Hollow Earth Wall Labels

Gallery One

Hollow Earth

Hidden below Nottingham are 800 hand-carved sandstone caves, the largest collection of its kind in the UK. Inspired by this subterranean city, *Hollow Earth* explores the subject and site of the cave. Spanning works by more than 50 artists, the exhibition descends into the depths to consider questions of thresholds, darkness and prehistory.

Every culture and religion tells stories about what lies beneath. In myth and sacred texts, caves are the domain of gods and monsters, places of birth, burial and rebirth. Today, they remain closely associated with danger and survival, connected with seed vaults, doomsday bunkers and the possible source of pandemics.

Caves are places where species and millennia mingle, portals to the deep past and to troubled futures.

*Hollow Earth* is divided into five sections and  
echoes a descent into a cave. The exhibition  
brings together 150 works, including installation, painting, sculpture, photography, film, sound, archives and architectural proposals, and is punctuated by a series of new commissions.

*The exhibition is organised in collaboration with Hayward Gallery Touring. In 2023, it will travel to The Glucksman in Cork and to RAMM in Exeter.*

**Athanasius Kircher**

Page from *Mundus Subterraneus*

1665  
Private collection

Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) was a German Jesuit scholar and polymath. After a visit to Italy, when he was lowered into the crater of Vesuvius, he proposed that the Earth’s interior was crisscrossed with interconnecting channels of fire. In 1665, Kircher published the lavishly illustrated book *Mundus subterraneus, quo universae denique naturae divitiae* (The Subterranean World: All its Riches). In it he wrote, “the whole Earth is not solid but everywhere gaping, and hollowed with empty rooms and spaces, and hidden burrows.”

**Laura Emsley**

*cave model*

2022  
Pulped paper, steel, plastic Courtesy the artist

Searching for a way to move beyond postmodernism in the 1990s, Laura Emsley (b.1957) opted to go “back to the caves”. This was first manifested in *CAVE* (1997), a walk-in structure made from pulped books of theory and philosophy. As she has written, “My work attempts to reconnect to the primordial power of deep earth where our early human minds were first wired.” Since then, all of Emsley’s projects have been connected to specific caves, from France to South Africa.

Emsley has said that, in his “Allegory of the Cave” (350 BCE), Plato “disconnects mind and matter, inside and outside”. For *cave model*, Emsley pulped pages from Plato’s text to produce a brain- like papier-maché sculpture: “The cave is the place where what is inside our heads and outside meet — and we can no longer tell the difference.”

**Laura Emsley**, *CAVE*, 1997 Installation at *A–Z*, The Approach, London, 1998. Curated by Matthew Higgs

**Lee Bontecou**

*Drawing*

1961  
Graphite on paper Courtesy Tate: Presented by Leo Castelli, 1962

The American artist Lee Bontecou (b.1931) is best known for her wall- mounted reliefs, which teem with portals and protrusions. Since the late 1950s, she has used drawing as a means of planning these sculptural works, as well as an end in itself. In this piece, which Bontecou describes as an “illusionary world”, we encounter shadowy cavities and voids. The central form is at once machine-like and biological, and has been likened to a spaceship, a bunker and a bodily organ.

**The Threshold**

*Hollow Earth* echoes a journey into a cave, starting at the threshold, before working its way further and further down, finishing in the depths.

This gallery introduces some of the exhibition’s central themes: transformation and illusion, the hidden and the unearthed. Like the threshold to a cave, it is a transitional zone that leads to what can be a place of hope or dread, of birth, burial or rebirth.

Caves have no straightforward definition. The English  
word comes from the Latin *cavum*, meaning “hollow”.

A dictionary will tell us it is a natural underground cavity, a void large enough to hold a human. But while we measure caves with our bodies, they are difficult to describe. They often exceed our language and our grasp. Perhaps this is what draws artists into the dark.

**Joseph Wright of Derby**

*Grotto in the Gulf of Salerno*

1780–81  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Derby Museums

A master of subtle chiaroscuro, or light and shadow, Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97) is one of the most significant artists of the 18th century. His works have become synonymous with the Industrial Revolution. Painted in 1780, and exhibited at the Royal Academy that year, Grotto in the *Gulf of Salerno* is one of a distinguished group of works inspired by the artist’s travels in Italy. Based on a drawing he had made there in 1774, the painting depicts the interior of a cavern near Naples, a popular stop for artists on the Grand Tour.

**Caragh Thuring**

*Inferno*

2018  
Oil on linen  
Private collection, London

Caragh Thuring (b.1972) has always been captivated by volcanoes — their mystery and devastating impact, as well as their depictions. *Inferno* is what the artist calls an “impossible painting”, meaning that the vantage point appears to be located inside a volcano itself. The earth becomes a frame and a threat. The silhouetted figures on the crater edge seem out of time, their dress suggestive of the Regency- era Grand Tour, and the pursuit of knowledge and dominance over nature.

**Michael Ho**

*Echoes from the Void*

2022  
HD video, 12 min  
Courtesy the artist. Commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella

Made in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this new film by Michael Ho (b.1991) considers the cave as a kind of echo chamber. Shot at Thor’s Cave in the Peak District, as well as locations in Dorset and Devon, *Echoes from the Void* includes imagery borrowed from Chinese myth and folklore.

As Ho has said, this work “re-examines the children’s game of ‘Chinese whispers’ within the context of the pandemic and the age of digital media. It aims to discuss the East Asian diaspora through the exposure of the mechanisms through which mis- and disinformation are produced, disseminated and consumed. In a time when fears of the ‘Yellow Peril’ are resurgent, how do facts get turned into fiction?”

**Barry Flanagan**

*Hole in the Sea*

1969  
Photo etchings  
Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery, copyright the artist

Barry Flanagan (1941–2009) made a short 16mm film for *Land Art* (1969), a pioneering televised exhibition. Filmed on a beach in the Netherlands, he buried a plastic drum in the sand and filmed it from above as the tide came in. These three etchings were made from photographs that Flanagan took of the exhibition when it was originally broadcast on West German state television.

**Ed Herring**

*Oiled Earth (near Woodhead, Yorkshire, September 1969)* 1969  
Silver gelatin print

*Chemical-packed cuts (slag heap near Wigan, Lancashire, August/ September 1969)* 1968–69

Silver gelatin print  
All works courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery

Ed Herring (1945–2003) was a British Conceptual artist whose work lay at the intersection of Land and Performance art. Herring made what he called “environmental statements” in the landscapes of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Deeply rooted in ecological concerns, these works often reflected on consumption and cultural responsibility. *Oiled Earth* was a response to the U.S. Department of State’s proposal to reduce the impact of earthquakes by pouring crude oil into the San Andreas Fault.

**Steven Claydon**

*Both Tomb and Womb*

2022  
Anagama-fired stoneware, turned Ukrainian ash, laser-cut aluminium, waterproof MDF

*Both Womb and Tomb*

2022  
Anagama-fired stoneware, turned Ukrainian ash, laser-cut aluminium, waterproof MDF  
All works courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

During World War II, Japanese potteries were requisitioned for ordnance production. Steven Claydon’s (b.1969) vessels invoke this history, their forms derived from mines and grenades, funereal reliquaries and the *wabi-cha* tea ceremony. Claydon used a traditional wood-burning pottery kiln called anagama, which is Japanese for “cave”. As he has written: “An anagama is a hole kiln [...] both tomb and womb. It is also a chrysalis, a site of metamorphosis. A sacred thing and a secular thing. A beast and a tool.”

**René Magritte**

*La condition humaine*

1935  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Norwich Castle

René Magritte (1898–1967) painted four works with this title between 1933 and 1935. All depict a painting-within-a- painting, one of the Belgian surrealist’s favourite motifs. In this version, the easel is framed by the mouth of a cave. The work’s title, as well as the fire, may connect these questions to Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”. An episode from Plato’s *Republic* (350 BCE), the allegory explores the difference between reality and representation, by way of the figure of prisoners in a cave, chained with their backs to a fire, watching shadows flicker across the wall.

**Santu Mofokeng**

*Chasing Shadows*

1996–2014  
Giclée print  
Courtesy Santu Mofokeng Foundation and MAKER Gallery

Santu Mofokeng’s (1956–2020) series *Chasing Shadows* was made largely in the caves of central South Africa, such as Motouleng, an immense sandstone overhang. It has a special significance for followers of the country’s traditional animist religions, and is a place for salvation and healing. Mofokeng described growing up with “A faith that is both ritual and spiritual — a bizarre cocktail of beliefs that completely embraces pagan rituals as well as Christian beliefs. And while I feel reluctant to partake in this gossamer world, I can identify with it.”

**Juan Downey**

*Plato Now*

1973  
Facsimile pencil drawing Courtesy the Juan Downey Estate

In the late 1960s, the Chilean artist Juan Downey (1940–93) began to produce interactive installations exploring questions of perception. His video installation *Plato Now* drew from Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” (350 BCE), in which prisoners are chained inside a cave with their backs to the entrance. All they can see are the shadows of objects passing in front of a fire that burns behind them — shadows which they understand to be reality.

When *Plato Now* was first presented, it involved nine meditating participants. A row of monitors was placed between them and the spectators, who were able to see the performers’ faces via a closed-circuit television, while lights cast shadows of the audience on the wall. The brain activity of the performers was monitored and, when a specific level was reached, quotes from Plato were transmitted to their headphones.

Reverend John Tripe

*Rock Holes Nottingham (aka The Rock Caves of Nottingham)*

1804

Watercolour on paper

Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

Francis Nicholson

*Rock Caves and Nottingham from the River Leen*

c.1787

Watercolour on paper

Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

Nottingham’s caves are all man-made. The sandstone bedrock below us provides the perfect conditions for hand-carving whilst still maintaining structural integrity for corridors, rooms and arches. For centuries, these caves played host to pub cellars, dwellings, mines, malt kilns and tanneries. While some remain in use today, over the years many became middens and dumping places, receptacles for the unwanted.

Presented here is a selection of objects, photographs, artworks and materials which explore some of the ways they have been used. Borrowed from a range of local archives and collections, the display is not representative of a chronological history but instead gathers different forms of documenting and viewing the city’s caves, looking both inwards and outwards, above and below.

Reverend John Magens Mello

*Les Grottes de Creswell*

1882  
Ink on paper  
Courtesy Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham  
Item accession: MS 45/6

Reverend John Magens Mello (1836–1915) was born in London and graduated from St. John’s College, Oxford in 1859. His time at Oxford aligned with the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* and the subsequent debates around human origins and religious beliefs. In 1863 he moved to Mapperley in Derbyshire after being appointed rector of St. Thomas’s, Brampton, near Chesterfield.

Reverend Mello was a keen geologist and local historian. In 1876 he published his *Handbook to the Geology of Derbyshire*. Living in proximity to the caves at Creswell he recognised their importance as archaeological sites and requested permission to excavate them in 1874 alongside Thomas Heath and William Boyd Dawkins. Amongst his numerous published articles he also wrote about the caves of Creswell and Derbyshire. Seen here is his illustrated article *Les Grottes de Creswell*.

**J. C.**

*A View of the Rock Holes in the Park near Nottingham belonging to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.* From *Nottinghamia vetus et nova* by G.C. Deering  
c.1751  
Ink on paper  
Courtesy Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham  
Item accession: 6001692403

**Unknown photographer**

*Cave Photographs*

2022 Giclée print

**Unknown maker**

*Rudera Coloniae Troglodyticae Juxta Nottingham*

Date unknown  
Ink on paper  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

A view of the River Leen and adjacent caves, with a plan of the same area.

**Unknown maker**

*Figurine*

c.13th–14th century  
Earthenware  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

An unusual piece of pottery found in a cesspit  
on Lower Parliament Street in 1975. It may have depicted a figure on horseback and possibly functioned as the hollow spout of an aquamanile.

**Unknown maker**

*Jug sherd with face detail*

c.11th–15th century  
Earthenware  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

A small ceramic sherd, possibly from a jug, with  
a moulded face decoration found in the caves under Drury Hill. The caves were investigated on several occasions with the majority of excavations taking place in 1968 ahead of the Broadmarsh redevelopment. The development involved the destruction of Drury Hill and all properties on that road.

**Reverend J. Swete, engraved by J. Storer**

*Interior of the Chapel in the Rock Near Nottingham*

1810  
Ink on paper  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

White Watson

*A Mountain in Derbyshire*

1791

Various stone samples

Courtesy Derby Museums

**G. F. Campion**

*Nottingham Castle, H. Houldsworth clearing debris in Water cave,  
Mortimers Hole*1938

Giclée print  
Courtesy H. Houldsworth and Picture Nottingham

**Unknown photographer**

*Cave Photographs*

2022 Giclée print

**Unknown photographer**

*Caves under Willoughby House, Low Pavement*

c.1930s  
Giclée print  
Courtesy Campion Collection and Picture Nottingham

Trent & Peak Archaeology

*Nottingham – City of Caves*

2014

3D scans converted to video, animation, 4 min

Courtesy Trent & Peak Archaeology

**Frank B. Lewis**

*Plan shewing* [sic] *rock cellars under the Castle Rock*1905  
Ink on paper

Courtesy Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham. Item accession: NPE P 4/13/3

Map highlighting the layers of cellars under some of the buildings along Castle Road and Brewhouse yard, including Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem, Nottingham’s oldest inn. This map was drawn by Frank B. Lewis, the city architect from 1901 to 1912.

Gallery Two

**The Wall**

For thousands of years, caves have fascinated artists. They are our oldest studios and art galleries, and the first paintings can be found on their walls and ceilings. Cave art is a feature of every continent except Antarctica, with the earliest being made over 30,000 years ago.

After World War II, artists’ encounters with neolithic rock art transformed their approaches to the canvas, to mark-making as well as to the gallery. This space assembles very different responses to cave paintings and carvings encountered in Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Guyana and Spain.

**Sofia Borges**

*Nothingness*

2016/22  
Vinyl, giclée prints

Brazilian artist Sofia Borges (b.1984) has said that: “Caves are at the root of my research. After visiting the Chauvet cave replica and surrounding region in 2015, I began to understand the deep connections between meaning, existence and art. Nature and culture aren’t separate. So much of my work is about the place beyond the visual.”

For this exhibition, Borges has created an installation that brings together different strands of her research. The background mural is a close-up of a cave and installed on top are photographic assemblages that combine Degas bronzes with iconography from her investigations into theatre, myth and performance.

**Unknown photographer**

*Katharina Marr and Elisabeth Pauli copying rock site at Wadi Nocham, El Richa, Algeria*c.1934–35

Giclée print

**Karin Hissink**

*Katharina Marr and Elisabeth Pauli copying rock carving of large group of elephants at El Richa, Algeria* c.1934–35

Giclée print

**Unknown photographer**

*Elisabeth Pauli at work, Ain Dua, Libya*

1933 Giclée print

**Unknown photographer**

*Elisabeth Pauli at work, Ain Dua, Libya*

1933 Giclée print

**Unknown photographer**

*Elisabeth Pauli and Maria Weyersberg at Valltorta Gorge near Albocacer (Cueva de los Caballos), Spain*1934

Giclée print

**Unknown photographer**

*Elisabeth Pauli at work in Northern Spain*1936  
Giclée print

All works courtesy The Frobenius Institute

The German anthropologist Leo Frobenius (1873–1938) undertook numerous expeditions around Europe, Indonesia and Africa. A team of artists accompanied him, who meticulously documented the prehistoric paintings and engravings they found in caves and on overhanging cliff faces. Some 5,000 replicas and rubbings were created, many of which were widely exhibited, inspiring artists including Alberto Giacometti, Paul Klee and Jackson Pollock. Displayed here is a selection of photographs by members of the Frobenius Institute, who documented these expeditions.

**Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio**

*Industrial Painting from the Caverna di Antimateria* (Cavern of Antimatter)

1959  
Oil on synthetic canvas

In 1956, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio (1902–64) was central to establishing the Situationist International, an international alliance of social revolutionaries. At the same time, he began to produce what he called *pittura industriale* (Industrial Paintings), huge rolls of canvas made using mechanised rollers. Multiple artists, and even children, could operate this “painting machine” to produce “group paintings”.

The longest of these, *Caverna di Antimateria* (Cavern of Antimatter), measured 145 metres. It was presented at the Galerie René Drouin in Paris in 1959, turning the space into a kind of soft-lined cave. Stretches of canvas were sold by the metre, with some offcuts transformed into dresses worn by models at the exhibition opening.

**Hamed Abdalla**

Works from the *Convulsions series* 1977  
Acrylic spray on crumpled Japanese paper and board Courtesy the Hamed Abdalla Estate, Paris

The subterranean continued to be a point of return for Hamed Abdalla throughout his career, culminating in the *Convulsions* series, which preoccupied him in the final years of his life. At first glance, these works appear to be photographs of rock formations, but are in fact pieces of paper that have been sprayed with acrylic before being crumpled, flattened then fixed on board.

**Aubrey Williams**

*Birth of Maridowa*

1959  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Bradford Museums and Galleries

*Petrification IV*

1961  
Oil on canvas  
Copyright Aubrey Williams Estate. Courtesy Aubrey Williams Estate and October Gallery, London

Aubrey Williams (1926–90) was born in British Guiana and moved to London in 1952, where he became one of the most significant painters of the postwar period. As a young man, Williams worked as an agricultural field officer in North Guyana, where he came into contact with the Warao, an indigenous Amerindian people. Williams learned their language, recorded their stories and encountered their ancient petroglyphs, or stone carvings. In the late 1950s and early 60s, Williams explored various “tribal” imagery, including a motif of a bone-like claw or glyph. He described this as a “strange, very tense, slightly violent shape [...] It has haunted me all my life and I don’t understand it.”

**N.H. Stubbing**

*Untitled*

1958  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Arts Council Collection

In 1949, the British artist N.H. Stubbing (1921–83) attended a meeting in the Cave of Altamira, a thousand- metre complex in northern Spain. There, surrounded by prehistoric wall paintings of bison, boar and deer, a group of artists — including Joan Miró and Mathias Goeritz — discussed how art might develop in the aftermath of the war. The site had been discovered in 1868, but for decades the paintings were widely thought to be modern. In 1902, they were eventually dated to around 20,000 BCE.

The so-called “School of Altamira” was short-lived but had a profound influence on Stubbing. As his wife Yvonne wrote: “perhaps it was from that moment he started identifying with prehistorical man!” In 1954, he gave up painting with a brush, and began to work directly with his hands to create rhythmic and textured surfaces. Stubbing himself referred to these mystical works as “Rituals”, or “Ceremonies”.

**Hamed Abdalla**

*NOUM, The Sleeper from the depths*, from the *Illuminations series*1962  
Silver, aluminium, tar and oil paint on board

Courtesy the Hamed Abdalla Estate, Paris

Egyptian artist Hamed Abdalla (1917–85) had a lifelong interest in what he called the “silent darkness” of caves. As a young man, he explored caves across Egypt, and while living in France during the 1950s often visited the grottos in the Vercors region.  
The geological forms he encountered resonated with his own artistic experiments. He began to conceive of painting as a kind of fossilisation, sedimentation or crystallisation.

**Lydia Ourahmane**

*Tassili*

2022  
4K video, 16mm transferred to video, digital animation, sound, 46 min Courtesy the artist. Commissioned by SculptureCenter, New York; Mercer Union, Toronto; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; B7L9, Tunis; and Nottingham Contemporary

In early 2022, Lydia Ourahmane (b.1992) and a crew of ten collaborators travelled from Algiers to Tassili n’Ajjer, a national park in the Sahara Desert, near the Algerian–Libyan border. Largely inaccessible, it is home to one of the most significant groupings of prehistoric rock art in the world, dating back to 12,000 BCE. Describing the transformation of life in the region over thousands of years, the paintings depict images of demons, extra- terrestrials and lost rivers. The first time Ourahmane visited, there were three water sources; now there is only one. Soon there may be none, and it will be almost impossible to travel there.

Ourahmane described this ambitious journey as “an act of translation, an experiment of what we might unearth together”. The wordless film features an “exquisite corpse”-style soundtrack, composed by four musicians — Felicita, Nicolas Jaar, Yawning Portal and Sega Bodega — who had neither visited Tassili n’Ajjer nor heard any of the other sections in advance.

**The Dark**

Scientists call the deepest recesses of caves the “dark zone”. Darkness can be by turns terrifying and freeing, a state for silent contemplation or creeping unease.

This gallery assembles objects, artworks and  
music that consider what it means to dwell in the dark. It traces catacombs, solitary rituals, subterranean reverberations and bodies that inhabit mysterious and unknowable sites.

In 1988, composer and musician Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016), the trombonist Stuart Dempster (b.1936) and vocalist Panaiotis descended into the Dan Harpole Cistern, near Seattle. Originally built by the US military, this 200-million-gallon concrete void was drained and decommissioned in the 1950s. Enticed by the extraordinary reverberation delay of 45 seconds, there the Deep Listening Band recorded their self-titled first album. Describing the experience of playing there, Oliveros wrote, “The Cistern space, in effect, is an instrument being played simultaneously by all three composers.”

For Oliveros, recording in the cistern was the catalyst for what became a lifelong practice of “deep listening”. As she wrote: “hearing happens involuntarily. Listening is a voluntary process that through training and experience produces culture [...] Deep Listening is listening in every possible way, to everything it’s possible to hear, no matter what you are doing.”

In 1990 Oliveros published *Deep Listening Pieces*, and a year later co-founded a series of deep listening retreats in New Mexico. As she wrote: “The more I listen, the more I learn to listen. Deep Listening involves going below the surface of what is heard, expanding to the whole field of sound while finding focus. This is the way to connect with the acoustic environment, all that inhabits it and all that there is.”

*Deep Listening Band*Liner notes from the albums *Deep Listening* (1989), *Troglodyte’s Delight* (1990), *The Ready Made Boomerang* (1991)  
Courtesy Deep Listening Band, ¿What Next? (Nonsequitur Foundation), and New Albion Records

Following the release of the Deep Listening Band’s 1989 debut album, the musicians went on to make several further records in unique acoustic spaces. With David Gamper replacing Panaiotis and joining existing members Pauline Oliveros and Stuart Dempster, the trio recorded in the Trinity United Methodist Church in Kingston, New York and the Tarpaper Cave in Rosendale, New York, as well as returning to the Dan Harpole Cistern.

Excerpts from *An Anthology of Text Scores* 1979–98  
Courtesy Deep Listening Publications

Oliveros produced hundreds of text scores, which she described as “acoustic algorithms”, “recipes that allow musicians to create music without reading notes”. The open and inviting nature of the text scores would, Oliveros hoped, “allow anyone to participate, whether they could read music or not”. Included in the opening pages of the anthology is the poetic text *The Earthworm Also Sings: A Composer’s Guide to Deep Listening* (1992): “In my auralizations I hear an alternate self, tiny enough to journey inside of my own ear. In this pleasure of the imagination I go into this labyrinthine cave.”

Inspired by Oliveros’ anthology of text scores, we have developed a series of listening exercises. Find them in our exhibition notes.

**Brassaï**

*Birth of Man* (from *Graffiti* series)

1956/61  
Silver gelatin print

*Masks and Visages* (from *Graffiti* series) c.1950  
Silver gelatin print

*Primitive Images* (from *Graffiti* series) c.1950  
Silver gelatin print  
All works courtesy Tate: Purchased with funds provided by the Photography Acquisitions Committee 2014

The Hungarian photographer, writer and filmmaker Brassaï (1899–1984) was a regular contributor to the surrealist magazine *Le Minotaure*. In 1933, he developed a photo-essay titled *From Cave Wall to Factory Wall*, drawing a connection between modern-day graffiti and prehistoric paintings. This grew into a 30-year series of photos titled *Graffiti*: close-up shots of faces, figures and symbols carved or etched into the crumbling walls of Parisian streets, which Brassaï related to the cave art of Altamira in Spain and the Dordogne in France.

**Peter Hujar**

*Palermo Catacombs #13*

1963  
Silver gelatin print  
Private collection, Switzerland

The photographer Peter Hujar (1934–87) was a central figure in the New York cultural scene. He only produced one exhibition and publication during his lifetime, *Portraits in Life and Death* (1976). The first part contained candid portraits of the New York scene, while the second half was taken during a trip he took in 1963 with the artist Paul Thek to the Capuchin Catacombs in Palermo, Sicily, which date back to 1600. Susan Sontag noted in her foreword to the publication that photography has the ability “to turn the whole world into a cemetery”.

**Robert Smithson**

*My House Is a Decayed House*

1962  
Photo-collage  
Courtesy Drawing Matter, Somerset

Robert Smithson made this work in his early 20s. As a teenager, he often drew ruined and collapsing buildings in his home state of New Jersey. This developed, by the end of the 1960s, into creating large-scale earthworks. *My House Is a Decayed House* is a collage of architectural structures, with fragments of buildings and statues mired in paint. It was first presented in an exhibition titled *Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings for Lent* (1962). The title for this work comes from a line in *Gerontion* (1920) by T.S. Eliot, Robert Smithson’s favourite poet.

**Anti-tank landmine**

1945  
Ceramic  
Collection Aaron Angell

This ceramic landmine casing was produced in the final months of World War II, in the ancient wood-fired kilns of Shigaraki, a pottery town near Kyoto. After Japanese metal supply lines were cut by the Allied powers, a large-scale invasion was anticipated. As a last resort, the Japanese began to produce ceramic ordnance, including grenades and landmines. Few examples survive. This casing was probably produced by a maker more used to producing fine teaware.

**Michelle Stuart**

*San Juan Ermita de Chiquimula*

1978  
Cloth, string, muslin-mounted rag paper (earth and rock marks from site in San Juan Ermita de Chiquimula, Guatemala)

*Small Ledger: Near White Horse of Uffington*1979–80  
Earth from site on muslin-mounted paper

*Ledger Series: Campeche*

1979–80  
Earth from Mexico on muslin-mounted rag paper  
All works courtesy the artist and Alison Jacques Gallery, London

After dropping out from art school in the 1950s, Michelle Stuart (b.1933) worked as a mapmaker for the United States Army Corps of Engineers during the Korean War. This experience would later influence her artworks, in which she experimented with different ways of translating landscapes. In 1970, Stuart began to develop a series of *Ledger* works, which sought to archive time and the natural environment. On paper and cloth, she rubbed samples of earth gathered from her extensive travels. This intense process sometimes made her hands bleed, so that the paper became infused with dirt and blood.

**Gordon Matta-Clark**

*Sous-sols de Paris* (Paris Underground)

1977/2005  
16mm film transferred to HD, 25 min Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix

Originally trained as an architect, Gordon Matta-Clark (1943–78) was concerned with urban development and decay. In this film, Matta-Clark explores the catacombs that lie beneath Paris, which he had first visited in May 1968. We clamber through tunnels, visiting ossuaries, crypts, ruins and car parks. He saw these sites as the repositories of history, “forgotten spaces buried under the city, an historic reservation of living memories of past projects and fantasies”.

**Mary Beth Edelson**

*Grapceva Neolithic Cave/ See for Yourself*1977  
Silver gelatin print  
Courtesy David Lewis Gallery

The American artist Mary Beth Edelson (1933–2021) was a key figure in the feminist art movement. In the 1970s, she began a series of solitary performances in remote places, which she called “private rituals”. In 1977, Edelson read about a cave on the Adriatic island of Hvar, in what was then Yugoslavia. She wrote: “I needed to do my rituals in an actual prehistoric cave; to experience a neolithic site where I could smell the earth, poke around in the soil, breathe the air, and know that the cave air had circulated through my body and become a part of me [...] I sold my car and bought the voyage.”

Once Edelson had located the cave, she set up a circle of candles, and created the photographs that became the *Grapceva Cave Series*. “The energy from the rituals seemed to pulsate from the vaulted ceiling to me and back again [...] I felt like the center of the universe. My mouth was actually inhaling the cave, all of it, and breathing it out again.”

**Henry Moore**

*Cavern*

1973  
Lithograph on paper  
Courtesy Tate: Presented by the artist, 1975

Between 1940 and 1941, Henry Moore (1898–1986) made a celebrated series of drawings of people sheltering from the Blitz in the London Underground. In 1944, he illustrated a BBC Radio play based on Homer’s *Odyssey*, one of which is titled *Odysseus in the Cave of the Naiads*. *Cavern* displays what Moore described as his “bias towards blackness and mysterious depths”. Inspired by the prints of Rembrandt and the drawings of Georges Seurat, it also draws on his experience of visiting the candlelit Altamira cave paintings in Spain.

**Nadar**

*Paris Catacombs*

1862  
Giclée print  
Courtesy National Library of France

Nadar (1820–1910) took his first photos in 1853, not long after the birth of photography. Around 1861, he turned his gaze to the Paris catacombs. To take these photographs, Nadar designed a light called a Serrin Regulator. Because the exposure time could be as long as 18 minutes, Nadar relied on a mannequin rather than a live model. The catacombs were, Nadar said, “one of those places that everyone wants to see and no one wants to see again”.

**Unknown maker**

*Nottingham Green Glazed Salt Figurine*

c.13th–14th century  
Earthenware  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

A well-preserved piece of earthenware in the Nottingham Light-bodied Green Glaze tradition. This form of glazing was particularly common in the early to mid-14th century. This figure is missing its arms, which possibly held a basket.

**Unknown maker**

*Sandstone Head*

Date unknown  
Sandstone  
Courtesy Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

A crudely carved sandstone head, likely to have been carved directly into the wall of the cave from which it came.

Gallery Three

**The City**

Our language for caves is often architectural – they have chambers and chimneys, vaults and cathedrals. Some of our earliest places of shelter and dwelling, caves have today been reimagined as places of survival and safe-keeping, from doomsday bunkers to seed vaults and data farms.

In this gallery are mappings and imaginings of storage facilities, infrastructure and future communities under terra firma. Many are speculative proposals for how we might retreat below ground, and what worlds might await us there.

**Alison Knowles**

*The House of Dust*

1967  
Documentation  
Courtesy the artist and California Institute of the Arts Archives

*The House of Dust* began as one of the first-ever computer-generated poems. In 1967, Alison Knowles (b.1933) attended a workshop organised by the composer and engineer James Tenney. She wrote four indexes of values, which she randomly combined into thousands of variations of verses using a computer. One read: “A HOUSE OF PLASTIC / IN A METROPOLIS / USING NATURAL LIGHT / INHABITED BY PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.”

A year later, Knowles used this poem as the inspiration for two cave-like biomorphic dwellings, known as *The House of Dust*. Over the next 15 years, they were installed in several places. These photographs were taken between 1970 and 1972, when Knowles was teaching at CalArts, an art school on the outskirts of Los Angeles. While there, the houses hosted seminars, screenings and performances, until one was damaged by an earthquake.

**Jeff Wall**

*Burrow*

2004  
Silver gelatin print  
Courtesy the artist and White Cube, London

Jeff Wall (b.1946) is best known for what he has termed “near- documentary” photographs, enigmatic images of meticulously assembled scenes. Since 1997, he has also been exhibiting black- and-white photographs in a more straightforwardly documentary vein. *Burrow* depicts a building site or improvised refuge. As Wall writes, “it is more interesting to depict something in a way that the viewer feels he or she is really seeing, but at the same time suggest that something significant isn’t being seen — that the act of picturing creates an unseen as well as a seen.”

In 2000, Wall photographed the underground scene from Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* (1952), without having encountered Gordon Parks’s version of the same scene, presented nearby.

**Kaari Upson**

*Internal Pocket #2*

2011  
Latex, acrylic  
Courtesy the Kaari Upson Estate and Sprüth Magers

Kaari Upson’s (1970–2021) *Larry Project* (2005–12) grew out of her exploration of a burned-down building next to her parents’ home in San Bernardino, California. She constructed an imagined life of the former resident, working from abandoned furniture, photographs and diaries. She went on to develop videos, installations, performances and a life-size mannequin of “Larry” himself. Upson made a number of casts, or “skins” of sections of buildings and furniture. In *Internal Pocket #2*, she cast the walls and floors of Larry’s home, and particularly the top landing of a dramatic stairwell. Once cast, the space is inverted: the floor is on the wall, strewn with a box, tennis racket and shoe, and imprints from the grand, carpeted staircase.

**Ben Rivers**

*Look Then Below*

2019  
Super 16mm transferred to digital, 22 min  
Courtesy the artist and LUX

The British artist and filmmaker Ben Rivers (b.1972) shot *Look Then Below* in the limestone passages of the Wookey Hole caves in Somerset. This short film conjures a future subterranean world inhabited by the ghosts of Neolithic settlers as well as a new species evolved from our own dying planet. *Look Then Below* is the third in a trilogy of speculative films that Rivers has developed with the sci-fi novelist Mark von Schlegell. The score is by composer Christina Vantzou.

**Robert Smithson**

*Cavern of Muck*

1969  
Pencil on paper  
Courtesy the Holt/Smithson Foundation

The American artist Robert Smithson (1938–73) had a longstanding engagement with geological thinking, prehistory and the subterranean.

In 1969, he started working with “temporal sculptures”, artworks situated in industrial landscapes, which harnessed gravitational flows and pours of materials. Many of these works were short-lived, favouring entropy and collapse over permanence. A number of Smithson’s subterranean works were never realised, living on as sketches, essays and proposals.

**Goshka Macuga**

*Cave*

1999/2022  
Paper and mixed-media artworks Courtesy the artist

*Cave* was the title of the London- based Polish artist Goshka Macuga’s (b.1967) first solo show. Presented in 1999 at Sali Gia, an artist-run gallery in an apartment in South London, it took the form of a grotto-like space created from crumpled packing paper. Installed inside were works by 35 artist friends — among them, Dexter Dalwood, Enrico David, Emma Kay, Matthew Leahy, Saskia Olde Wolbers, Michael Raedecker, Mark Titchner, Keith Tyson and Gavin Wade.

For Macuga, *Cave* was a significant moment, signalling a turn towards exhibition design and the use of other artists’ works within her own installations. In 2000, Macuga wrote: “I provide a total, unifying environment for the exhibition of other people’s work, in which their work becomes my work and my work theirs.” For *Hollow Earth*, Macuga revisited *Cave*. Many of the works that Macuga has selected are rejected, unfinished or damaged. They speak to the cave as a receptacle for the remains of humanity, culture and thought, of collapse as well as escape.

Artworks included in Cave (Clockwise from left)

Simon Moretti

*A free light present rises*

*Above the future*, 2022

Folded newspaper, ram skull

Peter Liversidge

*What if,* 2022

Acrylic paint on cardboard

Goshka Macuga

*Hot Head (Olympe de Gouges),* 2017

Melted Wax

Ahmet Ö**ğ**üt

*Mutual Issues, Inventive Acts*, 2008

Aluminium mounted photograph recycled by Goshka Macuga in 2017

Matthew Leahy

*In Search of John Kot*, 1998

Oil on canvas

Goshka Macuga

*Drip Head (Donna Haraway)*, 2017

Melted wax

*GONOGO, Proposal for Fourth Plinth,* 2021

Mixed media

Copy of Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son*, 1819-23

Prop for *To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll*, 2016

Painted by Josephine Reich

Ian Dawson

*Paper Sculpture*, 2000

Paper

Goshka Macuga

*Shoe for the robot,* 2016

Mixed media

*Family Module maquette (broken),* 2021

Jesmonite

*Copy of Guernica (burned),* 2016

Burned painting on canvas

Painted by Josephine Reich

**The Center for Land Use Interpretation***Wampum Underground, Wampum, Pennsylvania  
Gateway Commerce Center, Wampum, Pennsylvania  
SubTropolis Underground, Kansas City, Missouri  
Mega Cavern, Louisville, Kentucky Space Center Executive Park, Independence, Missouri SubTropolis Underground, Kansas City, Missouri*

Giclée prints  
All works courtesy The Center for Land Use Interpretation

All works 2017, from the series *Hollowed Earth: The World of Underground Business Parks*

Founded in 1994, The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) is a Los Angeles-based research and education organisation that explores land use and manmade landscapes. They believe these sites “can be read to better understand who we are, and what we are doing”. *Hollowed Earth* comprises more than 40 photographs of underground business parks.

CLUI writes: “There is a vast network of underground office, storage, and logistics facilities in the former limestone mines of the USA. These drive-in artificial caves can extend for miles, and house a subterranean analog of the world above.”

**Frank Heath**

*On the Beach, Episode 3: Midnight Sun*

2015  
Video, 16 min  
Courtesy the artist and Simone Subal Gallery, New York

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault stores duplicates of more than a million seed varieties from almost every country, safeguarding the world’s food plants in the event of a global crisis. It is set 120 metres inside a mountain on the remote Norwegian island of Spitsbergen.

Shot on location, Frank Heath’s (b.1982) video intersperses documentary-style footage with a telephone conversation in which a caller recounts a vision of the sun appearing during total darkness. Taking its title from Nevil Shute’s apocalyptic 1957 novel, Heath’s video is one of a series of works he has made exploring questions of technology and collapse via subterranean spaces.

**Hans Hollein**

*Semi-Subterranean Building with Fibreglass Dome*1964  
Pen and ink on paper

Courtesy Drawing Matter, Somerset

**Walter Pichler**

*Study for an Underground City*

1964  
Collage  
Courtesy Drawing Matter, Somerset

In the early 1960s, the architect Hans Hollein (1934–2014) worked closely with the artist Walter Pichler (1936–2012) on a series of proposals for speculative buildings and cities. These experiments include watchtowers, sacred spaces, “communication interchanges”, and an Underground City. These imagined subterranean communities were informed by the promises of the Information Age, as well as by the threat of nuclear fallout.

**Antti Lovag**

*Model for a structure “de rencontre et de réflexion”*1968  
Painted wood, metal, paper Courtesy Drawing Matter, Somerset

Antti Lovag (1920–2014) was a Hungarian architect with an interest in organic forms. This cave-like model for an unrealised building is a “space of meditation and conviviality”. As Niall Hobhouse and Nicholas Olsberg have written, Lovag’s chambers have their origins in “psychoanalytic thinking and in the contemplation of nature forms”, with a purpose and sensibility close to the expressionists of the 1920s “and to the fascination of surrealists for the regenerative spaces of cave, shell and womb”.

**Gordon Parks**

*Invisible Man Retreat, Harlem, New York*

1952  
Silver gelatin print

*The Invisible Man, Harlem, New York*

1952  
Silver gelatin print

*Untitled, Harlem, New York*

1952  
Silver gelatin print  
All works courtesy the Gordon Parks Foundation and Alison Jacques Gallery, London

In 1952, Gordon Parks’s (1912–2006) close friend Ralph Ellison published *Invisible Man*, his landmark novel exploring the experience of being Black in postwar America. Parks created a series of photographs illustrating key scenes, four of which were published in *Life* magazine, where he worked for 20 years. The first image shows a young man descending into a manhole. The final image is an elaborate composite print: the protagonist sitting alone in a basement surrounded by a maze of lightbulbs, which he has installed to assert his own visibility. As the novel’s narrator says, “I doubt if there is a brighter spot in all New York than this hole of mine.”

Gallery Four

**The Deep**

Speleology is the term for the scientific exploration of caves. The word was coined around 1893, intriguingly coinciding with the birth of cinema.

Exploring caves allows access to layers of time that can be difficult to comprehend.  
We have only explored a mile below the earth’s surface; the further down we go, the less we know. In this gallery, works explore speculative approaches to mapping and recording unknowable spaces. They reflect on myth, ceremony and deep time, and are narrated by communities of explorers and storytellers lurking in the shadows.

**Emma McCormick-Goodhart with Barnabé Fillion and ARPA***Exuviae*2022

Scent molecules; Indian clay distillation Mitti Attar; moonmilk depositional biomatrixes in cave waters from Mondmilchloch, Mount Pilatus (Switzerland) and Tongass National Forest (Alaska); manganese cultures from Fort Stanton Cave’s Scorched Earth Passage (New Mexico); cave dirts from Mammoth Cave National Park’s Logsdon Cave (Kentucky) and Ogdens Cave (Virginia); macerations of mica, cicada molt, oyster fruiting body and the artist’s saliva

Courtesy the artist  
Sample cultures courtesy Riley S. Drake, MSc; Kathrin Füglister and Moritz Lehner

**Emma McCormick-Goodhart with Jessika Kenney***earamphore*2022

5-channel audio, digital projection Courtesy the artist

*earamphore* is a new sound piece made in collaboration with the vocalist Jessika Kenney, prompted by a Neolithic female skull. Unearthed in 1962 in a megalithic burial chamber in Southwest France, this skull lay beside a prosthetic “ear”, one of the earliest known, carved from a mollusc shell. Sculpted here as a 3D lifeform, was this worn as a surrogate ear, as an amulet, or something else entirely?

The remarkable paintings that fill Lascaux were made 17,000 years ago, and rediscovered in 1940. Several replicas have since been built to substitute for the original, which closed to the public in 1963 in response to algal outgrowth caused by the breath of over a million visitors. The most recent replica, Lascaux IV, is a digital and sensory facsimile — an exacting version of how the cave once looked, sounded and felt. Yet, how did it smell?

Emma McCormick-Goodhart (b.1990) is an artist, writer and researcher based in New York, who has explored the “synthetic material fiction” of Lascaux IV. For *Hollow Earth*, she has produced a “scent climate”, developed with perfumer Barnabé Fillion, which proposes a dramaturgy for “remote sensing” across millennia. *Exuviae*’s base notes of wet clay and moonmilks, still culturing, channel the microbiome- induced impressionability of soft cave surfaces that were “fluted” by fingers and mouth-blown pigments, and probe the urge to inscribe media.

**Ilana Halperin**

*The Rock Cycle*

2021  
Terracotta bricks and drainage tiles encrusted in limestone  
Courtesy the artist and Patricia Fleming Gallery

Ilana Halperin’s (b.1973) *Rock Cycle* series is a kind of geological collaboration. She has developed a technique of submerging objects in the petrifying springs of Saint-Nectaire in France for several months at a time. In these caves, the water is so rich in calcium carbonate that it quickly creates a layer of stone on anything it touches, a process that would typically take a century.

As Halperin has written: “I’m not an earth scientist, but I am an artist who is used to trying to think across how we relate to the earth and earth processes and time and each other. I think a lot of what I do is trying to cultivate feeling.”

**Chioma Ebinama**

*Womb*

2022  
Watercolour and coffee on handmade paper

*March of Mothers*

2022  
Watercolour and coffee on handmade paper

*Sweet Mother and the Hunger Demon*

2022  
Watercolour, sumi ink, casein, turmeric, coffee and gelatin on handmade paper All works courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, Interim Art

Chioma Ebinama (b.1988) is a Nigerian- American artist who draws from a wide range of sources, including folklore, animism, West African cosmologies and Eastern spiritualism. For this exhibition, Ebinama has created new works inspired by the 11th-century Tibetan Buddhist poet and yogi Milarepa.

As she has written: “Milarepa was a Tibetan siddha who reached enlightenment via solitude, encountering demons while meditating in a cave. He began his path of enlightenment as a murderer; his mother was the catalyst for seeking purification from this karmic debt. Mothers are often left out of the narrative. The greatest minds of modern history were only able to explore their solitude because mothers and wives were doing the labour of daily life. If we could all meditate in a cave like Milarepa, we might be confronted with very different inner demons: an urgent need to respect the mother — and her rage — as absolutely essential.”

**Ailbhe Ní Bhriain**

*Interval (I)*

2022  
Framed pigment print  
Courtesy the artist and domobaal gallery

Ailbhe Ní Bhriain (b.1978) has made this new photo-collage for the exhibition. As she has written, disrupting the surface of images “is a way of accessing a space of strangeness to imagine the possibility of an image’s interiority and what might lurk beneath surface presentation”.

**Ailbhe Ní Bhriain**

*Inscriptions V*

2022  
Walnut, glass, Perspex, mixed media Courtesy the artist and domobaal gallery

Irish artist Ailbhe Ní Bhriain (b.1978)  
is interested in how systems of categorisation can shape knowledge and turn stories into history. Presented here is a selection of curious objects, which hint at museum displays and mythologies of the underworld. Placed inside and on top of a group of vitrines, they are concerned with what is included (and excluded) from the canon.

**Flora Parrott**

*Cave Map*

2017–19  
Embroidery textile, painted flints

*Darkness Retreat*

2021  
Digitally printed cotton, embroidery

*Fixed Position*

2014  
Digitally printed velvet  
All works courtesy the artist

Flora Parrott’s (b.1981) work stems from her interest in the mapping of caves and our sensory responses to profound darkness. *Cave Map* was created inside cave networks in England, France and Germany. *Fixed Position* was made after a visit to the Alta Ribeira caves in Brazil, where she encountered a “blackness so dense that you can’t see the edge of your own form.” In a similar vein, *Darkness Retreat* was made after a period of 60 hours spent in total darkness, when the “lines between vision, dream and hallucination... [become] blurred”.

*Darkness Retreat* and *Cave Map* were both made as part of Parrott’s PhD, which is a Techne project supported by AHRC.

**Matt Copson**

*Death, Again*

2019  
Laser animation, 9 min Courtesy the artist

Matt Copson (b.1992) uses computer- generated laser projections, hand-drawn animation, murals, sculpture and music to explore life and death. He works with a cast of characters, including birds, skulls, babies and the recurring figure of a sly fox. As Copson has said: “I think of my laser works as cave drawings. They are a continuation of and reconnection to our beginnings, and to our need to process the world in crude form. To illuminate the darkness with magic.”

**Liv Preston**

Assortment of open and closed Pelican Hardigg Cases with various sculptural works inside  
2022

Courtesy the artist

While growing up in West Yorkshire, Liv Preston (b.1993) was always drawn to subterranean spaces. Her work continues to be informed by the material language of mining, the hobbyist nature of the caving community and the episodic structure of video games. For *Hollow Earth*, Preston has made an inventory of new works presented in plastic flight- cases similar to those used by cavers and encountered in game design.

All itemised, the contents deal with materials and objects associated with these spaces and their translation to the context above ground.

Liv Preston

*Karst,* 2022

School exercise books (x300), limestone, pelican hardigg case

*Scrip memorial,* 2022

Bootleg colliery tokens (x11), lead, brass, pelican hardigg case

*(???),* 2022

Miner’s pick (x1), pelican hardigg case

*Ferrous*, 2022

Iron filings (4g), pelican hardigg case

*(???),* 2022

Lead chain (17m), pelican hardigg case

*(???)*, 2022

Tap water (40ltr), pelican hardigg case

*(???)*, 2022

Gachapon (x934), pelican hardigg case

*Press [E] to search container,* 2022

Aluminium sandcasts, enamel, water (70ltr), pelican hardigg case

*ANAGLYPH,* 2022

Photograph by Footleg (Paul Fretwell), steel, pelican hardigg case

*Grotto*, 2022

Bats, pelican hardigg case

(*???)*, 2022

Mud (60kg)

*(???)*, 2022

Used oil sand (540kg), pelican hardigg case

All works courtesy the artist