

**Emma Black**

Sweet Art Award 2025

**Eyes Are Raising, Bite at The Back of Your Throat, 2024**

The installation *Eyes Are Raising, Bite at the Back of Your Throat* reimagined in the Sweet 'Art Gallery Space explores London’s marginalised and hidden histories. It incorporates symbols and signifiers that were often used as insults but have been reclaimed to highlight resilience and their historical significance. For instance, the kitten, originally used to belittle suffragettes campaigning for women’s voting rights, is now a symbol of defiance. The double-headed axe, or labrys, became a powerful emblem of women’s empowerment and lesbian identity during the 1970s. The raised fist is a well-recognised symbol of resistance and solidarity. The fragmented foot represents the obscured or forgotten histories held within archives. Poulaines, medieval shoes with exaggeratedly long pointed toes, were once condemned by the church and associated with sexual deviance and vanity. Lavender references the fields that once surrounded London and its subsequent reclamation as a symbol of queer identity. Through these elements, the installation aims to shine a light on hidden histories and identities, reclaiming space for marginalised narratives and bringing them into view.

**Out of Place, 2024**

This series of sculptures, taken from a larger body of work titled Out of Place, presents relics from a past that’s yet to exist, challenging linear narratives of time and space. By exploring themes of the uncanny and the monstrous, these works reframe the experiences of those who exist outside societal norms, confronting ideas of otherness and belonging.

Inspired by Queer Ecology and Donna Haraway’s concept of ‘becoming with,’ the sculptures blur the boundaries between the human and non-human, rejecting rigid taxonomies that define what is ‘natural’ or ‘against nature.’ By blending the ordinary and the strange, Out of Place encourages viewers to reassess their relationship with the material world and the narratives it constructs.

The works invite contemplation on personal experiences and associations with materiality and environment, encouraging reflection through the interplay of senses and surroundings. Exploring themes of history, memory, and the tangible remnants of the past, the installation challenges traditional perceptions of identity and space.

By embracing the strange and the transformative, Out of Place seeks to reclaim space for marginalised identities and experiences, encouraging a rethinking of how we define and relate to both the familiar and the ‘Other.’

**Not Me, 2023**

Not Me emphasises the process of making, evident in the final form, celebrating the messy and imperfect nature of human existence. The work explores the uncanny double reflected in the mirror and the anxiety driven by society's fixation on appearance. The horns, inspired by Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of beauty, symbolise the influence societal beauty standards exert over us. By removing the nose, (a deliberate gesture that echoes the ancient Egyptian belief in breaking a statue’s nose to diminish its power), the work critiques the hold these ideals have on us.

The dual-faced representation embodies the seen and unseen aspects of identity, delving into the concept of masking and conformity to societal norms. Through Not Me, viewers are encouraged to question the impact of societal ideals on their self-perception, prompting them to reflect on their relationship with mirrors and to consider a deeper understanding of the body beyond physical appearance.

**Untitled (Unease #1), 2024**

**Untitled (Unease #2), 2024**

**Hold Your Tongue, 2024**

**Five-Many-Two, 2023**

These works represent the delicate balance between the desire for connection and the fear of vulnerability. They embody the internal struggles faced by individuals dealing with neurodiversity and mental health challenges, showcasing how these personal battles manifest in both subtle and overt ways. Through this exploration, the work highlights the nuanced and often difficult experiences of navigating self-expression amidst societal pressures and personal insecurities.

*Untitled (Unease #1) & Untitled (Unease #2)* capture the discomfort and unease associated with stifled emotions and internalised anxiety. The distorted, sneering mouth, frozen in ceramic, represents the physical manifestation of these internal tensions. This piece explores the silent suffering that often accompanies the fear of expressing one’s unmasked self, particularly in the context of neurodiversity, inviting the viewer to contemplate the unspoken struggles that shape our lives.

Hold Your Tongue explores the internal and external pressures to self-censor, especially in the context of anxiety and ADHD. The stacked ceramic tongues, impaled by a metal spike, symbolise the tension between the desire to express oneself and the fear of being too much or saying the wrong thing. The glossy finish of the tongues contrasts with the harshness of the spike, embodying the internal struggle of self-censorship and societal expectations with the need for human connection.