

Rose Davey: The work you make often feels as though it has jumped out of a bin, containing the aftermath of a birthday party. How does one material find another?

Sarah Kate Wilson: The work is definitely polyamorous. Often I have no idea how things are made, I find the experience of making to be an out of body experience. When I made Zumba in 2014, I made it 24 hours before the show. I had an idea that shaking a piece of silver sequin encrusted fabric under fast strobing lights would make the fabric look like silver liquid. Luckily it did. Things are made fast, or without realising that I am making them.

Rose: It feels like anything goes. But do you work to a logic? Is there a common goal of visual pursuit you follow? Or do you have a conceptual target?

Sarah Kate: It changes from work to work. I am always thinking about dismantling hierarchies, between ideas, materials, people, value judgements.

Rose: Rainbows have continued to appear in various guises over the years. What is it about the colour combination or natural phenomenon that sustains your interest?

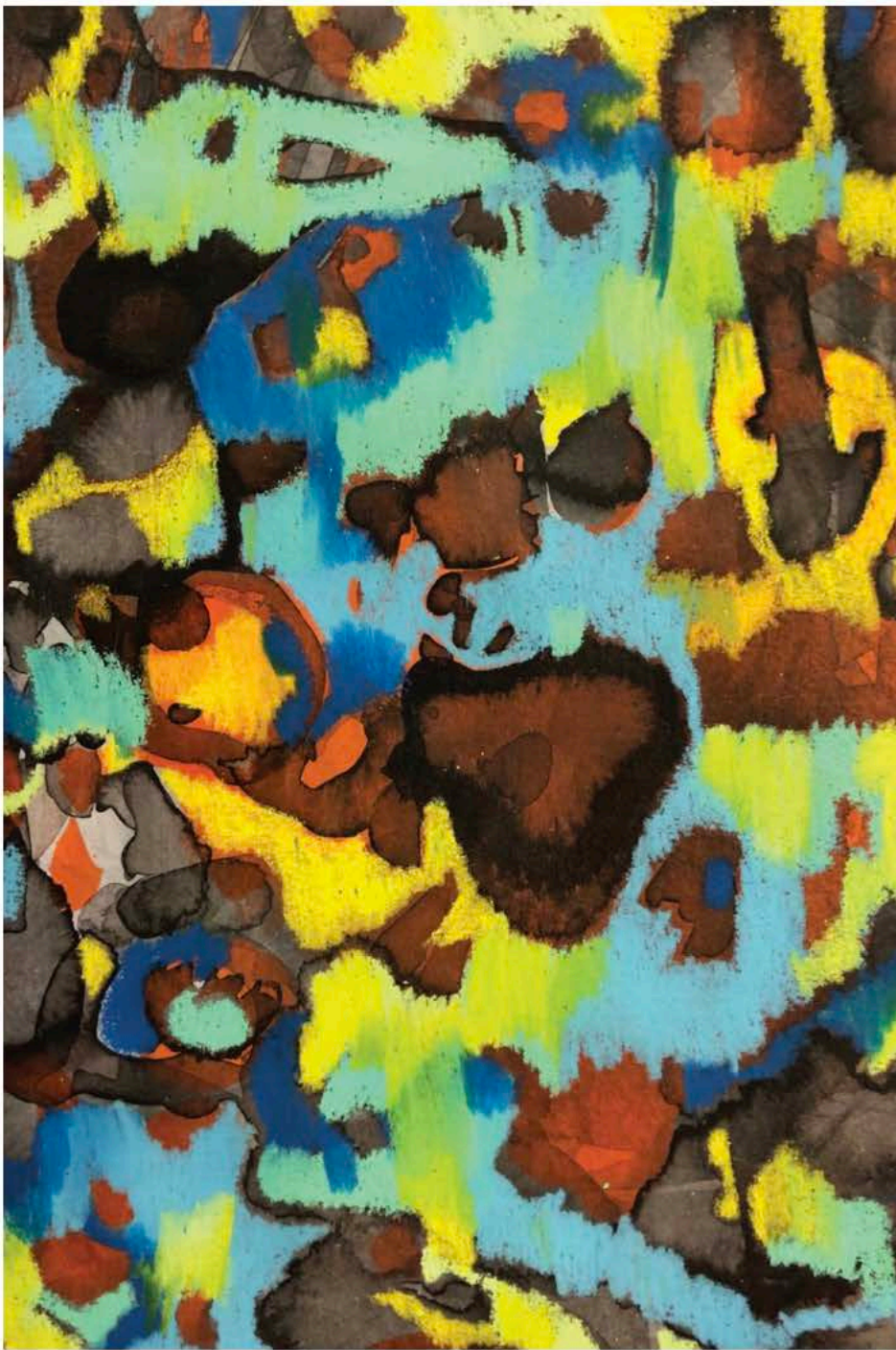
Sarah Kate: Rainbows only appear when the correct weather and viewing conditions align, which is rare. This event is magical really. In terms of possession I love them, because people cannot own rainbows, they are free, and available to all. They appear in the sky, a space we cannot touch. They can be huge and span mountain ranges, they 'exist' only for a short while. Rainbows appear in most cultures. In Greek mythology, Iris is a rainbow goddess, she is unusual because she is both a goddess of the sky and the sea. She is often referred to as a messenger, because she links the heavens with earth. Also, she has gold wings. In terms of colour, white light is split when it passes through raindrops. This splitting enables us to see a whole spectrum of colour, even ultraviolet and infra-red light are present in rainbows (sadly we cannot see these colours with the naked eye). So really it is not about one colour being more important than another, they are all present all of the time, but only 'appear' momentarily when the correct conditions align. For the most recent iteration of *Show-Off* (2020) I staged a performance titled *An Event* (left). Using rainbow sticks (made of metal and glass), water spritz bottles and a large theatrical spotlight. Six performers worked together to try to manifest small rainbows in front of a seated audience.



Sarah Kate Wilson
Rainbows, Beata Viscera Iridis acc
Piper Haywood and Toby O'Connor, performed in tandem by Musarc
DO DISTURB festival, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2017



Sarah Kate Wilson
An Event, 2020
Performed at *Show-Off*, London, 2020



Sarah Kate Wilson
Hiding Place (detail), 2020
India Ink, water-soluble crayon, acrylic paint on paper

Rose: I am intrigued by the drawing element that has recently emerged within your practice. The butterfly drawings are very tight and deliberate, whereas other works appears to employ more chance. Why are you making them?

Sarah Kate: They are actually made with a strong dose of chance. To make the drawings I am building up layers of marks using wax, crayon, and india inks, scraping the work back to the layer underneath, washing the paper and building up the layers again. I am obsessed with these butterflies. When under attack they open their wings to reveal 2 large spot markings, which look like the eyes of an owl. So the butterfly can startle predators by 'appearing' as a bird of prey. The reason I am making them is because I am devising a performance on the subject of animal mimicry. This performance will require sets, costumes and performers, so whilst in quarantine (due to Covid-19) I am using drawing as a way to think about these ideas, but also as a place to pour out thoughts. I don't see chance and deliberate actions sitting at opposite ends of the spectrum, I allow chance into my work, deliberately. Even with performance, which is probably the strictest and 'tightest' way I work, i.e. with a score, an audience, costume, site, I want an element of improvisation, or happy accident.

Rose: I love the comic strip and speech bubble that contains the words "Maybe I took it all too seriously, after all, it's only paint..." I think 'seriousness' is relevant to your work because the materials you use are not very 'serious', whereas I think your intention is deeply serious. Do you aim to make work that might cause the viewer to question whether or not to take it seriously?

Sarah Kate: That comic strip is from the UCL collection (see p.96). It is so funny because it rings so true. It is only paint, it is only art, but we make work because we would go insane if we didn't, but in many ways it is a ridiculous thing to do, maybe we are insane in continuing to make?

Once people look at my work, I hope they understand it is not wholly serious or wholly flippant or totally sad or 100% comical. It is a sliding scale and in many ways reflects the viewer's mood at the time of viewing, which will be different from day to day.