THE ARTIST

The setting is the Studio.
The setting is in my head.
Artwork is a mirror. Lots of layers exist. Things happen that can't be made sense of immediately, but that in time we might comprehend. Experiencing that which is there around you and within the space.
A making sense of something.
A feeling of setting.

THE MOTHER
What are you working on at the moment?

THE ARTIST
A few new sculptures. I've been working in steel for the first time, on a bigger scale than I have in the past.

Sound of plasma cutter cutting steel, tapping and metal noises continue in background of monologue

I've become increasingly interested in artists; makers that have come before me and where I fit within the dominant lineage of art history. In August 1977, the artist Anthony Caro made fifteen sculptures while working at a workshop in Emma Lake in Saskatoon. Due to the workshop's remote location, he used lightweight steel tubing and beams which were easier to transport than the heavier materials he would normally make sculptures from. His materials at the time also reflected his interest in 'non-monumental' sculpture. This was demonstrated in his move away from stone, marble, and bronze - materials that are traditionally used in large-scale sculptures. Instead, Caro used more ephemeral materials, creating a more immediate approach that has since grown much more prevalent in sculpture overall. I find it fascinating that these sculptures were 'non-monumental' at the time, but in hindsight, looking back, appear to be the epitome of monumentality.

One of Caro's sculptures from this time is called *Emma Dipper*. The title referred to the name of the lake he was working at; a monument to a form in the landscape. But this title has its own personal meaning to me. *Emma* was a friend I had at school and *Dipper* was a ride in the fairground where I grew up in Sunderland.

In the 1960s, when the sculptor David Smith died, Caro was gifted a large amount of steel from Smith's studio. In turn Anthony Caro's studio, following his death in 2013, donated a large amount of steel to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, a gift for other artists to use. I've chosen to use some of this steel in my sculptures for this exhibition. The material threads of this steel - its journey - stretches across time, linking me to these two sculptors and implicating the work I make.

My own work is concerned with making a mark; a stand; a record. Connecting with my own place in the historical lineages where I see myself existing; working-class and feminist narratives that encourage me to make something which otherwise would not exist.

THE MOTHER
Whose story is the most important?

THE ARTIST

I am fascinated by the stories of the lives that have came before me - lineages of art history and family and place. Recently, I signed up to a free trial of ancestry.com.

As I added family members to my family tree, it became a dense digital constellation. Every time I add a family member it grows vaster, reaching out immeasurably - ever further into time and space.

I add my paternal grandmother Lavinia. There are no photos of her available. I add my maternal grandmother Phyllis. I post the photo of her on social media with a caption:

THE MOTHER

My nana Phyllis aged about 27, my age, with her first husband George Crawford and their son also George Crawford. George Crawford was a marine engineer in the navy and died from a bomb in 1941 during the Second World War. While pregnant with their second child Phyllis received a telegram informing her that George was 'missing, presumed dead.' My nana had worked as a servant from being 14 up until she married, so tried to get help for her and her two children but the only help offered was all three going into the workhouse - my nana's dad told them to get lost.

THE ARTIST

It feels thrilling to share the story with some of those I know, to document it in words, but a couple of hours later and just before bed, I delete it.

Family members always said of Phyllis that she could 'write a bestseller' but she never did. What does it mean to have a bestseller in you, but to never write?

I dream as an artist. I dreamt I was rinsing a paintbrush. Washing it with shampoo to get thick orange paint out. Different types of taps.

THE MOTHER
Whose voice deserves to be heard the most?

THE ARTIST

My ancestors used their hands and heads to make new objects – commodities or consumables – that entered and led their own lives in the world. My dad worked in a shipyard in Sunderland, once hailed the biggest shipbuilding town in the world, from leaving school right up until its closure in the 1980s. Some of my ancestors left Ireland to move to Liverpool to work in the shipyards there, bringing us to England. My nana opened and ran a popular fish and chip shop that sold wet fish by day and takeaway fish and chips on an evening. Taking care to eye the

potatoes of any marks or bruises, she would make perfect chips. My gran and grandad both worked at Plesseys telephone factory just as telephones were becoming an increasingly popular form of communication. Plesseys was later taken over by Siemens. I often wonder if at the time anyone working in the factory could have known that telephone communication would become the most important technology of our time and if they sensed the important formative role that they played in it – an industry that would later spawn the Internet and all the progress that has come with it.

Whenever I am struggling to make work I look at my Mike Kelley book. I feel like it might make a difference - to witness another artist's record, to connect with them through their body of work... and maybe it does.

When I am making art, I want to make a connection with the entity of art and with other humans. To pierce the norm and to feel more awake after the encounter. The heart is light and wants to fly.

THE MOTHER

Do you ever think about how the materials you use impact your body? Make sure you wear a mask and gloves.

THE ARTIST

Sometimes I think my materials might speak back. Or that my body might clap back. I am an artist with very poor sight and sickly hands.

My mother always said when I was younger that I had such slender fingers I could be a hand model if I didn't have eczema. I've had eczema for as long as I can remember. It's moved to various part of my body but consistently been on my hands. Skin with scales, frail and animalistic. An organic baromoter of stress. A reactionary armour.

A few years ago my eyes swelled up for a couple of months. Eyelids like rubber bouncy balls. Shiny top layer of skin gone

but a roughness like fine sandpaper. A weathered stone made from eyes watering from the cold and a damp bedroom.

I remember my fingers weeping on cold mornings at junior school, pulling off bits of fluff that threatened to become embedded. When I was a baby a fortune telling Icedancer who used to come in my parents' fruitshop saw my hands and said I would grow up to be a pianist. I took piano lessons every Wednesday evening from the age of 7 to 18. My fingers, the things with which I make things, appear to seek to negate themselves by scratching each other until their skin breaks. The creators and the destroyers. The destroyers and the destroyed. Whenever I visit, my mother makes it her mission to heal the eczema on my hands, regularly appearing with a pot of aqueous cream and insisting I rub some on.

Over Christmas I was making some work in my parent's garage in Sunderland and I noticed a vase on the floor. A ceramic pot-like vase that my mother had made on a pottery course she did when I was little. I asked if I could have it and she said why? it's not very good. I said I really liked it and it reminded me of my own art work, with swirling uneven abject clay rings around the top and forcibly scraped tooth-combed lines in its body.

I loved making as a child and I still do because of the hands on directness it enables, which feels like a world away from this world of ours that depends on metaphysical screens and documents to keep on going.
But I can't imagine Damien Hirst ever ordering his own materials and arranging his own transport.
Is being an artist harder than it used to be?
Sometimes it feels like I'm living an infinite number of lives existing in parallel to one another, covering different jobs, times and places.
The Writer, The Artist, The Administrator
So the work is formed by many hands. Many hands form the work. The hands are moulded by the world but the world is moulded by the hands.

Making through moulding, casting, joining, pouring, drawing, cutting, writing and talking, morning, evenings, daytimes, holidays and weekends, using my hands to use every kind of tool, pushing against each another to create a sense of risk, a sense of the unknown, that things might not turn out alright or if they do, it will be beyond what had previously been imagined.

The hands of the past held industrial machinery, but now they hold expanding foam, or epoxy resin, or a handsaw, or hessian, or a bucket of plaster, or a brush, or a drill.

My knowledge of everything that has happened up to this point determines the work and also what will happen to it in the future – whether it will go on to have a life after me, or come to exist in another form. These forces pushing and pulling compromise at a sense of equilibrium and like magic, the work appears to stand of its own accord. The work exists in the world, independent of the artist that created it and eventually, beyond them. Across time.