

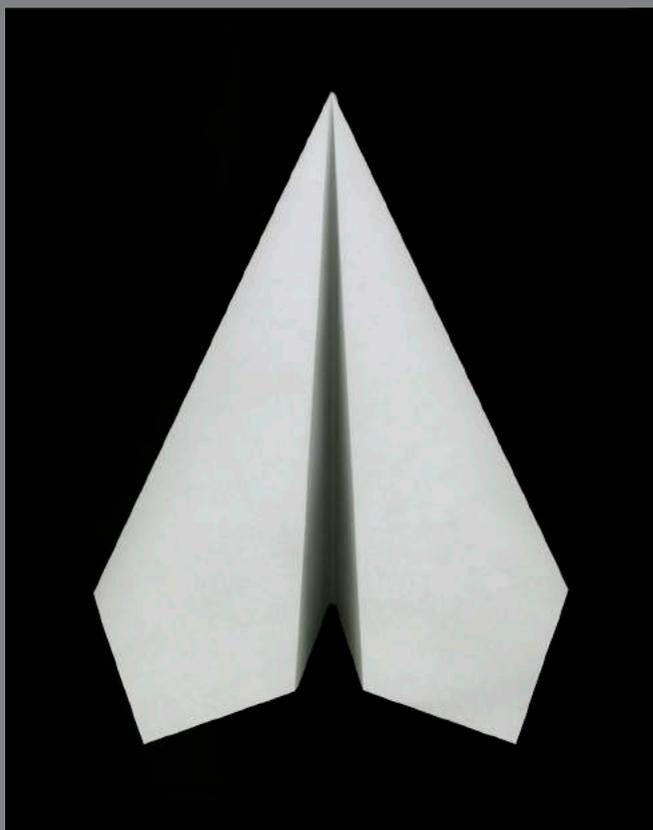
**OPEN  
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**15 JANUARY - 3 APRIL 2016**

**FLAT DEATH:  
EDGAR MARTINS & JORDAN BASEMAN**



## TO HELP KEEP OPEN EYE GALLERY FREE, PLEASE DONATE

We believe photography is for everyone and can be meaningful, informing our present and inspiring positive futures. Open Eye Gallery works with people to explore photography's unique ability to connect, to tell stories, to inquire, to reflect on humanity's past and present, and to celebrate its diversity and creativity.

Founded in 1977 Open Eye Gallery is an independent, not-for-profit photography gallery based in Liverpool. We are one of the UK's leading photography spaces, and the only gallery dedicated to photography and related media in the North West of England.

Open Eye Gallery has consistently championed photography as an art form that is relevant to everyone. We promote the practice, enjoyment and understanding of photography by creating challenging and entertaining opportunities to experience and appreciate distinctive, innovative photographs.



Front Cover: Edgar Martins, *Farewell Letter* from the series *Siloquies and Soliloquies on death, life and other interludes*, 2016

Above: Jordan Baseman, *Deadness*, 2013. Still courtesy the artist and Matt's Gallery, London.

15 JANUARY - 3 APRIL 2016

## FLAT DEATH: EDGAR MARTINS AND JORDAN BASEMAN

Through photographic projects by Edgar Martins and Jordan Baseman, this exhibition presents two series of work that invite us to reflect on how we deal with death, as a society and individually.

Edgar Martins attempts to understand our relationship to death and photography's role in this process through a variety of images. Jordan Baseman's exhibition of memorial images sits within a long tradition of photography being used by families to remember their loved ones after they have passed.

The exhibition's title, *Flat Death*, is taken from Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, which considers the photograph as a fixed record of a moment in time.

Our Curator, Thomas Dukes has been in conversation with Angela Samata. Angela sits on the All Party Parliamentary Group tackling suicide prevention in England and Wales and is a presenter and arts professional. Angela presented the BBC documentary 'Life After Suicide' which has recently been recognised with a Mind Media Award. Together, Thomas and Angela discuss themes that arise throughout the exhibition.

**THOMAS DUKES:** Good Morning Angela, thank you for agreeing to having a conversation around the exhibition *Flat Death*. From the outset the gallery has been talking to a lot of different people and organisations who deal with bereavement, to try and ensure that the exhibition remains as open and constructive as possible, and so we appreciate your time to contribute to the discussions we've been having here.

**ANGELA SAMATA:** Morning Thomas. Thanks for inviting me to talk to you about the show. I'm interested in *Flat Death* both because of my personal experience as someone bereaved by suicide and professionally as a curator. Can I ask where the initial idea for the exhibition came from and did you always plan to exhibit Edgar Martins and Jordan Baseman simultaneously?

**TD:** Well, in 2014 we were talking to Edgar Martins following the release of his work *The Rehearsal of Space & the Poetic Impossibility to Manage the Infinite*. He had worked with the European Space Agency to create an incredibly comprehensive & meditative survey of this leading scientific organisation. The project presented items and asked questions of them, as Martins says “an approach that was simultaneously descriptive and speculative”. In conversation, Martins said he was producing a new body of work with exclusive access to the Portuguese Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences around the human relationship to death – and we were really excited to see Martins create a similar forensic/poetic vehicle to reflect on a mental space Western Society can often distance itself from.

Then, knowing Jordan Baseman’s work, we understood that we could continue the visitors’ experience in a more durational, installation way. The two pieces have a conversation of style and ethics between them, and together make a powerful experience for the visitor. This seems like a good time to say that both of the artists have been phenomenal to learn from and work with.

I wanted to talk about how we have needed to be careful in the selection of the work – as there are some pieces that in consultation with various groups, we are looking to not include. In this instance, entirely to try and safeguard rather than any ethical or taboo based consideration. It’s a very difficult question for me, but what do you think a public gallery should consider in presenting potentially difficult/challenging work?

**AS:** If we view *Flat Death* in the context of Open Eye Gallery’s long history of presenting shows which confront the viewer with often uncomfortable truths, then this exhibition follows in what is a strong tradition for any public gallery. Looking more specifically at some of the work here, once the objects depicted in a selection of Martins photographs have been utilised in the actions that many of us are unfortunately familiar with, they change forever. Photographic truth, capturing an object or a moment in time is an important aspect of photography, but these objects also represent life changing actions, with all the impact that those actions elicit. They transform from inanimate, everyday objects that don’t even register in our psyche, into significant, constant reminders of what was

lost in those moments. Curatorially, I see the merits of and place for each image, however, I do find them personally challenging. I hope some of these points will be raised in the ethics debates.

**TD:** Yes, I’m looking forward to hearing from a cross-section of voices and seeing if some people change or question their own position on the responsibility of a public gallery when working with challenging material. By bringing together arts professionals along with people working in mental health I’m hoping that we’ll end up with some useful thinking to share (the questions and findings are being presented in the gallery).

You raised the nature of photographic truth earlier, and I do find myself coming back to the difference between presenting archive imagery of crimes, autopsy or trial material, for example the *Burden of Proof* exhibition recently on display at The Photographers’ Gallery, and the work that functions more as an art object when the source material is so similar. I see something of the divide of art from the ‘real life’ processes of science or social history here; we can consider an image differently when its purpose is defined by a scientific objective to when it is used in a creative sense.

**AS:** Again, yes, I hope during the ethics debates we consider these contextual issues and moral dilemmas for both photographers and the viewing public regarding this type of image. I think we could probably write a book on one aspect of this conversation alone, Thomas!

**TD:** There is so much writing and discussion about the relationship of photography to death; it’s a subject that comes from our humanity, creativity and science. I hope that people find their visit thought provoking.

Thank you, Angela, it’s been a pleasure looking at these ideas with you.

## EDGAR MARTINS

Edgar Martins presents a selection of images from his project titled, *Siloquies and Soliloquies on death, life and other interludes*.

Martins has worked closely with the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science in Portugal to create the work, which includes challenging images relating to death. Presented are photographs of forensic evidence, archival material and Martins' own reflections.

Whilst upholding respect for the deceased and the bereaved, Martins raises the importance of discussing why our depiction and understanding of death creates tensions when spoken about in public.



Edgar Martins, *Untitled* from the series *Siloquies and Soliloquies on death, life and other interludes*, 2016

## JORDAN BASEMAN

Jordan Baseman presents one part of his 2013 exhibition, *Deadness*. Projected 35mm slides collected by the artist show images taken by families of recently deceased loved ones, or their funerals.

The project explores the historical, cultural and sociological relationship between photographic portraiture and embalming. The embalmer's attention focuses on preparation for the moment relatives and loved ones view the deceased, to leave the bereaved with a peaceful image and memory of the deceased.

Interviews and discussion are central to Baseman's creative process, this work focuses on the experiences of Dr John Troyer - Deputy Director for the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath.



Jordan Baseman, *Deadness* (Still 139a), 2013. Courtesy the artist and Matt's Gallery, London

## HELP AND SUPPORT

If you would like to talk to someone concerning issues raised in this exhibition, please be aware of the following organisations:

### SAMARITANS

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

116 123 / 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free phone

### MIND

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

0300 123 3393 / 9am – 6pm, Mon–Fri (except for bank holidays)

Text 86463

### SURVIVORS OF BEREAVEMENT BY SUICIDE (SOBS)

[uk-sobs.org.uk](http://uk-sobs.org.uk)

0300 1115065 / 9am – 9pm, every day

### CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY (CALM)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

0800 585858 / 5pm – 12am, every day

Webchat online

### PAPYRUS (PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE)

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

0800 068 41 41 / Mon–Fri 10am–10pm, Weekends 2pm–10pm

& Bank Holidays 2pm–5pm

For more information on organisations you may find helpful, please visit: [uk-sobs.org.uk/we-can-help/other-organisations](http://uk-sobs.org.uk/we-can-help/other-organisations)

You can also find printed copies of 'Help is at Hand' throughout the gallery spaces: [www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk/help-is-at-hand](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk/help-is-at-hand)

## PUBLIC PROGRAMME

### ETHICS COMMITTEE

Thursday 14 January / 6pm / Free

This event will ask 'is there a shared understanding of the ethical issues that arise when exhibiting images related to death?' Findings from the committee are available in the gallery.

### MONTHLY EXHIBITION TOURS

Sunday 17 January / Sunday 14 February / Sunday 13 March  
2.30pm / Free / Drop in

Exhibition tours are led by our curator Thomas Dukes and offer insight to the works on display. In March, presenter and arts professional Angela Samata joins Thomas to lead the exhibition tour.

### REDEYE EVENT

#### STILL HERE: AN EVENING WITH LYDIA GOLDBLATT

Thursday 25 February / 6.30pm / Free / Booking Required

Photographic artist Lydia Goldblatt will present her critically acclaimed project, *Still Here*. Redeye offer support and information for anyone interested in photography.

### PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Thursday 24 March / 6pm / Free / Booking Required

An opportunity to discuss themes arising in *Flat Death*, informed by visitor comments collected throughout the exhibition.



Open Eye Gallery, 2015 © Ted Oonk

## FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

15 APRIL - 5 JUNE 2016

### OPEN 2

The second show in the Open series, *Open 2* presents six new or early career artists who came to our attention through submissions and expressions of interest. This year we welcome photographers Sam Hutchinson (Leeds), Peter Watkins (London) and Phoebe Kiely (Manchester) along with a collaboration by photographer Stephen Iles & sculptor Nicola Dale (Manchester) and a new take on the exhibition publication by designer/artist Thom Isom (Liverpool).

A common thread running through the projects explores how we gather and make meaning of the hundreds of events - visual and otherwise - that we are experiencing daily, and how artists might share their experiences with others. Photography offers a way of fixing a moment for special consideration, selecting a perspective, but how does this fit with anyone else's view and understanding of the world? *Open 2* leaves space for interpretation, it invites you to bring your own understanding to the artists' work.

The Open series is presented with the support of the Brian Mercer Charitable Trust, who support Open Eye Gallery in showing the most compelling work received through our ongoing call for Exhibition Submissions.

Open not only provides a platform for displaying new work and fresh perspectives, but supports a forum for learning and discussion through a rich programme of public events unfolding throughout the duration of the exhibition.



© Phoebe Kiely, 2015

## EXHIBITION SUBMISSIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Open Eye Gallery is open to receiving exhibition proposals from artists and curators. We welcome artists from any stage of their career to share their ideas with us; we are always interested to hear about your work and new projects. We are particularly interested in receiving work from early career and emerging photographers based in the North West of England. For more information please visit our website, where you will find further information including exhibition submission guidelines and a proposal form.

We are also inviting independent retailers, designers, illustrators and makers to submit pop-up shop proposals for our small, but perfectly formed gallery gift shop.

Please check our website for job vacancies, internships and volunteering opportunities.

### GALLERY HIRE

Our three gallery spaces are available to hire for a variety of events including private dinners, meetings, away days, launches and wine receptions, with a beautiful external glass covered realm for larger events available on request.

We can help with catering, lighting, AV equipment and more!

For more information on how to host your event at Open Eye Gallery, visit our website or call +44 (0)151 236 6768.

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## OPENING HOURS

10.30am – 5.30pm  
Tuesday – Sunday  
Including Bank Holidays

## DIRECTIONS

Open Eye Gallery is located at the heart of the Liverpool Waterfront, a short walk from the Liverpool One shopping centre and the Albert Dock. The gallery is part of the Mann Island development, a complex of three black buildings that sit between the Strand, the Canning dock and the Museum of Liverpool. Our entrance is on the ground floor, in a covered public courtyard which can be entered from the south side (facing the Museum of Liverpool) or the north side (facing Mann Island and the Liver Building).

19 Mann Island  
Liverpool Waterfront  
Liverpool, L3 1BP

## KEEP IN TOUCH

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