

**VERSE**

Our Lost Secret

Avonmouth Factory

**PIECES**

I. The Creation of H

II. The War Path

III. The Death of a Cure

IV. The Factory of Death

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## OUR LOST SECRET

*The physical & psychological reality of  
a lethal weapon & medical cure*

Graduates of Architecture and Planning from the University of the West of England, with academic lead from Elena Marco (ARB), explore the production, deployment and destruction caused by Mustard Gas (also referred to as 'H' gas) during the Great War. The chemical substance was used as a devastating weapon but also paved the way for medical advancements in cancer fighting chemotherapy.

The LOST Secret, composed of four mixed media pieces, captures

the physical and psychological reality of a lethal weapon and a medical cure.

The pieces commemorate and celebrate the sacrifices made by both the men who fought in the trenches who were often consumed by the debilitating gas, and the women who risked their lives to produce the deadly chemical weapon in the Avonmouth factories.

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## AVONMOUTH

*A role of the famous Bristol Gas Girls  
& the Great War*

The size and scale of the First World War changed the fate of the country forever. As men were called to fight, women were urged to support efforts at home. Many stepped out of the domestic realm and into important supporting roles such as working in ammunition factories, intelligence services and other masculine roles.

In the factories of Avonmouth and Chittening, hundreds of women worked in perilous conditions to produce shells and munitions.

Devices were not only filled with explosives but also chemicals - predominantly Mustard Gas, H, H.S or even LOST as it was referred to. The women endured perilous conditions, often traveling many miles to their place of work, and their health was often severely affected as noxious chemicals stained their fingers, seeping through clothing and even into the fabric of the buildings. Mustard Gas not only brought back blind, scarred and breathless men from the front line but also

scarred those who engineered and assembled the deadly canisters.

In the factories, Dichlorethyl Sulphide (H) was diluted with Carbon Tetrachloride and Monochlorobenzene to producing a brown liquid with a pungent Mustard aroma. In the trenches the gas slowly penetrated the respiratory system of the enemy, blistering skin and dissolving bodily tissues.

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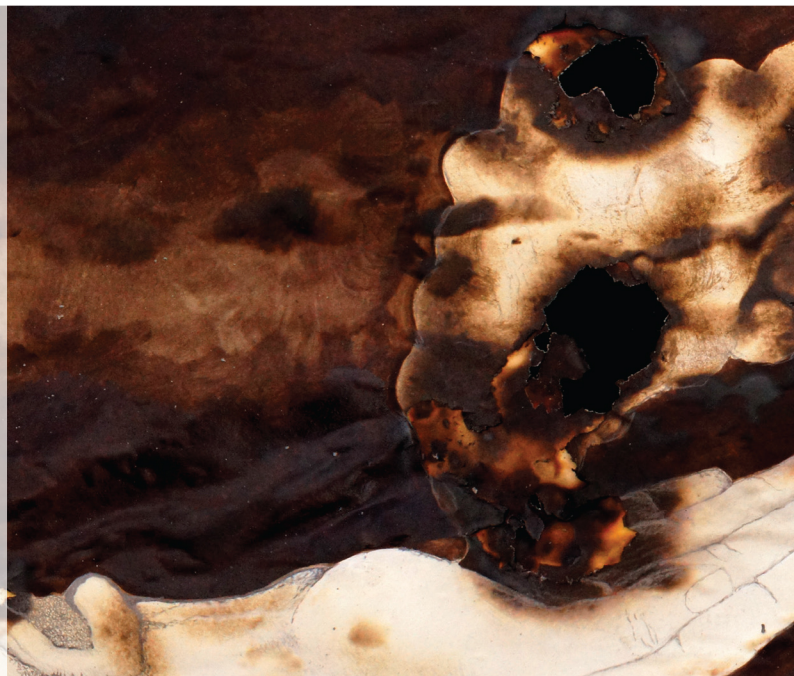
## THE CREATION OF H

The Creation of H has taken inspiration from the *Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo. Whilst Michelangelo expresses the paradox of undeniable connection and separation of the sacred and the profane, the connection in *The Creation of H* lies in the production and use of chemical weapons and the separation of the front line soldier from the supporting wife. Intimately expressing the collective and respective processes of war felt from both a male and female perspective

Symbolically, hands are commonly used in the act of manifesting

our desires. Delicately drawn in pencil, appearing boldly from the deep brown murky abyss of Mustard Gas, an emotional moment is drawn out of processes which will later create death. The almost porcelain feminine hand of the Mustard Gas factory worker is offering the lethal weapon to the men in the trenches.

Commemoration is paid to those men and women who suffered together as equals for a common cause.



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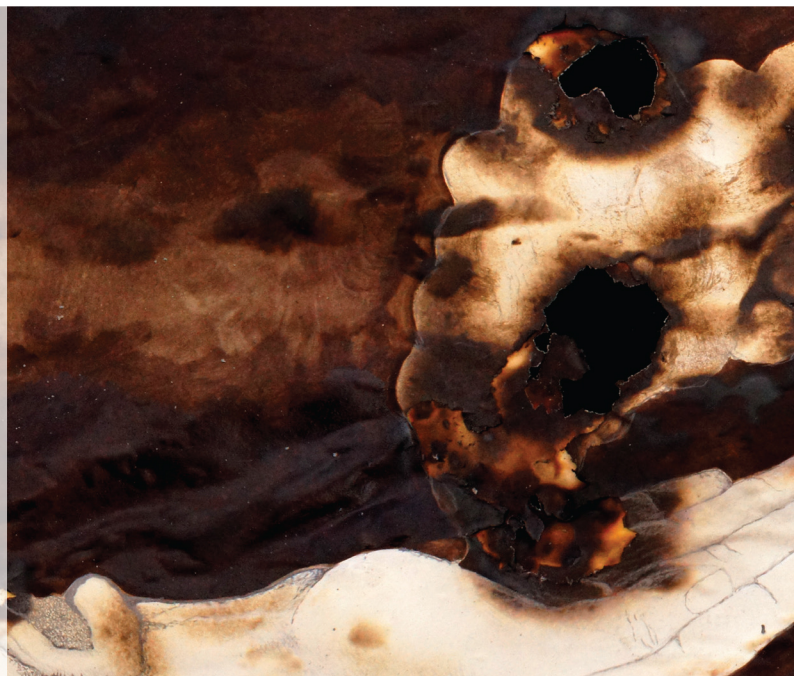
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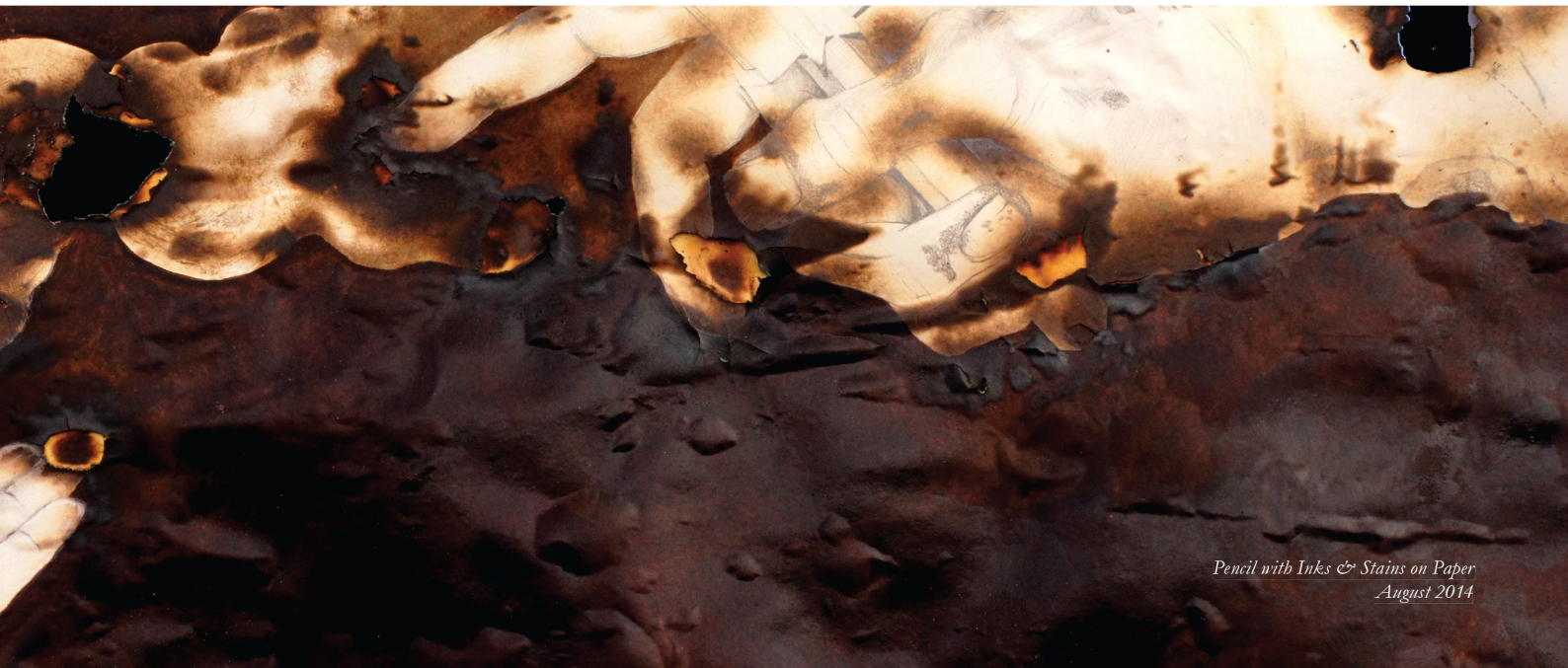
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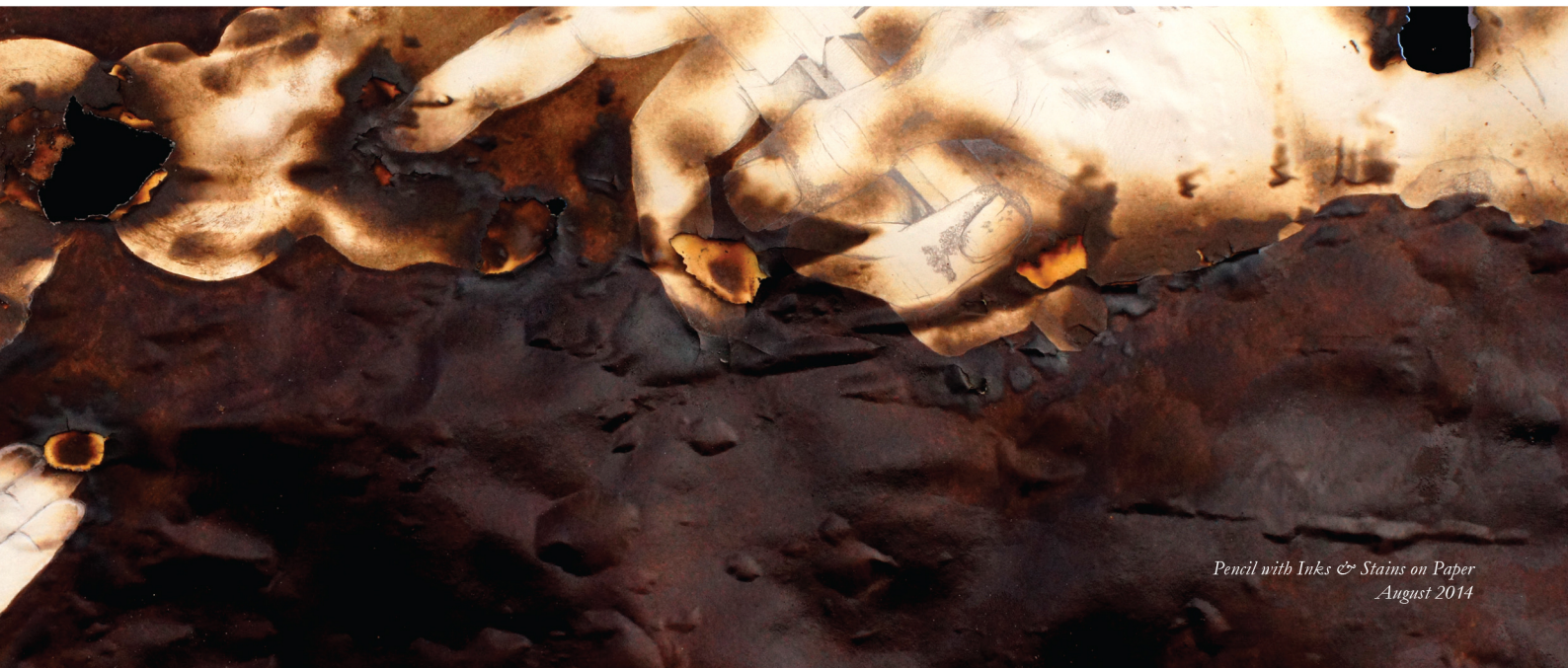
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*Pencil with Inks & Stains on Paper*  
*August 2014*



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*August 2014*



# II

## THE WAR PATH

The War Path depicts the journey of the deadly gas from creation in the Avonmouth factory to deployment in the trenches.

The mechanised and industrial factory process is expressed in a three dimensional form through the use of wood, metal and oil - common commodities of the factory.

Gas canisters, much like the soldiers, undertake an expedition to

the front line, beginning on the Avonmouth dockland railway. A collaging technique maps the trenches of France alongside the blueprints of the vessels used in production and canisters of the gas manufacturing process.

The efforts of those at home have also been commemorated with a hidden gas mask, used in factory and trench alike.



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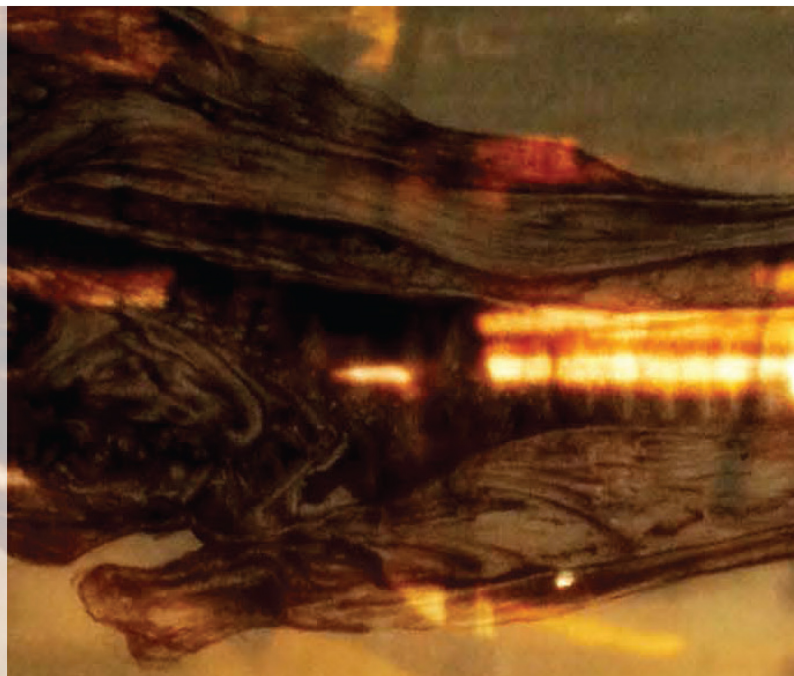
# III

## THE DEATH OF A CURE

The Death of a Cure explores the reality of the chemical warfare and the degradation of the human body. Mixed methodologies including drawing and collage exhibit the known and unknown effects of Mustard Gas that blind, scar and dissolve the human body.

Detailed autopsies undertaken on soldiers and munition workers outlined the grotesque effects of Mustard Gas on the body. Analysis such as this caused substantial

medical advancements and are cited as the source and development of the early forms of chemotherapy - revealing not only the destruction of chemical warfare but also it's curative ability.



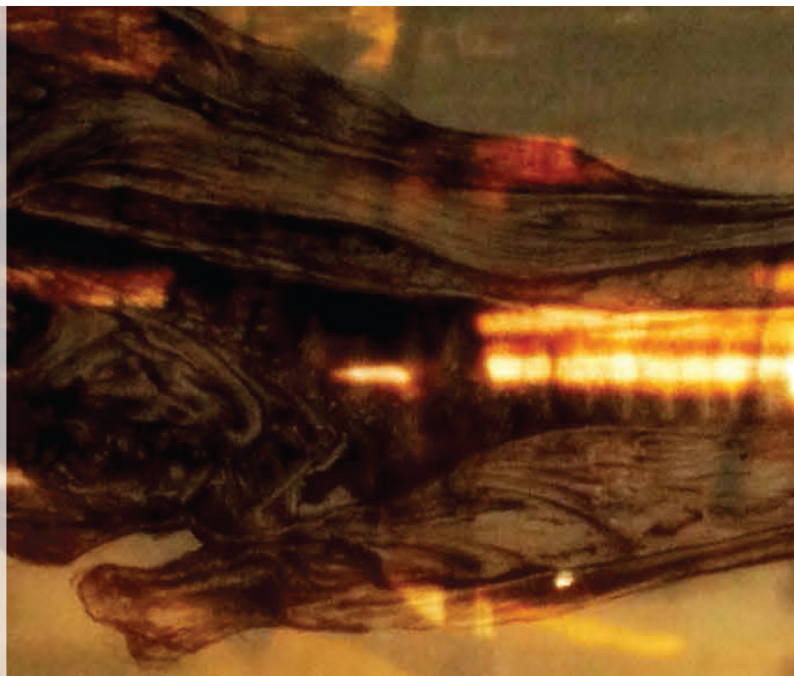
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# IV

## THE FACTORY OF DEATH

The Factory of Death represents the crude reality of the working conditions within the Avonmouth factory which often caused death and long term suffering to its workers, whose health was often determined by the exposure to deadly chemicals.

The inspirations for *The Factory of Death* originated from the conditions within the Avonmouth production sheds. Broken machinery parts within the sculpture echo the industrial machinery used in warfare munition production.

Such machinery would frequently spew toxins into the clothing of the workers and the fabric of the building. Oil cans and rags offered a quick fix to prevent further spillages although inevitably workers would risk health and even life in the squalid conditions.

The collage of ideas within the piece is enforced with the solidity of materiality, whilst the fluidity of the gas is expressed in the multiple distinctive and paradoxical compositions.



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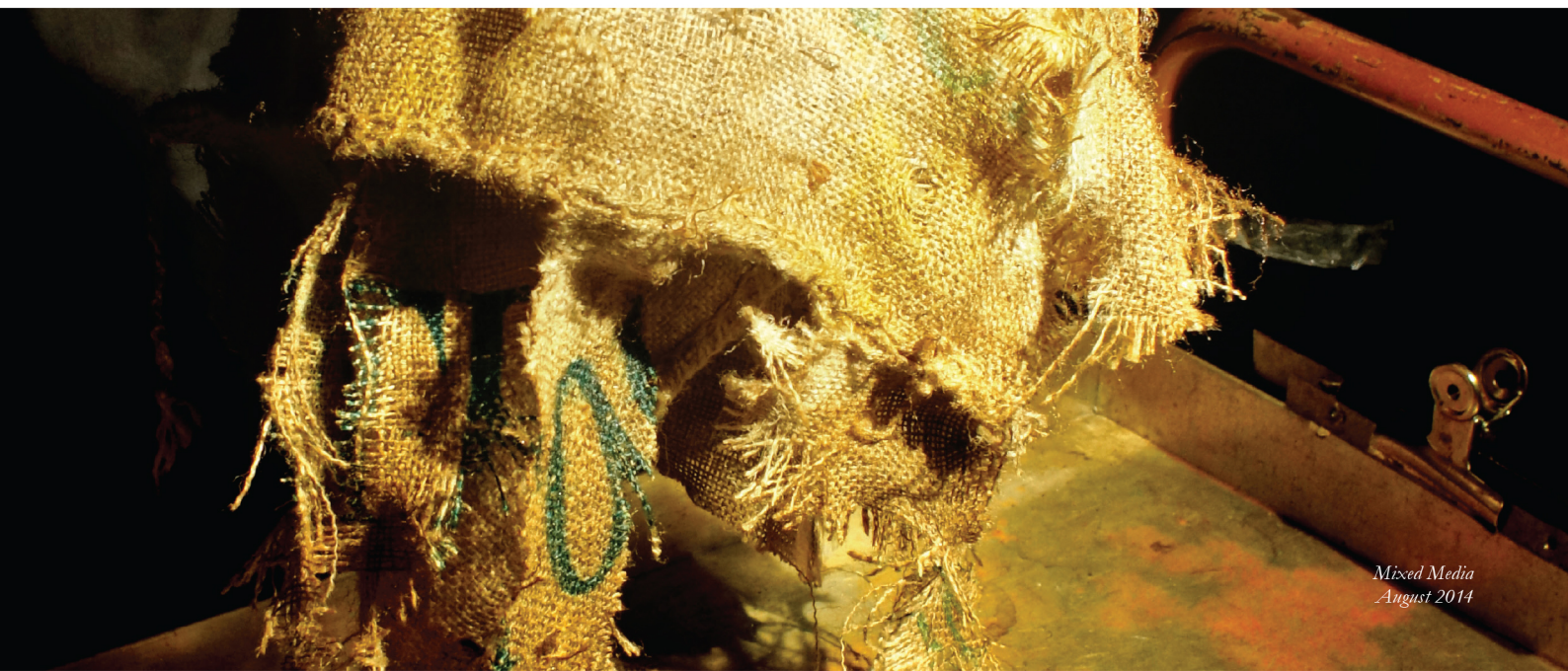
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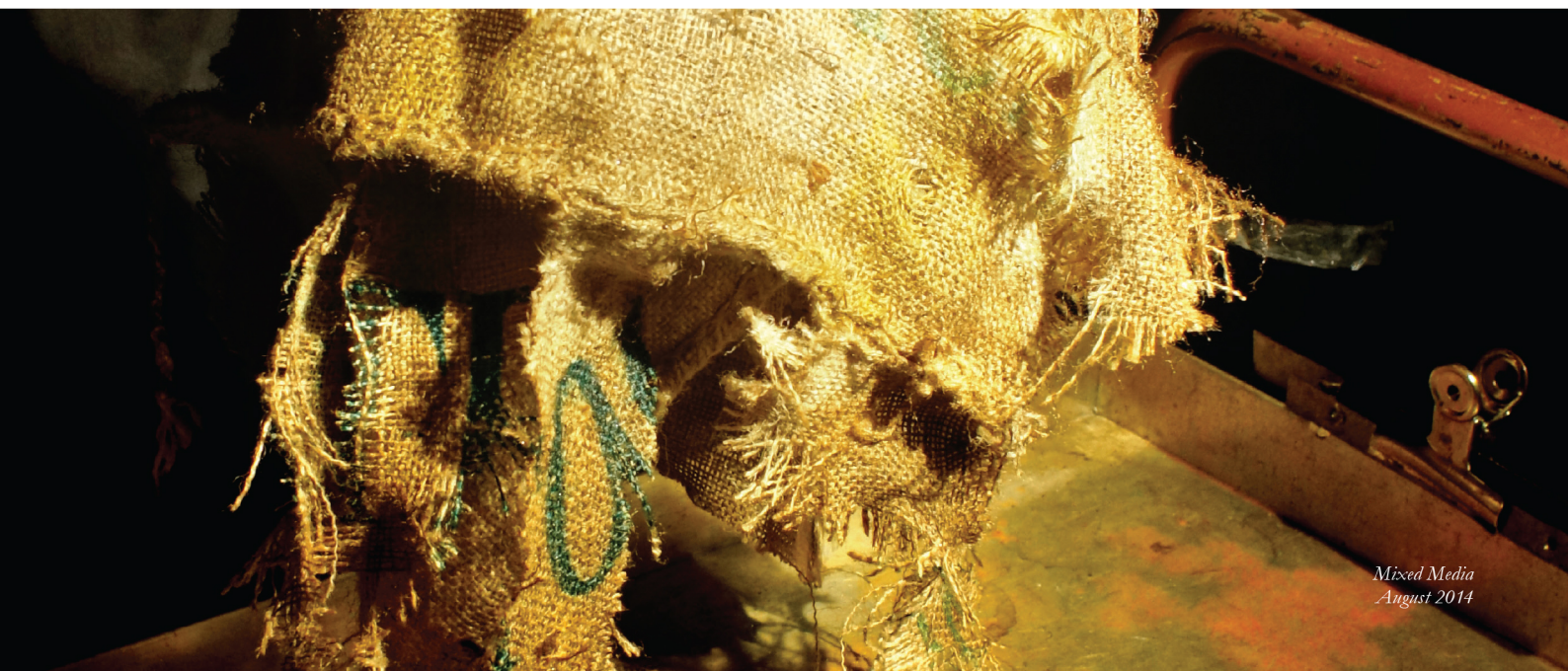
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*Mixed Media  
August 2014*



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