



Bec Nicholson, Fine Art graduate from Northumbria University, is pictured with some of her work on display.

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Fine Art graduates receive coveted award

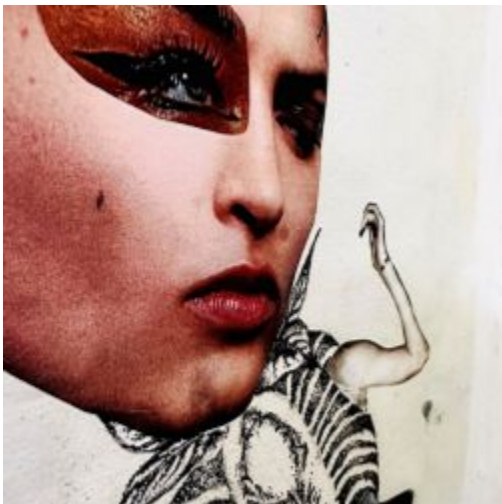
Two Fine Art graduates from Northumbria University have been awarded the 2024 New Graduate Award, presented in collaboration with Middlesbrough Art Week.

Bec Nicholson and Katie Young have been selected for the coveted annual award. It provides an opportunity for two graduating artists to take part in a regional residency programme, during which they will receive support and mentorship, before exhibiting their work at Middlesbrough Art Week this autumn.

Industry professionals, including the team involved in the organisation of Middlesbrough Art Week, viewed work by those graduating from Northumbria's Fine Art programmes this summer at the annual [REVEAL degree shows](#). Work was exhibited across the University's City Campus and at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and supported the selection of the two New Graduate Award winners.



Katie Young.



An example of Katie's work.

Katie, who displayed a large-scale tapestry installation at BALTIC, explained: "I am still in disbelief at being selected for the New Graduate Award. Coming into Northumbria University as a direct entry in second year, it feels rewarding that there has been high recognition towards my practice. This award will give me the relevant stepping stones in my career as a full-time artist.

"Building up towards the degree show, I felt inclined to use this opportunity

as a way to communicate with the local community on the issues we face within today's society. Themes I explored in my work were the boundaries for beauty, gender identity and the feeling of alienation. The main focus of the work was to showcase the limiting society we live in today and implies the question: why do we all follow the society of today that stops us from being our true selves?"

Bec said of her award: "So much time and effort was put into seeing my degree show installation come to fruition, and I'm so grateful that my hard work has been recognised with the receipt of this award. I'm thrilled to have the chance to continue developing my practice professionally, and excited to see what comes next.

"My piece for the degree show was a painting installation centred around the concept of dreams and the dreamworld. I'm fascinated by internal processes that we struggle to articulate in waking life. My practice is an attempt to visually realise the unconscious to highlight its importance and develop a better understanding of myself, and hopefully inspire others do to the same."

Last year Northumbria alumni Alice Kershaw and Seymour Mace, who also completed their studies on the [BA \(Hons\) Fine Art](#) programme, were awarded a place on the New Graduate Award scheme following their successful [graduate shows at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art](#) in May 2023.

Middlesbrough Art Week Co-Curator and Project Manager, Will Hughes, said: "It was a pleasure this year to visit the degree show across both the Northumbria Campus and BALTIC to see the culmination of three years' worth of creative endeavour. We are proud to continue to offer the New Graduate Award to two Northumbria Fine Art graduates and to give them support and development opportunities at this crucial time, post university.

"It was a really difficult choice to pick only two graduates for the award as we were so impressed with the variety and quality within the degree show, but we are really pleased to have selected Bec Nicholson and Katie Young. Both Bec and Katie's work showed great ambition and quality and it was clear how the studio provision, mentoring support and exhibition opportunity could positively benefit their developing art practices."

Allan Hughes, Programme Leader for BA Fine Art, said: "The staff of the BA Fine Art programme at Northumbria are delighted to be working again with

Middlesbrough Art Week to support the New Graduate Award for the third year in a row. This award offers a unique opportunity for the recipients to undertake an artists' residency programme where they can reflect on their journey through the BA Fine Art programme, develop new work in response to the curatorial themes of the Middlesbrough Art Week programme, establish networks and receive mentorship from practitioners in the field.

“The residency will culminate in the exhibition of new work as a part of Middlesbrough Art Week in September 2024 and we are excited to be taking our undergraduates down to see it and show them what is possible. The partnership with Middlesbrough Art Week is one of a number of partnerships we are committed to in our programme and we believe in the value of the experience and the opportunities it can bring for graduates looking to establish themselves in the Arts sector and make a contribution to the local culture.”

This year's Middlesbrough Arts Week, *IN THE NOW AND THE FAR*, focuses on negotiating the overlap and differences between cultural production and political action, the attitudes, frameworks and timescales that inform the way work is made and shared and, in turn, how this helps us reimagine the communities we live in.

The seventh [Middlesbrough Art Week](#) will take place across the town of Middlesbrough from Thursday 26 September to Saturday 5 October 2024.

Bec and Katie's work will be displayed in gallery space at Orbis Community in Gateshead this summer before moving to join the Middlesbrough Art Week exhibitions.

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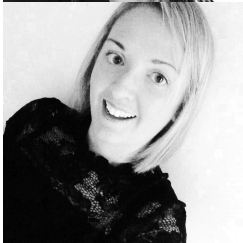


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