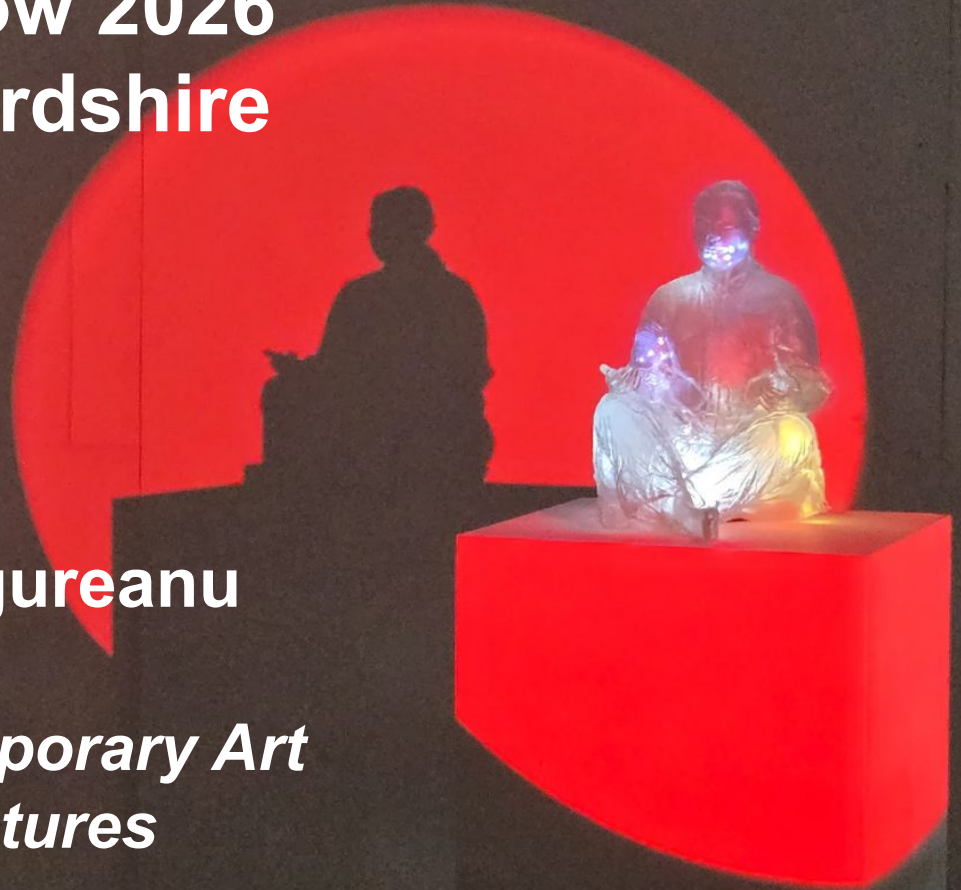


GradEx Degree Show 2026 University of Staffordshire

Yuliia Holoavtiuk-Ungureanu

*Multidisciplinary Contemporary Art
Project: Residual Futures*



Introduction

Residual Futures is a multidisciplinary contemporary art project bringing together a series of interconnected works across sculpture, installation, sound, performance, moving image, and spatial practice. Developed through ceramic processes, meditation, archival thinking, and lived experience of war, rebuilding, labour, and impermanence, the project examines how bodies, structures, identities, and environments are continuously reshaped through pressure, rupture, repetition, and time. Across the Degree Show, modular ceramic structures, dissolving clay, layered sound environments, residual performance traces, and immersive spatial interventions function as interconnected material conditions of fragility, endurance, adaptation, and collective memory. *Residual Futures* approaches rebuilding not as restoration, but as a continual negotiation between vulnerability, memory, coexistence, and transformation.

About the Artist

Yuliia Holovatiuk-Ungureanu (b. 1987, Lviv, Ukraine) is a multidisciplinary Ukrainian artist living and working in the United Kingdom. Her practice unfolds across installation, sculpture, ceramics, painting, performance, and socially engaged projects, with a focus on material processes, spatial experience, and embodied engagement.

At the core of her work is a transformative process – moving from lived experiences of war, displacement, and destruction toward questions of responsibility, justice, and the possibility of futures shaped through conscious rebuilding. Working with clay, soil, natural pigments, found objects, and documents, she allows matter to embody unresolved realities instead of translating them into visual symbols.

Drawing on archival research, historical records, and legal documents, Yuliia examines how systems of power and responsibility become embedded within material traces. Her use of non-conventional pigments such as kumkum, sindur, turmeric, and earth shifts attention from representation toward material presence by foregrounding their physical weight, texture, and cultural resonance, allowing transformation to emerge through prolonged engagement rather than symbolic depiction.

Across installations, performative situations, and participatory formats, she creates spaces that slow perception and invite attentive presence. Repetition, modular structures, and restrained gestures operate as meditative tools, opening questions of care, fragility, and balance within unstable conditions.

Her practice is closely connected to Ukrainian cultural heritage and its vulnerability to erasure, approaching identity as something lived, carried, and continuously reassembled. Through material and spatial work, she explores peace not as resolution, but as an ongoing process shaped through attention, responsibility, and participation.

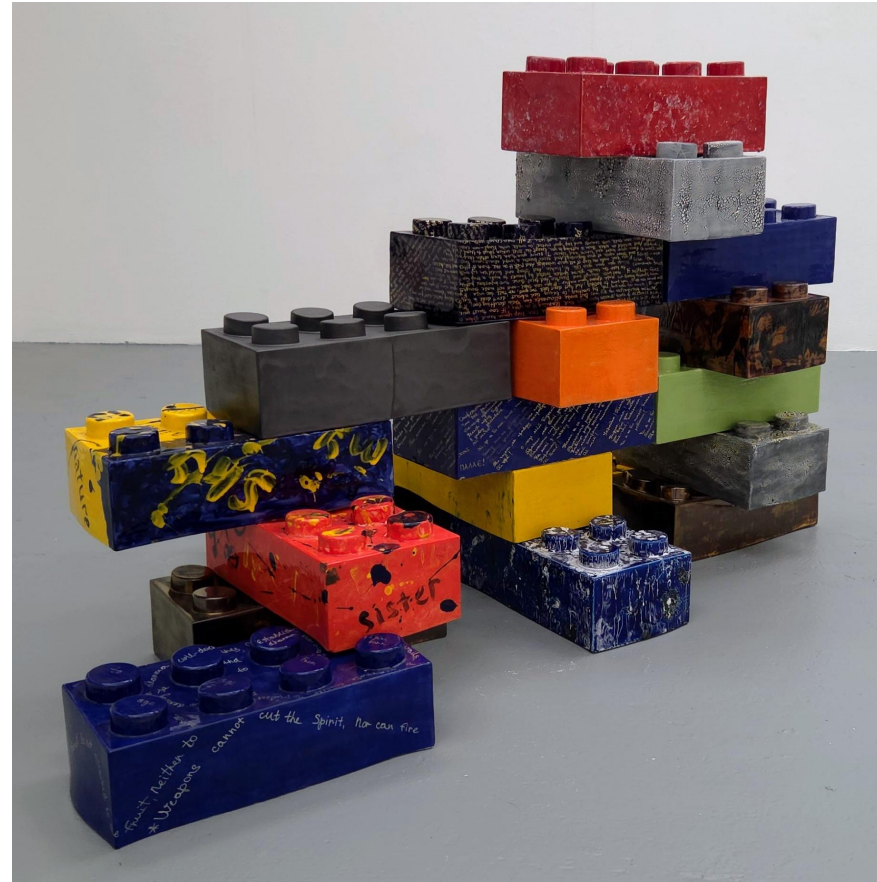
Becoming The Self, 2025-2026

Large scale slip-cast ceramic bricks, glazes, mark making and text
Dimensions variable

Becoming The Self is an evolving modular sculpture composed of twenty large-scale slip-cast ceramic bricks. The work reflects on how identity is continuously constructed through pressure, memory, rupture, and lived experience rather than existing as a fixed condition. The repetitive modularity of the bricks began to resemble the ways individuals are altered by emotional, political, and historical forces over time, while echoing the psychological condition of Ukrainians living through prolonged war, displacement, and instability.

Produced during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the sculpture emerged through the artist's search for inner stability, peace, and self-realisation while living within conditions of uncertainty and rupture. Some ceramic elements remain visibly cracked or deformed following deliberate testing of the clay's physical limits during firing. These fractures are intentionally retained as material records of endurance and vulnerability rather than signs of failure.

While some bricks remain blank, others contain handwritten texts and literary references that informed the artist's understanding of ethics, resilience, responsibility, and becoming, including writings by Lesya Ukrainka, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and Rudyard Kipling's *If*, alongside participatory handwritten reflections on peace and collective responsibility.





Self-Realisation: Becoming The Self, 2026

Live performance with modular ceramic sculpture, meditation, participatory writing
Duration variable

Self-Realisation: Becoming The Self is a live performance centred on the continual reconfiguration of a modular ceramic sculpture composed of large-scale slip-cast bricks. Developed alongside *Becoming The Self*, the performance approaches identity and rebuilding as unstable processes shaped through movement, repetition, meditation, and collective presence rather than fixed form.

Through slow bodily gestures and repeated restructuring of the ceramic elements, the sculpture shifts from a static object into an evolving condition that changes across time and activation. Each performance produces a new configuration while retaining traces of previous states, allowing the work to function simultaneously as sculpture, action, and living spatial archive.

Audience members are invited, if they wish, to contribute handwritten reflections and wishes for peace directly onto selected ceramic surfaces. These accumulated inscriptions gradually become embedded within the evolving structure itself.

Through live activation, participation, and continual transformation, *Self-Realisation: Becoming The Self* reflects on fragility, adaptation, coexistence, and the ongoing process of becoming shaped through lived experience and collective memory.

Becoming The Self, 2025-2026

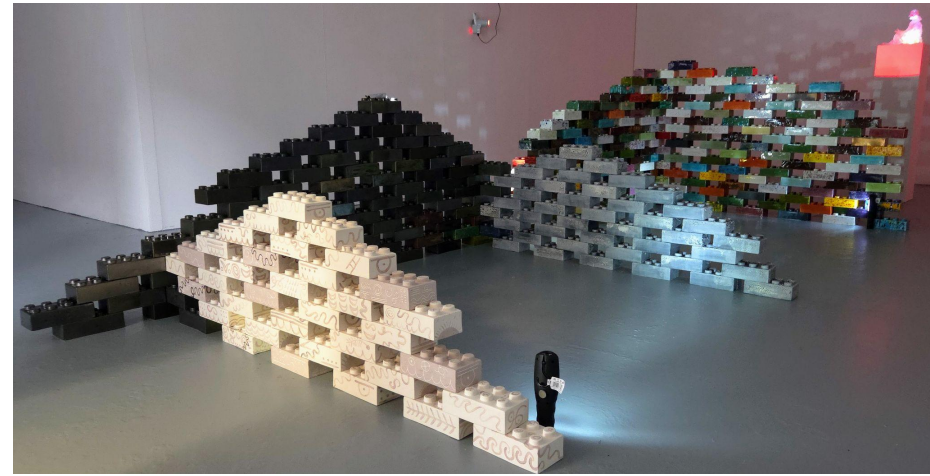
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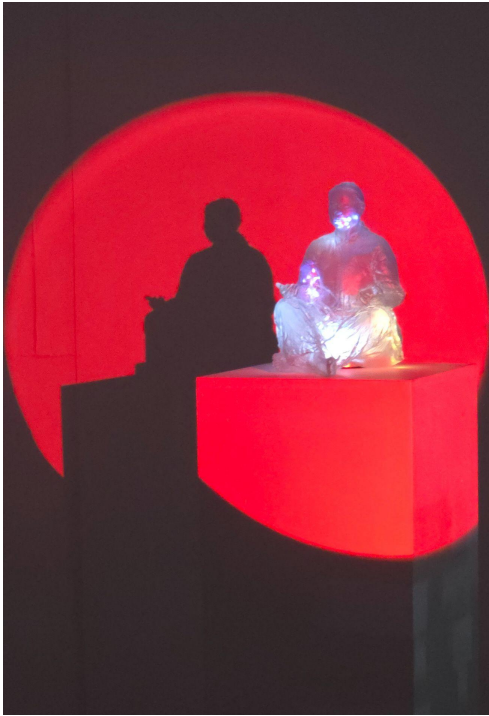
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Through repeated reconfiguration and the live performance *Self-Realisation: Becoming The Self*, the work approaches rebuilding as a continuous negotiation between fragility, adaptation, memory, and collective resilience.





Self Portrait, 2026

3D printed resin sculpture, internal light sources, audio installation (9 min 2 sec), mixed lighting sources

Dimensions variable

Self Portrait developed through reflection on meditation not as withdrawal from surrounding reality, but as the ability to remain present within it. The work combines a translucent 3D printed figure, internal light, and guided meditation audio within an immersive spatial environment shaped by overlapping emotional and sensory conditions. The sculpture was produced through a body scan taken while the artist was meditating, allowing the physical posture of contemplation to become permanently embedded within the work itself.

Positioned beside an installation containing children's voices, laughter, and sounds of play, the sculpture allows contrasting emotional and psychological states to coexist simultaneously, reflecting the complexity of lived experience rather than separating contemplation from everyday life. Visitors are gently invited, if they wish, to sit on a nearby bench and meditate alongside the recorded audio guidance, allowing the installation to become a shared reflective space shaped through presence, listening, stillness, and time.

Light emitted from inside the translucent figure projects reflections and shifting shadows across surrounding walls, transforming the body into a temporary source of illumination. These projected forms resemble meditative or Buddha-like silhouettes while remaining connected to the artist's own body and lived experience. The work gradually became a reflection on resilience, inner stability, and the capacity to preserve humanity and share it with others despite external pressure and instability.

Through sound, light, bodily presence, and spatial immersion, *Self Portrait* explores meditation as a lived negotiation between vulnerability, coexistence, attention, and continuity within unstable emotional and social realities.

State of Becoming, 2026

Single-channel video performance

40 min

State of Becoming developed through the artist's prolonged engagement with clay, bodily repetition, meditation, and processes of material transformation. Centred on repetitive actions of crushing, dissolving, reclaiming, and reworking clay by hand, the performance gradually transforms physical labour into a reflection on impermanence, self-realisation, and continual becoming. Rather than treating destruction as failure, the work approaches collapse as part of an ongoing cycle through which forms are broken down, absorbed, and reconfigured over time.

The work evolved alongside the artist's sculptural and installation practice, particularly experiments involving dissolving clay structures and reclaimed material. Through repeated handling, fragmentation, and reconstruction, clay becomes understood not as passive matter, but as a substance capable of carrying exhaustion, pressure, memory, and transformation simultaneously. The repetitive reclaiming of clay gradually began functioning as both a physical and psychological process, reflecting how lived experience continuously reshapes human beings emotionally, materially, and spiritually. As clay changes texture, density, and form through pressure and reworking, the performance parallels the ways life itself alters the body, perception, memory, and inner sense of self over time.

The work is also informed by meditation and philosophical ideas surrounding samsara, surrender, impermanence, and liberation from attachment to fixed identity or stable form. Within the video, repetitive gestures continuously shift between construction and dissolution, control and release, endurance and exhaustion, allowing bodily action itself to become the primary sculptural material.

Rather than presenting dissolution as an endpoint, *State of Becoming* approaches transformation as a continual process in which rebuilding becomes inseparable from breaking apart, and where renewal emerges through repetition, surrender, labour, and continual return.





The Performer, 2026

Clothing rack, hangers, garments, personal belongings, live and residual performance installation
100 × 180 × 85 cm

The Performer developed through the artist's response to the destruction and theft of ceramic works during the exhibition *On the Edge* (2026). Influenced by the *Bhagavad Gita's* reflections on detachment from the results of action, the installation questions how artistic labour becomes intertwined with attachment, loss, vulnerability, and personal identification. Rather than focusing on the missing objects themselves, the work shifts attention toward what remains after action, performance, and bodily presence have already passed.

The installation incorporates garments, shoes, and personal belongings used during live performances connected to the artist's ceramic practice. Some fabrics remain visibly stained with clay and pigment, transforming ordinary clothing into residual evidence of labour, movement, exhaustion, and emotional exposure. Suspended between archive, dressing area, storage system, and memorial structure, the installation exists in a constantly shifting state between activation and absence.

During live performance, the garments temporarily disappear from the installation and return onto the performer's body, allowing the work to oscillate continuously between physical presence and residual trace. When the performance ends, the clothing re-enters the installation carrying new marks, folds, and material memories generated through action and repetition.

The empty garments retain the physical outline of movement while simultaneously suggesting disappearance, impermanence, and the unstable boundary between person and residue. Rather than documenting performance directly, *The Performer* holds onto what the body leaves behind, reflecting on how action, memory, and emotional weight continue to persist materially even in absence.

Returning to The Source, 2026

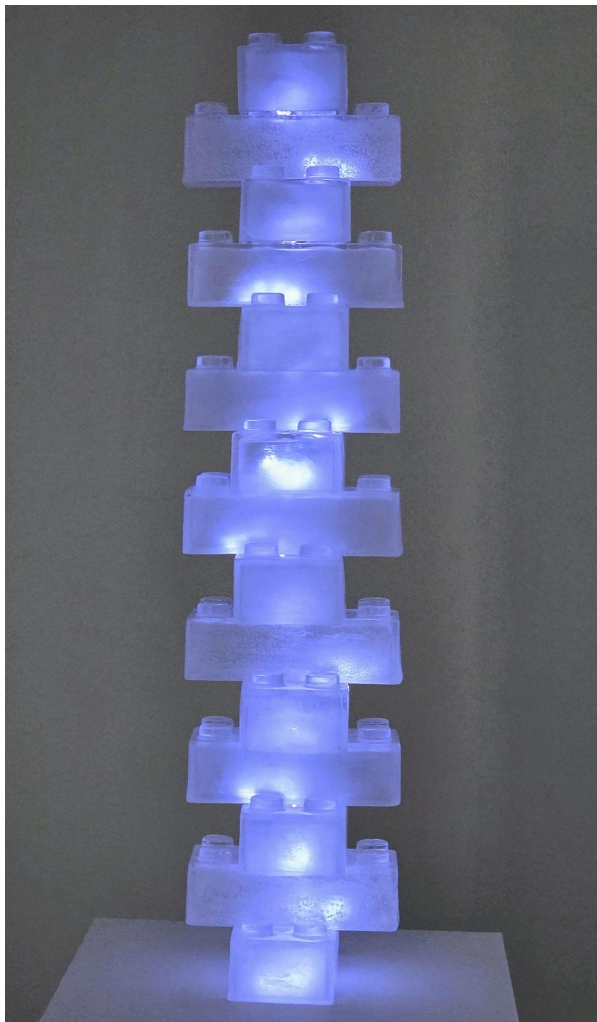
Bone-dry and reclaimed clay bricks, melting ice, time, basin, white cloth, hanging system, Dimensions variable

Returning to The Source is a time-based installation in which unfired ceramic bricks gradually dissolve beneath melting ice and water. The work brings together several strands of the artist's practice: earlier experiments with kinetic sculptures and meditation, her background in environmental policy, and her growing interest in reclaiming clay as both a sustainable process and a metaphor for transformation, impermanence, and return.

The fragile clay structures evoke damaged apartment blocks in Ukraine destroyed by Russian missiles and drones – images that have become part of the daily visual landscape of war for Ukrainians, whether encountered directly or through memory, distance, and continuous news circulation. Yet the work extends beyond destruction alone. As the bricks soften, collapse, and return to liquid matter, the installation reflects on time as a force that gradually absorbs pain, dissolves fixed form, and carries individual experience into collective history.

The work is also informed by Buddhist and Indian philosophical ideas surrounding impermanence, meditation, and moksha – spiritual liberation through the dissolution of attachment and ego. Water functions simultaneously as a destructive and healing force: it erodes the structures while returning them to a shared material source. The slow disappearance of the bricks suggests that buildings, bodies, identities, and suffering are all temporary states within a larger cycle of transformation. Rather than proposing restoration, *Returning to The Source* holds collapse, grief, release, and spiritual return within the same process, reflecting on fragility, healing, and the possibility of continuity beyond visible form.





Between Worlds, 2026

Resin, integrated string lights

8.5 × 82 × 8.5 cm

Between Worlds emerged following the theft of fifteen ceramic bricks during one of the exhibitions (*On the Edge*) in 2026. Reconstructed in translucent resin and arranged in their original vertical formation, the illuminated forms resemble suspended presences existing between disappearance and return. The work gradually developed into a reflection on absence not as emptiness, but as a condition shaped by uncertainty, memory, and unresolved waiting.

The sculpture continues the artist's long-term engagement with war, displacement, loss, and the psychological condition of living between rupture and continuity. The work became increasingly connected to the forced deportation and disappearance of Ukrainian civilians and children from occupied territories during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. According to the European Commission, nearly 20,000 Ukrainian children have been unlawfully deported since 2022 (European Commission, 2026). Rather than directly illustrating violence, the work approaches disappearance through fragile material presence and spatial tension.

The translucent resin shifts the original ceramic language of weight and fracture into something more unstable and immaterial. Internal string lights transform the structure into a narrow vertical glow resembling a distant signal, memorial candle, or fragile architectural trace. Light functions simultaneously as evidence of life, absence, continuity, and hope while remaining physically vulnerable and temporary.

Through repetition, illumination, and suspended material presence, *Between Worlds* reflects on displacement, memory, and the emotional condition of existing between worlds – between home and exile, presence and disappearance, survival and uncertainty.

Fault Lines, 2026

Broken and repaired ceramic bricks, red thread, found stool from a damaged building in Kharkiv (Ukraine), plinth, warning tape

138 × 115 × 150 cm

Fault Lines emerged through the artist's growing interest in material fracture and structural instability produced during prolonged experimentation with clay. Rather than discarding broken elements, the work approaches cracks, collapse, and instability as material evidence of pressure, rupture, and survival. Over time, the fragmented ceramic forms began resembling destroyed apartment buildings in Ukraine after Russian missile and drone attacks, where traces of ordinary life remain embedded within collapse.

Several ceramic fragments hang from red thread, recalling exposed reinforcement and unstable building remains left visible after destruction. Other compressed forms positioned near the plinth resemble vehicles overturned and trapped beneath collapsing concrete structures, recalling scenes witnessed by the artist in Kharkiv following Russian attacks. The found stool incorporated into the installation was recovered from the same damaged building referenced within the work while the structure itself was undergoing demolition, transforming the object into both a surviving fragment and a witness to disappearance.

Fragments scattered across the floor further extend the work's reflection on instability and sudden rupture. Some emerged after two large ceramic bricks were accidentally broken during exhibition, allowing sudden impact to become materially embedded within the installation itself. The dispersed debris echoes the abruptness with which catastrophe enters everyday life, where structures appearing stable can collapse without warning.

Rather than concealing damage, the installation leaves fragility visible, treating instability not as failure, but as a lasting structural condition.



Conclusion

Across *Residual Futures*, the Degree Show environment functions as a shifting space where sculpture, sound, bodily action, light, and material transformation unfold simultaneously around the viewer. Rather than presenting separate works as isolated objects, the project creates a condition of continual negotiation between construction and collapse, presence and disappearance, stillness and labour. Through bodily navigation, residual traces, live activation, and changing material states, visitors encounter spaces shaped by instability, coexistence, memory, and adaptation. Instead of proposing resolution or closure, *Residual Futures* holds transformation as an unfinished process in which vulnerability, endurance, care, and future imagination continue to exist simultaneously within conditions that remain materially and emotionally unresolved.

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