

*Dead lamb*



“This impressionist oil painting was created as part of a project exploring the darker realities of farming lives. It depicts a still born lamb with Schmallenberg; the body and limbs deformed and blood seeping from the joints, mouth, and nose. I wanted to convey the juxtaposition between the warmth and joy of bringing new life into the world, something I learnt to do as a young child, and the cool tones associated with death and disease, something also taught young in my community. Lambing is often a lovely time of year (despite the later nights and earlier mornings) with few casualties and representing this with the iodine wash background seemed fitting in the context of the piece, as iodine is used to prevent ambilocal infections and expresses the care for animal’s welfare. The represented trauma of the Schmallenberg outbreak contrasts with this background by use of subjective representation through surreal impressionism, the obvious distressing imagery, and the exposed neck of the still born highlighting our vulnerability to tragedy and need for compassion. While there are many cases where livestock and their carers die in tragic circumstances, I felt it important to draw attention to this example particularly due to the cultural significance of lambs. They are a species as old as the landscapes we farm and a common symbol, even in modern day, of life, youth and innocence, something that disease takes from individuals, livestock or not. Death is undoubtedly a part of life, but the deformed dead lamb drives home that it can often be out of our control, hard to come to terms with and a distinctly uncomfortable truth.”

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