

Shelter: 'Nothing at all'

When thinking about shelter, and listening to the conversation of the group last week, what came up for me was something both physical and psychological. I kept thinking about the word *nest* and how many birds had nested in our garden this year. Their nests being a place of shelter and nurture, but when exposed they appear very fragile and a bit chaotic.

In this work I am exploring the notion of the nation state as a place of shelter and that there is an expectation of citizens that the State should be a provider of last resort. In England a group called ExcludedUK has been created, representing up to 3 million people who feel they have been overlooked and badly treated by the government during the pandemic. They are people who have fallen outside of the criteria for financial support because they had just changed jobs, didn't earn enough from their self-employment and so on.



Each of the paper scrolls (inkjet printed on hand-made Lokta paper) contains a testimony from people who are now struggling financially through no fault of their own. The texts are contained within an actual nest that was dislodged during a recent storm (the fledglings left it some months ago).

The text from which the title is taken reads:

Nothing at all since March after 38 years of paying a massive amount of tax but only recently going self-employed. The word injustice doesn't begin to explain it.

These stories made me think about a psychological contract that might exist between citizens and the State and when it's broken the fragility of our shelter is exposed. The texts are hidden to echo the sense of people feeling unheard and unseen. I have added the feathers in some versions as they relate to the nest and are also regarded as a symbol of protection.

This is an unresolved work, a series of playful acts, and to complete it I think I'd develop a new version where the texts inside the nest would be stories of support and community with the texts outside being those of the excluded.



