

# LUNGLEY

## St. Paul's Cathedral [Harley Kuyck-Cohen](#)

13/09/19 - 29/09/19

Private view 12/09, 6-9pm.

LUNGLEY Gallery is pleased to present **St. Paul's Cathedral** a solo exhibition by Harley Kuyck-Cohen.

Squeezed into bags, sold at B&Q then stuffed in flowerpots, compost is just a base; a wet fecund pulp offering delectation to greedy fingered roots and tendrils. Useful, insofar as it achieves flowers, tubers and fruit. But to look again, with the benefit of hindsight, a cannibalistic duality unfurls. It plays both cradle and coffin, hosting all manner of life and its slow languish afterward. It is the peculiarity of its nature to give rise to life, solemnly receive the traces, before manifesting their deterioration. But it can provide us with a model for constant growth, layering and decay crossing scales of time and physical size. Taken in this way, as a system (or series of), it is easy to reconcile the artist's affinity to compost with his persistent focus on the city.

Drawing its bulk from the life it supports, the city is a living index of its own history, entangling disparate narratives. This is the entry point of the work. Most of the sculptures are made from a composite builder's filler, in one sense an architectural glue, in another a membrane to join spaces. Approached obliquely the content is sweated out across a diffuse and unsteady logic, poetically exploring the heteroclitite nature of the city. Often, this straddles questions on the contemporary experience of urban space. One such question recurs: how do inhabitants navigate the contradiction of public and private space as the two categories collapse? On the one hand, private space accommodates the outside world via televisions, computers, smartphones or even spyware, whilst public space is instrumentalised for private interest. The work engages these themes by trying to imagine the ways that individuals or groups might carve out their own personal histories and mythologies against this backdrop. The pasting of smartphone photographs onto sculptures is not a confessional slant, but a reimagining of folk histories through the Poor Image. There are frequent nods toward vernacular architectures or communal practices, with Harley's previous show taking the name *Allotment* (Airspace gallery 2019). Recently, the artist undertook a research trip through the Netherlands to explore architectures for alternative living.

The current exhibition takes the name *St. Paul's* – after the foremost cathedral in London. Harley regularly incorporates the geography of the host city, in *Allotment* he used images taken during his residency in Stoke, many of them referencing the city's ceramic past. Both instances draw attention to the specific history of a place. In Stoke, to underscore the lost futures of modernism, and in London, the wobbly import of monuments. Both offer themselves as relics, attesting to the capacity of belief to shape physical space, whilst their position as relics betrays the fluidity of belief as a currency. In this way the city is constituted of overlapping systems of belief. St Paul's is at once the embodiment and witness of this process.

Text by [Alex Leigh](#)

For further information or sales advice please contact the gallery at [mark@lungleygallery.com](mailto:mark@lungleygallery.com)



Harley Kuyck-Cohen: Octopus (2019)