THE SCOTSMAN

Art

Edinburgh Art Festival reviews: Eva Rothschild | Katie Paterson | Anne Hardy

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Three exhibitions by a trio of mid-career female sculptors are among the highlights of this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, writes Susan Mansfield

Eva Rothschild: The Void Presses The Wall, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh ★★★★

Katie Paterson: Afterlife, Collective, Edinburgh ★★★★★

Anne Hardy: Feelings, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh ★★★★

The female presence is particularly strong at this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, across painting, photography and sculpture. If we focus just on the last of these, three of Edinburgh's leading contemporary art spaces are presenting work by a trio of mid-career female sculptors.



Installation view of Afterlife by Katie Paterson | Eoin Carey

Katie Paterson's installation Afterlife, at Collective, is all about materials too, in a different way. Commissioned by Sorcha Carey, Collective's director, when she was curating the Folkestone Triennial last summer, it's a gathering of 197 amulets, sourced and 3D-scanned in museums around the world, then remade using new materials which reflect the fragility of the planet: coral from the Great Barrier Reef, charcoal from wildfires, polystyrene fragments recovered from the Mariana Trench, and so on.

Small talismanic objects from different world cultures, designed to sit in a hand or be worn as jewellery, are displayed in a bespoke dimpled table designed by Berlin-based architects Zeller & Moye, and made by Scottish company Sylvan. Despite the ubiquitous notices to the contrary, the desire to touch them is almost irresistible.

It's a show where looking isn't enough, you need to know more, and fortunately there is a detailed exhibition guide which explains the background to each amulet and the material in which it has been remade. Thus, a netsuke of two birds with beaks touching is made from plastics found in the stomach of a baby albatross in Antarctica; an amulet of the solar system from ancient Rome is remade in space junk.

They are organised into sections: extraction, pollution, biosphere and so on, but the message is the same. Each one is a pocket-sized reminder of the damage dealt to the planet by human kind. But here's the magic. While they have a cumulative power, instead of leaving us feeling lectured to, the objects - invested over so much time with hopes and meanings - seem to embody our fragility, our desire to do better. Paterson has taken a severe lesson and wrapped it up in hope and compassion.