

JONATHAN MCCREE



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RECENT WORKS



Painting and performance, painting as performance and the performances of paintings.

Jonathan McCree works with film, installation, painting and sculpture as a record of movement and emotion through space. He pushes the boundaries of what is normally perceived as architecture and demonstrates how experimental practice can help uncover new strategies for exploring spatial ideas and qualities. Materiality and structure are main considerations, giving way to a deeper understanding of the spaces we navigate on a daily basis. He works with traditional notions of architecture but also with the architecture of the body and the mind.

With references to the historical, the biographical and the quotidian, McCree's work reflects a series of moments, the concept of potential, a space where anything can happen. Exploring lived experience in the body, paint, and painting, serves not only as a visual medium, but as a performative one, a study of the physical across space and time.

Anything can be a painting; marks on a sheet of paper or canvas, a dance, a film, a crowd, through a merging of artistic genres in a site-specific environment that challenges preconceived notions of the role of the viewer from the moment they enter the space.



(title page)
Jonathan McCree
Racoons Falling on the Guest House Roof, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 41 cm (11³/₈ × 16¹/₈ in)

(right)
Jonathan McCree
High Folly Sculptures installed in a North Florida garden, 2022
cardboard, paper tape, pigment, acrylic medium
120 × 30 × 30 cm (47³/₄ × 12 × 12 in)

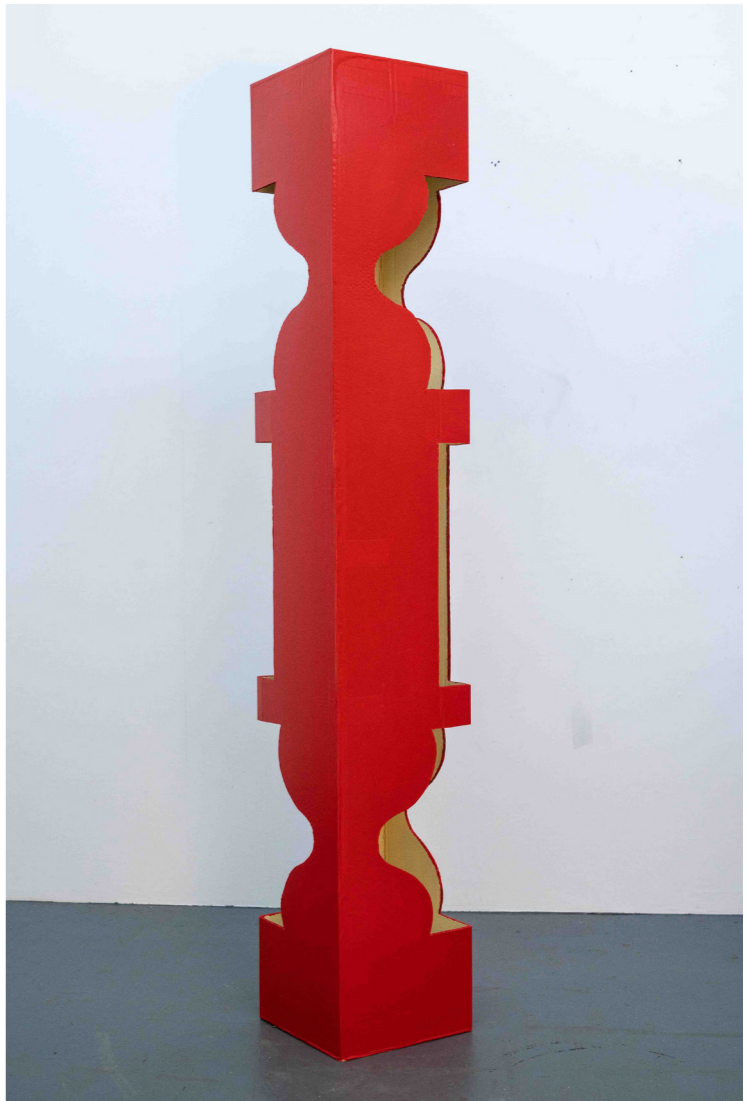


My playfulness is about creating a set of problems and impediments that are overcome for their own sake, for the joy of overcoming if you like. There is an implicit challenge in these works which isn't serious, there's very little at stake. They can be configured and if you change your mind, they can be reconfigured again. There's an inherent playfulness in that, for both the body and the imagination. I think the colours are about that as well.

These are structures that are put together only to be unfixed again, giving literal agency to a performer or spectator. My hope is always curiosity. I want people to bend down, stretch up and peer through the sculptures. To interrupt their usual flow of movement so that they become choreographed as they discover how to inhabit the space.



Jonathan McCree
High Folly #2, 2021
cardboard, paper tape, pigment, acrylic medium
180 x 30 x 30 cm (171 x 12 x 12 in)



Jonathan McCree
High Folly #4, 2020
cardboard, paper tape, pigment, acrylic medium
180 x 30 x 30 cm (171 x 12 x 12 in)

When viewing High Folly and wondering how you might inhabit the space, I like the idea that our task is to understand how to approach and choreograph ourselves in the present, alive to a new set of possibilities. Perhaps this is a way to imagine a future based on a present, which doesn't quite exist yet.

One thing leads to another in an instinctive way. Although I often work on clearly defined projects and sometimes site specific work, I am usually continuing my thoughts from what came before. I find that ideas that I may have had 10 years ago, will circle around and find new forms and contexts.

I draw a lot. I like to take a drawing book somewhere and draw what I find. This is a way to organize my thoughts rather than to render an image.



Jonathan McCree
Pink Circle, 12 March 2023, 2023
acrylic on sand cast aluminium
39 cm (15³/₈ in) diameter



Jonathan McCree
Blue Pagoda, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 20.5 cm (11³/₈ × 8¹/₈ in)

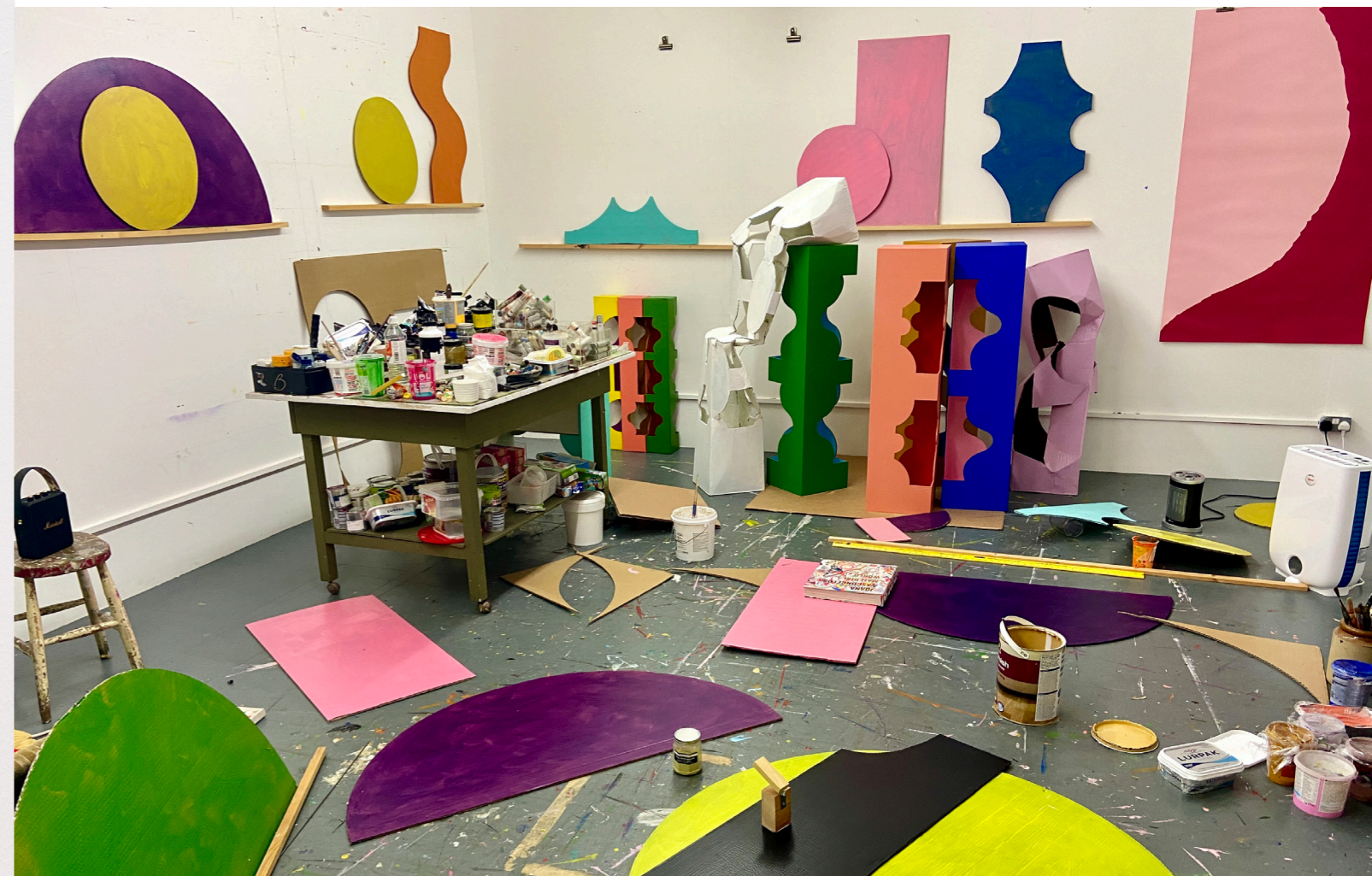


Jonathan McCree
The Night is Always Sweet, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 41 cm (11³/₈ × 16¹/₈ in)

Jonathan McCree
A Good Chair, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 41 cm (11³/₈ × 16¹/₈ in)



I grew up with parents who were members of a strict, fundamental, Christian organisation called Christadelphians. It felt important to me quite early on to be working with a visual language in which, as far as possible I was free to play and invent. I have memories of my parents: the white cube church and the community that they belonged too, and how I wanted to replace that set of memories, replace that sterile environment. You imagine a church environment to be full of meaning or ecstasy, or whatever religious spaces are supposed to contain. I wanted to replace the sterility I experienced, with daydreams. To replace the emptiness with something more fantastical, something that my imagination could inhabit.



Jonathan McCree
Blue Hole, 2023
acrylic on sand cast aluminium
83 × 50 cm (32 5/8 × 19 3/4 in)



Jonathan McCree
Too Many Avocados, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 20.5 cm (11³/₈ × 8¹/₈ in)

Jonathan McCree
Forbes Street, 2020
oil pastel on paper
29 × 20.5 cm (11³/₈ × 8¹/₈ in)



Jonathan McCree's sand cast aluminium sculptures reference his earlier cardboard sculptures. The new sculptures see shapes that McCree has worked with before metamorphosed; blown up, simplified, exaggerated in scale and transformed in almost covert fashion, into a new material. Casting cardboard into aluminium destabilises our experience and offers up a tension around truth, authenticity and value. We fluctuate between the experience of something real and the sense of something symbolic.

McCree's practice lives in this in-betweenness where ambiguity abounds, and memories and sensations are unearthed through our deep connection to times and places past.

My intention is to generate sensations from an encounter with colour, weight, surface, texture and space. In turn I ask my sculpture to operate in space in a way that requires us to use our memory. We have to walk around, look through and peer inside. We scan and hold in mind.



(left)
Jonathan McCree
High Folly #9 on High Folly #5, 2024
sand cast aluminium
240 × 30 × 30 cm (94½ × 11¾ × 11¾ in)

(above)
Jonathan McCree
Tower of Holes, 2024
acrylic and resin on sand cast aluminium
214 × 52 × 60 cm (84¼ × 20½ × 23⅝ in)



(previous page)
Jonathan McCree
Swainsley, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 41 cm (11³/₈ × 16¹/₈ in)



(right)
Jonathan McCree
Tower of Holes (pink, orange and pale blue), 2022
cardboard, paper tape, pigment and acrylic varnish
105 × 40 × 22 cm (41¹/₄ × 15³/₄ × 8³/₄ in)

I often don't look at the drawings much once I've done them. They stay with me mostly as a set of physical memories, which I will find useful later on. It also feels important to take in something of the world outside of my studio. When I start on any project, I'm never clear in my mind about where I will end up. I think of the uncertainty as energy.

I think my memories play out in colours and their relationships. I'm instinctively aware that it has to be a brown next to a particular shade of orange let's say, which perhaps comes from a memory I can't quite pinpoint. I wonder if these memories are abstract, maybe they are about emotions and desires more than specific narratives.



Jonathan McCree
A Young Tree, 2024
oil pastel on paper
29 × 20.5 cm (11³/₈ × 8¹/₈ in)