

# London Grads Now

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by Paul Carey-Kent

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It's obvious enough that this year's graduates have missed out on the traditional benefits of a degree show. But the Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery has teamed up with the Saatchi Gallery to do something about it by facilitating students to curate a 'best of ' selection

through an open call to all those graduating this year. London Grads Now brings together over 200 works by 150 graduating artists in one central location, providing a convenient overview of work from the RCA, Slade, Goldsmiths, UAL (Wimbledon, Chelsea, St Martins and Camberwell). The handsome 'white cube' style presentation of selected works at the Saatchi Gallery (£3 to 25 Sept) contrasts with the hurly-burly of traditional all-in degree shows – indeed, there's no reason why it wouldn't be good to have just such a curated summary as an extra in 'normal years'. Oddly, though, it is 'wall-based work only', even though sculpture is perfectly well-suited to the space.

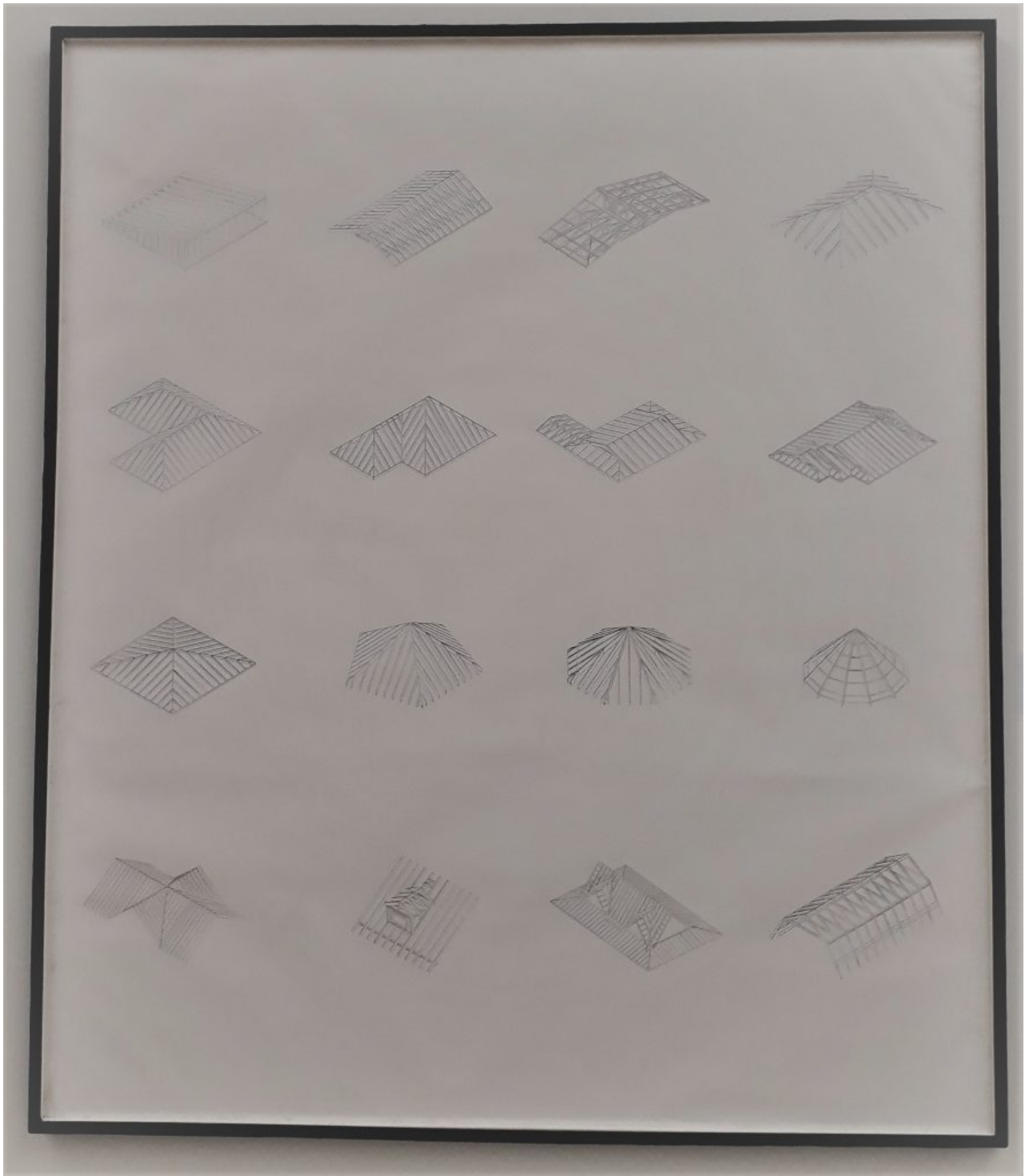
As for trends in the work: not that much was easily pigeonholed as 'lockdown work', but there was plenty of content – and as many personal stories, often told through domestic materials such as textiles, as there were works directly addressing broader events and histories. Here are four artists – out of many – who caught my attention.

**Yang Xu** (RCA): 'Missing you is like Fire', 2019 (top). Yang took the dressing up commitment prize in presenting an interior painted on carpet evoking the rarity value of that luxury being present in her uncle's house in China and also suggesting through the melodramatic title and the detail of a dropped champagne glass some traumatic romantic occurrence. @\_xu.yang



**Tsan Huang** (Camberwell): still from 'Violence Towards a Piece of Paper', 2020, a six-minute film in which the violence of a memorable title is at the meditative end as Tsan employs a glue gun to draw in ink, then washes and scrapes the paper clear with acid to end up with a ghostly absence. @its\_canart





**Giles Thackway** (Goldsmiths): 'Holder', 2020. Personal loss meets global warming: what look somewhat like Sol LeWitt-style variations on a geometric theme are based on the beam architecture of Australian houses destroyed in recent bush fires. They're drawn using the charcoal which also frames the work. [@giles.giles.giles](https://www.instagram.com/giles.giles.giles)



**Gail Theis** (Wimbledon): 'Flesh and Blood', 2020 (detail below). The domesticity and craft traditions of a quilt turned to an examination of mixed marriages through photographs of such couples – from the artist's own parents to celebrities – along with sperm, egg and chromosome motifs woven into the diagrammatic presentation.  
[@gailtheis](https://www.instagram.com/gailtheis)



Art writer and curator Paul Carey-Kent sees a lot of shows: we asked him to jot down whatever came into his head



### **About Paul Carey-Kent**

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Art critic and curator, based near Southampton. I write most regularly for Art Monthly, Frieze, Elephant, State, Photomonitor... and, of course, FAD.