

MA Contemporary Art Practice (Part-time)

Practices Portfolio 2020-2021

Sinéad Kempley

Through the use of cyclical materials and metamorphosing forms, my work focuses on the depletion and transformation of matter, and the resistant substances that evade consumption. My practice is led by a curiosity with these materials, particularly those that elicit a visceral reaction.

In *Handheld*, a collection of small sculptures can be arranged, rolled, balanced, wrapped up, thrown, caught and broken. The forms vary – bulbous, liquid, stackable, coiled and puzzle-like. They are made from various materials including clay, plaster, plasticine, concrete, solidified slime, and stone offcuts. On some, ceramic glaze has been mixed with volcanic ash and silicon carbide to create a foamy texture that feels static to touch.

In *Some Form of Collapse*, a three-channel video installation, I focus on the byproduct of industrial mining, the formless dust, that seems to take on a life of its own. This work responds to the notion of the ground as ‘an interface, within a world of materials, between the relatively solid substances of the earth and the relatively volatile medium of the air’.¹

In the risograph publication *A Damp Corner*, I record objects and materials to make their scale ambiguous and sense of movement unclear. The photographs are often low-resolution images, the original place and context are lost; they become an archive of inconsequential fractures or openings. Solid ground is disintegrating, a damp corner is growing, an everyday unease is projected onto a tiny hole opening in the ground. This was created in collaboration with printmakers Samuel Stokes and Josh Bartrum at the London Centre for Book Arts.

Currently, I am working with ephemeral materials that can be reused and reformed. These works inhabit a space; they are responsive to the way I handle them and transform in unexpected ways. For example, the cyanobacteria in one material produces a layer of bubbles as it solidifies. When a slab made from agar (a jelly-like substance obtained from red algae) is first installed, it is covered in a slime that looks like it will never dry. A few weeks later, it has shrivelled into a skin-like surface. The larger pieces in the installation act as decoys. A puddle of unidentifiable slime blocks the path into the space. A viscous substance oozes down an LCD screen. A waxy, undulating form takes up much of the space in the centre of the room. As time is spent looking underneath, above and behind, mutating micro-forms can be found hiding in the crevices and corners of the space.

My practice and research have been shaped by working as an arts educator with young children and partially informed by interests in the more-than-human world, absurdist fiction, material feminist theory, anxiety and worrying, mineral extraction and industrial processes. I am part of the collective Surface Matters: a platform for peer to peer networking, critical debate and exchange for intergeneration female artists whose work utilities making and materiality

Statement for arts education opportunities/funding applications:

My practice has been shaped by working in various community and school settings.

I have worked with the group Redstart Arts, based in SE London, which develops and delivers visual art for adults with learning disabilities. I assisted with the project *weatherSCAPE* at the Deptford Lounge, which was displayed at Deptford X Contemporary Art Festival. I made a short video piece, in collaboration with the group, as part of this project. This project was funded by Arts Council England and Lewisham Council.

I worked with Trinity Laban to design and facilitate a drop-in family workshop responding to live music and dance in the space at the Tate Exchange, Tate Modern. Children used iPads to make short video pieces following prompts with restrictive parameters e.g. follow the space below the dancer’s feet. They then used stills from their videos to create textured collages using recycled materials.

For a number of years, I have designed and run workshops for SMASHfestUK, a semi-immersive story-lead science and arts festival which specifically engages underrepresented audiences. In my workshop as part of the festival, the children made a miniature model of Deptford which they lit up with conductive paint and LEDs. The following year, I built a wave structure that became a responsive sound installation. The children added texture to the wave using recycled materials and recorded sounds using a hydrophone. We added these sounds into their sculptures using programmable sensors, meaning when the sculptures were touched, their recorded sound played. The following year the festival toured the UK and I facilitated printmaking workshops. This was funded by Arts Council England and the Wellcome Collection.

Most recently, I worked as the Art Lead at Rathfern Primary School in Lewisham, in SE London. All of the art the children created (from Nursery to Year 6) responded to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, using recycled materials wherever possible. We focused on a creative journey, rather than a prescribed outcome, where experimentation and risk was encouraged. I saw the impact of regular and supportive art lessons on the children’s wellbeing, confidence and expression of identity.

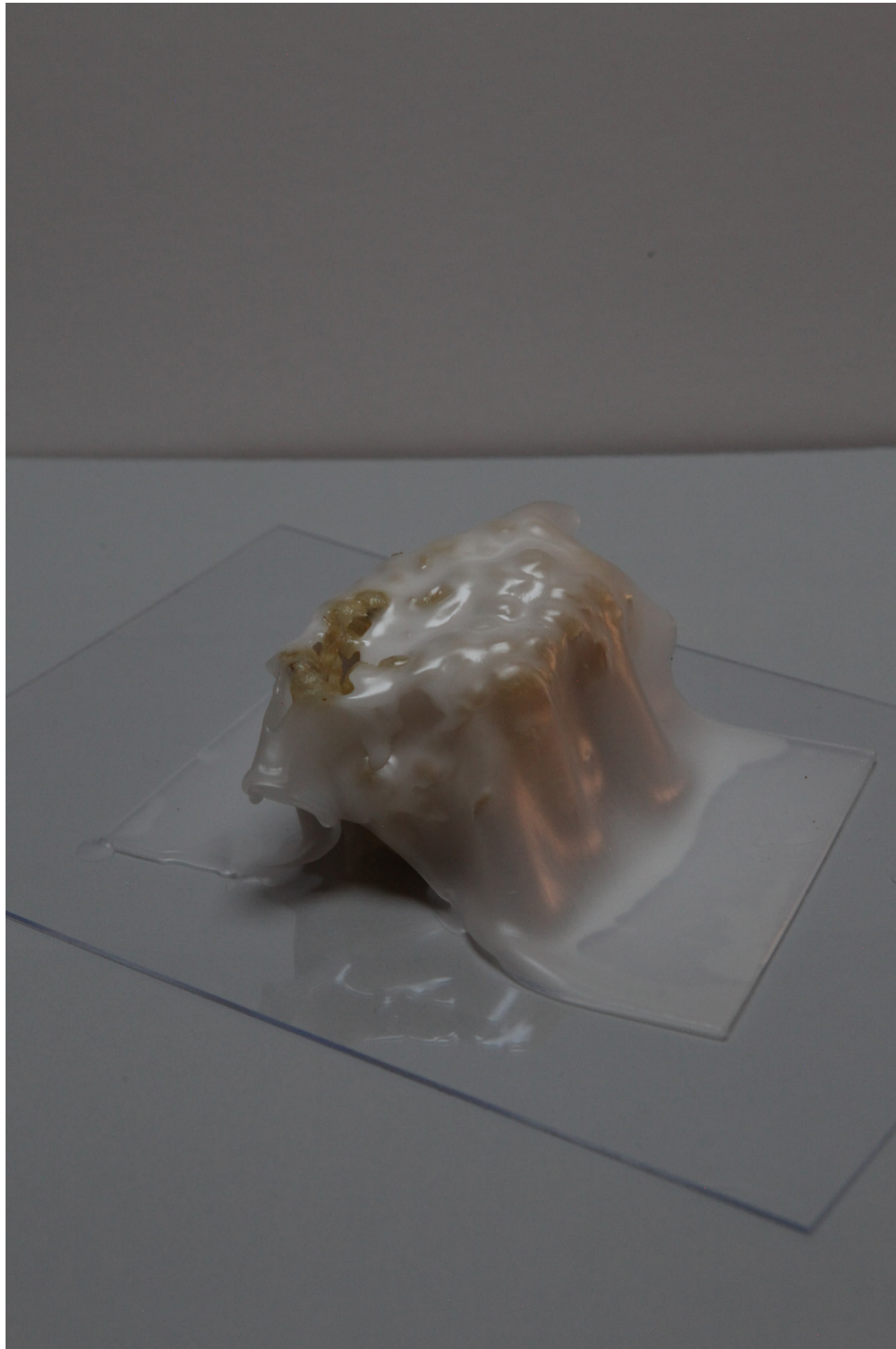
I am currently working as a Community Engagement Art Lead for Choices4Growth, a children’s mental health project in Berwick upon Tweed on the Northumberland/Scottish Border. Initially, I will be working with three local schools, running a series of workshops responding to the theme of *Change*. This project will allow space for the children to process their experiences of the last year during the pandemic, whilst thinking about how they feel about change going forward.

www.sineadkempley.com

¹ Gibson, J. (1979) *The Ecology of Visual Perception*, as cited in Ingold, T. (2010) *Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing*.



Layered bioplastic.



Whelk egg case, melted wax sheet, acrylic. Short videos can be found here:
https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/03/28/video-melt/



Bioplastic, soon after making.



The same bioplastic a week later.



Soldified slime with polystrene balls, inside of half a tennis ball found on the beach.



Artificial pumice rock, polystyrene balls held on by static.



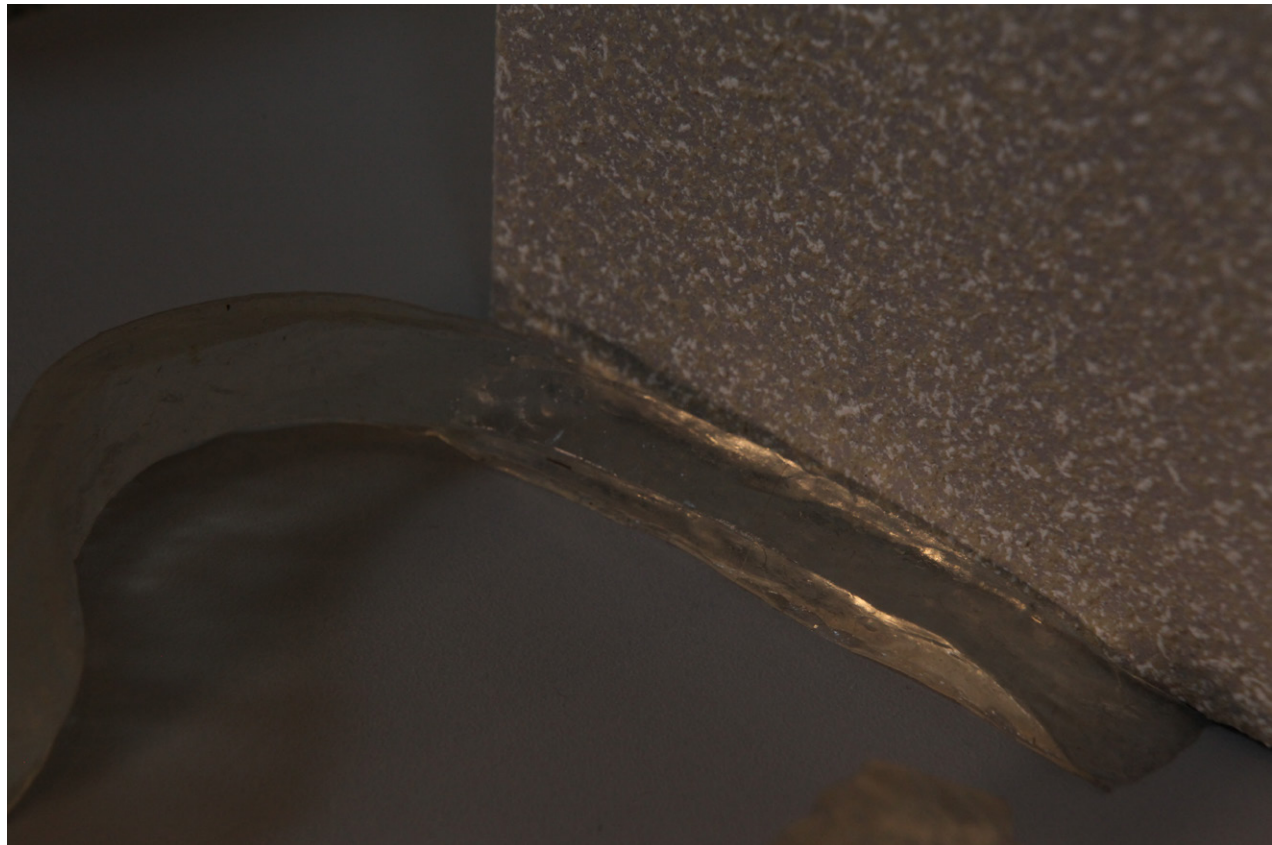
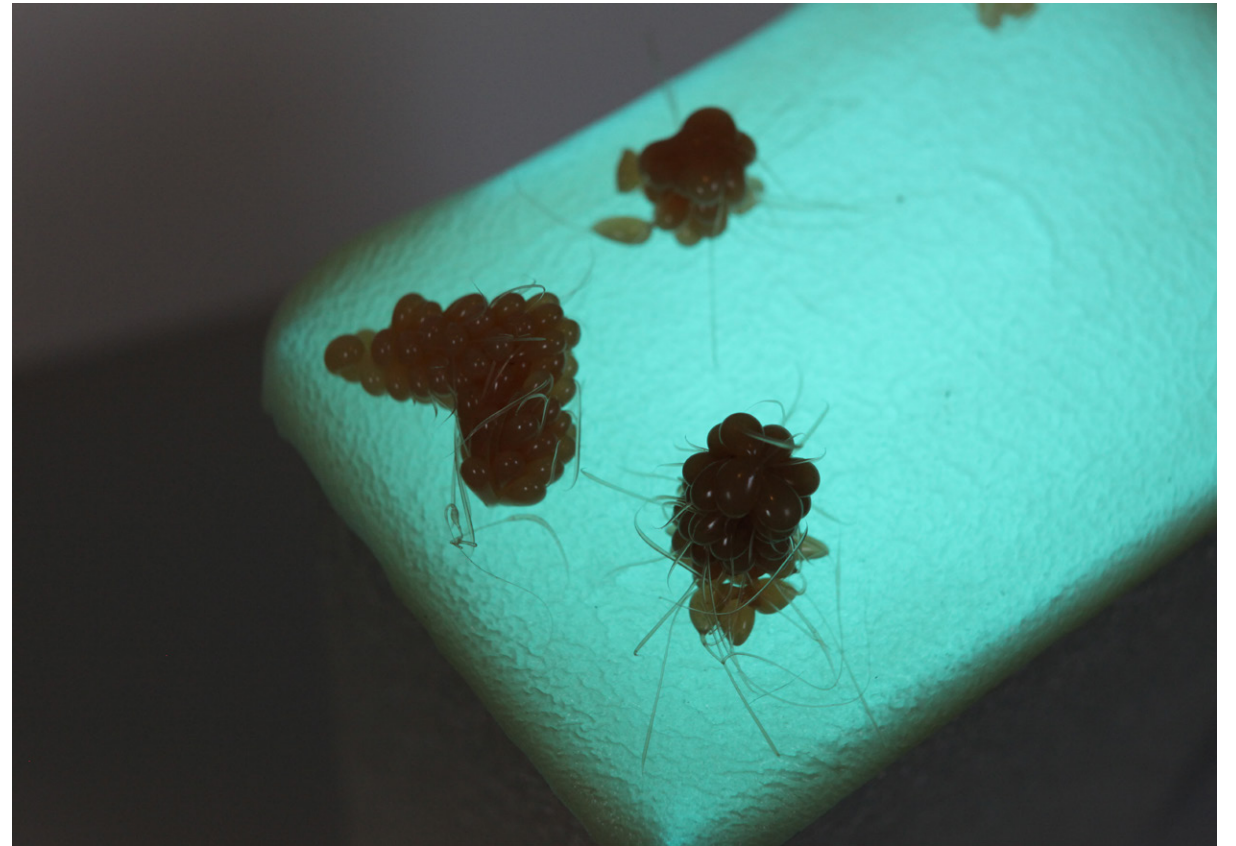
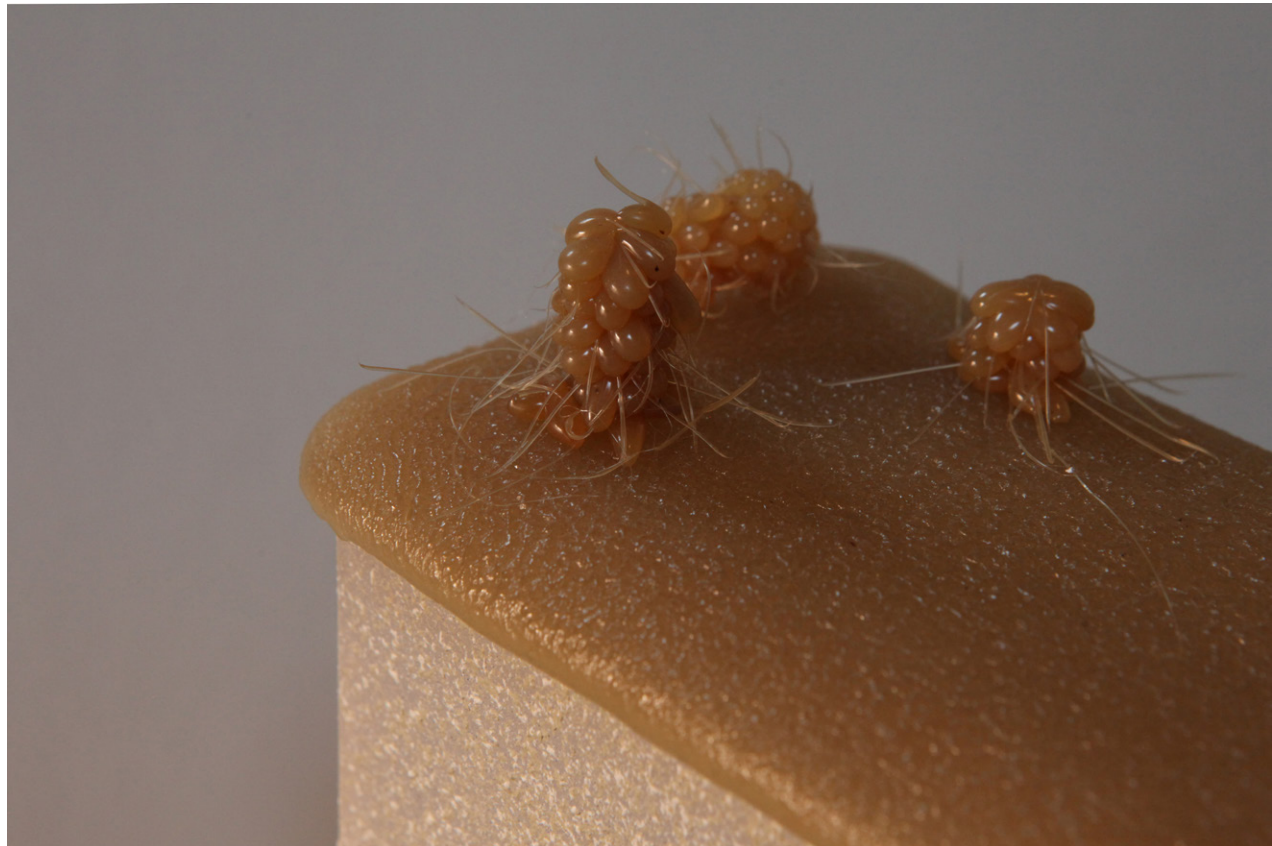
Bioplastic slab, cardboard stand sprayed with stone effect paint, sound sensitive strobe light, surface transducer.

A video can be found here: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2020/12/30/445/

The sound recording of foam: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2020/12/13/sound-of-foam/

The sound of air/bubbles in wet sand: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2020/11/15/hydrophone-recording/

Initial video of sand with air pump: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2020/10/29/test-with-aquarium-air-pump-and-wet-sand/



Waste EVA glue from binding machine, aged agar bioplastic slab, cardboard box sprayed with stone texture paint, sound sensitive strobe light, surface transducer, bioplastic worms.
Video of strobe light and more photos can be seen here: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/04/02/694/



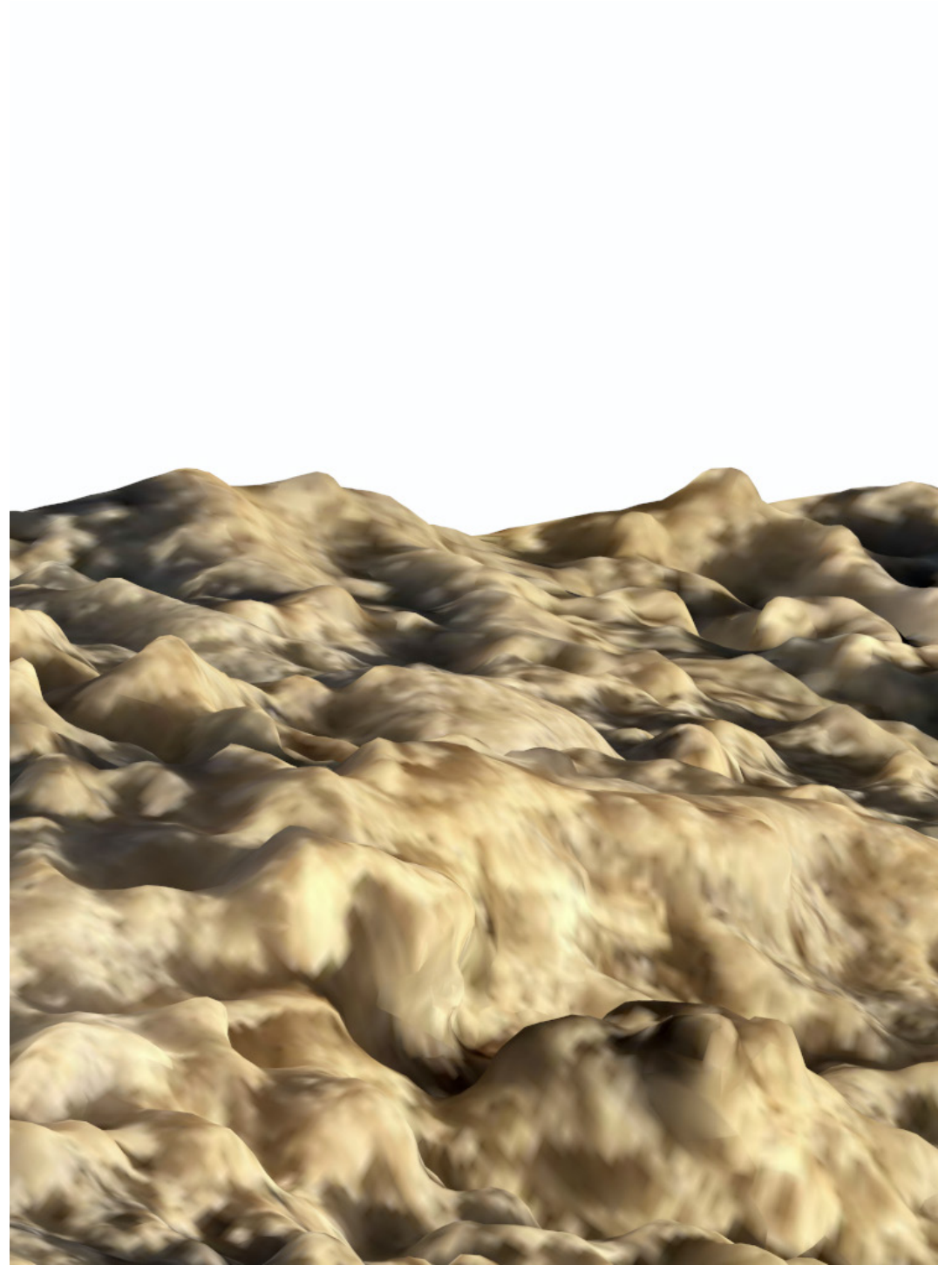
Bioplastic, styrofoam block, wax sheet, plywood shelf.

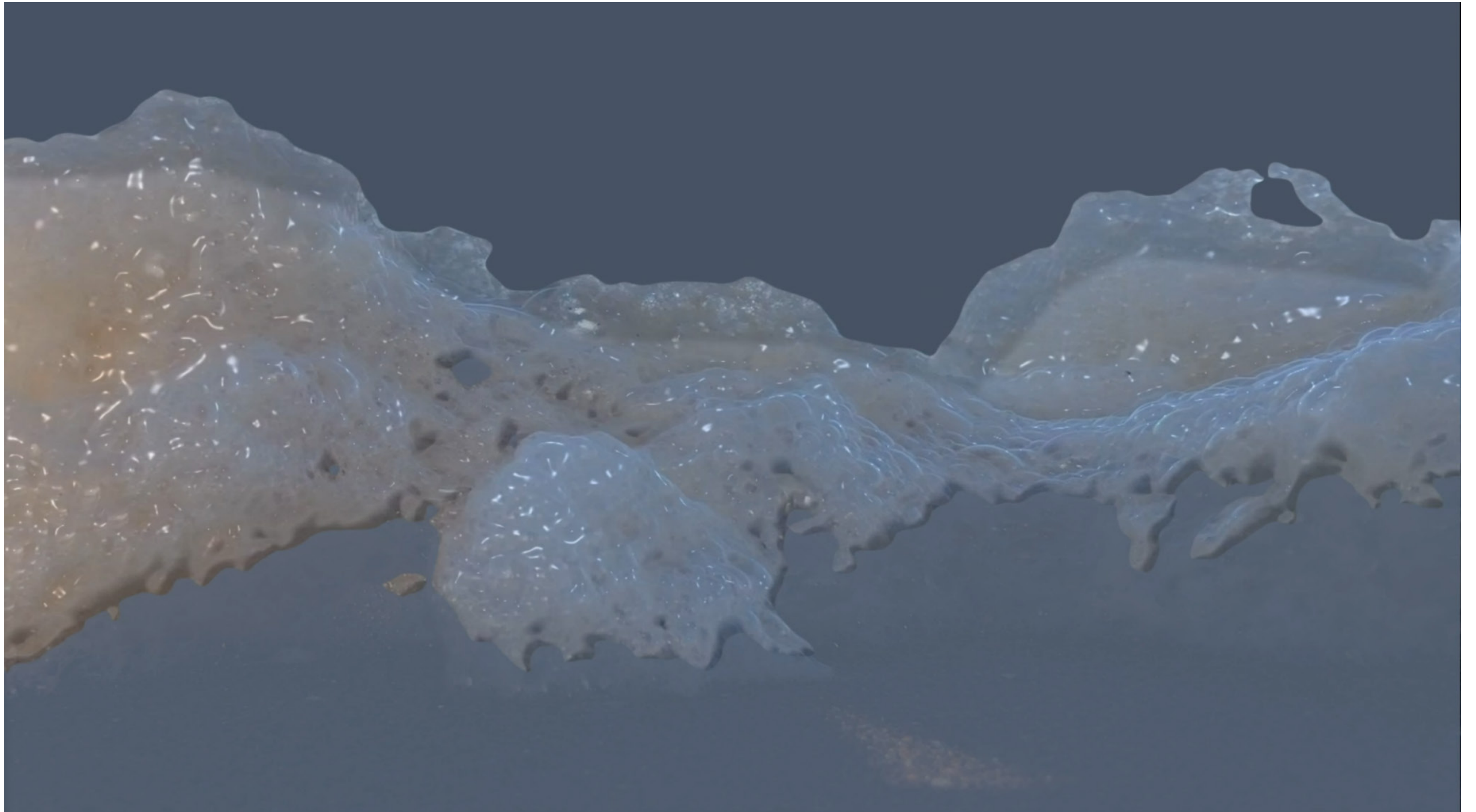


Bioplastic membrane, cardboard cube sprayed with paint.



Sea foam scanned with photogrammetry.





Video of wobbling sea foam, altered in Adobe After Effects.

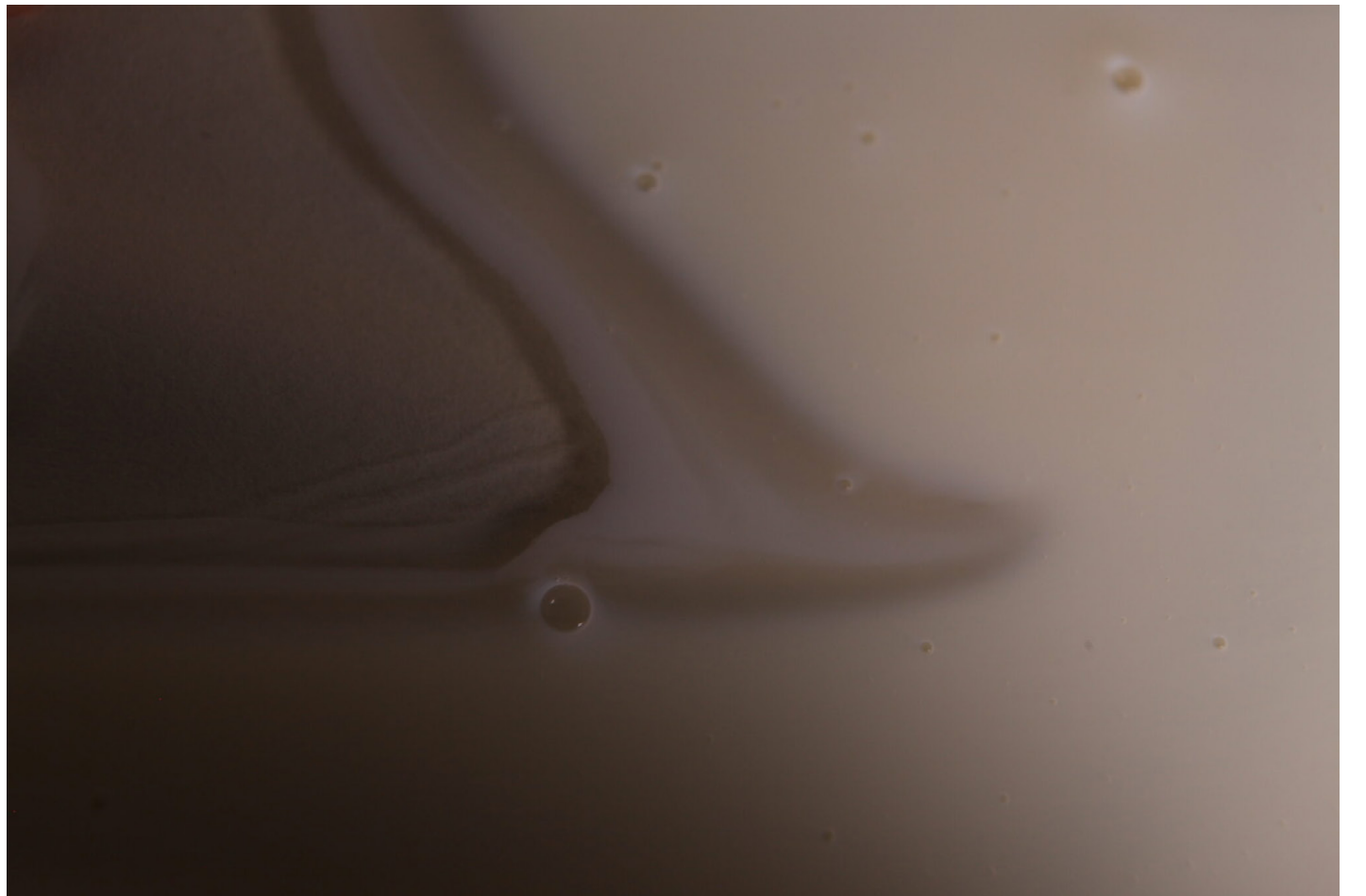
Video can be seen here: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/02/01/another-after-effects-test/

Initial videos using this method: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/01/14/first-after-effects-test/



Photograph of bioplastic slab on cardboard, with foam moving as it is blown by fan.

I also made a video, which can be found here: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2020/11/26/nothing/



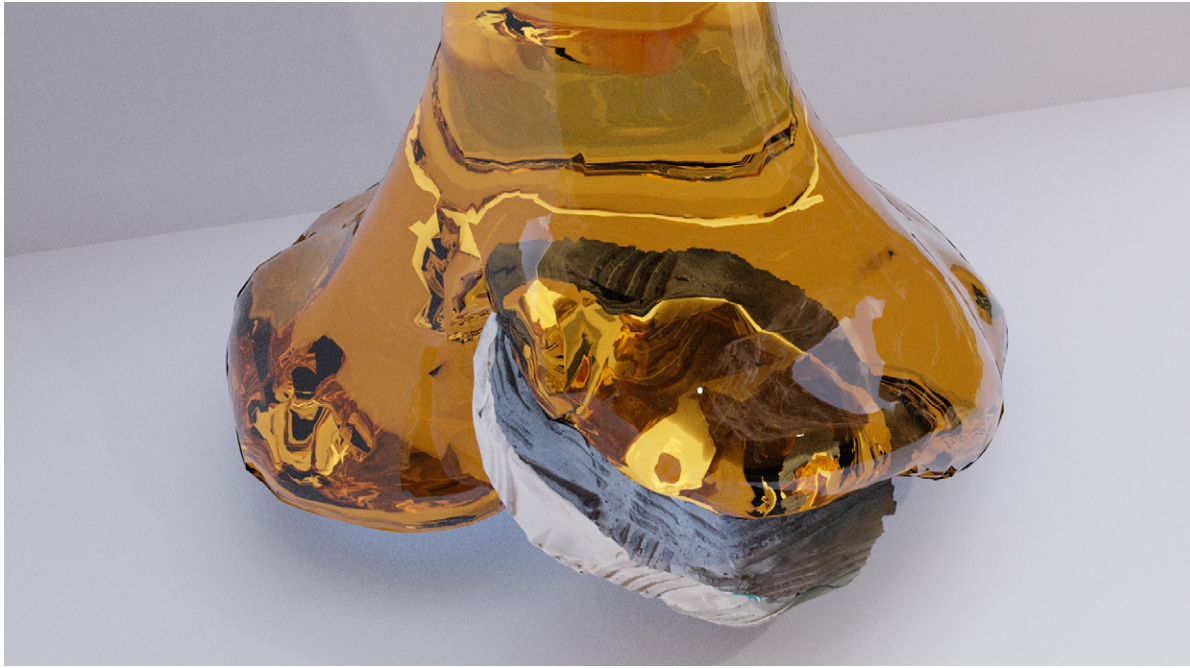
Photograph of glue and soap.



Discarded plastic fragment found on beach (possible flower pot), melted wax.



Blender photograph of sculptures scanned with photogrammetry.



Blender fluid simulation animations. Videos of animation can be found here:
https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/03/11/613/



Video of flowing viscous substance (liquid latex), altered with Adobe After Effects.

Video can be seen here: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/s2115611_tpg-practices-2020-2021sem1/2021/03/09/610/



Photograph of sand dune plant roots printed on silk.



Photograph of sand dune plant roots printed on silk, wooden dowel, bricks found on beach, bioplastic worms.