

Catherine McColgan

Artist description:

Catherine McColgan utilises an interdisciplinary practice of Art and Science to tackle larger philosophical questions regarding the potential ethical implications of a contemporary Bio art practice. She uses a microbial perspective to investigate the symbiotic relationships regarding our existence and what it means to be human. McColgan looks at human cells through scanning electron microscopy (SEM) to present an unrecognisable image of the microbial human form to her audience, showcasing the power of scale regarding abstraction. By researching art, science, and philosophy as a basis for producing work, McColgan probes the human psyche. She explores how we perceive ourselves as a singular organism despite being a varied ecosystem of human and microbial cells working together.

McColgan's artistic practice is multimedia, consisting of drawings, paintings, screenprints, petri dishes, clay and bioplastic sculptures. Her work uses microbial imagery drawn on paper, creating the SEM series, which is used as a recurring motif, exploring a range of processes, experimentation and methodology. The processes she tests may be scientific, artistic or a hybrid of both (e.g., painting onto Petri dishes to cultivate samples). She is selective about which artistic processes she uses to examine her microbial motif, often looking at processes that mimic those of her subject matter. For example, McColgan produced a series of screenprints based on mitosis, allowing the artist to duplicate the imagery and build complex overlaid images, much like how cells amalgamate to create large, multisystem organisms.

Influences:

Marc Quinn's '*Family Portrait*' (2001) influenced McColgan; the work presents the instructions of Quinn's family's genome (DNA), investigating the enigmatic ambiguity of our existence. Quinn influenced McColgan's practice significantly as she began experimenting with subject matter cultivated through scientific methods in her artistic practice to comment on interpersonal relationships. During her foundation year, McColgan discovered Heikki Leis' '*Afterlife*' (2005-2016). The photography series that depicts fungi recyclers led her to experiment with approaches to working with mould microbes, looking at spore landscapes and how life may appear from a different perspective. Through her developing practice, an interest emerged in recontextualising our perceptions of microbes to reimagine our relationship with them. McColgan also researched the Theseus' Ship Paradox and the idea of whether our identity relates to our original parts, and whether we are the same person if all our cells are replaced every 7-10 years? These research points provide a field of knowledge McColgan comments on within her practice, referencing a microbial perspective and capturing the detail of these omnipresent microbes and cells.

Current Project:

Through etchings, screenprints and beadings completed in the first term of her Art and Science Masters at Central Saint Martin's McColgan has begun considering the boundaries that scientific images are typically constrained within. How manipulating these drawn lines can recontextualise the microbial images she works with, challenging the scientific presentation we typically see of microbes. Utilising overlapping and cluttered compositions she imagines the natural habitats of these isolated microbes seen within scientific textbooks. Her work teeters the line between educational interests of the microbiological and aesthetic experimentation

McColgan imagines a symbiotic world within her practice, where art and science can collaborate to create art. Through her artwork, she invites the audience to discuss the similarities and differences between the two disciplines and reach their conclusions regarding the strangeness of microbiology and bio art.

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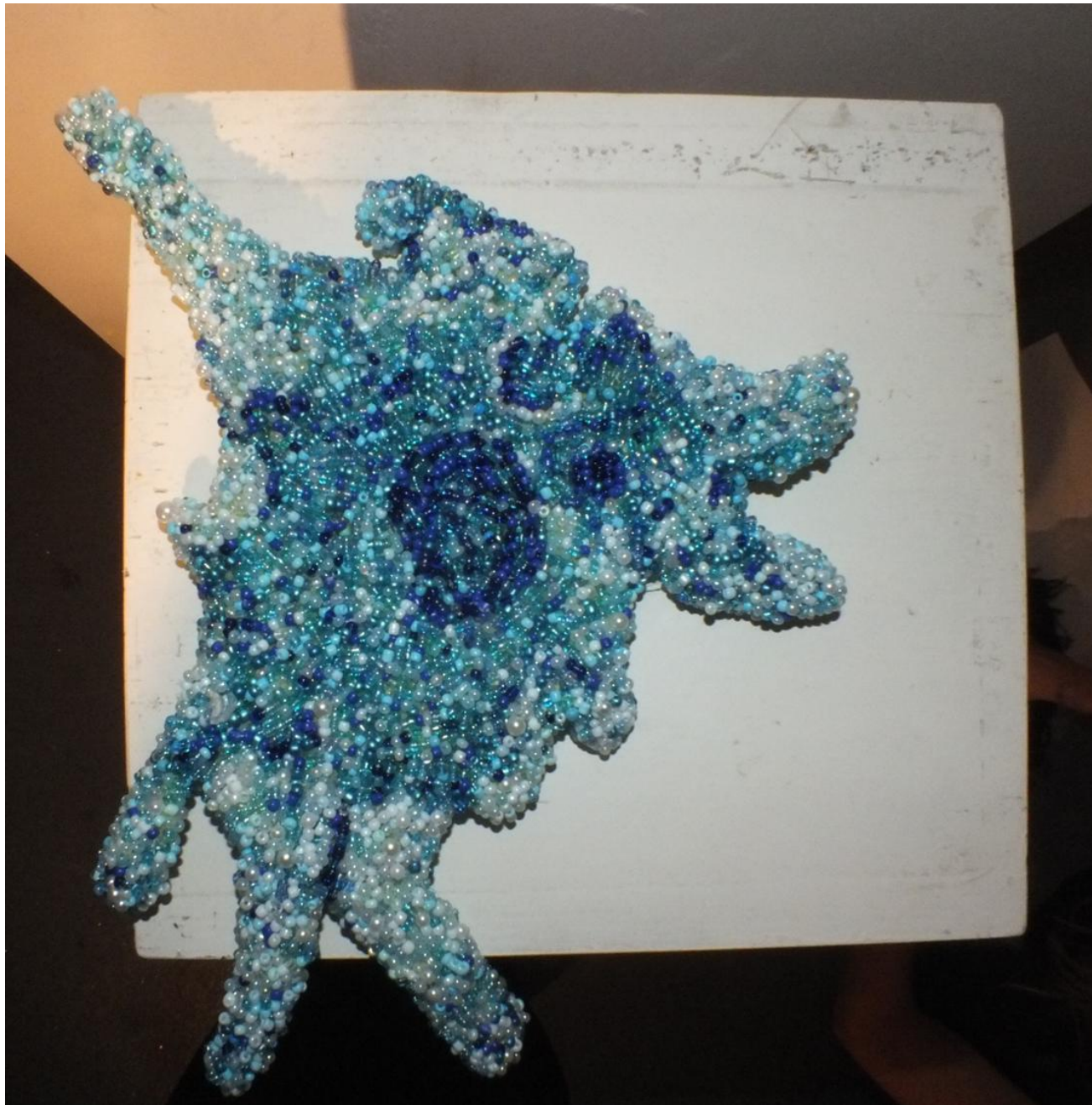
Website: <https://www.cbmccolgan.com>



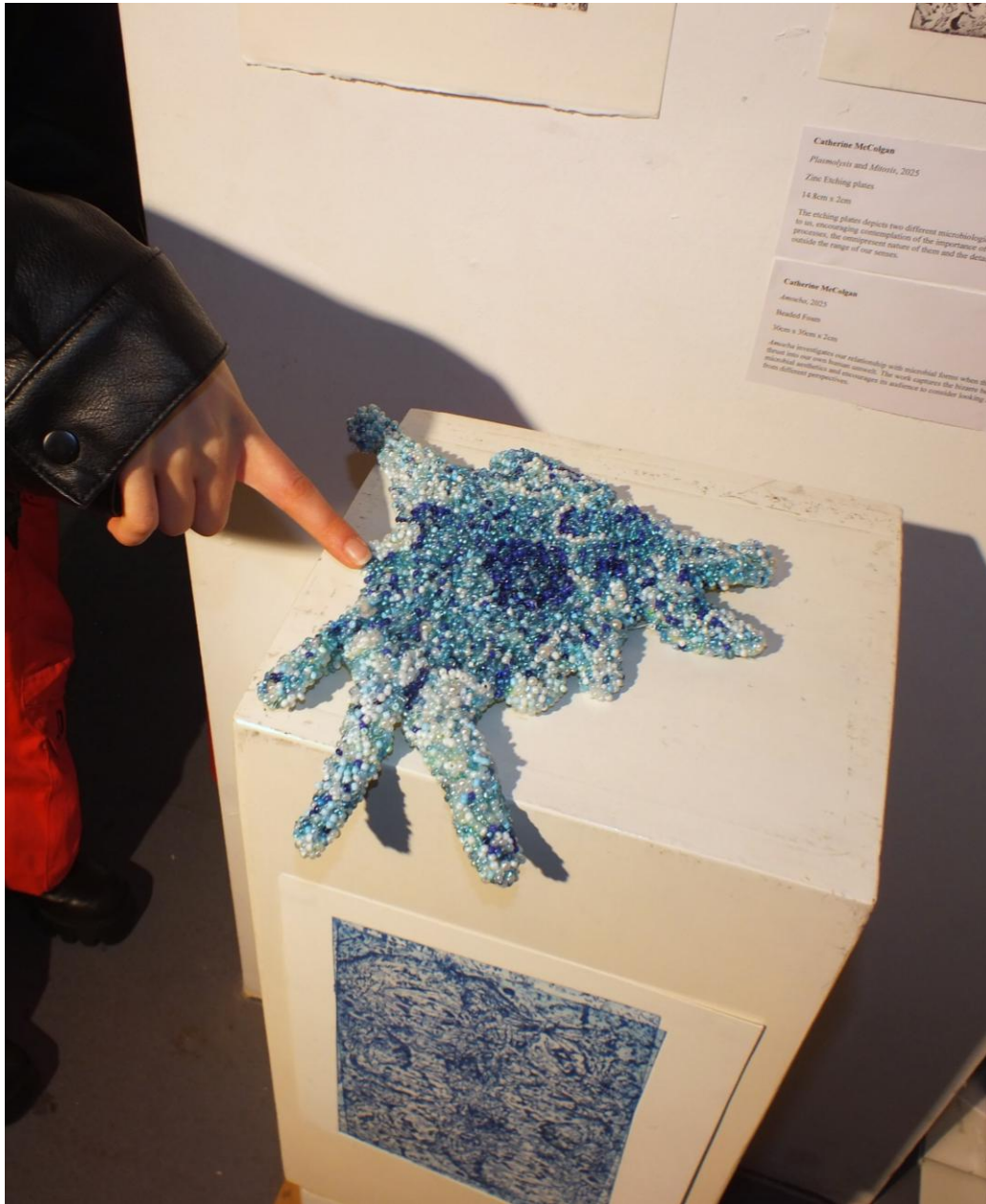
SEM 1 and *SEM 2* (2024) Drawings of human cells, 10.5cm x 14.5cm, fine-liner on card



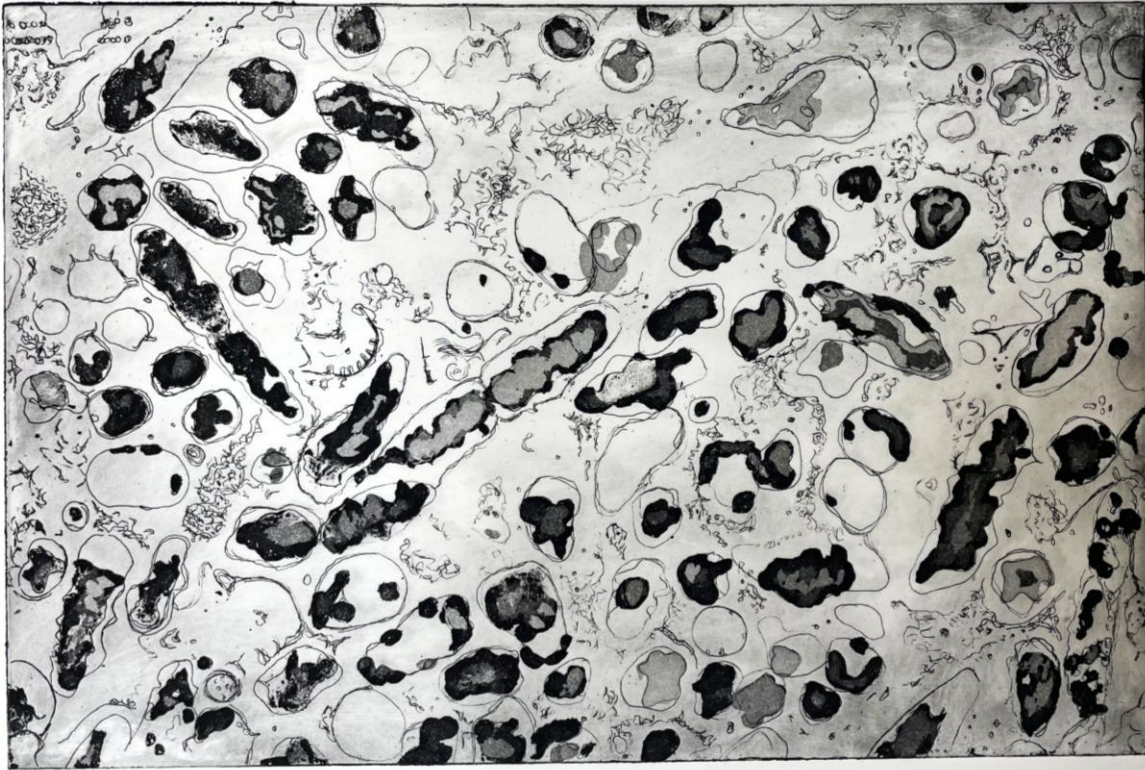
SEM 3 Drawing of a human salivary gland, 14.8 x 21cm, fine-liner on card



The Amoeba, 2025
Beaded foam
Exhibited in *Temperament of Art*
at the Good Rice Gallery

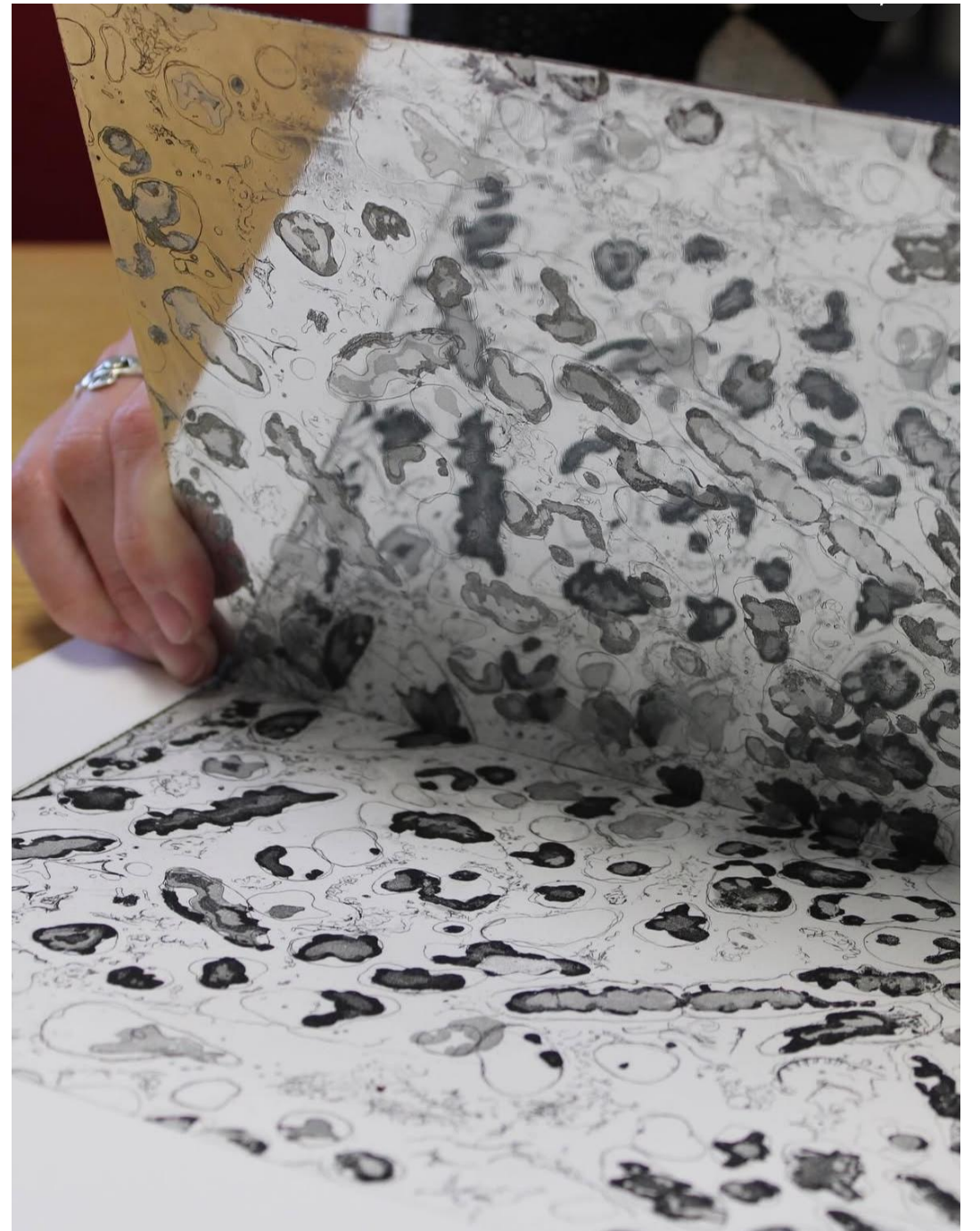


The Amoeba displayed alongside *Mitosis without Borders* Etching Prints
Exhibited in *Temperament of Art* at the Good Rice Gallery



Plasmolysis Etching prints 21 x 29.7 cm
In collaboration with the University of Southampton and
Phage collection project

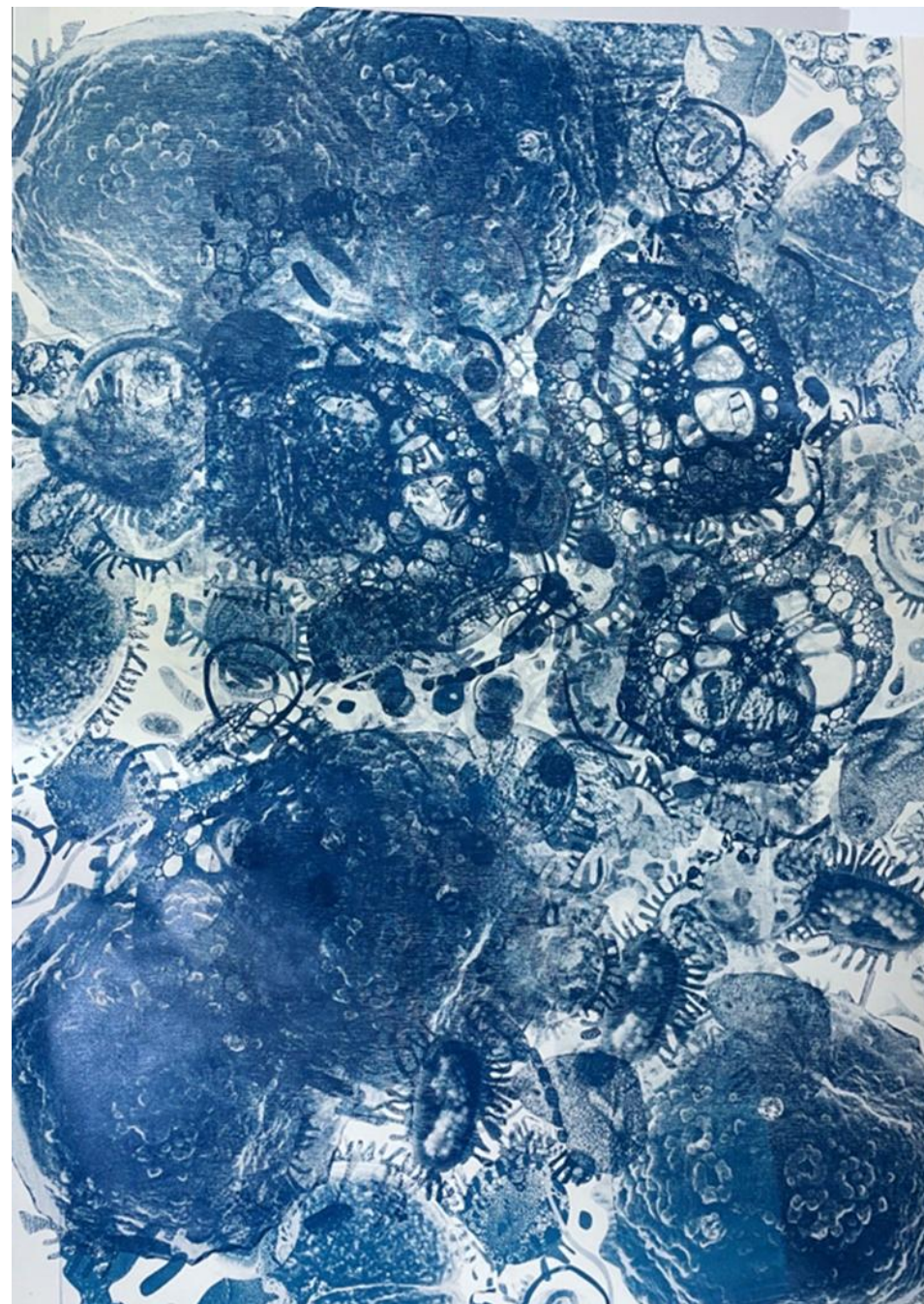
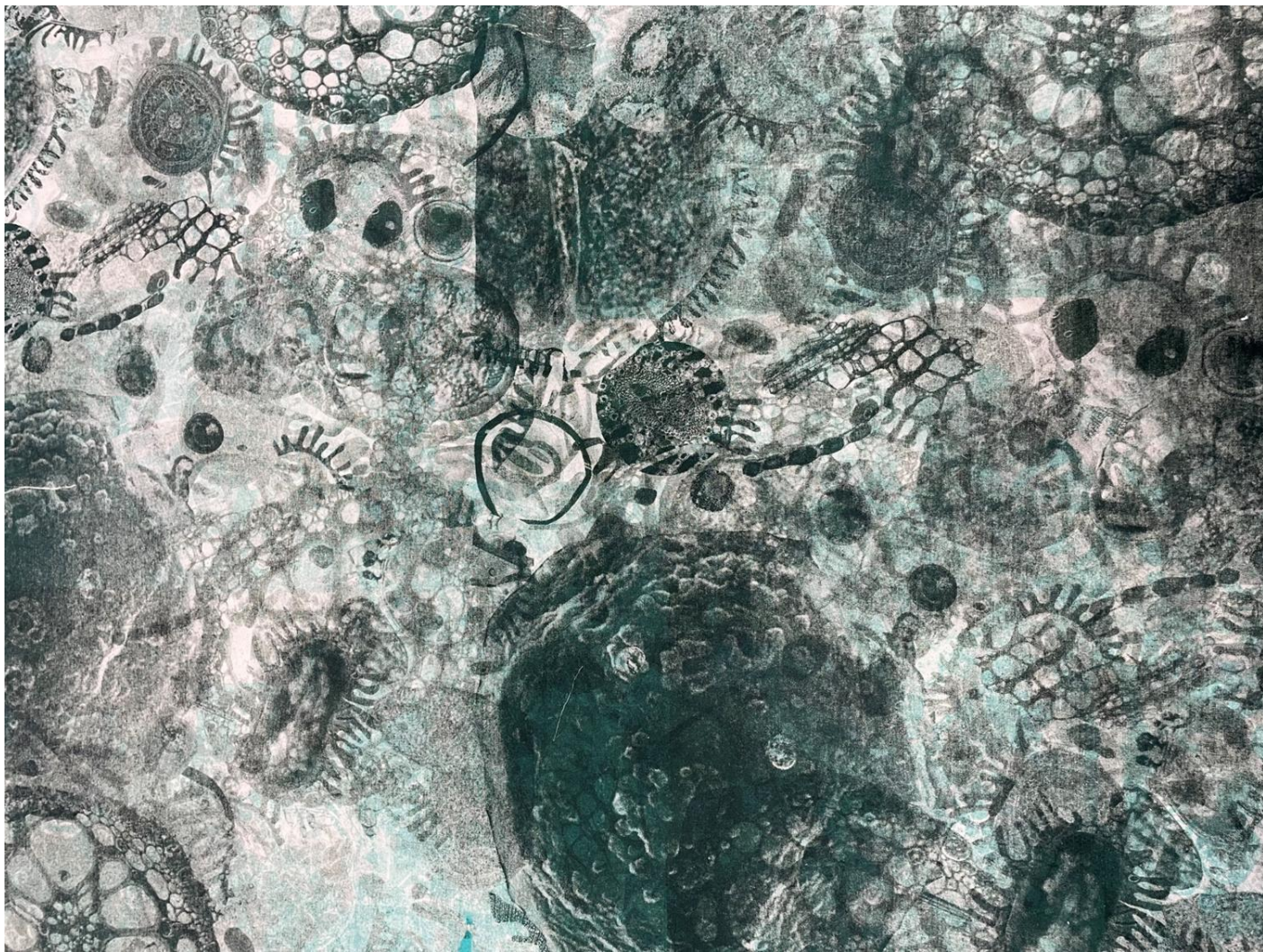
<https://www.phage-collection.org/blog>





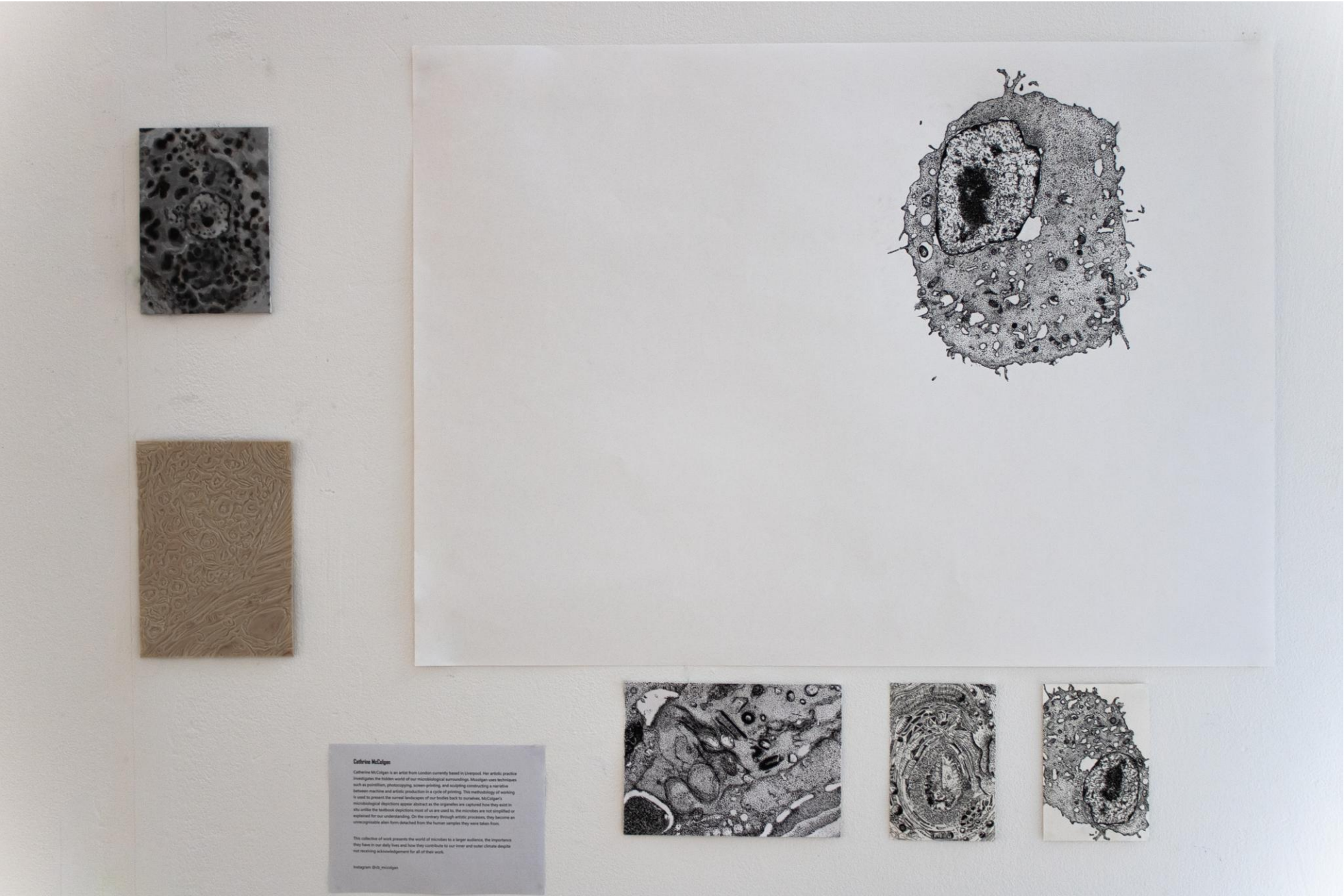
Screenprints of *Franken Microbe*
composition on paper and fabric,
each 59.4 x 84.1 cm

Displayed with gelatine
bioplastic discs



Details of *Franken Microbe* composition on paper and fabric, each 59.4 x 84.1 cm

Mixed media collective of work presented for the 'Climate' exhibition at LJMU (Includes the *SEM* series seen at the bottom right of the picture, an acrylic on canvas painting and a carved linocut block featured on the left side



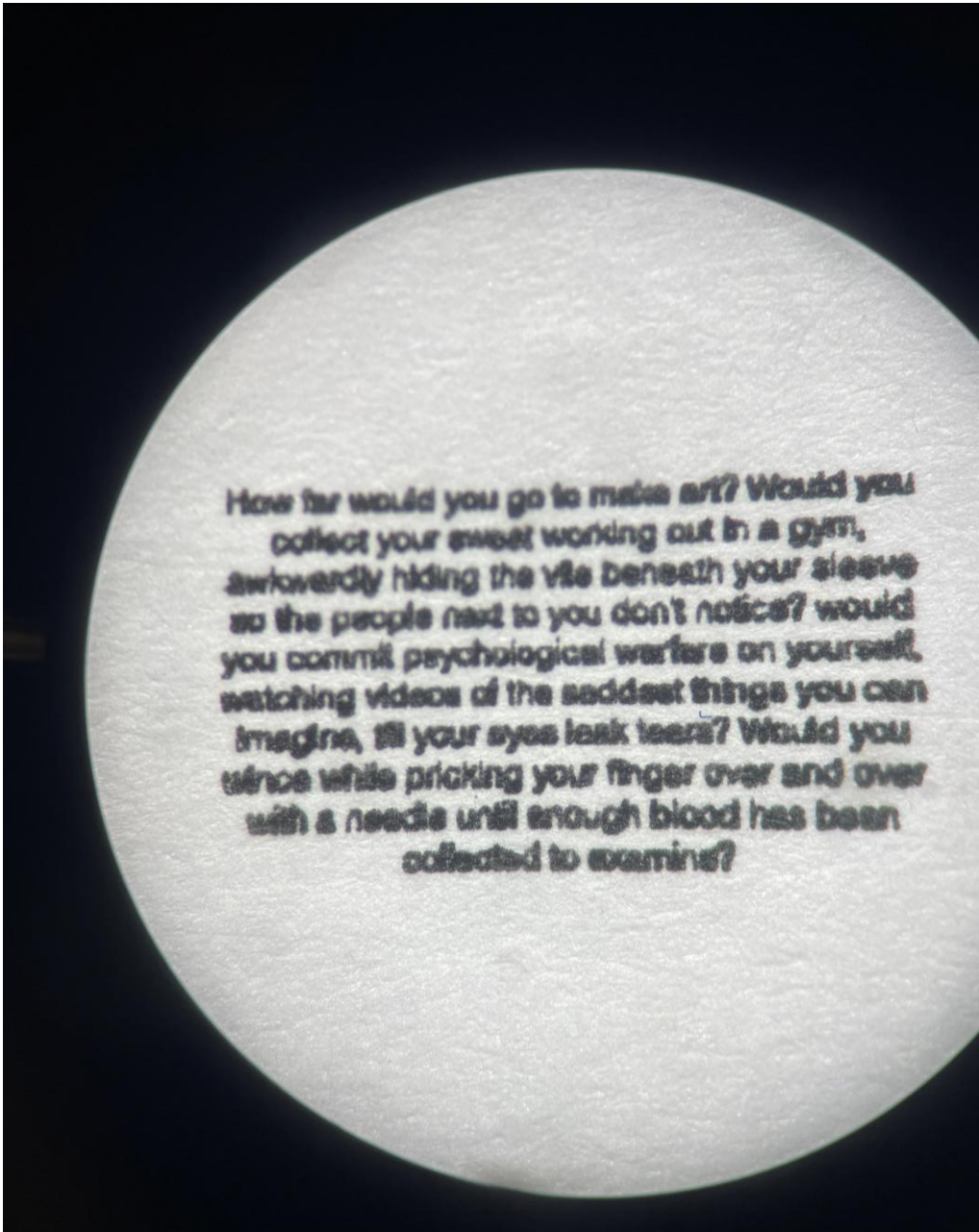
Catherine McCulgan
Catherine McCulgan is an artist from London currently based in Liverpool. Her artistic practice investigates the hidden world of our microbiological surroundings. McCulgan uses techniques such as positron, photomicroscopy, freeze drying, and sculpting constructing a narrative between nature and artistic production in a cycle of printing. This methodology of working is used to present the natural landscapes of our bodies back to ourselves. McCulgan's microbiological depictions appear abstract as the organisms are captured how they exist in the culture but the techniques depicted most of us are used to the microbes are not accepted or explained for our understanding. On the contrary through artistic processes, they become an accessible also form detached from the human samples they were taken from.
This collection of work presents the world of microbes to a larger audience, the importance they have in our daily lives and how they contribute to our inner and outer climate despite not having acknowledgement for all of their work.
Instagram @cmmcculgan



Blood, Sweat and Tears , 2026 (30cm x 30cm x 1cm) Oil on Canvas



Blood, Sweat and Tears displayed in CSM Interim Show, 2026



Text seen as under Microscope



Screen Prints '*Mitosis*' Collection, 2024 (each 29.7cm x 42cm), presented in the '*Climate*' Exhibition



Untitled Screen prints on cotton, 2025 200cm x 100cm, presented in the 'Climate' exhibition, 2024



Penicillium's Performance, made from beaded fruit, displayed at 'Limits and Demonstrations' exhibition at the Bridewell Gallery, 2024





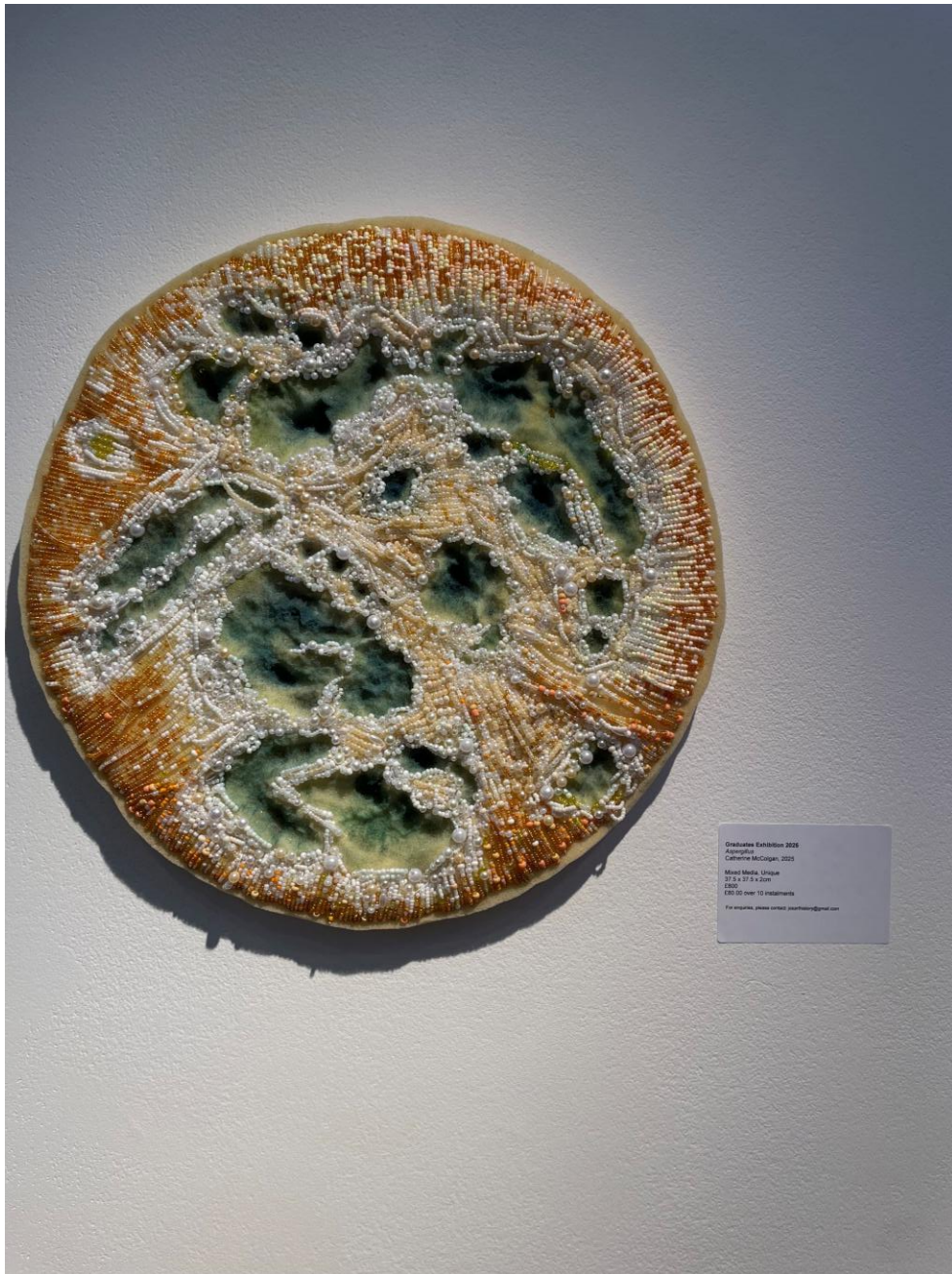
Penicillium's Vanitas 2024, Acrylic and oil on canvas 101 x 82cm



Petri dishes from the '*SPIT*' series produced Mould and Bacteria, 10cm x 10cm x 1.5cm



Untitled Petri dish sculptures inspired by the SPIT series, the centrepiece is made from a 3D printer, the rest consists of clay, 10 x 10 x 1.5



Graduate Exhibition 2008
Aspergillus
Catherine McColgan, 2008
Mixed Media, Unique
37.5 x 37.5 x 2 cm
£80.00 over 12 instalments
For enquiries, please contact: pearl@pearl.com



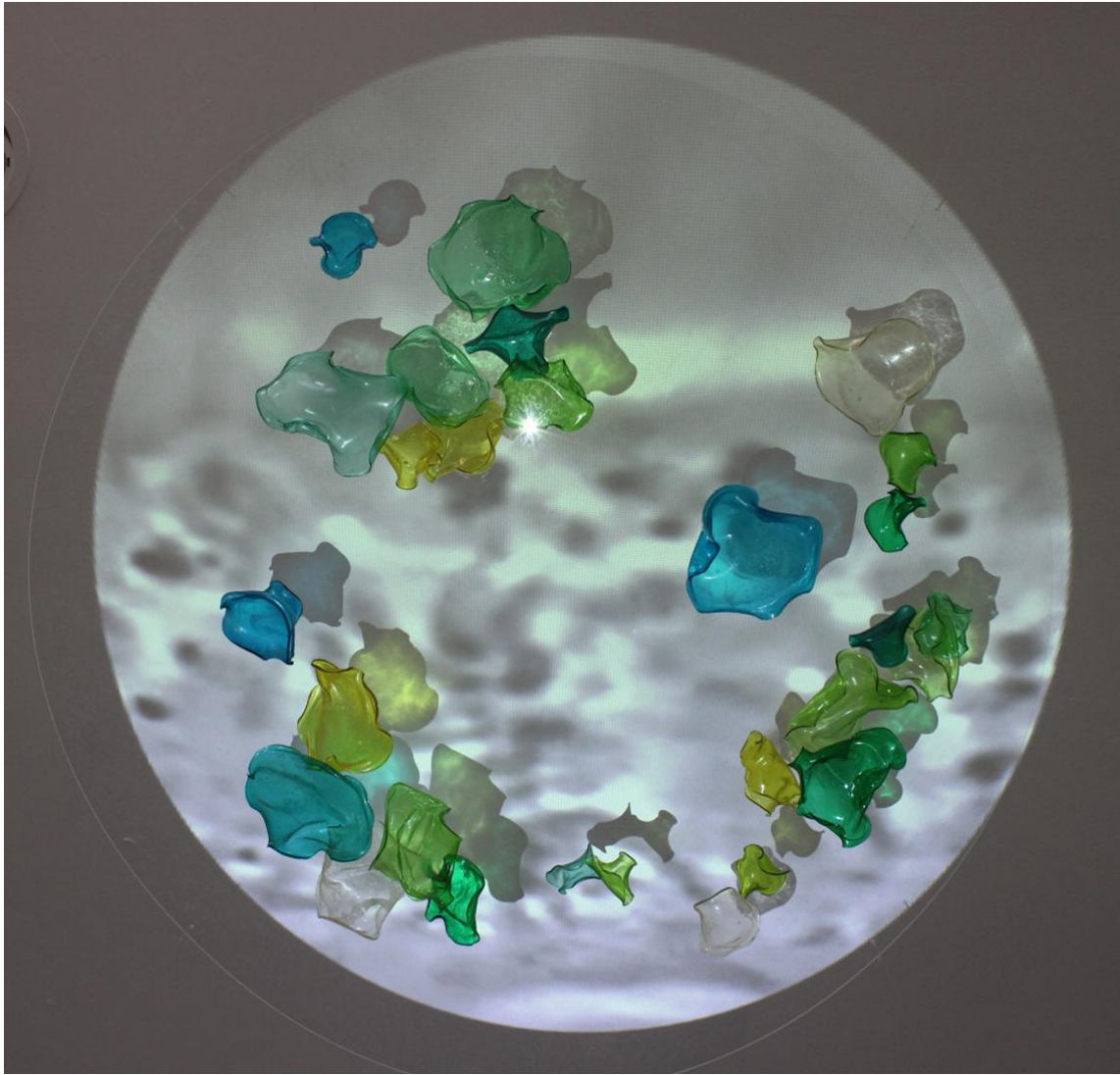
Aspergillus, Based on the fungus previously grown by McColgan
Beaded foam, 37.5 x 37.5 x 2 cm



Details from *Aspergillus*



Introspicere 2025
Mixed media installation



Introspicere 2025
Mixed media installation



Video of mitosis shone through
a collection of bioplastic lenses