

Video transcript Athena Papadopoulos (English)

This is actually an artist portrait of me. Athena. Me, little old me, Athena Papadopoulos, here in my home studio.

I turned my house into a studio, so it's like literally there's piles and piles of work everywhere, and it's just like you can't escape it, especially being locked down with all of it. It's like... It's a nightmare, but also like, you know, a dream world.

So much. You know. I know yeah, but I always have to go back to go forward. Somehow... You know like I kind of have to go through like a detective process of like uh you know of my own life, and my own kind of education and my own upbringing, and kind of it's like remembering things that I didn't remember before and uh... it's like all a way of sort of reconciling your past in order to be done with it in a sense, but you keep having to go back, you know, to the scene of the crime upstairs.

The others, the works that you saw in my other studio, those are very contained like they're very precise. You know these are fun cause you're like can throw stuff at them. Whereas the other I wouldn't be able to do that because it's like so tight. So it's like two completely different ways of way of working to everything you did, it would just get lost, you know. So like G one is gonna be like have a lot of similar stuff. In order to have content that's true to me, I need to actually investigate my own past, my own roots and my own complexity as a human being so that I can actually put it somewhere and say like "now you're somebody else's problem".

I have all of these fragments of things that I'm attracted to, but I don't know why and I don't wanna always have to explain why, and they're supposed to fit somewhere because I have a kind of intuitive draw to them, uh their subject matter or their materiality or something. But I can't explain why and I can't explain what they're gonna be for and I don't know where they're gonna go and then you do that for a long enough and you've got about a zillion materials and fragments and ideas and small aspects of things that could be put into works. And then it's a bit like a tornado of all of this content and material that is begging for you to find a home and to place it within the world and to make sense of it.

I really love... I really was thinking about these objects that had a life before I, you know, discovered them, you know, that they're like these pre-haunted objects. I actually go to, like kinda, disused furniture stores or to the back alleyway of some, like, care home or something, where there's like all of this metal that's, you know, broken trolleys and things like that. There's residues on the objects and there's things that the materials absorb, you know, emotionally.

As these objects accrue history and are no longer wanted, they want to cry out and tell you what has happened to them through these, like, lamentations.

But also the whole thing with relationships and growing up in a kind of a home

where there was a lot of arguing and there was a lot of stuff happening between two people who were supposed to love each other, but they were actually, like you know, secretly plotting against each other and, you know, that's like a really bizarre kind of environment to grow up in. and so I think that's kind of like, you know, that's had a sort of psychological effect on me and I've also kind of really thought about these different dynamics between characters.

And and that duality was... was a lot of what was a lot of what was behind the basis of the conversations between the two voices, um, which kind of directed the work in the MOSTYN show where it was two voices, two figures, two characters who were both attracted and repulsed by each other, to each other, and also loving each other, but hating each other. You know all of those dichotomies of good and evil, bad and good, loving, and loving and hating, and like the kind of grey area between that, which is actually that both characters possess all of those things. It's not just one is one and the other is the other, that it's a very complex interplay of shifting dynamics between things.

So you walk in to 'Cain and Abel Can't and Able' and you're greeted by a bible, an oversized stuffed bible that contains like these five different dialogues between two characters, two voices, all of those dichotomies: mother-daughter, He-she, different animals, Cain and Abel, one for each, and then you have like a little choir behind them, behind the bible, of these like, um, like the disembodied leg that gets turned into a cross.

And the paintings are, like, filled full of different objects and materials, and then they're, you know, kind of sucked in with this mesh. You don't know what's inside of them. You know, you can kinda see, but you know you can't be exactly sure.

So imagine the blue room has like the backstage area and so there's these three graces, which are the sort of stars of the show, but they haven't come out yet and they're just kinda, imagine them in the back room, kind of, which is a bit like an infirmary as well and they're kind of airing all of their grievances.

So in my shows and with my work, it's sequential a bit like a movie Jurassic Park, where with, like, each film, the dinos get more and more souped up or I don't know genetically modified. They become like these genetically modified hybrids, um, but like that one must see the first film to understand where it all came from.

Like so many people write a tagline about my work; that it's like a questioning of femininity and the use of make up and hair dyes, but I use those materials because they were things that humans used on their bodies. So I could, um like, create bodies or characters that really came out of a personal interest and a misunderstanding of why people play the roles that they play and the, like, human dramas that result from wearing these false masks. And playing these certain mainstream roles. So really, like, I guess it was a mis-identification with this, and what really interested me were the psychological complexities through like the use of my own imagined narratives that take that idea as a point of departure, but in order to create my sculptural characters and the scriptwriting and the sound and the text that's embedded in the works. Um, you know, these

elements that are continuing to push the work in a much more, I think, cinematic or um theatrical or literary direction even though they're all still works.

As human beings, if you're really living, like, your life changes a lot you know. And if your work remains the same, it's a little weird, you know it's just a little strange that because, if you're really working with your life and the way that I do and from my own personal experience, but also my experience of the world and of relationships and of other people and of all of the new things that I come across, then inherently the work would have kind of quite radical shifts. My work shifts as I shift. That's why I think the artworks are basically just surrogates of me. Essentially they're kind of like bizarre clones of what's going on inside of me that comes out in a manifested form.