

December 2025

Dear Locksbrook,

I don't know how to tell you this, but I think I'm falling for you.

I first felt something years ago when I came to 'Mapping the Landscape', a panel discussion with some of my favourite artists — Mariele Neudecker, Simon Faithfull and Tim Knowles. Gosh, that was way back in 2019, when you were new on the block.

I was amazed at how open you were — how you welcomed so many different people in and held space for them to be themselves: to explore, to be playful, to learn. At the time, I was researching biomaterials and becoming fascinated by artworks that could disappear — sculptures that didn't need the monumental presence of the works I grew up with. Soon enough, ephemeral, temporary, performative pieces began to seep into my practice.

Later on, I was far away from you, up in Middlesbrough at an event called MAW (Middlesbrough Art Week), developing a project called 'Volcanoes and Scoria Bricks'. It extended my initial 'Is It Magma?' research and explored the history of 'scoria brick' production - a forgotten building material and waste product of the steel industry. Essentially I started using slag as sculptural material, a substance akin to molten lava. I thought of you then - how helpful you would be with all your resources and wisdom, how you would have helped me understand things better.

Probably the most academic thing I've ever done is write a 'Manifesto for making sustainable artwork'. It's really just a checklist of things to consider, but like so many people, I'm hyper-aware of the fragility of this world, and it feels more crucial than ever to be sensitive to our impact if we can. Maybe it was also an excuse to hang out with your type a bit more. The manifesto became a starting point for conversation — a bridge, an invitation for everyone to join in.

Anyway, look, I don't expect you to remember me from back then. There were plenty of other people around.

The next time we met was more informal. I was walking down the river and saw no one else about, so I thought it might be alright to drop by. You were welcoming, as always, and I came to see 'Here's One We Made Earlier'. An exhibition showcasing work from the technical demonstrators and managers from the wider institution. Again, your openness and willingness to bring everyone into your community shone through.

For the last three years, things have become a bit more serious. I've been regularly sharing my thoughts and projects with you. Two years ago, I told you about my new interest in film - a medium to fill in narrative gaps in my sculptural projects. You enjoyed the magic tricks in 'The

Belief of Things Disappearing', a film exploring sleight-of-hand illusions and the UK's waste industry, questioning how nothing really disappears, only transforms.

Last year we had a great time discussing my big solo show at The Lowry in Salford, 'Making Up'. I built a large wooden walkway for the public to travel along until they reached a rotating turntable that gently spun them around - a purpose-made dead end. At the end of the exhibition, the walkway was transformed into wooden crates and gifted to the local community.

This year, you even listened patiently to my latest obsession; brewing culture from a queer perspective. I told you about medieval alewives, the pioneers of beer making who have largely been forgotten in society today. I explained about my version of the ale stick and how these wiggle forms started to dictate a larger sculptural work and house some of the films in a big installation called 'Down the Hatch'.

And lately... well, I've started writing '2026' next to your name in my journal. Imagining our future together. Thinking about a time when it would be just you and me, exploring all we could achieve. My life right now is hectic — a good career but a constant juggle — I am craving some simpler focused time, and the chance to share what I've learned. And I think you can help me do that. I have so much to give, and so much still to learn. I can tell you what it's like to be an artist now, and help bridge the gap between where you are and the real world.

What I really want is the space to guide others, to help them articulate the messy, exhilarating parts of practice while grounding it in real-world experience. And I can picture doing that with you.

I worry that I'm older than some of your previous partners, but you know what they say: age brings experience. And I have so much I'd love to share... the things that have helped me survive as an artist, the advice that has rung true again and again.

So, with all that said, I guess it's now or never.

Do you fancy grabbing a coffee sometime?

Yours, fondly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jo', written in a cursive, fluid style.

Jo