



## Virtual residency 2020: About the artist

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Michael Safaric Branthwaite is a contemporary visual artist and Course Director for Visual Art Design at Staffordshire University.

His research focuses on the co-option of archaeological methodologies to explore the nature of objects and how they form meaning in contemporary society. As part of his work, he has exhibited in various International shows with sculptural and digital-based work, exploring this concept and the wider implications of how we relate to and define objects and their histories. As part of this research, he has explored the range of ways objects articulate themselves in society with a focus on how digital hand-held devices can capture the qualities of an object and how this might manifest itself in an information-driven society. He further expands his research by working outside this context exploring the curatorial notions of his practice in projects such as "Finding Treblinka". He has been the recipient of various funding from bodies such as Arts Council England and the British Council.

Since 2014 he has undertaken several artistic residencies at sites relating to the Holocaust and other traumatic events in Europe's history. This underpins his current line of enquiry into The Covid-19 crisis and how resulting limitations have restricted the possibilities to continue these residencies and therefore restrict some of the key points of discussion. In Safaric Branthwaite's view these will be even more prevalent as the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis are felt during the recovery period. This raises the question of how we can continue important socio-political debates and projects during these uncertain times.

The results of this is a virtual residency programme using artistic strategies developed in 'Finding Treblinka Artists Respond' and 'Accessing Campscapes' to develop residences accessing museums online archives and materials as a way to develop new lines of enquiry. These residencies aim to develop discursive materials for online dissemination that promote debate about the possible causes of racism and xenophobia in the past and how they relate to the current global situation.

Branthwaite's work covers a range of thematics with a focus on conflicted histories and heritage and rehumanisation. By exploring the conflicting and competing "truths" he aims to make the audiences re-evaluate their perception of historic events. His interest in rehumanisation stems from ideas surrounding the individuality of those involved in Europe's traumatic past, and how we might build contemporary connections with this to address both the past and how it is enacted in the present.

From August to December 2020 Branthwaite is invited to a virtual artistic residency at the Falstad Centre.