

@DEZ\_REZ\_PROJECTS PRESENTS

25 APRIL - 2 MAY 2020



**A VIRTUAL EXHIBITION OF PAINTING,  
DRAWING AND FILM**

IN SUPPORT OF VICTORIA BATHS

GALA POOL, SOPHIE NIXON

AARTI PANDEY  
DONNA WOOD  
KEVIN BOARDMAN  
NAN COLLANTINE  
PATRICK O'DONNELL  
SOPHIE NIXON  
SUZANNE BETHELL

# THE ARTISTS

Aarti Pandey is a figurative sculptor who draws on her background in genetics and development biology to explore the interaction between science and art. Aarti has experimented with digital film interventions using images of the baths.



Donna Wood is a filmmaker and painter who is currently studying PGCE to teach art following a career producing documentaries for the BBC and independent production companies. Donna has previously produced films and paintings about Victoria Baths during a residency in 2019 and views this project as an opportunity to develop the work she produced in her last residency.



Nan Collantine is a painter and is revisiting her drawings made during her residency at the baths in 2019, and those of the public who were invited to draw in a series of sketchbooks. Using these fragments of drawings, sketches and her own memory of spending time at the baths, she has made a series of paintings that use this scant information to make abstract responses, visually exploring themes of absence, memory and escape.



Kevin Boardman is an artist, educator and creative consultant. He is responding to the iconic tiles and bricks of Victoria Baths and how the build-up of these shapes forms complex structures and empowering spaces to function in a variety of ways. His work for this project is taking root in his city centre apartment, making tiled interventions around his home.

# THE ARTISTS



Patrick O'Donnell is a multi-disciplined artist working in site intervention, sculpture and film. Currently involved in the Castlefield Gallery Bolder programme, Paddy has previously worked at Victoria Baths on a residency in 2019 and is using work that he produced and experimented as a starting point to produce new work in film and interventions.

Suzanne Bethell is a painter and printmaker and a finalist earlier this year in the inaugural open exhibition at Home, Manchester. Interested in the power of colour to affect mood and mind state, she has responded to the rich glazes of tiles, the deep greens and turquoises found within the Baths, producing a series of small tile-like, square, canvasses. These have developed into assemblages incorporating materials associated with restoration and construction, reflecting the ongoing renovation of the baths.



Sophie Nixon is a painter of urban Manchester, of architecture and quiet cityscapes. Sophie has painted a series of oil paintings that describe her own visual response to Victoria Baths, to the beautiful light coming through the ceiling glass, the period details and the sense of solitude she felt in those empty upstairs rooms.

# INTRODUCTION

It's April 2020 and COVID-19 has stopped most of us in our tracks. The pause is palpable in the streets. Many of us felt a need to be still. While there was still work to be done, the will to do it and carry on was largely absent.

Earlier in the year Nan Collantine was invited to assemble a group of artists to exhibit work as part of SpringFest at Manchester's Victoria Baths, an event that marks the start of open season for the baths when life returns to the building with weddings, fairs, festivals and tours. Unfortunately, like everything else during these strange and challenging times, it was shelved.

Encouraged to find a way to make it happen by Victoria Bath's Gwyneth Brock, the group started to consider taking the exhibition online, and also support the baths, which like many other community-led projects, faced an uncertain future.

Within a couple of weeks the artists had reassembled as a collective (using Zoom) to think about presenting the work in a new context. Asking, what are the limitations and what are the opportunities of taking an exhibition online? Asking questions like 'what we would normally do, or receive, from an exhibition that might not translate digitally?' This included meeting people, interacting about the work and having physical space in which to showcase pieces. 'How would the work be presented? Which online platform would we use?'

Previously in 2019, three of the artists undertook a residency at Victoria Baths, each could therefore refer to previous research, ideas and materials archived from that period and, of course, their memory of spending time there. Although the remaining artists have all visited the baths, they had not been able to attend to research this project. Did this give Donna Wood, Patrick O'Donnell and Nan Collantine an advantage? Or could this enforced distance serve the others better? What happens when an artist can't experience the thing first-hand? How can artists work with secondary, mostly digital information?

As it turned out the artists came together to support each other in developing and adapting work, delivering a programme of live and pre-recorded interviews and studio visits and a live history of art talk and response to the exhibition by Sara Riccardi of Art Across.

From the decorative aesthetics of Victoria Baths to its echoes of the British Empire; from the dreamlike and the spiritual associations of water, to its containment of memory and physical carrier of pollution caused by human activity, the artists have each responded to this project in a rich and diverse way.

This catalogue is a record of the work that was produced, some of which is available to buy. 15% of all sales from this exhibition will be donated to Victoria Baths.

For enquiries or sales requests please contact [dezrezprojects@gmail.com](mailto:dezrezprojects@gmail.com)  
All prices exclude shipping/delivery which will be calculated upon purchase.

# AARTI PANDEY



Sonic Somnium  
(Digital film)



First Class Males  
(Digital film)

# AARTI PANDEY



First Class Males  
(Digital film and stills)  
A3 edition prints, signed by the artist  
£115

# DONNA WOOD



Sea of Clothes  
(Video 10 mins)

This film is about the true cost of our disposable fashion. When we buy a T-shirt as a bargain for £5, the true cost of the T-shirt is the damage caused to the environment by making it and the poor quality of life for the people who make the clothes.



It takes 2700 litres of water to make a cotton T-Shirt, and when we clean our synthetic clothes in the washing machines, it releases microplastics into our water system synthetic textiles and has recently been assessed as the main source of primary microplastics in the oceans.



Water Therapy  
(Film, 5 mins 14 secs)

This short film was inspired by the aerotone at Victoria Baths. The aerotone was the predecessor to today's jacuzzi, and was invented as a cure for such ailments as arthritis and depression, even Manchester's football teams used to come to Victoria baths to use the aerotone to soothe their aching muscles.

Donna Wood has combined interviews and footage that she filmed herself about the aerotone at Victoria Baths, with footage that she found on the internet about water therapy.

Different narratives about water therapy collide as the clinical language of medicine is disrupted by the glamour of exclusive spas and grooving in hot tubs!



# DONNA WOOD



Reflection in stained glass II  
(Oil on board 25x35cm)  
SOLD (Victoria Baths crowdfund reward)



Figure in Turkish Baths  
(Oil on canvas 180x100cm)  
£165

# KEVIN BOARDMAN



'What catches my eye about Victoria Baths is its tiles and bricks. The build up of these shapes forms complex structures and empowering spaces to function in a variety of ways.

These tiles adapt to the space throughout their life span as a result of human interaction, other materials, water and also building developments.

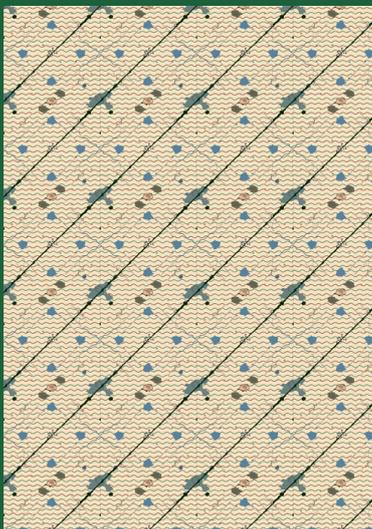
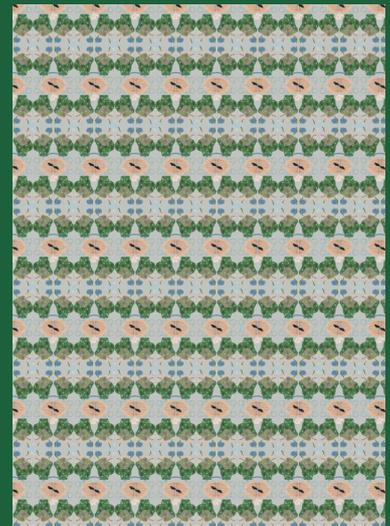
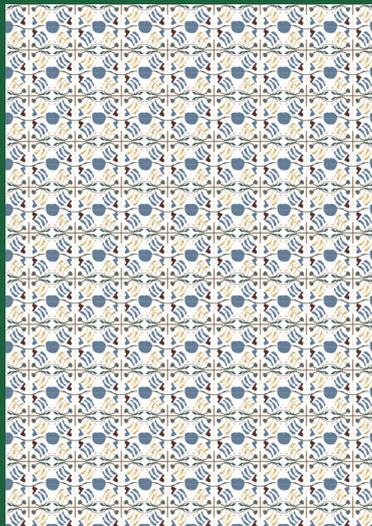
Even during restoration, if you look closely at the tiles, bricks and the floor, small manipulations occur to form their own signature identity.

All of this develops its individual identity. My original intention was to study these tiles in the flesh but because of quarantine restrictions this was not possible.

I have decided to look at this in a different way. Using sheets of paper I have placed in different locations around my apartment.

Initially all these sheets of paper look the same, but through time and because they are in different locations, the sheets of paper will collect their own unique information, forming an individual aesthetics/data.'

Kevin Boardman.



Above A3 size edition digital prints signed by the artist  
£200 each  
Original paper tiles  
30x26cm £200 each

Left - Filmed digital site intervention

# NAN COLLANTINE



She was empty, yet deep at the same time  
(Oil and acrylic on canvas 50x50cm)  
£295



Lucky Pebble  
(Oil and paper on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295



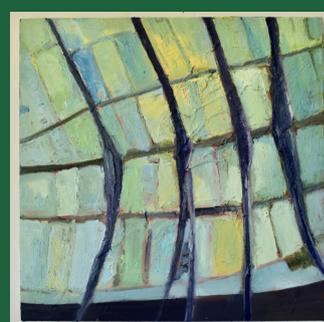
Blue bath, cold heart  
(Oil and acrylic on canvas 50x50cm)  
£295



His delusions of grandeur  
(Oil and paper on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295



Midsummer on Medlock  
(Oil and acrylic on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295



Catch my clouds for they drift my way  
(Oil and paper on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295



Good hearts sing back  
(Oil and acrylic on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295



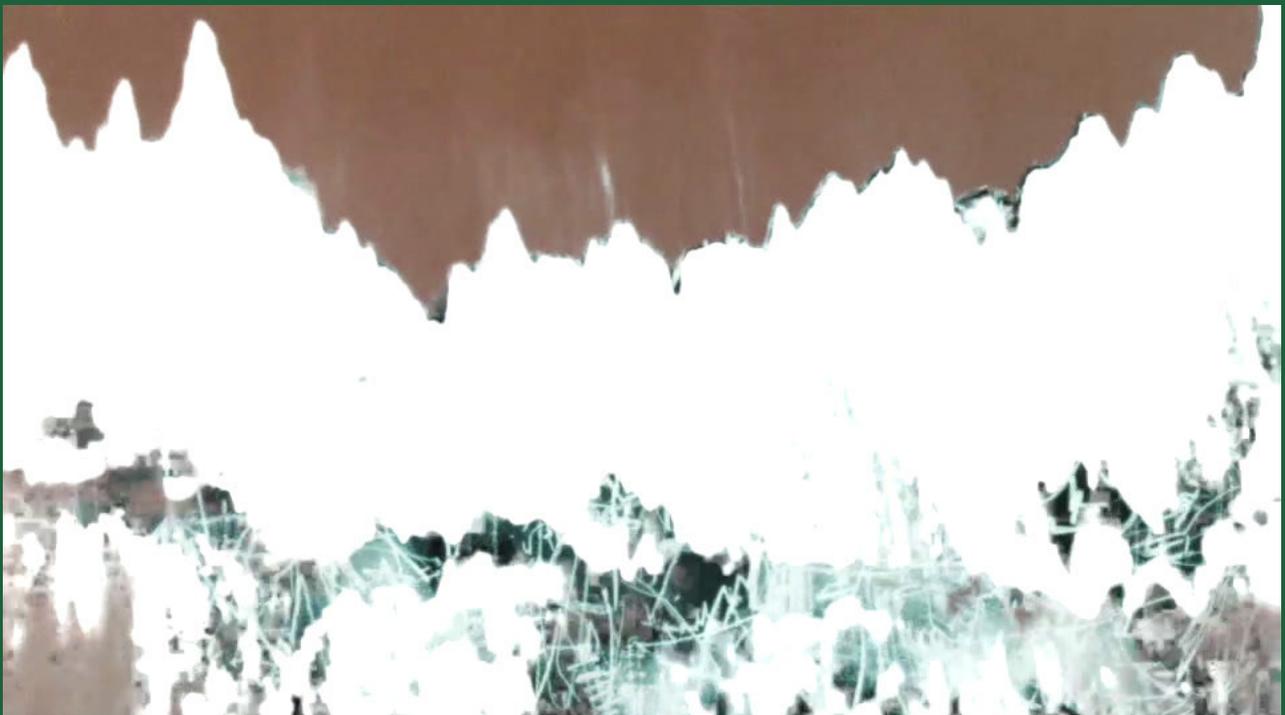
Hotel du Lac (give me back my book)  
(Oil and paper on canvas 50x50cm)  
£ 295

# NAN COLLANTINE

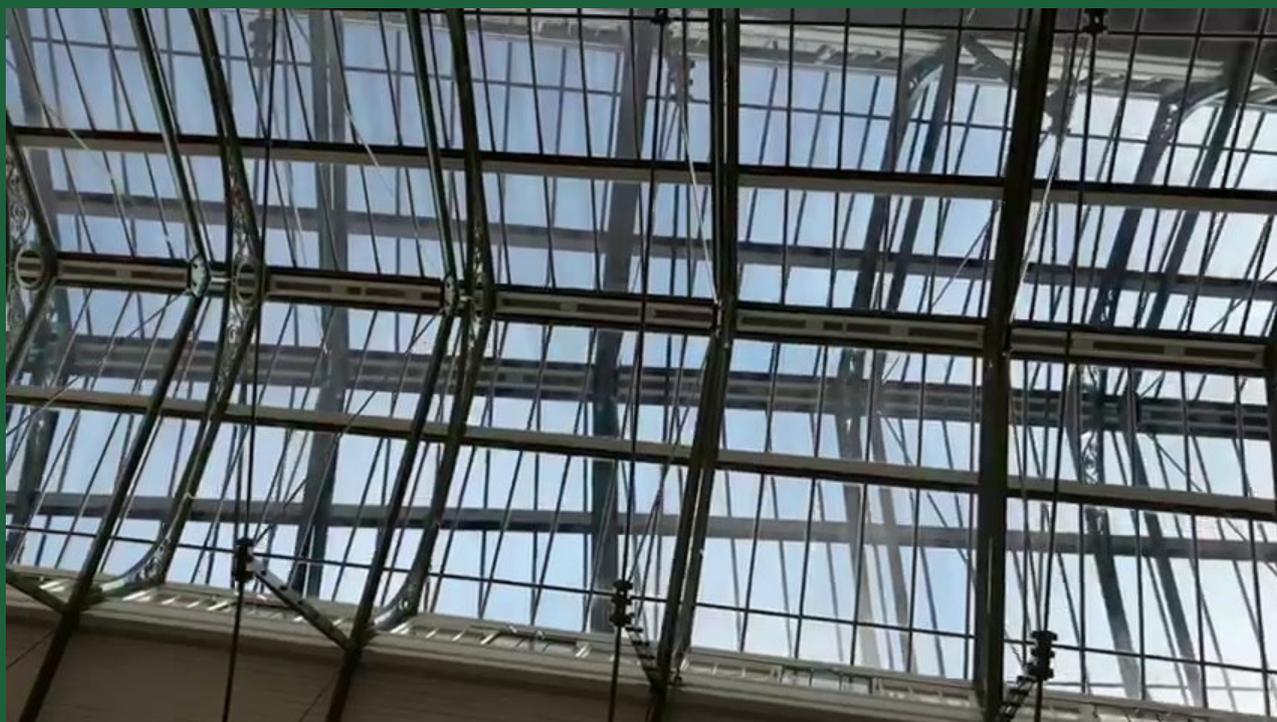


Nan Collantine produced a short film during the exhibition, layering fragments of films she has made of the ocean.

She filmed her process drawing from a projection of the film. The drawing then became another layer in the film which includes text from Moby Dick by Herman Melville.



# PATRICK O'DONNELL



Where Was I?  
Digital video intervention



Freedom of Movement  
Site specific installation (2019)

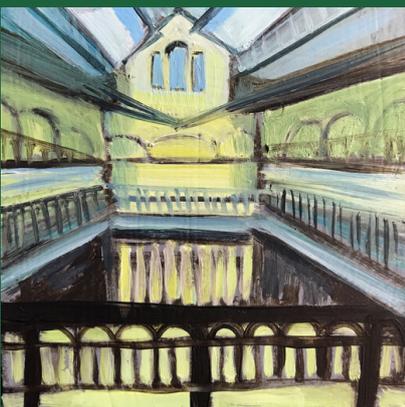
# SOPHIE NIXON



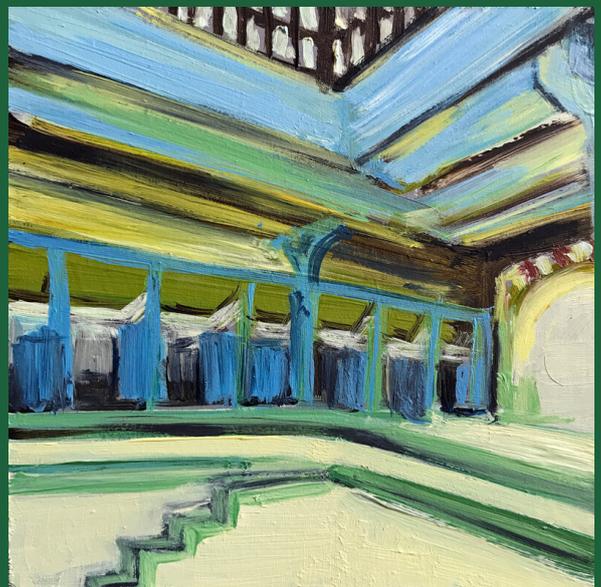
Pool 1  
20x20cm oil on board unframed  
£325



Skylight 1  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105



Gallery 1  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105



Changing rooms 2  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105

# SOPHIE NIXON



Pool 2  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105



Empty room 3  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105



Changing rooms 1  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105

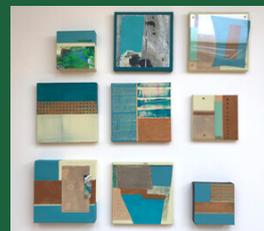


Empty room 1  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105



Empty room 2  
10x10cm oil on board unframed  
£105

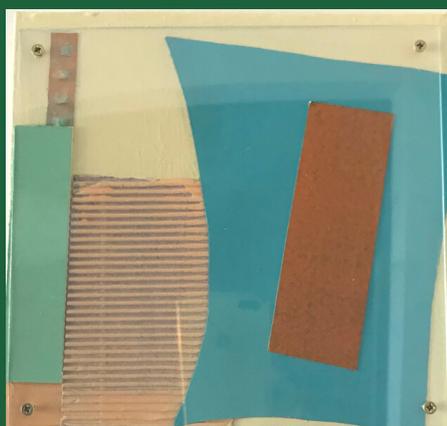
# SUZANNE BETHELL



Victoria Baths 16  
Mixed media assemblage 20x20x1.5cm  
£125



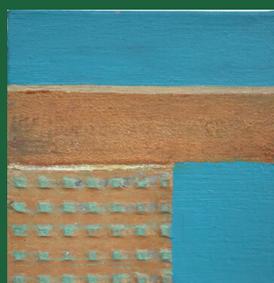
Victoria Baths 10  
Mixed media assemblage, 12x12x4cm  
£65



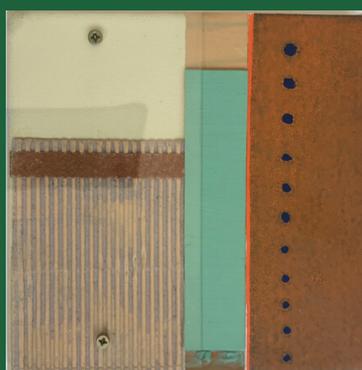
Victoria Baths 12  
Mixed media assemblage, 20x20x1.5cm  
£125



Victoria Baths 3  
Mixed media on canvas, 20x20x1.5cm  
£75



Victoria Baths 4  
Mixed media on canvas, 12x12x4cm  
£65



Victoria Baths 11  
Mixed media on assemblage 15x15x1.5cm  
£95

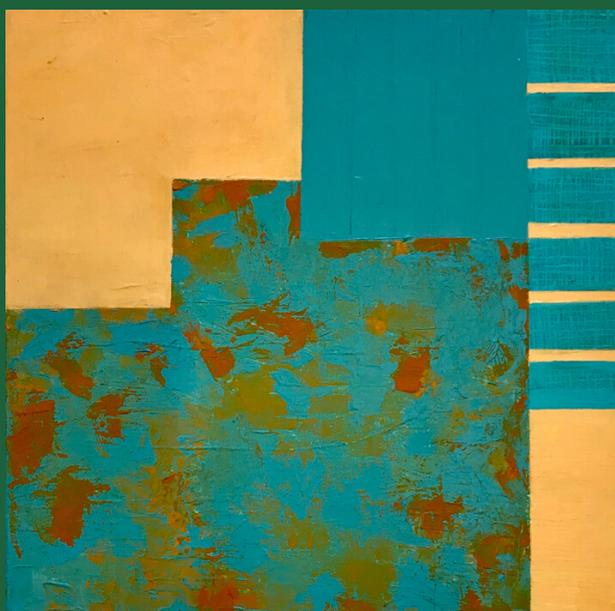
# SUZANNE BETHELL



Victoria baths 5  
Mixed media on canvas , 20cm x 20cm x  
1.5cm  
£125



Victoria Baths 14  
Mixed media assemblage 20x20x1.5cm  
£125



Victoria Baths 1  
Acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm  
£190



Victoria Baths 2  
Mixed media on canvas, 20x20x1.5cm  
£65



Victoria Baths 6  
Mixed media assemblage, 20x20x1.5cm  
£95

# SARA RICCARDI



It took me a little while to realise the combination of timely synchronicities, when Nancy Collantine got in touch with me about my possible participation in the online project GALA with some sort of talk or presentation.

It was a few weeks into lockdown, and after adjusting to the new situation – being furloughed from my day job, being on my own in my flat, seeing the whole season of events I had planned to deliver getting cancelled – I had just started thinking about bringing my art-historical talks and seminars online, in some form. Nancy's offer came just at the right time.

What was I being invited to respond to? An exhibition, gone digital due to the lockdown, of artists connecting in different creative forms to the space, history, and aesthetic of Victoria Baths in Manchester.

Here I had my main themes, then: art – my leading subject as an art historian – and hygiene, washing, cleanliness, water, but also loneliness and emptiness. Victoria Baths ceased to be used as Manchester's 'water palace' in 1993 and, although the venue is still very lively and full of visitors and events, some of the artists in the exhibition found the sometimes quiet and empty spaces of the building a fruitful source of inspiration.

In my practice, based on the creation and delivery of art-historical events, I always strive to identify ways of making my historical themes relevant for the present, but this time the connection has proved particularly natural and direct.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all, despite all our technological advancement, to perfect and master again a very basic task: washing our hands.

The simple act of washing and a heightened awareness of hygiene in general have been lifesavers in the past weeks, and the subject has strongly become part of the public discourse, while we were used to considering such things as private.

Researching for the presentation I delivered on Zoom during the GALA Instagram showcase, I went back to the roots of public baths, exploring the history of Roman and Turkish baths. In both cases, personal hygiene formed one of the pillars of social and religious life, and it was a highly public topic.

Since our engineering techniques have allowed us to have running water in our private houses, we've grown shy, but before that, and up to the Victorian and Edwardian era in Britain, when Victoria Baths were built, opening in 1906, the need for washing included and was connected to an element of socialising.

The importance of socialising is another topical matter, as the lockdown has been preventing us from doing so, and the field of the arts is highly affected: we experience art in person, when we can, and often as a social activity.

Based on the many lists of resources to keep sane and busy while forced in the house, the arts seem to be a vital necessity for many: theatre, music, cinema, dance, painting, performance, crafts, reading – either experiencing or performing these activities seems to have a highly beneficial effect in dealing with the current situation. And that is the second reason why the GALA exhibition as a project has been so relevant and timely: baths establishments, ancient and modern, are beautifully decorated, and Victoria Baths aesthetic has been one of the main points of reference for the artists.

Beauty and hygiene have proved to be two valuable weapons against some of the possible destructive consequences of a serious pandemic, and GALA and my presentation have allowed me to reflect on how much, in the past, the two were linked. As someone suggested at the end of the Zoom event, maybe we could get inspired by these examples of the past to re-discover a more holistic approach to our well-being.

# DEZ REZ PROJECTS

Dez Rez Projects is a home for DIY artists' projects and occasional pop-up exhibitions and to create ad-hoc opportunities for early career artists.

For enquiries email [dezrezprojects@gmail.com](mailto:dezrezprojects@gmail.com)

Instagram: [@dez\\_rez\\_projects](https://www.instagram.com/dez_rez_projects)

## Acknowledgements

Dez Rez Projects would like to thank Victoria Baths and in particular, Gwyneth Brock for her support in bringing this exhibition to life online.

Thank you to Sara Riccardi of Art Across for bravely joining the programme and bringing her fascinating historical perspective to the exhibition.

Also thanks must go to all the artists Aarti Pandey, Donna Wood, Kevin Boardman, Nan Collantine, Patrick O'Donnell, Sophie Nixon and Suzanne Bethell for collectively bringing this exhibition together and undertaking an additional project above and beyond what was originally expected and for donating work in support of Victoria Baths during the Covid-19 crisis.

## A Message from Victoria Baths

"Closing the doors on SpringFest 2020 was a tough one. The event had been such a long time in planning by the Victoria Baths' Events Team, Kat, Becca and Chris, and we knew that all the contributors, Dez Rez included, were gearing up to take part.

An encounter with Nan on Twitter set us both thinking about the possibility of taking the exhibition online. What Dez Rez finally delivered, in the form of GALA, was way beyond my wildest expectations. I was completely bowled over by all the artists' work, and their commitment to the project. Thank you so much to Nan and everyone involved. I hope we'll see you all at Victoria Baths before too long; it's really not the same looking after an empty building."

Gwyneth Brock, Victoria Baths