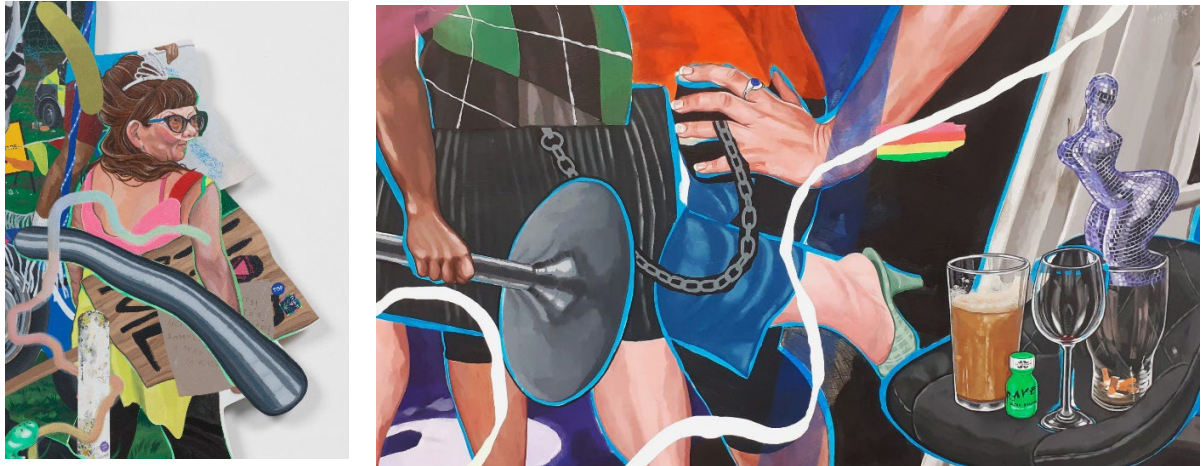


# Spike Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
PRESS RELEASE

Flo Brooks  
*Harmonycrumb*  
Saturday 10 June to Sunday 10 September



Spike Island is excited to present *Harmonycrumb*, a new commission by Flo Brooks exploring trans and gender-nonconforming histories through painting and assemblage.

The exhibition includes seven acrylic paintings applied onto found fabric, and five to six assemblages comprised of lino flooring cutouts and handmade objects. Together, these works explore speculative entanglements between Brook's own life and the experiences of different historical figures, including military leader Joan of Arc (1412-31), 'female husband' Charles Hamilton (1721-46), and physician Michael Dillon/Lobzang Jivaka (1915-62).

Embedded in the materials of domestic space, which Brooks describes as 'the first space of dreaming, fantasising, worlding,' each work originates from fragments of these people's lives, gleaned from newspaper clippings, autobiographical descriptions and visits to the places they lived and worked. In one painting, Michael Dillon/Lobzang Jivaka is depicted riding a motorbike through the countryside. He is surrounded by images and ephemera that relate to the former College Motors garage in Bristol, where he wrote a ground-breaking book about transexualism, *Self: A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology*, in 1946. In another, Charles Hamilton, who worked as a quack in Somerset, is shown at a market cross, assembling and selling bottles of 18<sup>th</sup>-century medicines with mysterious-sounding names, such as 'Sovereign Elixir' and 'Viper Drops'. Motifs from Brooks' own life also appear throughout, forming layered and interweaving narratives that span time and space.

Extending out from the paintings, the floor assemblages support a range of objects and ephemera that are either appropriate to, or out of step with, the period. Some of these objects are placed on and around the lino, which undulates across the floor. Others, such as a broken candlestick and one of Joan of Arc's sabatons (plate armour shoes), emerge from cut out 'windows'.

Collaging together different places, eras and individuals, Brooks' works resist simplified representations of trans and gender non-conforming lives. Rather they open up a flexible space for the unfolding of multiple perspectives, shifting identities and evolving relationships. They are not historical portraits but dream-like scenarios: fragmented, mutable, incomplete.

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For further information and high-resolution images please contact Niquita Munowenyu, Communications Manager at [niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk).

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Flo Brooks (b. 1987) is an artist based in West Cornwall. He works across painting, collage, publication, installation and social practice. Merging autobiography with fiction, Brooks' works coalesce around ideas of selfhood, belonging and temporality, most often taking form in densely layered acrylic paintings that for him act as a kind of repository for complex feeling, memory and social and political histories.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Be tru to your rec*, Project Native Informant, London, 2022; *Angletwich*, Brighton CCA, which travelled to Tramway, Glasgow, 2020–2021, and *Scrubbers*, Project Native Informant, London, 2018. Group exhibitions include *Bodies in space*, MIRROR, Plymouth, 2022; *SEEN*, Newlyn Art gallery and The Exchange, Cornwall, 2022; *Beano: The Art of breaking the rules*, Somerset House, London, 2022; and *Kiss my genders*, Hayward gallery, London, 2019.

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

- ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND

Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the

programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.

Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.

- The exhibition is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, supported by Arts Council England.

- IMAGES (L to R):

Flo Brooks, *Hold me hold my placard*, 2022. Acrylic on wood, 180 x 109 x 3.5 cm, 70 7/8 x 42 7/8 x 1 3/8

Flo Brooks, *Work in progress*, 2022. Acrylic on Canvas.