

Angharad Williams
Harder to Hide

On the occasion of Artissima Present Future 2024, Angharad Williams presents “Harder to Hide”. A multifaceted artist with a practice committed to installative artworks and exhibitions, Williams brings together painting, sculpture and ready-made within a site-responsive installation.

Grounded in the seminal discourses of Achille Mbembe’s necropolitics—the power over life and death—and the militarisation of society, Williams’ installation casts a probing light on these themes, delving into the tension between the advancements driven by defense imperatives, and the inherent human need for connection and understanding.

Central to “Harder to Hide” is the intricate play between interiority and exteriority, the hidden and the revealed. This duality, not only a theme but a lens, reflects our contemporary socio-political landscape and Williams’ deeper investigations into histories of violence and pacifism. Through this, layered inquiries into freedom, security, and individual agency emerge. “Harder to Hide”, with its evocative title—an assessment and a call to face reality—captures a unique temporal snapshot, especially in our image-centric “now”, where self-scrutiny and external reflection are paramount.

The vibrant painting (*Untitled, 2024*), depicts a heat-sensitive image reminiscent of sonar-like radar imagery—ostensibly drone footage—serving as a central visual anchor in the installation. Resembling targets, the painting pull viewers into a singular, precision-defined scenario. Conjuring images related to military oversight, these visual representations also find parallels in civilian contexts, such as agricultural monitoring. This co-optation or adaptation of technology from one domain to another underscores Williams’ fascination with sight, scale, and the fluid boundaries between distinct uses. As these technologies and their representations weave themselves into various aspects of daily life, they often become embedded and invisible: “hidden in plain sight”.

Contrasting this, a red chair with gold lettering reads the German ‘Ich Dien’ in English: ‘I serve’, a 55-year-old ceremonial chair from the Prince of Wales’ investiture—seemingly cemented into the floor in a reversed plinth with the booth elevated around it, serves as a potent metaphor (*Relating to the Law, Relating to Nature, 2022*). The work was originally presented in Williams’ solo exhibition “Picture the Others” at Mostyn. This performative and conceptual choice underscores the impossibility of extracting or distancing oneself from shared history—a testament to the enduring weight and presence of collective memories and experiences that, despite time’s passage, remain firmly rooted in place and in people’s memories. The chair’s relocation from Wales to Turin highlights its fetishistic character in line with its historical significance as an artifact. This, combined with echoes of art historical ‘ready-mades’ or “appropriation” strategies, creates another focus point on the transformative potential of context, borders, and the very act of showing and displacement.

Finally, the installation showcases a delicate glass sculpture of a rattle (*Nobody wins, 2024*), embodying a pivotal tension in the exhibition. Its fragility serves as a ‘breaking point,’ reminiscent of the singular point on safety glass, a symbol of both vulnerability and potential escape. Much like transformative moments when people or situations unveil their real self, this piece compels viewers to grapple with the dilemma of preservation and destruction. We are presented with a profound ethical choice: to either safeguard the fragile or shatter it.

In Williams’ oeuvre, ‘witnessing’ is not just a passive observation; it’s a deeply articulated concept, emphasizing the profound realization of one’s position and responsibility in the world. In an era of overwhelming exposure and the ubiquity of technological voyeurism, “Harder to Hide” emerges as a statement on society, and the enduring quest of the human project.