



EDINBURGH
SCULPTURE
WORKSHOP

BEACHHEADS

LOUISE GIBSON

POEMS BY
JENNI FAGAN

BEACHHEADS

Poems for
Louise Gibson's installation

By
Jenni Fagan

CAR DOOR 1

There is a key
there is a key
there is a keyhole.

Insert me!

Skid marks on a motorway
in an S
where it skidded towards the truck.

Of course there is a key.

It is not here though!

Bent now, keyhole like an old man peering at you — on its side, a metal eye.

Six motorways lead to Berlin!

On the circular There is a key

There is a key

There is a keyhole,

Insert me

pin tumbler locks no longer align

skid marks on a motorway

in an S

where it skidded towards the truck.

Of course there is a key.

It is not here though!

Bent now, keyhole like an old man peering at you — on its side, a metal eye.

Six motorways lead to Berlin!

On the circular

5am of the Bundesautobahn

doors slam —

an orbital motorway

a tarmac iris circles under the sky

metal contorting in slow motion and on the way ... one siren.

Each road concertinas hearts, souls, lives
all play the same chromatic scale of transition
a man drives from Poland
with a cat beside him,
49 million four-wheeled vessels fly
one couple
encased in an expensive
metal clad heart
with an engine's incomparable roar
she is shouting
shouting!

He always saw her legs as evidence of his status
that's what she says when they arrive
with the cutters
metal biting into metal
it is dawn

clear a day as any who has-realised they might-still be-alive could hope for
all the mangled
mess of their life on display
early commuters gliding by expressionless
as headlights.



Accelerationist, 2 car doors, leather, resin, lacquer, 2025

BEACHHEAD (in a SCRAPYARD in MITTE)

The invading force has arrived
established a foothold
prepared for further advances
distracted
by metal, distracted by light,
the artist is considering a return
across the sea,
to somewhere, to someone, to something
today there is still time yet to forget all that.

This scrapyard is the beachhead
enemy territory,
a crucial initial base for operations,
a temporary line,
it occurs when troops arrive
on impenetrable
landscapes
to create others, more, what is it?
More reserves?

The artist has no game in this right now.

The scrapyard
smells of chemicals and the discontent of men
wondering why she might come to take from their private assortment
of misplaced objects
out of factories and a castle, out of farmland and boat yards, out of workshops
where heat sprays the steady glob of welded fire.

Undeterred, the artist fixes her glasses.
She is looking
for evidence of the future in unconsidered objects,
it
arrives in twos.

Outside metal Ezzy is waiting, mettle Ezzye,
this is Lichtenberg
don't you know it child?

They said they arrived in twos in this world, or perhaps they left in discomfort
two steel baths
two filing cabinets — wattled together,
they will return
if the artist returns
but for now they will be carried on a truck
to live in a bunker
under a motorcycle garage in (Mitte)
metal grey
gunmetal
filing
filing
filing
filing
filing
filing
filing
paper,

did you file who you were every day of your life?
Under quiet streets
filing cabinet drawers
open and close
like angular jaws
swallowing.



The cabinet, 2 filing cabinet, pleather, resin, lacquer, 2025

BEACHHEAD 2

When they takes notes on the not coming apocalypse
it will not be in pen
paper has long ceased
all forests reach upward with thin metal trees
bacteria is no longer friendly
artefacts
tell the warped stories of civilisations
a bathtub becomes a shark
an eye
looks out,
it has extended its jaw wide enough to swallow humanity
dislocated it,
flesh sharks were never able to do that
metal always knew itself to the superior form
a fridge opens its door
like the ribs and chest of a burly man
slimed on the inside
what you throw into the sea
is claimed by the hands of history
a clear water bottle
filled with lentils, launched from Egypt
to Palestine,
tell me where the items used to be when they were sanitised
in shops
sold for a little, sold for a lot,
it is the fairytales that reclaim everything
in the late hour
of the last day



Atrophy The shark (detail), 2 baths, bacteria dyed cotton, scaffolding mesh, resin, lacquer, 2025.

RESIN

The machine will die,
it has began to intercept all words with the letter ttttttt
tears like resin
adorn leather, pleather, metal,
silky
like the inside of a thigh
this is the gestation,
sliding down the legs, inception equals two components,
resin tears,
can be polished,
can be lacquered,
can become
their own clear little eyes.



Mountain close (detail), 2 industrial wheelie bins, leather, resin, lacquer, 2025.

BACTERIA

The artist uses an altar
as an agar
a liquid broth
bacteria is invoked
nutrients activate growth
jelly agar
jelly dipped fabric
scrapings of bacteria
bacteria, the oldest and most successful living organism on earth
created oxygen
so we might destroy it
early specimens 2 billion years old
trapped in rock when magma solidified below the surface
where all the art comes from
Paleoprotozoic era, darling!
Cyanobacteria, earth's first photo-synthesiser (2.4 billion years old)
fuses water, the sun to create nutrients
our first oxygen
all things exist in fusion,
the artist is growing bacteria,
gloves, boiler suit, protective eyewear,
it's only everyday bacteria, pink, it is not a raver
but unlike the blue species,
it is not resistant to art.



Atrophy The shark (detail), 2 baths, bacteria dyed cotton, scaffolding mesh, resin, lacquer, 2025.

I HEARD JAZZ

Out in the courtyard there are so many chimneys
no fires today
every one a silent trumpet,
defiant as jazz
a car may be called an accelerator
pedal to the floor,
on arriving back from Berlin
a job is required,
first the late night party bus that rescues those who have taken too much
on dark streets where ambulances perhaps
don't need to be
from 10pm to 5am
what the artist brings back is not dreams
it's to be clad in scrubs, each surgery room clear
for machete injuries, burns, self-harm, cancers, all forms of injury,
in rooms of operation
all swabs must be counted,
spinning fat,
chit-chat,
the theatre must be heated for treating burns
did you know me (a patient asks ...)
in the time
before my skin was resined by fire, this lacquer?
She is laid out on the table.
Fell into a bath, scalding hot.
Who is conscious lately?



Beachheads, installation view, 2025.

DUALITY

We are built in contradiction
wet and dry
dirty and clean
sexy and gross
you and I
tell me yellow resin
what was the phone call?
The unconscious is present.
They use shark skin
when you don't have enough of your skin.
colour me.
where is the ability to live with familiarity?
I won't break it down.
I'm a poet.
speaking to the soul in riddles
is the oldest form
of
courting.



Flat B 52, 2 radiators, upholstery foam, resin, lacquer, 2025

UNLOVED

Left for all of winter in Berlin,
under quiet snowfall,
two baths
waiting for spring,
for summer,
for autumn,
all the seasons have come and gone.

A woman walks by with lips in pillar box red
like they did in wartime
against Hitler.



Atrophy The shark, 2 baths, bacteria dyed cotton, scaffolding mesh, resin, lacquer, 2025.

FLAT B52

Flat B52 I think I love you
your guts are on show repellent-as-ever
look at your little knob
ever jutting
ever bloodied
the cut umbilical
seeks return
your radiators are little forests
they are fairytales
in Dresden
in the Highlands
printed using mattress fabric
are you kidding me?
Can't be found in this town it's just too clean.
It was not a chair.
It was not a bed.
It was on a side street in Glasgow.
Will it shape like a shape?
I see a little man
with a little orange hand
with ochre blood oozing,
with a valve like a penis, a rude little thief,
there are choices to be made
about choices,
take more than you need,
the artist walks these streets looking at what society has left out
Dalton scrapyard, there used to be one
now there are five,
the artist will be there in the morning.



Flat B 52 (detail), 2 radiators, upholstery foam, resin, lacquer, 2025

BEACHHEADS 3

Why are you in my yard?
You don't speak my language girl in any shape or form
yet there is form and there is for
and there is for
and there is form
and there is looking
and yards do get paid ... in art sometimes.



Mountain close, 2 industrial wheelie bins, leather, resin, lacquer, 2025.

Dr. Jenni Fagan is a critically acclaimed award-winning novelist, poet, screenwriter and artist.

Author of five fiction novels, one non-fiction memoir and eight poetry collections, currently translated into ten languages.

The New York Times described her as the Patron Saint of Literary Street Urchins.

Fagan's memoir *Ootlin* won't the 2025 Gordon Burn Prize, she was a Granta Best of Young British Novelist, a once-in a decade accolade, Scottish of the Year (2016), listed for The Women's Prize, Encore, James Tait Black, Desmond Elliot, Sunday Times Short Story Award, BBC International Short Story Prize, among others.

She is currently working on film and television adaptations of three of her books and writing a modern adaptation of *Frankenstein* as a novella

Louise Gibson is a sculptor and installation artist currently based at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. Dividing her time between Edinburgh and Glasgow, she relocated her studio from Berlin in 2017. Her practice focuses on creating sculptural and architectural works that combine resins, recycled fabrics, found objects, and scavenged materials. Through industrial processes such as casting, metal recycling, car-body lacquering, and resin work, she transforms discarded and overlooked materials into monumental forms, celebrating their inherent character and history.

Gibson's work has been exhibited extensively across the UK and internationally, reflecting her ability to bridge architectural presence with material sensitivity.

Solo Exhibitions

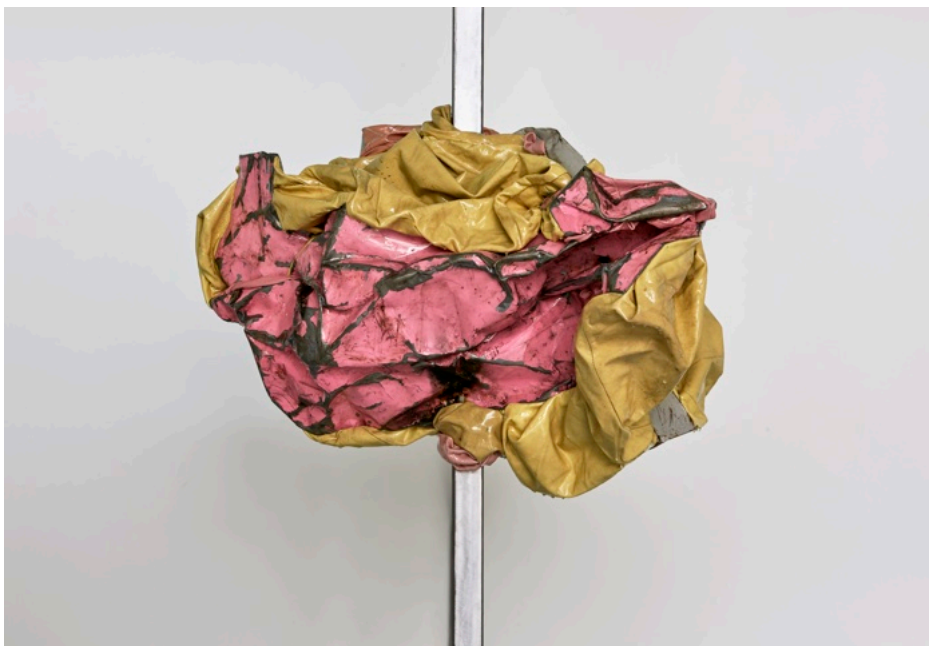
COALESCE – Lehertersibzehn, Berlin, Germany (2014)
Amalgamate – Summerhall, Edinburgh, Scotland (2012)
A Place of Alchemy – The Old Ambulance Depot, Edinburgh (2012)
Scottish Widows plc Main Atrium – Edinburgh (2010)

Awards

Warsteiner Blooom Award Finalist (2014)
Berlin Art Prize Nominee, Berlin (2014)
The Grove Artistic Bursary, The Grove Hotel, London (2012)
Wells Art Contemporary Nominee, Somerset (2012)
Broomhill National Sculpture Prize, Selected Artist, Devon (2012)

Thanks

With thanks to the amazing team at ESW Laura Simpson, Dan Brown, Debi Banerjee, Stephen Murray, Uist Corrigan, Vicky Higginson, Lynn Cowan, Gillian Ingram, Gabriele Jogelaite, Richard Moore. etc



The cabinet (detail), 2 filing cabinet, pleather, resin, lacquer, 2025

This publication accompanies Louise Gibson's exhibition
Beachheads,
presented as part of Edinburgh Art Festival 2025
at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop.



