5 things to do this week

Ashley Davies



1. Katie Paterson — Afterlife
Cast your eye quickly over the 200 or so amulets at a new exhibition in the Collective Gallery and you would be forgiven for not appreciating their significance.

Look closer and you will find that they are made of an extraordinary collection of materials, including ground-up landmine debris, space junk and trinitite (sand turned into glass by the first atomic tests in New Mexico).

The installation is the latest by the Glasgow-born artist Katie Paterson. Like so much of her work, Afterlife is a painstakingly created collection of symbols of the fragility of this planet.

"For centuries, so many different cultures have used amulets, typically carved in stone, as something to be worn on the body as protection, or to accompany the dead to the afterlife," says Paterson, a graduate of the Edinburgh College of Art. She has collected hundreds of them from across times and cultures — including Mesopotamian, Viking, Celtic and Greco-Roman — and collaborated with the museums that house them to obtain 3D scans and recreate these talismanic objects.

Among other materials used to make the amulets, which depict everything from birds, baboons and beetles to leaves, fish and even an ear and a foot, there are elements of a polystyrene cup found in the Mariana Trench, a part of the ocean so deep that the water pressure had condensed it. Remnants of a wildfire, of plastic swallowed by a baby albatross, and blood crystals from Afghanistan are also reconstituted in these magical forms, and also poisons left in the earth by human disregard for the planet.

This complex and delicate archive, commissioned for last year's Folkestone Triennial, is displayed on curved sycamore tables made by the Berlin-based architects Zeller and Moye. The amulets rest in concave spaces so smooth that from a distance they look like thumb prints in dough.

They are arranged thematically: on one side there is biosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, place and climate and wildfire, while the other covers Anthropocene, extraction, mining, war and pollution.