in the north of England. It echoes previous experiments such as *Floor Work 2020* (2020) in which the artist replicated celestial totems and sigils from the curtains of his shared childhood bedroom, fabrics that were carted back and forth between houses to create the appearance of stability. Again, we can sense here a form of refuge, albeit one sculpted from the itinerant comforts of a rear car seat drenched in the hazed flicker of overhead lights.

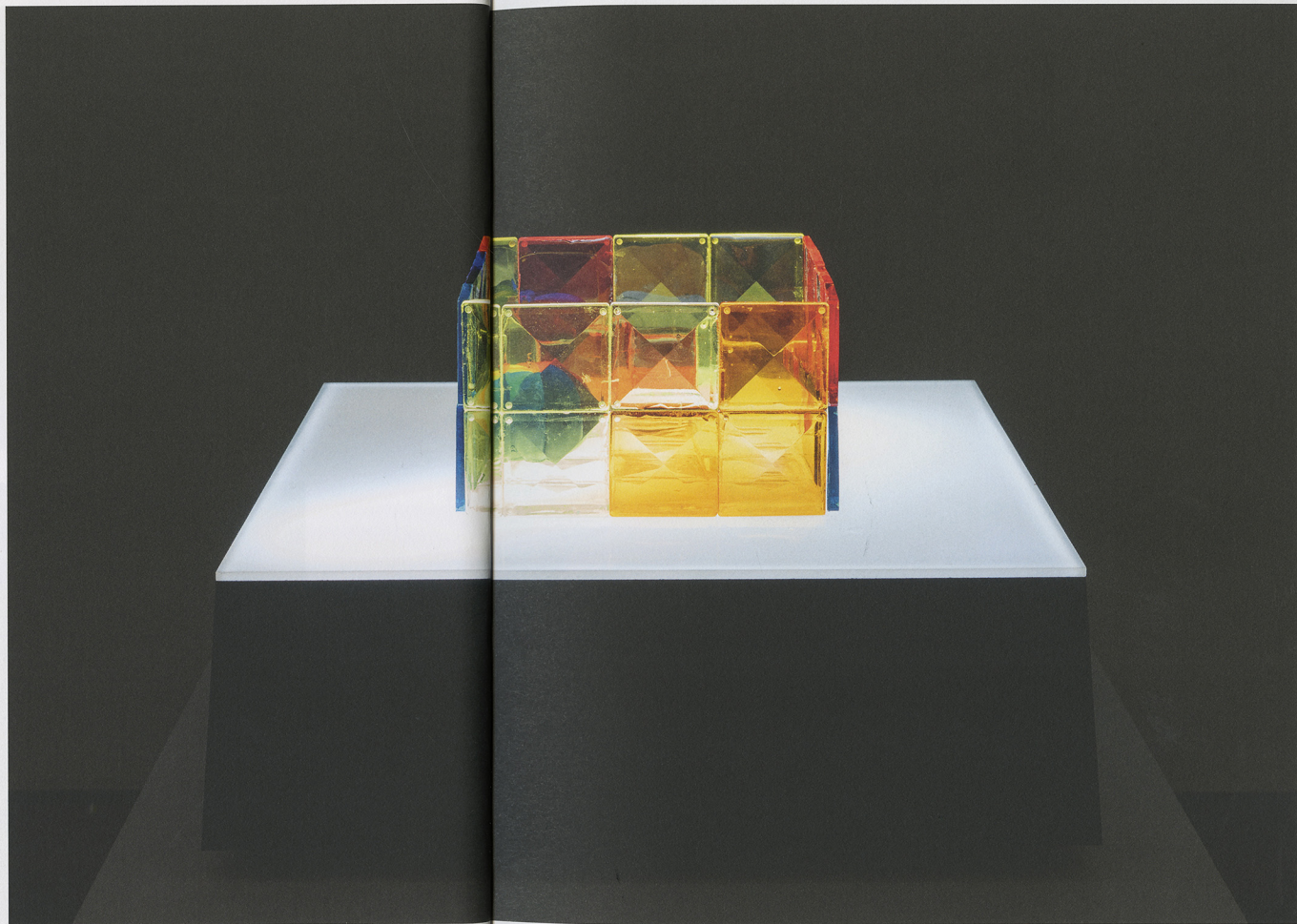
It's quietly resonant, this image of children being shuttled down a motorway in the gloom of night in the back of a parent's car. The harsh brutalising modernity of motorway travel enshrouding such vulnerable bodies with blistered tarmac and exhaust-choked concrete, as they're hurtled into an indefinite future at exponential speed. Perhaps it forms an essence that we might identify and trace through Buckley's work to-date; a pensive recognition of the fundamental vulnerability of bodies caught in systems of manufacture and social reproduction that seem hellbent, despite their best intentions, on harm and heat death.

Jamie Sutcliffe is a writer, curator, and co-director of *Strange Attractor Press*. He edited *Documents of Contemporary Art: Magic* (Whitechapel/MIT, 2021) and *Weeb Theory* (Banner Repeater, 2023), and is the author of *Let Me Work!* (forthcoming, Breakdown Press). His writing has appeared in *Art Monthly*, *Prieze*, *e-flux Criticism*, *The White Review*, and others. He lectures at *Chelsea College of Art and the University of Northampton*. Sutcliffe's work explores science fiction, gaming politics, animation, haunted media, and myth.

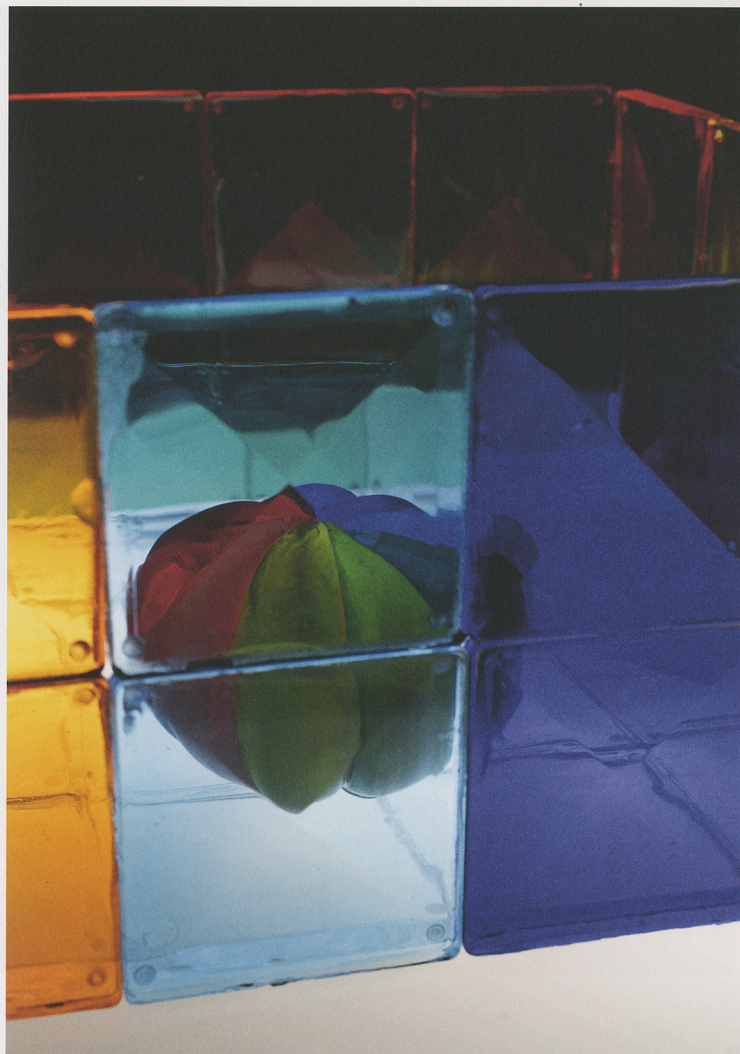
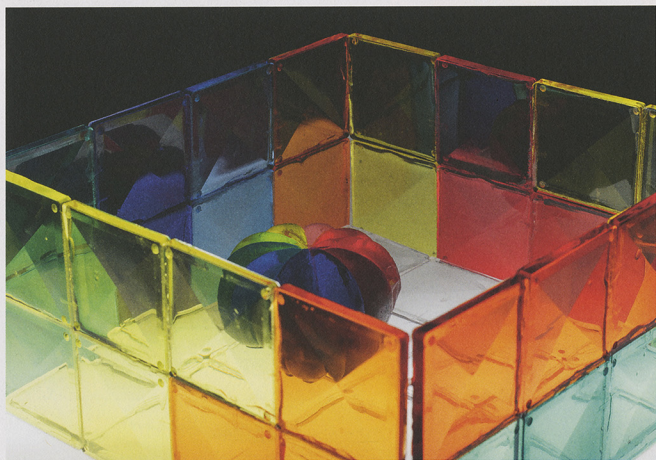
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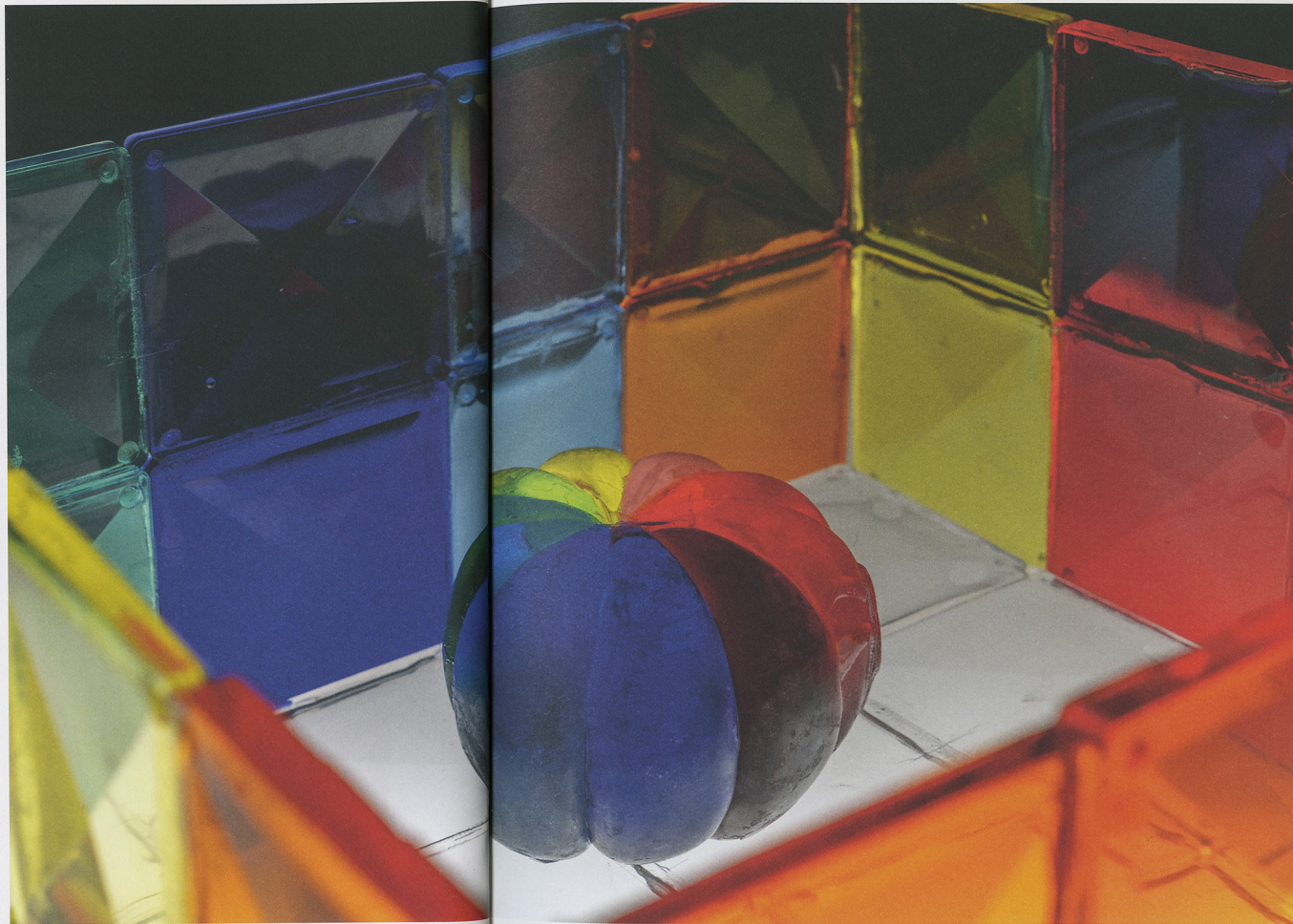
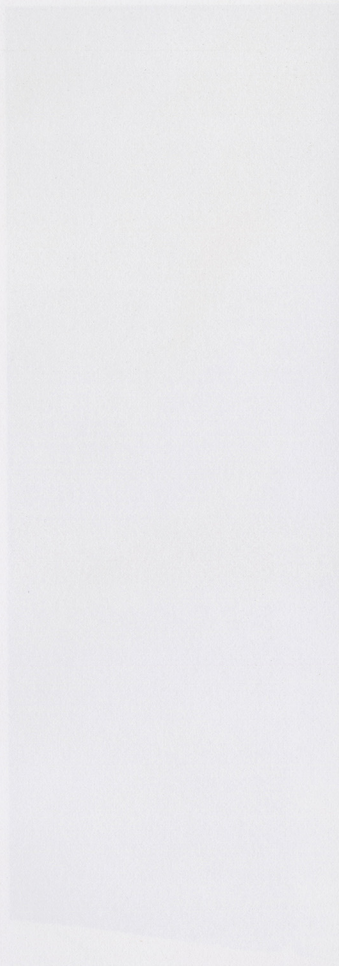


Goodnight Little House
2025
13¼ × 25 × 25 inches
Plastic, MDF, paint, LED lights









The Harrowing of Hell
2025
25 × 25½ × 59¼ inches
Plastic, MDF, paint, LED lights













Joseph Buckley

Born 1990, Ellesmere Port, UK.

EDUCATION

- 2015 Yale School of Art
- 2013 Goldsmiths, University of London
- 2010 Leeds College of Art

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *Window of Appearances*, Black Family Visual Arts Center, Dartmouth College, USA.
- 2024 *Despair Engine*, Island Gallery, New York City, USA.
- 2023 *Cannibal Galaxies*, Specialist Gallery, Seattle, USA.
- 2020 *Letter From The Home Office*, Lock Up International, London, UK.
- 2020 *Hateful Stool*, Disturb The Neighbors, New York City, USA.
- 2020 *Cousin Table*, Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space, New York City, USA.
- 2018 *Traitor Muscle*, Art in General, New York City, USA.
- 2017 *Brotherhood Tapestry*, The Tetley, Leeds, UK.
- 2016 *Days Of Madness & Of Learning*, [unnamed gallery], London, UK.
- 2015 *The Demon Of Regret*, International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York City, USA.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *Since when did the streets have mouths?*, Below Grand, New York City, USA.
- 2025 *The Fight Between Carnival & Lent*, Friedrichs Pontone, New York City, USA.
- 2024 *50 Degrees*, KINGS Artist Run, Melbourne, Australia.
- 2023 *The Secret Realm of Thrills & Concealment*, Afternoon Projects/BROWNIE Project, Shanghai, China.
- 2023 *Phantom Sculpture*, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, UK.
- 2023 *Family and Friends*, Anton Kern Gallery, New York City, USA.
- 2023 *Poor Things*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 2022 *Metafiguration*, Tops Gallery, Memphis, USA.
- 2021 *Trouble in Outer Heaven: Portable Ops Plus*, Southwark Park Galleries, London, UK.
- 2021 *Skroderiders*, Billytown Kitchen Space, Den Haag, Holland.
- 2021 *The Symbolists: Les Fleurs Du Mal*, Hesse Flatow, New York City, USA.
- 2020 *"I don't know whether the Earth is spinning or not..."*, Museum of Moscow, Moscow, Russia (VII Moscow International Biennale for Young Art).
- 2019 *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Washington Art Association & Gallery, Washington, USA.
- 2018 *Wind in the XXXX*, Space Space Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland.
- 2018 *Cellular World: Cyborg-Human-Avatar-Horror*, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, UK (Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art 2018).
- 2018 *Invitations to Forms*, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, UK.
- 2018 *Joseph Buckley & Sara Coffin & Cindy Ji Hye Kim*, Yeah Maybe#26, Minneapolis, USA.
- 2016 *TT cut.01*, Treasure Town, New York City, USA.
- 2015 *Wet Eyes*, Meyohas, New York City, USA.
- 2015 *Most Loathed*, 3401 Lee Street, Los Angeles, USA.
- 2015 *A Small Group Show Of American And British Artists*, Space Space Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.
- 2014 *The Panj Piar Assemble*, Grand Union, Birmingham, UK.
- 2013 *A Curator*, Team Titanic, Berlin, Germany.
- 2013 *Adapt/Erase*, &Model, Leeds, UK.
- 2012 *Glamourie*, Project Space Leeds, UK.

RESIDENCIES & AWARDS

- 2025 Artist in Residence, Dartmouth College, USA.
- 2025 Faculty Grant, Yale School of Art.
- 2021–2022 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, Jerome Foundation, USA
- 2019 Artist in Residence, LES Studio Program (a program of Artists Alliance Inc), New York City, USA.
- 2018 Artist in Residence, Triangle Arts Association, New York City, USA.
- 2018 Henry Moore Foundation New Projects and Commissions Grant
- 2017 Artist in Residence, The Tetley, Leeds, UK.
- 2017 The Elephant Trust Award, UK
- 2016 NY Community Trust Van Lier Residency at the International Studio & Curatorial Programme.
- 2016 Ossian Arts Research Fellowship, Jain Family Institute, New York City, USA

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Arts Council Collection of England.

TEACHING

- 2024– Faculty, Sarah Lawrence College
- 2022– Critic in Sculpture, Yale School of Art
- 2019– Adjunct Lecturer in Sculpture, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Studio Art Exhibition Program

Gerald Auten, Director
Senior Lecturer in Studio Art
22 Lebanon Street, Room 302
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755
603.646.1397

Jennifer Caine	Senior Lecturer in Studio Art
Chad Etting	Administrative Assistant
Karolina Kawiaka	Senior Lecturer in Studio Art
John Kemp Lee	Senior Lecturer in Studio Art
Aaron Panitz	Studio Art Technical Director
Soo Sunny Park	Professor of Studio Art
Dawit L. Petros	Associate Professor of Studio Art
Enrico Riley	Professor of Studio Art
Anthony Romero	Assistant Professor of Studio Art
Chris Sollars	Associate Professor of Studio Art
Kelly Thompson	Department Administrator
Tricia Treacy	Professor of Studio Art and Chair of Studio Art
Zenovia Toloudi	Associate Professor of Studio Art
John D. Wilson	Senior Lecturer in Studio Art

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday–Sunday, 12:30–8:30 pm
Closed Mondays and holidays

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SPECIAL THANKS

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