

# HARD LINES



L I S E T T E M A Y M O N R O E

# HARD LINES

is an autobiographical installation that uses sentimentality, nostalgia and revenge to navigate the aftermath of an abandoned relationship, while questioning what it means to inhabit a body stigmatised by the overhanging spectres of class, disability and menopause.

Where do long, sleepless nights lie within the mire of the late thirties? Where do heartache and longing reside amid the frenzy of shame? When the body begins to give up the ghost, as it has threatened to do since birth - particularly now in it's most dire of hours - how does this haunting not become consuming?

In her autobiography, Hilary Mantel writes, "I began this writing in an attempt to seize copyright in myself." This work is an exercise in doing the same: drawing an edge around experience and representing it as fact.

# **MATERIALS LIST**

*Hard Lines* includes a publication featuring an interview between Lisette May Monroe and Hannah Proctor, alongside a series of poems by Rachael Allen. Billboard works located around Glasgow city centre feature collages, an image of \*’s locket and film stills. Cotton drill fabric printed with an image of a pregnant Cleveland Bay brood mare. Cotton drill fabric printed with an image of Lisette May Monroe’s chest. Three-channel film work made on Carlton Bridge. Collages featuring made, found, and archival images from Lisette May Monroe’s film and digital archive (2015–2026). Images taken on location at Belleisle Street, Sandgate Drive, Memorial Chapel (Arbroath), and the Dining Room at Bonnington House. Found photographic prints belonging to \*\* from the cupboard at Belleisle Street. Replicas of \*’s necklace. Polaroid of Ashgrove Crescent (1987). Nails. Clip frames. CRT monitors. Media players. Lamps. Gels. Extension cables. \*\*’s framed darkroom print borrowed from Albert Road. Benches. Tape. Yellow roses. Vase from Swinnow Lane (1989).

RACHAEL  
ALLEN

# HORSES

Lisette asked Rachael  
to write something as  
part of the publication  
that would sit alongside

the show. This request came following a charged  
conversation at a party. Neither of them can  
remember what was said but they mutually  
agreed it connected them.

Things were depthless from the off  
I wanted to win the horses over  
the horses that roamed the housing estate  
the estate that was blackened from war  
and overlords  
the roofs leaking  
fungal apparitions  
caking the wall  
coating the wall

\*

The images and symbols of a prescient  
scare  
they didn't want to communicate with me  
the horses  
at first I fed them titbits  
rice and dried old peas and herbs  
I scattered around the communal areas  
like I was at a wedding  
but there was only an empty path  
and only me  
on the empty path  
and I was also  
the only empty path

\*

I was being watched  
and had to move fast  
succinctly we would weep  
with an old woman  
who lived next door  
who cannot escape the imagery  
of a rising lake  
a useless lake  
sat behind the estate  
full to the wet brim  
with car parts and bikes and horses –  
the woman would say to me  
about the lake –  
*to synthesise modern water  
is to know all the particles  
wedged in your particulars*

\*

everyone is funny –  
this happens in emergency –  
and in the apex of catastrophe  
disembodied shrieks are hilarious  
people in real distress is hilarious  
the horses paid no mind to this  
or freaked  
at the slightest imposition  
they had no middle ground  
they were either in stasis or in panic  
launching their selves  
from one end of the park to another  
clods of the earth scattering  
from their hooves

\*

I brought one in  
I wanted to know  
how the horse would fare  
how intrusive  
around the parts  
of the hidden house  
she'd be  
she shat as soon  
as she was inside  
stood in the hall  
rotund and thick –  
the smell of horses  
is a plot of hair  
warm and oily  
a deep clear grub –  
if I were to rub myself  
along her stomach  
I would be anointed  
the oil would be a crown  
which I could wear  
to crawl inside her  
be the foal  
emerge legs first  
sticking out  
the way of all farm animals  
first always a child and then  
always pregnant

\*

The day I walked down the path  
to the lake  
to say goodbye  
I held her gilded hoof  
the pattern on which was amber stripe  
I couldn't cut her shoes correctly and she had a wound  
that forced its way up  
right into her hoof  
like an eternal crack  
it was increasing and spreading  
the crack widening  
by the time we reached the lake I had to heave her creaking  
body in  
she slid slowly into the mud  
there was nothing she wanted to see in there  
she was at that point a dry land horse  
upturned

\*



HANNAH PROCTOR AND  
LISETTE MAY MONROE

IN CONVERSATION AT

# BELLEISLE STREET

Lisette asked Hannah to have this conversation, having known of her work and the way she thinks about things, for a long time. Specifically, she was made aware that Hannah had been working through a research project about revenge, and it felt appropriate to invite Hannah to come and chat about the show. Lisette had met Hannah a couple of times previously, but they had never hung out one on one.

**Hannah: To begin with, when you described the different works, it seemed like the show is about two different types of rupture or transformation - the big breakup / betrayal and then the menopause. I wondered if it feels like the two things are somehow connected?**

Lis: You said the word betrayal there and I remember, at the time, it felt like I was being betrayed by everything, as if everything was conspiring against me. Specifically, the breakup and my body were colluding to betray me. And the very condition of my body felt untrustworthy. I felt emptied out. People are often like, "Oh, when you go through a breakup, you suddenly feel really strong", and I didn't. I felt like shit. I knew I felt like shit because of health stuff - breakup or no breakup, I would have felt like shit anyway - it was just a massive fuck you from all angles. Finally, it got to the point where I thought: *this is so bad, it's funny. It's so bad, it's ridiculous.* That's not strength, but maybe that is comfort in submission. It was really hard to get a register on the right amount of feeling I was supposed to have.

When people talk about these breaks, either health stuff or life stuff, it's implied there will be a point of recovery, or there'll be a point where things return and you're supposed to infer that, at the end of this, you'll get your life back. There's a before and an after. But I realised that point of return didn't exist for me anymore. It wasn't possible and would never be tangible again because of the bodily shift that both the menopause and the heartbreak initiated. There is a fallacy there. The only possible thing I could do was accept, to meet myself where I was.

I don't know if that answered your question, but yeah, I think there are different registers to these betrayals and I think some of them are easier to recover from than others.

**Hannah: A breakup changes you and there's sometimes those sorts of narratives around getting over it that are meant to be affirmative, but actually they can make you feel worse in a way, because it really forces you to be to be real about it, when you're perhaps not ready to be.**

Lis: I think at some point I was waiting for it to feel like a film, for that montage to start where the main character suddenly realises they are fine. They've had their hair done or something and they're like, "Oh, I feel gorgeous now", and they are shining. And I couldn't work out when that bit was going to happen. And actually, I don't think it ever does, not in such a monumental way anyway! And I think it's the same with all these adverts about the menopause - loads of women, riding bikes or going salsa dancing or something - and they suddenly feel great. I realised, *oh no, that bit doesn't exist, for me, for so many.* So, you just have to start approaching things differently or you edit the way in which you do things to fit this new weird life that you have.

**Hannah:** Yeah, maybe that's true, that there is a prevailing idea that you get this allotted period of time, to 'fix yourself', and then you are supposed to get over it. Then you can 'get back' to how you were before, which obviously just isn't the case, right? And then you add perimenopause to this false equation... I feel like no one ever used to talk even about perimenopause?

Lis: I know. I love to watch daytime TV if I'm working, so it's just on in the background, like a big radio, now everyone's talking about the menopause. It's everywhere. There was this whole section I saw where there was someone talking about how their menopause made them feel useless, washed up, alienated and the two male doctors said that this was a reductive way to think and what they needed to realise is that actually now was the perfect time to become a grandparent. That grandparents have a key role in society and we need more people to take on that role. I thought, what the fuck? First of all, where am I - a single, childless woman - supposed to find grandchildren, for fucks sake?

**Hannah:** Wow so those doctors were just holding on to this kind of reproductive ideal like that's your only function in life. Great.

Lis: And I was like, *but what if you've never had a kid?* You feel this disconnect or like society's turning its back on you in a way. And you're just like, *well, then should I still be partying, should I still be going out? Where do I sit socially? Am I humiliating myself? How do I understand desire in this context?* Desire or demonstrating desire at this age as a woman is so contested. It's so heavy, which is really not sexy. *How does my body cope in all these situations?* These past couple of years and making this show has exposed me to my body over and over in a way I did not anticipate.

Then there are other moments where a light turns on in your brain and you think: these are just dumb social conditions enforced by patriarchal capitalism, I'm going to the club and you book a cab. This is what the work is trying to investigate too, I think: the layering, the hiding and revealing, being visible and obfuscating, making the collages. It's the same process

**Hannah:** Yeah, exactly. And is it kind of cool or is it embarrassing?

Lis: There's so much shame around all of it. But we all know shame is women's work anyway. The collages, I think, really walk that line of embarrassment. All the images in them are either from my archive - so my work or my digital day-to-day photos - or they are remakes of images from my ex's archive. I have always held a really special place in my practice for sentimentality and nostalgia, I don't find them twee, I think they are important. The only thing my ex left in our flat when he moved out was his entire portfolio of work and he's never asked for it back. There's something sentimental to me about these two archives replicating and meeting, and that could be embarrassing, or cringe, or maybe even a bit dangerous. But the repetition and regurgitation for me through making and through the collage/collaging flattens that out.

**Hannah:** When something really shitty has happened to you and that coincides with illness or other physical or medical stuff, it's really hard to disentangle the two. And sometimes it can feel like the physical symptoms become a metaphor for the emotional state. And it's so hard to isolate one from the other because they feel so connected somehow?

Lis: I think so. I also think you kind of lose the person that was, I guess, your mirror in that situation. And when you're with someone for ten years, they become quite a good measuring stick of how you're feeling, or they're able to see things that are happening to you that might lead to something else that you can't see. And so for that to suddenly disappear along with everything else, your frame of reference for regulation is gone. Whether it turns out that person ever told you the truth is a different matter, the truth as you knew it suddenly isn't there anymore.

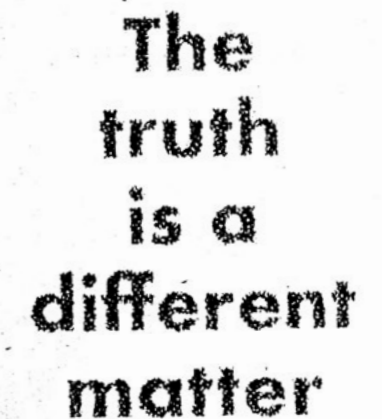
**Hannah:** There is the opportunity to tell yourself, "oh, the way I'm feeling is a medical issue".. But that doesn't mean that you don't concurrently have other additional feelings? Obviously both are true.

Lis: It also doesn't mean other things aren't happening in the world. I remember when maybe it was the day after my ex left, and it's obviously all chaotic and high drama and the bin men came and rang the buzzer and I was like, *don't they know? Like, why? Why are the bin men here?* I expected there to be some kind of universal newsletter circulated saying: *leave this woman alone she needs some space.* But no, the bin men still came and I was outraged. The buzzer in that moment felt so violent.

**Hannah:** Yeah, all the routines of the world just carry on.

Lis: I also think about rhythm in that sense. When a rupture happens, you are suddenly so out of sync with everyone and everything. The world carries on around you so normally that this actually only highlights the extremes of feeling and how suddenly you are outwith reality; a huge gap forming between everyone else and you. Maybe that's a big part of grief too, this sudden disconnect.

**Hannah:** I was interested in the video of throwing the locket in the river and I was wondering about the way that you visualised it as almost like a scene from a film. Why is it, do you think, that the act of doing something like that kind of plays over and over again in your head? What function does fantasy have?



The  
truth  
is a  
different  
matter

Lis: I've been trying to work that out. I think because I found the locket so late after the affair was revealed that it felt like this mythical object just appeared, right over there, on that side table. I'd moved back in, it was four months after I found out, the house had been gutted and cleaned and one evening some friends were round and as we were clearing up, I spotted it, just out in the open next to the TV remote, like it had always been there and it became such a fixation. So to try and unpack that I guess I replayed my reality now as the owner of this locket. Something that was constantly a part of that replay was what the end point for me and this object would be.

**Hannah: And it is such a symbolic object. It's not just any random thing.**

Lis: I think because the first thing I found, the thing that not only revealed the affair but also that it had been happening in my home, was pretty a pretty nondescript silver chain. So, if you knew who it belonged to, it was identifying, but as an object it was subtle. Whereas this was a *filled* locket. There were pictures in it and they were pictures of her and her family. So it was also the first time I had really properly seen a photograph of her and so was just like, *where the fuck has this come from?*

My friend took it away and kept it in her house for a long time, because I didn't really know what to do with it. I didn't want to live in the same space as the energy it held. The other necklace that I found much earlier was replicable. This didn't feel replicable. It felt very potent.

**Hannah: It has some sort of sentimental power, especially the images contained inside it.**

Lis: I thought, *this is quite a precious thing. And if I lost this, I would want it back*, but I don't feel like I have the goodwill in me to give it back. And maybe making the show and using it in the way I have, is proof I don't have any goodwill left. I don't know how I feel about that sentiment. I say that honestly, as I think sometimes people say they don't know how they feel and it becomes a negation of responsibility, which is something I have thought about a lot with the show: my responsibility to myself, to other people in this narrative, and in some ways to an audience. But this locket? I can't work it out.

It's taken me a long time to make work again and to make work in this way where I'm using it to challenge how I feel and force some kind of conclusion. But this locket and the symbol or emblem it has become; I don't think I will ever know how I feel about it. Maybe it's actually that I feel too many things about it. But at least I've dealt with it on my own terms, even if those terms keep changing.

**Hannah: So it's like you've kept it, but not physically.**







Lis: The only time I've really handled it was to make the work. It is intimate, to touch something that lived on your partner's lover's chest. In a small way it kind of replicates the intimacy she had with me without me knowing; she was living in my house, sleeping in my bed, using my stuff. And it's tarnished, it's been through life with her, you can see that daily imprint. So, to then have it in my hand, there's a representation of a connection there, one that I'm not sure I ever wanted. But it's also a connection that's hard to release. Me and her only met in passing, many years ago, before all this, so the locket is really my only sustained interaction with her.

I feel like making the work with it was an attempt to understand that lingering notion a bit more; photocopying it over and over somehow took it further away from her and more towards me. Replicating always seems to help me mark the edge of something, and throwing it in the river, well that just felt natural.

**Hannah: Because that also feels more like you are letting it be in the past. Is it allowing you to just move on from it? Revenge is about doing something to another person not for their benefit, right?**

Lis: Yeah and being selfish in this situation and doing something that felt natural or good, and following an intuition, is also about finding autonomy.

I think autonomy comes up a lot in the scorned woman archetype, and some of the revenge from scorning can maybe be seen as providing autonomy from a hurt that was enforced on you, perhaps? Pride too, for the autonomy to have self-worth, even. I think there's something very instinctive about the whole show. And I think that's because in the precursors of the breakup, I knew something was wrong. And I kept saying *something's wrong*. And I was told that my instinct was off by someone I relied on for the truth in so many different ways. But I'd known for quite some time, both with my relationship and with my body, something *was not right*.

When you are disabled, you're told all the time your instincts are wrong, that your body is doing this thing or that thing and you know it's not. It was the same with the affair. I knew from pretty early I think, I could smell it in the flat.

An intense symptom of menopause is your sense of smell becomes so potent, it's out of this world. The flat smelt so different to me, and I reacted to that bodily; I convinced myself we were getting carbon monoxide poisoning at one point, I thought that would explain my reactions at home. I went to see quite a lot of different clairvoyants and mediums afterwards. Each one of them intuited that my instincts were bang on.

**Hannah: When you went to the clairvoyants, was it because you were wanting to know 'Well, now what? Now what do I do?'**

Lis: Yeah, yeah, I think so. I do have a therapist, but I was talking to a friend and to one of the clairvoyants about that question. I think there is something really... this is going to sound like a really big statement, but I think there's something in my experience of working-class culture - about trying to understand something that has happened to you, through spirituality, particularly spirituality that might not be part of an organised religion. And quite often those attempts are made through seeing mediums and clairvoyants, and maybe a person is trying to prescribe or find a logic to something unexplainable, by dealing with those practices. It's something that a lot of family and family friends have always done. It's very prevalent in the community I'm from, families will go as a group etc. And so, when this happened, I was like, *there's something that's bigger than me and I can't work it out*, and so I went. There's a woman that I see quite regularly and she is, I would say, more like a spiritual healer, and spiritual practitioner and then I've also seen a couple of clairvoyants and mediums.

**Hannah: That's interesting. It is also so different because so much in therapy is about the past, isn't it? Whereas there you are asking questions that also hold the future.**

Lis: It's kind of experiencing lots of different times at the same time. Which again feels like collage to me.

**Hannah: A breakup that involves betrayal is distinct because you have to rethink what you had understood to be happening in the past. You have to question what you experienced at the time, in light of new information, right? So you have to kind of go back and understand, *oh, what I thought was reality was not actually what was happening*. You have to go back over things in a slightly different way.**

Lis: And I guess there were also lots of different perspectives on the idea of what was true and what is truth.

**Hannah: Which is not very easy to actually definitively know.**

Lis: I think it felt like going to somebody and saying, 'I want to know how you're experiencing the truth of the things that I'm telling you.'

I've had the same therapist for a long time and she's really great, but she knows my point of view and she knows how I approach things. I think there was something about seeing these women - and it was always women - and feeling like they were tapping into something that I couldn't quite walk up to, or questions that I could neither answer or ask.

**Hannah: Like approaching it from a slightly different angle or something?**

Lis: Yeah... A lot of them said some really mad shit. But all of them said things that were quite accurate too. They will start off with quite broad questions, not with the person I see regularly, but in general, the sessions narrow down to this point of focus. I went to see a woman in New York in the back of a bookshop, and I went in and she just put all these cards down and straight up, right out the gate. opened with, "um, you've been with a photographer for ten years, and he wasn't a very nice man."

I was so spun out. So, I went and got the most insane blow dry I've ever had for no reason and walked around looking so outside myself for the rest of the afternoon. There was something about being seen so clearly by her, or things being so obvious to her that it made me feel dumb and I needed to shift the way I existed in that moment to not align to that stupidity or something. It was chilling.

**Hannah: So do you feel like questions around class are kind of interwoven in this project as well?**

Lis: Yeah, I think something that I've always thought and written about, is what happens at times of high drama or high crisis in a close community? Like in a lot of working-class communities - I mean, I'm from quite a rural place, but the community is very close - it's quite specific how information spreads and is shared and how people are supported, and informed, but also gossip happens... There are all these kinds of layerings of communication, in how stories are told. So the project relates to that in questioning how we share narratives basically.

**Hannah: Yeah like, 'oh, did you hear?'**

Lis: Yeah, having to experience that in real time reminded me of being at home. It really reminded me of when my parents separated and it made me feel a lot more empathy towards my mum, I guess, and other - again usually women - people that have been in that situation and what it means to kind of map all that out.

I feel like there's something about pride within class and I don't know... I'm just thinking about a lot of the advice I got from family and friends at that time. And it was very much about not kicking off and just holding it together. And all that kind of stuff, which there is a class element to; mediating how you are perceived and the perception of how you behave in public.

**Hannah: And trying to keep a certain sort of facade.**

Lis: And then maybe wait a year and a bit and then do a show, a very polite show about it. Keep the gossip circle spinning.

**Hannah: Yeah. I feel like gossip is a weird one because it can be positive or at least benign. But it's also weird when something really horrific has happened to you and that experience circulates as something almost fun and titillating for other people to talk about, like, "Oh my God! You'll never guess..."; you know. There's almost a camp version of it that's three steps removed. And I guess that is what's weird in small places is that you hear things about people and things kind of circulate.**

Lis: I've had stories about me or my ex told to me that aren't true and I know aren't true. And I'm like, can we stop doing that? Because it kind of devalues the things that are true. But also I think gossip demonstrates the flexibility of language. Animating that retelling, or misremembering, which eventually builds a whole new outline.

**Hannah: Yeah there are many, many things that are true. And that's enough.**

Lis: But the biggest irony of it all is my ex used to thrive on gossip and circulating it, so maybe this is the universe dealing some of that back, and maybe me and the show are just passengers in that.

**Hannah: It's weird when these stories come back to you. This kind of embellished version. It's just completely out of your control, isn't it?**

Lis: Yeah. And I feel like the show is maybe a way for me to ring fence that a bit or declare: I have made a mechanism to direct how we are going to discuss this from now on. An overwriting. It might not work, but I think that's why it was really important for me to talk more about what was going on bodily at the time, or to state my position on the point of view that I come to the break up from. When gossip is happening, it's just happening quite abstractly, moved out of its context into just gossip material, so I wanted to add some layering to that.

Also I'm interested in the motivations for gossip, some people do it with an element of good faith, about people they mutually know. Some people do it strategically, for cultural or social capital, and they are the people you need to watch out for, because that's a selfish behaviour which has nothing to do with relationships or intimacy.

**Hannah: Can we talk about the horse? I didn't know the thing about the horse.**

Lis: Yeah. It's crazy, isn't it? It's also apparently an awful process for the horse. But yes, the first HRT was derived from pregnant horse urine, and given my whole life now ebbs and flows around HRT as it is the only thing that has managed to stop me from feeling invisible or invisibilised there became something so compelling about the pregnant horse belly to me. It's so full of multiple potentials. That's why it dips down into the space, like getting a peek of a full moon.

**Hannah: It's so crazy. It's quite sci-fi. I remember my friend's mum told me a story where she was kind of like, "Oh no. But the thing about being invisible is actually interesting". And she described this time where she just walked into a big concert without buying a ticket after it had started. She just walked through security and she was like, "I can because I'm literally invisible".**

Lis: I love that she got to that point with it. When it first started happening to me, I've never felt despair even close to that before. I was in a position where my brain fog was so bad that if I was driving I would have to pull over because I couldn't remember what side of the road to drive on. I would be on a train and I would have to phone my ex because I suddenly didn't know where the train was going. I would be in real distress, really panicking, not having a clue what was going on around me. I could not find language anymore, like mid-sentence your brain just leaves you hanging and you are scrambling around in there in real time just trying to find a way to finish what you are saying. And the pain was searing, I was engulfed by it. I couldn't walk.

Something researchers are just working out is EDS (the condition I have) symptoms heighten massively during any hormonal flashpoint. I was fucked, both physically and mentally, just absolutely fucked. My friend was like, I think you need to speak to the doctor. And I was like, why? And they did loads of tests but never mentioned menopause, because in the traditional medical framework, it's early for me to be going through it, but actually it's not really, many people go through it much earlier. It turns out my aunts were out the other side of it by the time they were my age. At one point they even did an early-onset dementia test on me at the doctors, and I was like, 'I don't think I've got dementia'. They're like, 'no, you need to do this test'. And I had to draw the hands on a clock and all this stuff. It was really, really crazy. And then they gave me HRT and I started that three weeks before my breakup.

**Hannah: Oh, wow. So it really was two things happening at exactly the same time. So as that started to take effect is when...**

Lis: Yeah. Thank fuck. Because I think I would have lost my mind.

**Hannah: And did/does the HRT immediately make a big difference?**

Lis: In like a month yeah. It doesn't fix everything, but I could live again which was timely given that the life I was living was falling apart.

**Hannah: Do you feel like creating this work has shifted how you process or reflect on the narrative of that time?**

Lis: Yeah, I think so. I also think it abstracts it a bit or it desensitises me to it a bit. Crucially I think the artwork generates distance. When you make work from the personal it can really feel suffocating, but once the work is done there is some wiggle room in there to shake that narrative loose. My flat has almost become another person in this narrative and that is a thought I wanted to shift through the work.

As a disabled person I spend a lot of time in my flat, I work from bed a lot, so I feel like my relationship with where I live is so deep-seated. I know that maybe sounds obvious but for other people they have different experiences of that, their connection to outside the home is much stronger. Some weeks I might only see the inside of my flat. So for the affair to happen there, and really disrupt and upturn my space, felt so vicious. I had nowhere to go, I can't afford another place, so it felt like I was being forced into existing in a violated space.

There is so much of the flat in the work for that reason. The objects we lived with, the poetics of our objecthood, the thresholds of the flat, my body in this space, the manipulated domestic. So I kept mapping out its architecture. Maybe that is the thing I feel most angry about and that is actually why the show exists in a way. So I could step into a space where I had some autonomy and articulation. I feel like sometimes, to say its a show about revenge maybe detracts from the reality in the work, and other days I'm like *fuck it, put the show on and burn it down*. But I'm also not even sure that is explicitly revenge.

**Hannah: Yeah, sometimes there can be ways that revenge can be quite, destructive or spicy that involves very spectacularly attacking someone else. And it doesn't really seem like that's what this work is doing. Do you know what I mean?**

Lis: I think there are things, or there might be things in the show, that only I would know are a nod or a poke at something, which might feel like revenge. But it would never be explicit. But then somebody was like, putting your ex's lover's locket on a billboard in the city centre of the place where you all live is pretty extreme. And I was - this sounds like I'm not taking responsibility for it because I am - but that was just a natural progression of where the work was going. Like the image appeared and then this happened and I thought, *that'd be great on a billboard*. If I track back and really interrogate why I did that, maybe I am more knowing in some of those actions than I am allowing myself to believe.

**Hannah: Yeah, because it's a very public gesture... There is something complicated about this work because I think it's true that people love revenge in some ways, because it can feel cathartic, or almost even more exciting when it's someone else getting revenge, because there's an exposure of passion and can be so over the top. Is it asking the world to come back at you with something, or what is it?**

Lis: I wonder if there's something in the power dynamic of revenge. It's quite Hollywood. But also I think the person enacting the revenge is always the wronged party and so it's a way of someone doing an action that might be seen as out of pocket or slightly wrong, but everyone can get behind it because they're the wronged person. And I'm quite interested in that as a group way of thinking about it, or a societal way of thinking about it, or something.

**Hannah: Yeah. Because I've always been interested in thinking about revenge that is not quite an eye for an eye. Is there something about it that is a bit excessive? I know there's that idiom: 'revenge is a dish best served cold', but I don't really get that because the desire for revenge is often so hot, it's so crazy, and nobody's thinking about needing revenge like that unless they're really angry... it has this much more desire-driven foundation... revenge comes from this really hard to contain place.**

**I'm thinking of John Wick. He can go on this endless rampage. Although I guess he's quite emotionless.**

Lis: One of my favourite films. But is that revenge or is it vengeance?

**Hannah: Yeah. What do you see as the difference?**

Lis: I feel like vengeance is more violent.

**Hannah: Like a rampage**

Lis: Yeah, I love revenge being described as hot.

**Hannah: I do think there's a form of revenge that's just justice. Basically, there's a form of revenge that is just like an injustice was done to me and I'm just doing something in the world that tries to right a wrong. And maybe that is through a quite spectacular act, not necessarily through a really, obviously political act or whatever. But I feel like there is something about the economy of revenge that's about justice. Also there's something about how sometimes acts that are done in revenge can seem quite spectacular or quite symbolic. And that's obviously, because it's precisely always a retaliation for something that was done to you. Otherwise you wouldn't be doing it.**

Lis: There's something about having to know someone so well, to know the best way to get revenge on them. It's quite a tricky thing to do or enact. You can't just go and let someone's tyres down, especially if they can't drive. It's got to hit.

**THE DESIRE  
FOR REVENGE  
IS OFTEN SO  
HOT.**

**Hannah:** It has to be really precise, calibrated to them. But there's something, I think at least in the way you were speaking about the locket, that seemed like it could partly be about revenge, but it's more complicated. There's something interesting about doing a work like this, which is in public that also enables other people to latch on to your narrative, to get behind you, to also think about things that happened to them... That is cathartic, maybe? Do you know what I mean? So it is not just about an individual experience. It's also about something that other people are also able to recognize. That's precisely why people are excited about it, because maybe it's also a scary thing to do.

Lis: I mean, a little bit. And then I tried to make that calibration when I was doing the show and I thought I was going to do a book with the show or the show was going to be a book. I went back to some of the notes that I'd written - there's not very many - I looked and thought, *this is shit*. Like this is shit writing, written by someone that is deeply sad that is only writing it down because someone told them to and I can't even find it in myself to try and make this better. There is a saying in writing, which the editor of this publication reminded me of, writing from the wound and not the scar, and at the point I was so firmly in the wound and maybe parts of me still are. Writing felt, and feels, terrifying. For me there is something so final about writing something down like that, and it can be revisited and be used in a way that a show can't. It can be used as a testament. Also, there was something I couldn't quite come to terms with, about that kind of one-to-one relationship between a reader and a text that felt too intimate, feels more exposing somehow. Maybe it's something to do with time and engagement and moving through something physically. The idea that my ex could take my book into his home and it be something that he also had. No. Whereas this is in a space that's neutral and to do with nobody. I also couldn't think about writing something in a way that didn't already exist... I think because your personal experience when it's happening feels so swirling and like you can't catch hold of anything. All you can think about is the action.. And I was like, *I don't know what my voice is in this*. I also feel like that's why this conversation exists. There is no writing for the show, only this, which aims to feel like a conversation that's looked in on rather than a statement for the work to stand by.

**Hannah:** So then there's all these existing genres or almost cliched forms for revenge documentation. Like imagine if this was a montage sequence. Because revenge films have such a particular sort of form, or a breakup film as well - they are such specific genres. *This is the bit where I'm supposed to do this or...* do you feel like when you dropped the locket from the bridge, that you were sort of deploying it as a scene in a film?

Lis: Yeah, it's something I just thought about a lot, like walking through it. And the film that I've made very much speaks to that or plays into that.

**Hannah:** And if this show was in a film, would it be this kind of near the end kind of moment.

Lis: Yeah. It's the final fuck you.



Hard Lines only exists because in 2024 so many people ensured I could exist; in all the devastated ways I needed to. I am eternally grateful. They rebuilt me from the ground up, until then I had never experienced love like that in my life. The patience and empathy I was shown, in ways big and small, turned me back around. When I was repeating myself, when I was out of my mind, even when I was forgetting birthdays and meetings and all the things that make up life's meaning, space was made for me to fuck it all up. I never fell down a hole I couldn't get out of – they made sure of it. They allowed me to prowl the edge of these difficult things, to poke this hurt and they kept me in their orbit when I needed it most, I was never allowed to feel alone, which persists even now.

No one owed me these things, but they gave me them anyway. They gave me lasagna and daily phone calls, usually in the earliest breaks of the morning or the last howls of the night, they gave me vapes and multivitamins, they gave me day trips and dumplings and books and llamas and nights out and nights in, they gave me takeaways in cardboard boxes and trips to the cinema in the eyeshadow pallet, they called me darlin' in a way that still and always will feel like a balm, they gave me winks across the pub and hands on a my shoulder at the bar, they met me outside the parties and functions to make sure I wasn't arriving solo, they gave me noodles and saunas and beds and their homes and gardens and taxis and lifts and group chats and so many voice notes, and karaoke, and check ins and invites and late nights - fuelled with shots and Margaritas - when they were so needed and early exits which allowed me to slip away into the night when things inevitably felt a bit too much. They made sure I didn't spend Christmas by myself. They gave me Blackpool and London and Aviemore and New York and Chimayo and Albuquerque and Lisbon and Lanza and Athens and Faro and Fulton's

and Exit and RBV and QPC and Oro and The Marlborough. They gave me the park and the orchard and sunset (homo) hill. They looked after my cat like he was their own and never passed comments on how intense I was being about him, which I was (and still am).

They made my home my home again by clearing and painting and cleaning and watching TV and looking at endless pictures of beds and filling each room with new energy. They pushed me on and on to recognise the things that were changing even when I couldn't see it myself, they slept on my sofa and on air mattresses and in random beds just to make sure there was someone there when I woke up. They travelled for hours just to bring me cereal or take me furniture shopping. They sat on benches with me at midnight and drank gin straight from the bottle. They gave me the hard word when I needed it, they made me look at things and really face the reality of them when the time was just right, they got me back in the studio and forced me to stay there, even when I wanted to leave. They hugged me for so long in the street that I can still feel it now, and sometimes they just stood next to me, while I stood there, not really sure what to do next, and they never made those silences uncomfortable or embarrassing.

So many people opened their lives up to me in a way that makes me feel endlessly sated and supported. I love you all in the truest sense, and will forever. Thank you isn't big enough but language isn't always good at doing the thing it should.

Special thanks to my therapist who has put in an absolute shift these past few years.

Lastly, to the roster of men that have woven in and out of my life over the past eighteen months while I came to terms with my body and my brain, your efforts have also not gone unnoticed. X

### **Three-channel video**

filmed by Adam Lewis Jacob, Erin Busswood, and Morwenna Kearsley. Edited by Adam Lewis Jacob; directed by Lisette May Monroe.

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### **Architectural models**

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### **All works**

Lisette May Monroe, 2026

**[lisettemaymonroe.com](http://lisettemaymonroe.com)**

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Lastly it is supported by the team at Gulabi who allowed this to be the opening exhibition of their new space, at a time in Glasgow where more things are closing than opening. To be the first in something new is a huge privilege. Thank you x

Lisette May Monroe is an artist and writer from Kippax based in Glasgow. She is also director of Rosie's Disobedient Press alongside Adrien Howard.

Rachael Allen is the author of *God Complex* and *Kingdomland*, both published by Faber. She works as an editor and lecturer in London.

Hannah Proctor is a historian at the University of Strathclyde. She is the author of *Burnout: The Emotional Experience of Political Defeat* and is currently interested in revenge.



***HARD LINES***