**TOWARDS MEMORIAL** exhibition at Bury Art Museum by YUEN FONG LING

**16 October 2021 – 22 January 2022**

About Towards Memorial:

**In a period of political and social uncertainty, how can what you wear help to express your beliefs and what you stand for? TOWARDS MEMORIAL is an art project that explores this question by remaking a pair of sandals designed and made by the socialist writer, poet and activist Edward Carpenter (1844-1929).** During his lifetime, Carpenter sought to improve the living and working conditions of the working class. This included a greater awareness of, and openness to, our physical and spiritual relationship with others and the natural environment. Carpenter also supported equal rights for women, and championed new ways of defining homosexual / queer relationships and identities at a time when homosexuality was illegal, whilst living openly with his life-long partner George Merrill in Millthorpe, Sheffield.

**The project began in Sheffield Archives on discovering examples of sandals Carpenter collected as reference, alongside a small newspaper advert, original photographs of Carpenter wearing the sandals, and paper foot patterns from his customers, one which was inscribed with “Self 1892”, pertaining to Carpenter himself.** This led to a visit to The Garden City Collection in Letchworth to see an example made by his artist, friend and collaborator George E. Adams. Re-making the sandal was a way of interpreting the archive material and translating these sources into a contemporary design using modern materials, with ethical shoemakers Noble & Wylie (formerly Guat Shoes, established Sheffield in 1978). Each pair of sandals are handmade and stamped on each inner sole with “Self 1892”, as well as “1844” and “1929” to commemorate Carpenter’s year of birth and death.

**The sandals have been initially gifted to members of The Friends of Edward Carpenter, a group of enthusiasts (and activists in their own right) who aim to commission a permanent public memorial to Carpenter in Sheffield city centre. This is where the project began to gain critical momentum. Members of Bury Council’s LGBTQ Employee’s group will be the next recipients to be gifted the sandals. Can a pair of sandals be a form of public memorial when they are worn?** Here, Carpenter's biography and ideologies align with those activists who continue his legacy today, and the project recognises their contribution to the fight against injustice and the oppression of others, including LGBT+ rights and sexual health, equality in the workplace, Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, and Sheffield Trees. Standing in these sandals activates the stories, beliefs and struggles of the past, bringing them to life for each of us in the present day. Will you join in too?

**The Carpenter Sandal can be purchased from Nobel & Wylie, Sheffield, and for every ten pairs sold, one will be gifted to an activist. For more details visit: www.nobleandwylie.com**

About the Exhibition:

The exhibition will contain **“Towards Memorial” (2019)** a film in three chapters documenting the making, gifting and wearing of the Carpenter sandals, made in collaboration with Picture Story Productions. **“SELF 1892” (2019)** a graphic brand and visual concept developed with designer Jon Cannon based on the remnants of the sandal’s prototype paper patterns, including product images by photographer Mark Howe, shot around the city centre of Sheffield. **“My Days with Edward Carpenter” (2018-ongoing)** is a series of Edward Carpenter and related gay postcards (suggesting a visual evolution of political protest) worn by the artist and his boyfriend in their shoes throughout 2018/19.

About the Artist:

**Yuen Fong Ling** is an artist, researcher and lecturer based in Sheffield. His practice explores issues of intersectional identities, historical omission, non-permanent forms of public memorial and socially engaged art practice, as the artist, model and curator. Graduating from the MFA at Glasgow School of Art in 2005, and completed his PhD at University of Lincoln 2016. Ling is also Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University.