

G A S W O R K S

**Lou Lou Sainsbury:
Earth is a Deadname
7 July – 18 September 2022**



Gasworks presents the first solo exhibition in London by Margate and Rotterdam-based artist Lou Lou Sainsbury. Identifying as a time traveller, Sainsbury works across film and performance, poetry and drawing, installation and textiles. Her work unwrites and rewrites our planet's natural history, putting forward alternate mythologies informed by queer and ecological activism.

Sainsbury's practice is often driven by collaboration within a care network of friends. Her writings and performances map a constellation of interspecies encounters with living beings in constant transformation, affirming her love for aliens and vampires, mystics and saints, impossible births and otherworldly forces, bodies that seep out and words that crack open.

At Gasworks, Sainsbury presents a new body of work that seeks to reimagine transgender experience beyond the limiting language of medicalisation, rewriting its histories into a cosmic poetics of trans sensuality, relation and desire.

The exhibition revolves around Sainsbury's *descending notes* (2022), a collaborative performance film that explores transness as a form of dissonance and resonance. It takes inspiration from Donny Hathaway's heartfelt rendition of *A Song for You*, in which a discordant progression of piano notes punctuates the lyrics: "If my words don't come together, listen to the melody 'cause my love is in there hiding... I love you in a place where there's no space or time."

Written and performed in collaboration with artists Ada M. Patterson and Raffia Li, the film is a love story between three "transing beings" whose desire unfolds across time and space, from early Christian mysticism to future alien intimacies, while being grounded in actual experiences of tenderness, solidarity and grief within Sainsbury's friendships and everyday life.

In the main gallery, Sainsbury presents a large-scale stained-glass installation. This work's fluctuating levels of translucency point towards a transgender gaze while nodding to Torrey Peters' 2021 novel *Detransition, Baby*: "People think a trans woman's deepest desire is to live in her true gender, but actually it is to stand in good lighting." Each of its panels feature geometric patterns dotted with dried flowers, cigarette butts and miscellaneous debris which are trapped in a thick layer of oozing honey like insects on amber.

The exhibition is punctuated by text-based works taking over the space. Words become flesh on the gallery walls, swelling like religious stigmata. Written in collaboration with Kari Rosenfeld, the poem *The Law of Desire is Fascist* (2022) is performed by queer elder poet Jo Mariner as a sound work, presented as a B-side to the film in the second gallery, while also reinterpreted as a cosmic landscape of inedible cupcakes which—in the artist's words—"resist to pass".

Sainsbury understands poetry and writing as a transformative practice—a form of somatic experimentation that operates on one's body at a molecular level, as evidenced on a photographic portrait of the artist captured by Kari Rosenfeld, in which a spiralling line of oestradiol gel features as writing on her naked arm.

Closing the exhibition is an empty bedroom cabinet with the words "to the pain in the womb" handwritten on masking tape. The cabinet features personal gifts, souvenirs and used HRT (hormone replacement therapy) wrappers, which act as a holding place for the artist's shared intimacy within a care network of friends, foregrounding trans experience as a collective process of making and unmaking the body, rather than an individual narrative centred on the self.

Lou Lou Sainsbury is an artist based between Margate and Rotterdam. She graduated from the MA in Art Praxis at the Dutch Art Institute in 2021. Previously she was an associate artist at Open School East in 2017, after completing her BA in Moving Image at the University of Brighton in 2016.

Sainsbury has exhibited individually at Well Projects, Margate (2020). Recent performances and group exhibitions include: Whitstable Biennale (2022); Centre for Contemporary Arts, Prague (2021); Yaby and La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2020); Nottingham Contemporary; Tate Modern, London; Yaby, Madrid (all 2019); and Flat Time House, London (2018).

List of Works

1. *Do you think the dead come back and watch the living?*, 2022

Stained glass, honey, dried flowers, cigarette butts, debris, steel frames
Four panel installation, each 218 x 128 x 3.5cm

2. *i keep you in my gut i keep you in my throat—are you hungry? i can feel you beating in me i can*, 2022 (with Kari Rosenfeld)

Wax, epoxy resin, clay, soil, spray paint, gummies, quail eggs, apple core, sugar, tree bark, lichen, popcorn, plasticine, make up, jacket, crochet, steel plates
Three plates, each 125 x 109 x 10cm

3. *[Nov 30, 2021 at 6:12:27 PM]: just a quick one. whats ya date of birth? im putting u as a witness for my trans form*, 2022

Portrait of Lou Lou Sainsbury by Kari Rosenfeld, C-print, 27.5 x 20.5cm

4. *Fragments of Songbook*, 2022

Wax lettering on gallery walls, spray paint, variable dimensions

5. *Curtain*, 2022

Metallic silk organza, steel reinforcing bar, 230 x 300cm

6. *To the pain in the womb o womb womb womb fleshy womb*, 2022

Antique cabinet, masking tape, alien souvenir figurine, cowboy boot lamp, oestradiol wrappers, 100 x 80 x 51cm

7. *Solar Halo*, 2022

Cymbal, twine, light, variable dimensions

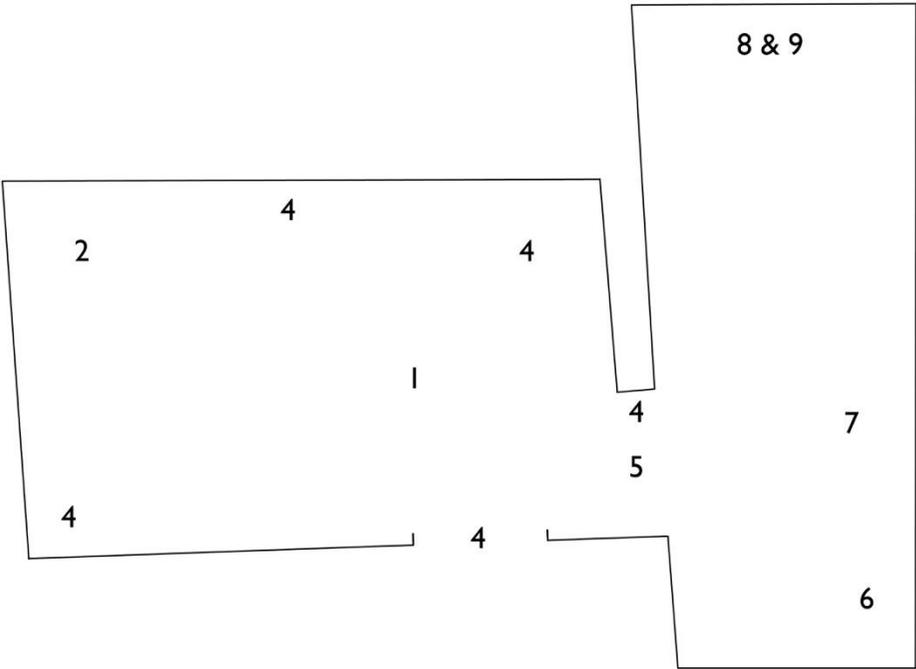
8. *descending notes*, 2022 (with Raffia Li and Ada M. Patterson)

4K video, 17:45 min

9. *The Law of Desire is Fascist*, 2022 (with Kari Rosenfeld)

Poem interpreted by Jo Mariner, sound, 15:50 min

* *descending notes* and *The Law of Desire is Fascist* are played consecutively in the second gallery with a total running time of 34 minutes, looped



Events Programme

Breakfast Exhibition Tour

Wednesday 31 August, 8:30-10am

Join us for a breakfast viewing of the exhibition with coffee, tea and pastries.

Open Studios

Saturday 17 September, 12-6pm

Meet our artists in residence: Gokula Stoffel (Brazil), Sandip Kuriakose (India), Rameesha Azeem (Pakistan) and Pamela Arce (Peru). Performance by Lou Lou Sainsbury and Kari Rosenfeld at 3pm. Residency artists talks at 4pm.

Performance: The Law of Desire is Fascist

Saturday 17 September, 3pm

Coinciding with Gasworks' Open Studios, Lou Lou Sainsbury and her collaborator Kari Rosenfeld present a performance to mark the closing of *Earth is a Deadname*, composed with sonic fragments and offcuts from the exhibition.

Gasworks events are free to attend, visit gasworks.org.uk for more information.

Production Credits

Side A: *descending notes* (2022)

A film by Lou Lou Sainsbury

Written and performed by

Lou Lou Sainsbury

Raffia Li

Ada M. Patterson

Editor: Lou Lou Sainsbury

Camera: Gabi Dao, Lou Lou Sainsbury

Boom operator: Peixuan Qiu (Maoyi)

Production assistant: Ioana Lupascu

Lighting: Marika Vandekraats

Sound design: Lou Lou Sainsbury

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Side B: *The Law of Desire is Fascist* (2022)

Poem written and recorded by Lou Lou Sainsbury and Kari Rosenfeld

Voice: Jo Mariner

References: Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940); Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1920); Sands Murray-Wassink's *I Want a Constant Orgasm in a Beautiful Body* (2010).

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Stained-glass: Maya Levy

Metalwork: Oscar Wanless

Acknowledgements

CAConrad, Cristina Emmel, Eva Fàbregas, Deborah-Joyce Holman, Rebecca Jagoe, Willow Killeen, Kris Lock, Snejanka Mihaylova, Azul de Monte, Iarlaith Ni Fheorais, Kate Paul, Rory Pilgrim, Dylan Spencer-Davidson, Zachary Schoenhut, Sriwhana Spong, Hypatia Vourloumis, Geo Wyeth, Essenburgsingle house, Transsensuality & Transpoetics working group and all transing beings.

Exhibition Credits

Earth is a Deadname is commissioned and produced by Gasworks. Sainsbury is the sixth artist to take part in the Freelands Gasworks Partnership, a programme for emerging UK artists based outside of London. Made possible thanks to a generous grant from the Freelands Foundation, the programme combines a three-month residency with a solo exhibition commissioned in partnership with Humber Street Gallery (an Absolutely Cultured project) in Hull, where a second instalment of the show will be presented in 2023.

Previous participants in the programme include Jamie Crewe, Rachal Bradley, Libita Sibungu, Lauren Gault and Bassam Al-Sabah.

Gasworks commissions are supported by Catherine Petitgas and Gasworks Exhibitions Supporters.

Commissioning partners and exhibition supporters



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