



**‘I’M SORRY’
ANNABEL McCOURT**

**BARNSELEY
CIVIC**

INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the artist’s own deeply personal experience of loss, this exhibition is centred on the powerful, restorative, and healing experience of saying “I’m Sorry”.

I’m Sorry is not about flippant apologies, taking the blame or over-apologising. Instead, it’s about becoming unburdened of guilt, reclaiming accountability, and discovering self-esteem. It is a powerful tool for forgiveness and healing. It is introspection for the collective good, to create a more compassionate world.

Through captivating portraiture and mesmerising neon lights McCourt transforms spaces. The artist invites you to step inside the safe, anonymous, and contemplative world of I’m Sorry, to discover raw moments of private reflection and confessions without guilt. Take a pilgrimage into I’m Sorry and embark on your own journey of personal transformation.

THE ARTIST

Annabel McCourt was born in Grimsby in 1975. Her work ranges from lens-based gritty social-realism, through to installation, moving image and architectural interventions, inspired by fact, folklore & legend. For this project McCourt has gone back to her artistic roots in photography, meeting people and forming genuine connections.

“I feel vulnerable, paired-down and honest by exhibiting this work and I am profoundly grateful to every contributor for ‘speaking’ truth to power via my camera lens”.

THE EXHIBITION

This project stems from McCourt’s experience of not being able to say goodbye to her father before he passed away. Holding a private ceremony to offer up an apology was a way for her to move on and heal from this aspect of grief which is shared by many. McCourt recognised that creating this space for others might be a useful and profound tool.

The exhibition comprises of a series of portraits in which the participants hold a bespoke neon ‘I’m Sorry’ written in the artists handwriting. Each person is captured in an intimate moment, offering their own private apology to the camera. The glow of electrified neon gas reacts uniquely with each personality as they offer their “I’m Sorry”. The neon is a potent metaphor for these moments McCourt has captured; fragile, vulnerable yet powerful.

Alongside the portraits, spaces of introspection and reflection are offered: A mirror with ‘I’m Sorry’ written in reverse, a deconstructed neon ‘I’m Sorry’ which slowly reveals itself as you move through the installation. Finally, visitors arrive at a space in which they write their own “I’m Sorry” in chalk on the walls. A chance to take accountability, to forgive and to become unburdened of guilty before stepping back out into everyday life.



Annabel McCourt, ‘I’m Sorry’ self portrait, 2023

PLEASE NOTE

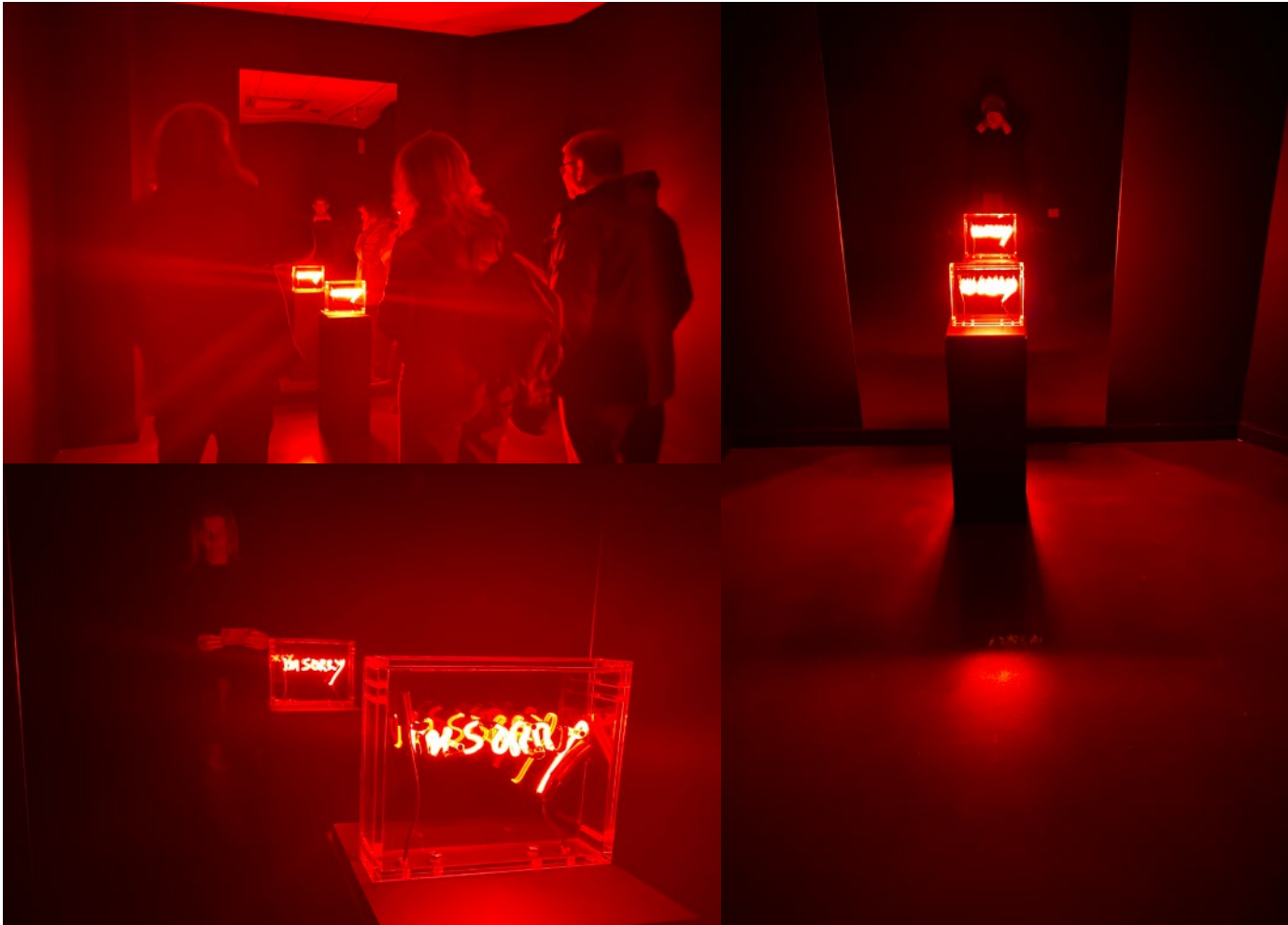
The 'I'm Sorry' exhibition can be scaled to fit your individual venue and it is actively encouraged to explore alternative installation configurations.

SHOW TITLE NEON

'I'm Sorry'

Glass diameter: 8mm
Direct to wall mount

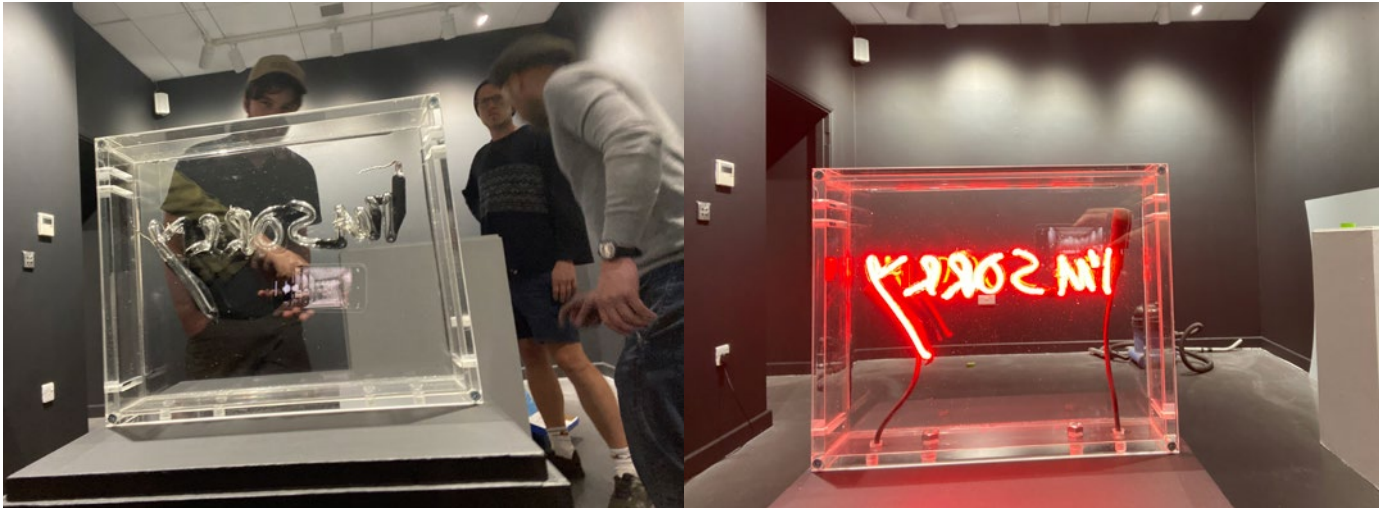
'ANNABEL McCOURT' vinyl

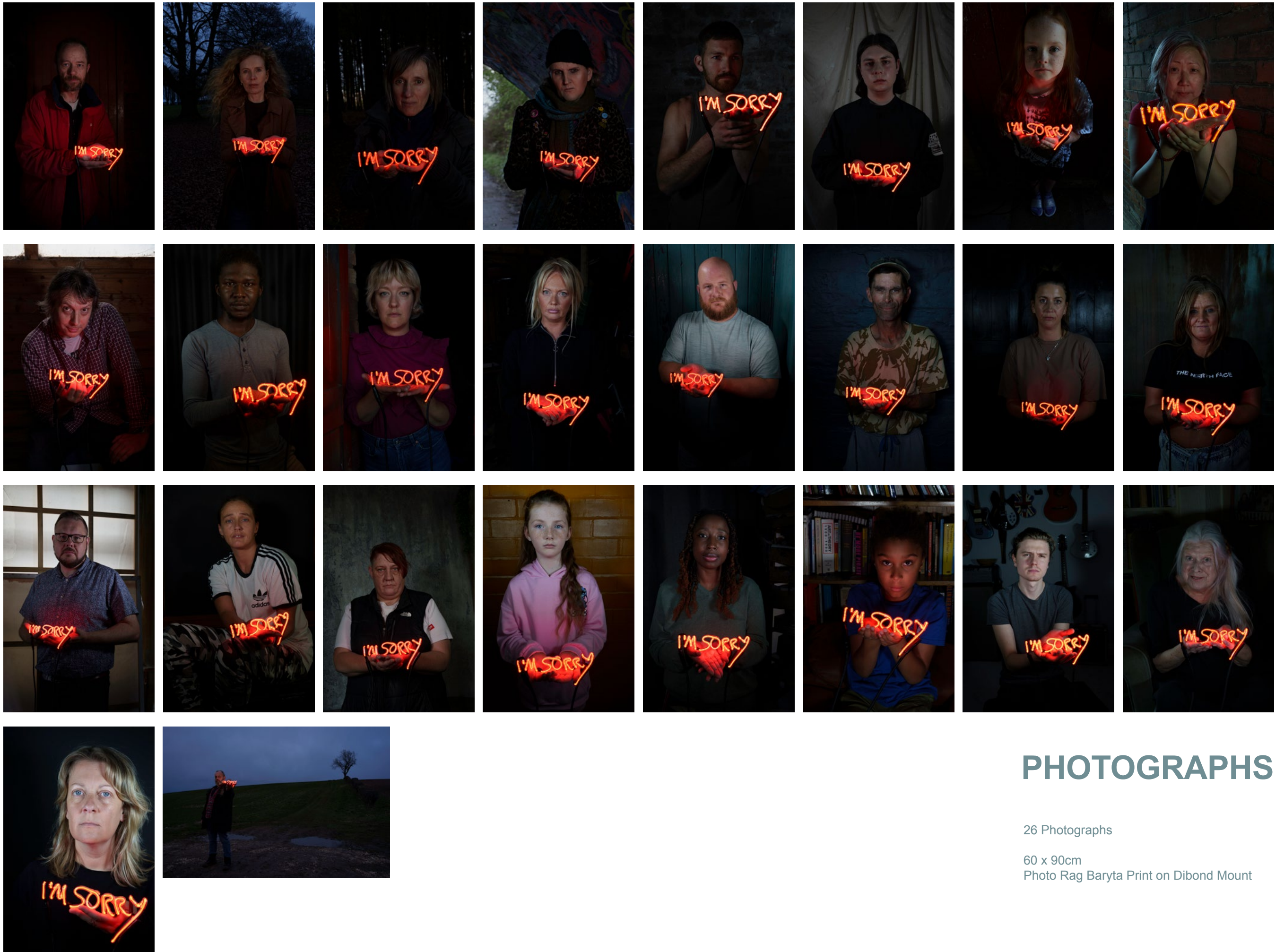


MIRROR ROOM

'I'm Sorry' - small hand-held version,
reversed glass: clear, neon fill
Size: 40-60mm high
Glass diameter: 8mm
Block out: Standard black
High Frequency transformer -
Electrode sleeves and high voltage cable
Tube supports and tie wire
Housed in acrylic case and mounted on a plinth

Mirror board sheet





PHOTOGRAPHS

26 Photographs
60 x 90cm
Photo Rag Baryta Print on Dibond Mount

25 x portrait

1 x landscape to be displayed in 'Apology Room'

Potential for community engagement and further portraits to be gathered in the locale.



DECONSTRUCTED NEON

'I'm Sorry' - deconstructed and suspended from ceiling Glass: clear, neon fill

Glass diameter: 20mm

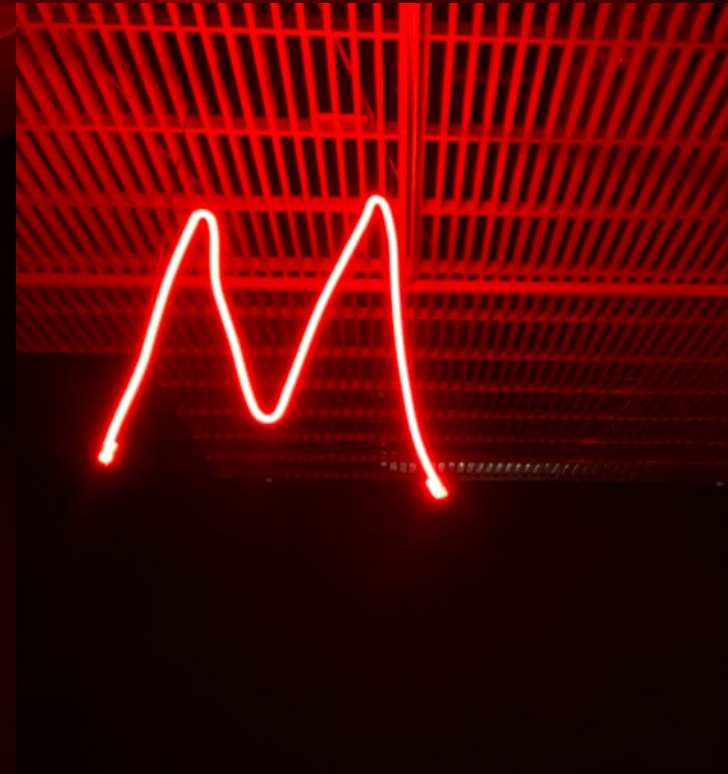
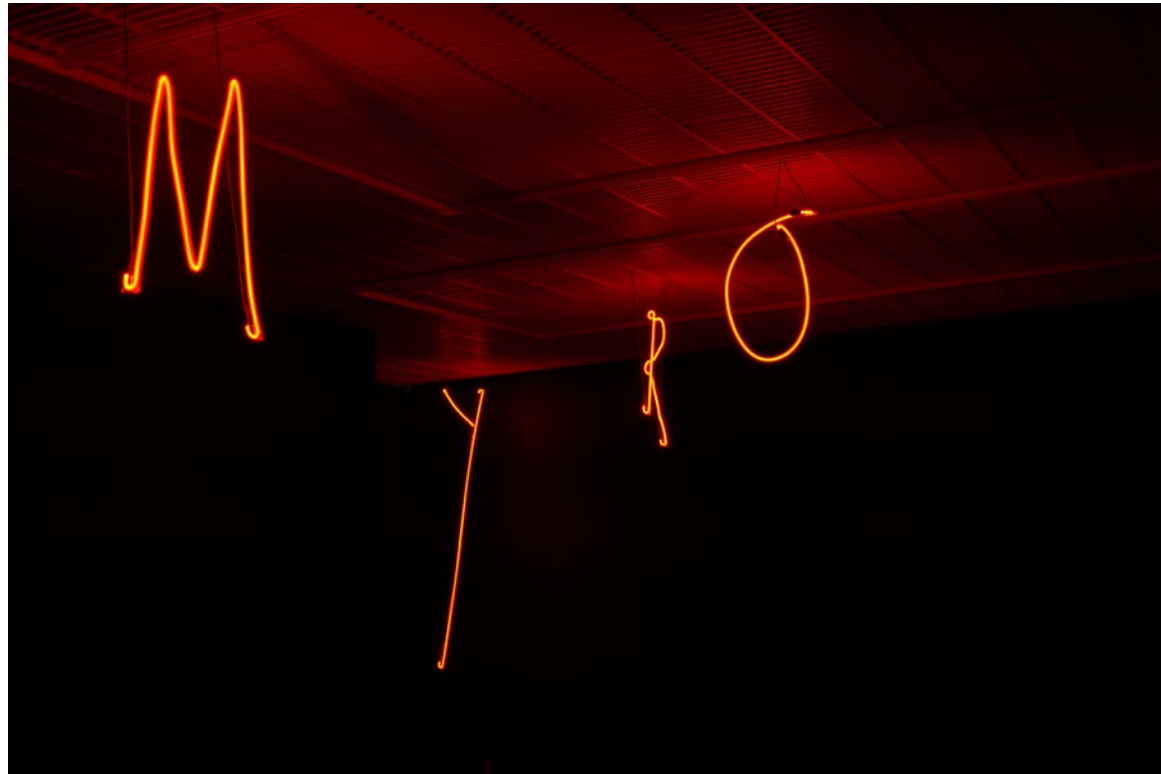
Block out: Standard black

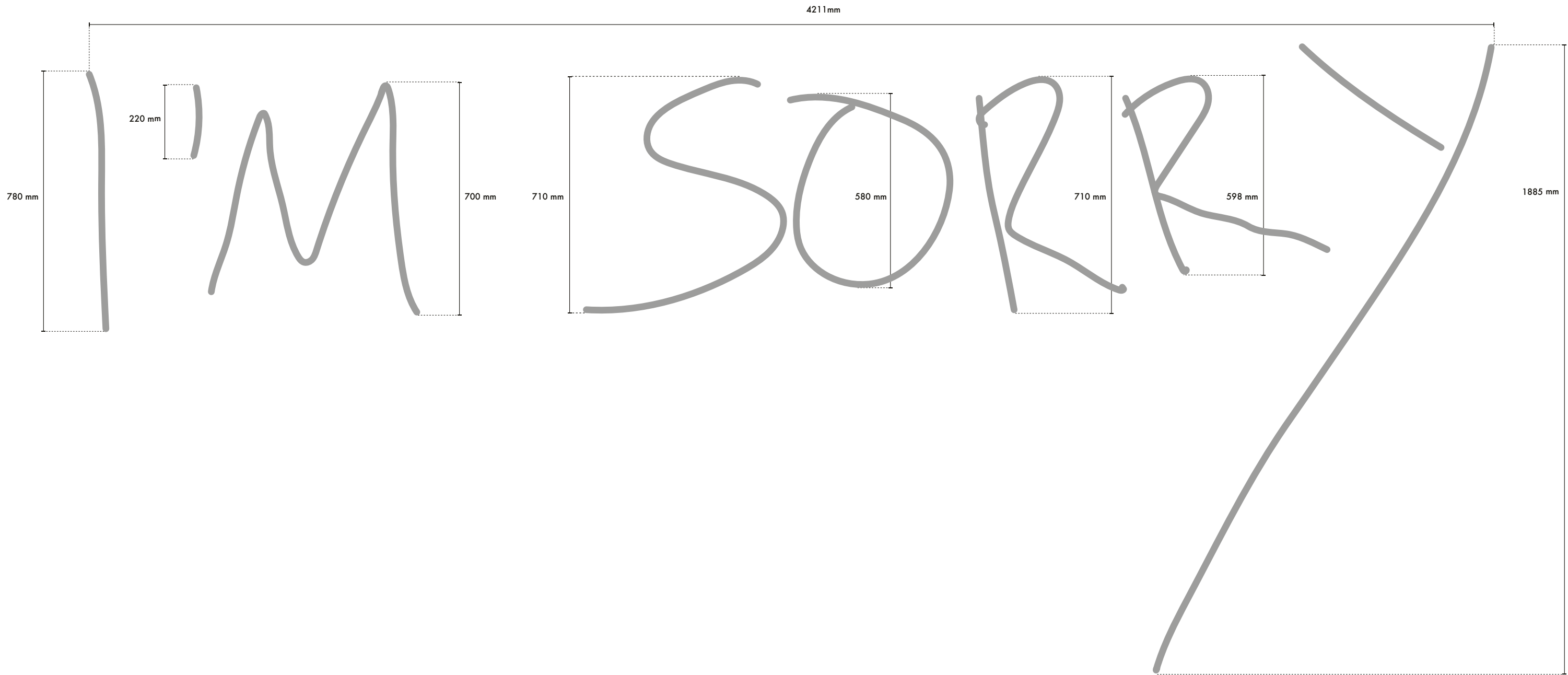
High frequency transformer

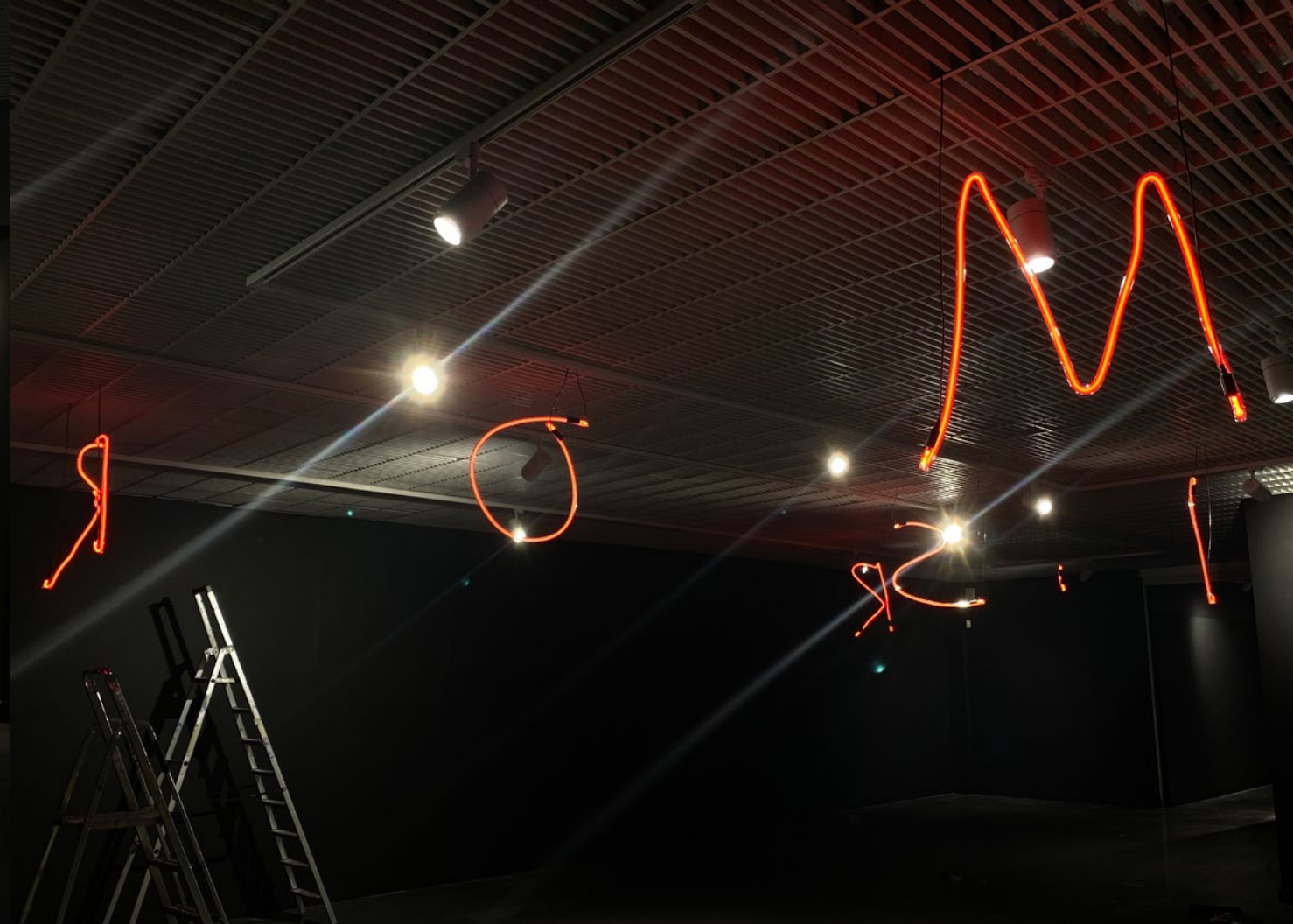
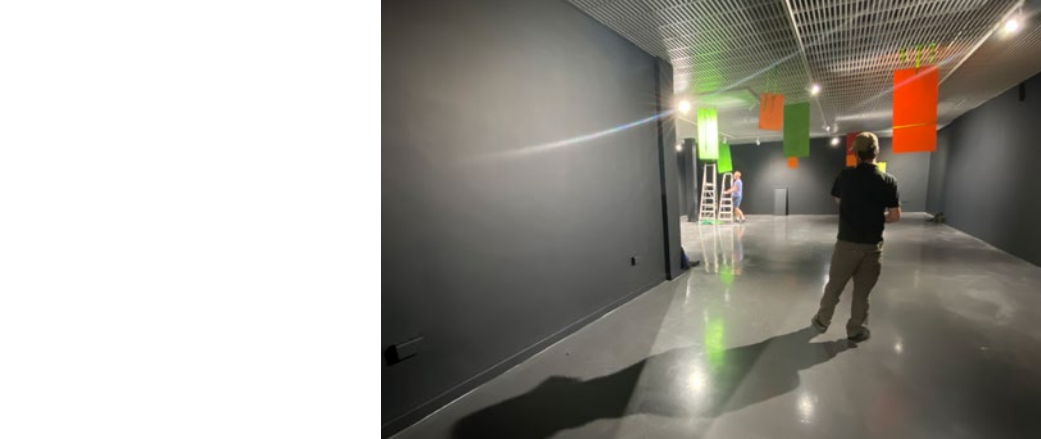
Electrode sleeves, high voltage cable

Tube supports and tie wire

Mounted to plywood batons and suspended from the gallery ceiling using fishing wire to create alignment via optical illusion





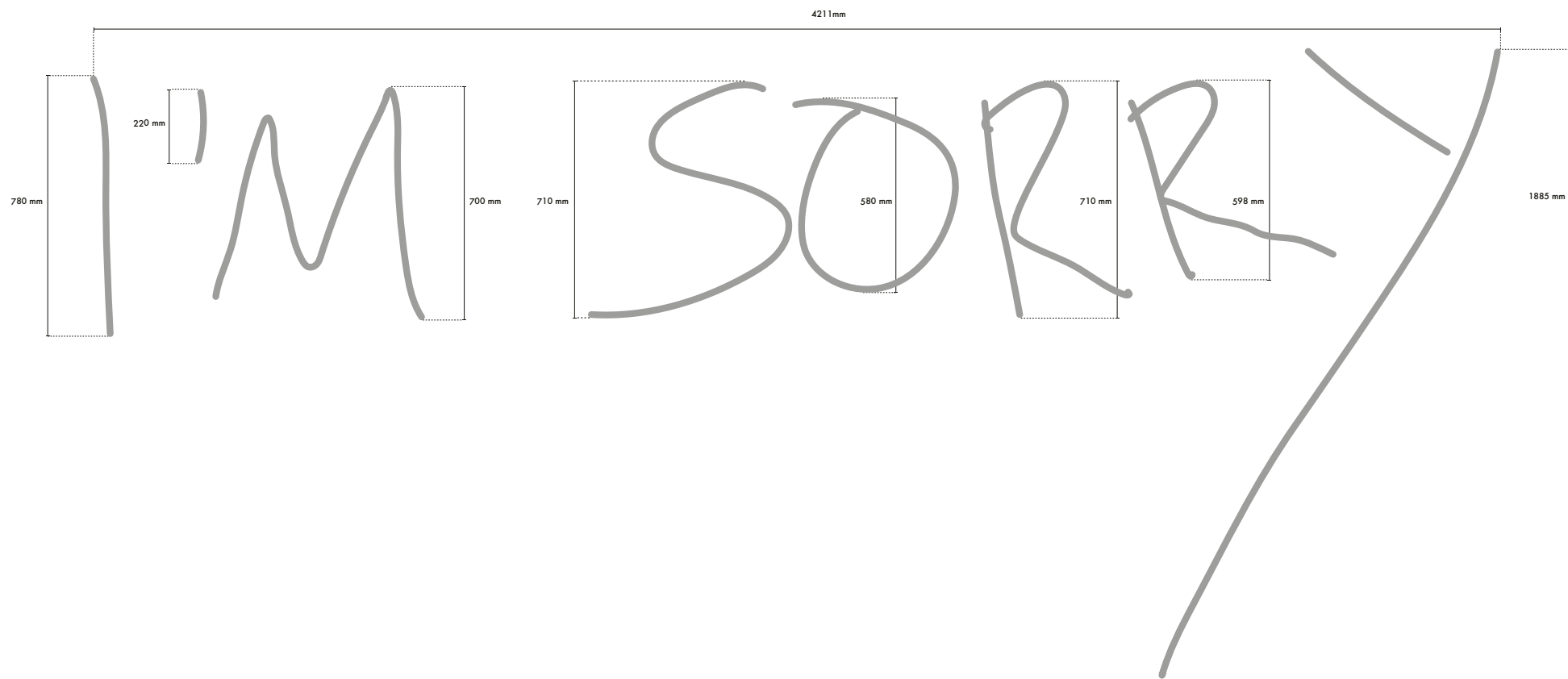


OUTDOOR NEON

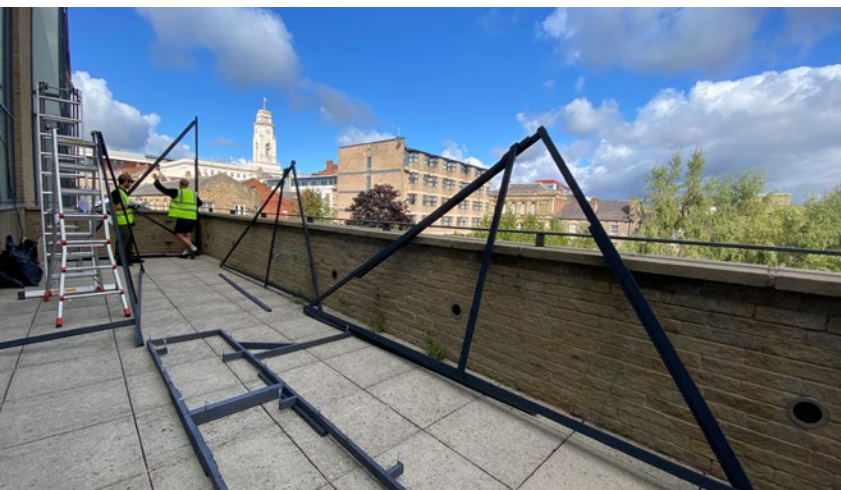
'I'm Sorry' - balcony
Glass - clear, neon fill
Glass diameter: 20mm Block out: Standard black
Traditional transformer
Electrode sleeves, high voltage cable
Mounted to plywood frame

Please note that the frame can be altered or specially constructed to fit your specific needs. This neon has the capability to be situated outdoors, but can also be exhibited indoors.





'I'm Sorry' - balcony/roof
 Glass - clear, neon fill
 Glass diameter: 20mm Block out: Standard black
 Traditional transformer
 Electrode sleeves, high voltage cable
 Mounted to wooden frame



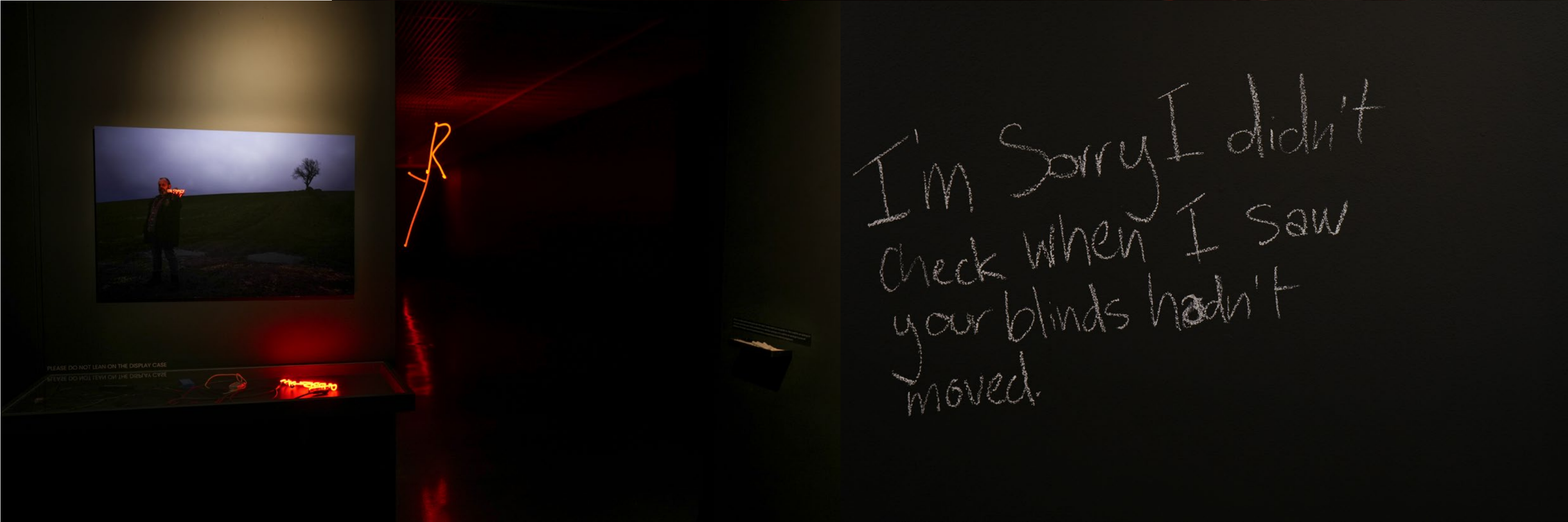
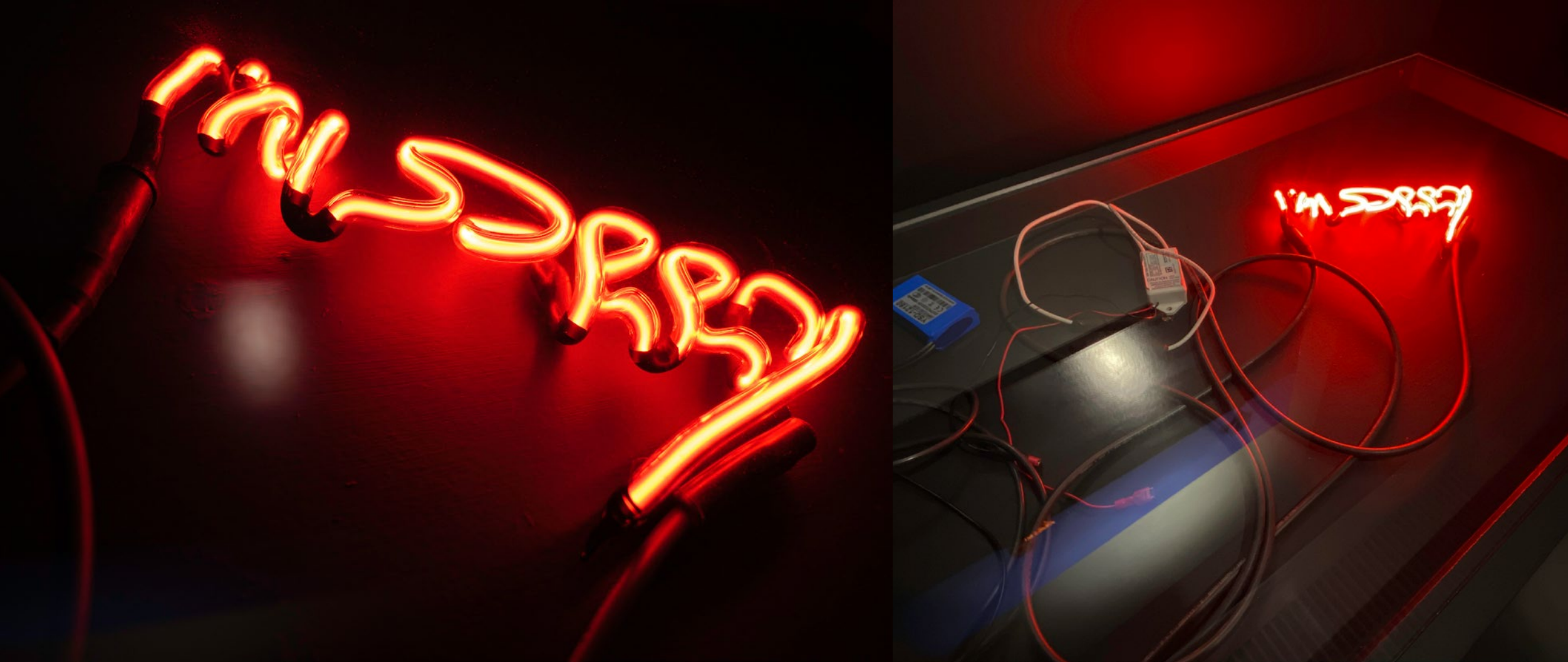
APOLOGY ROOM

Chalk

Vitrine with original 'I'm Sorry' neon

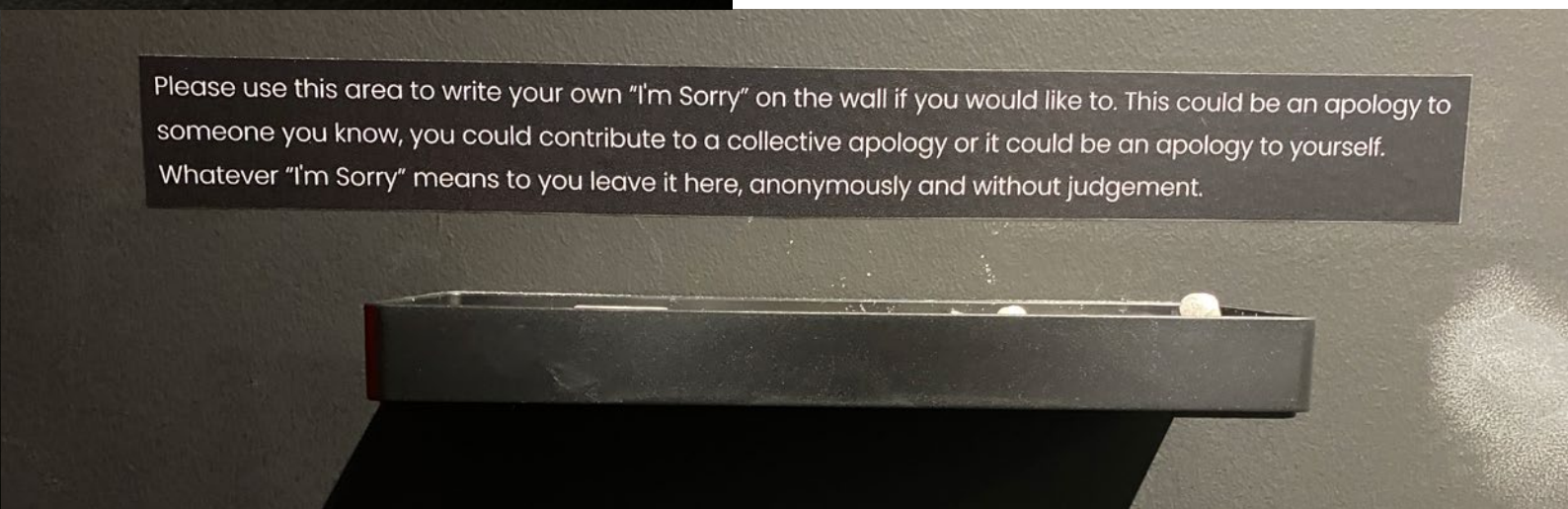
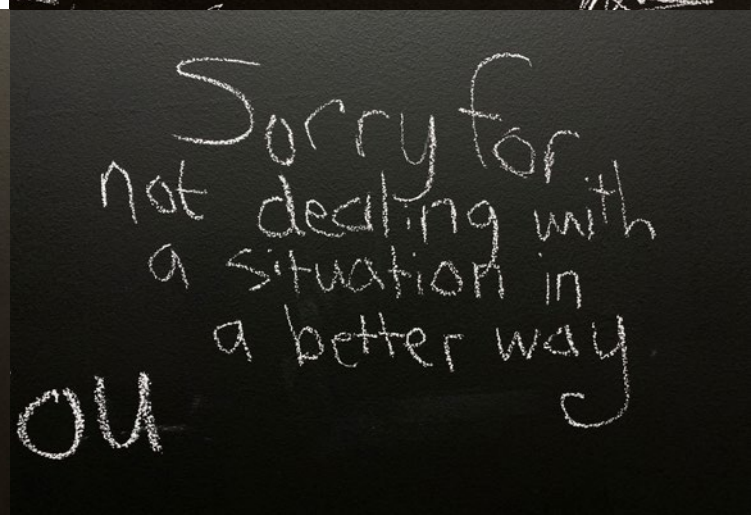
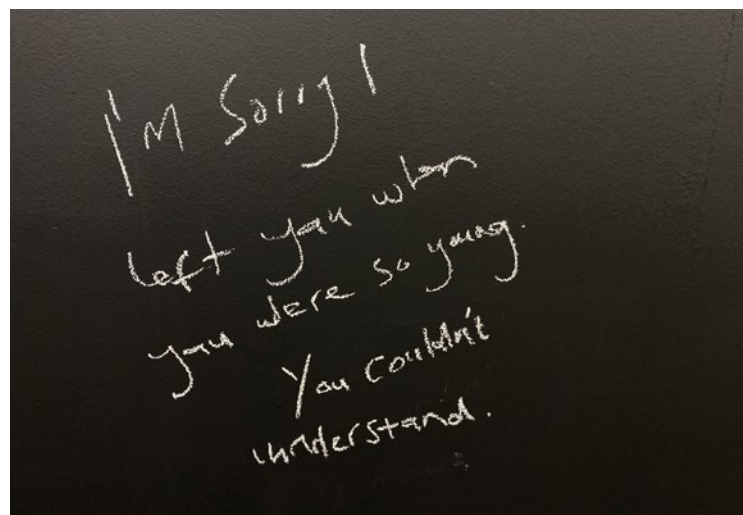
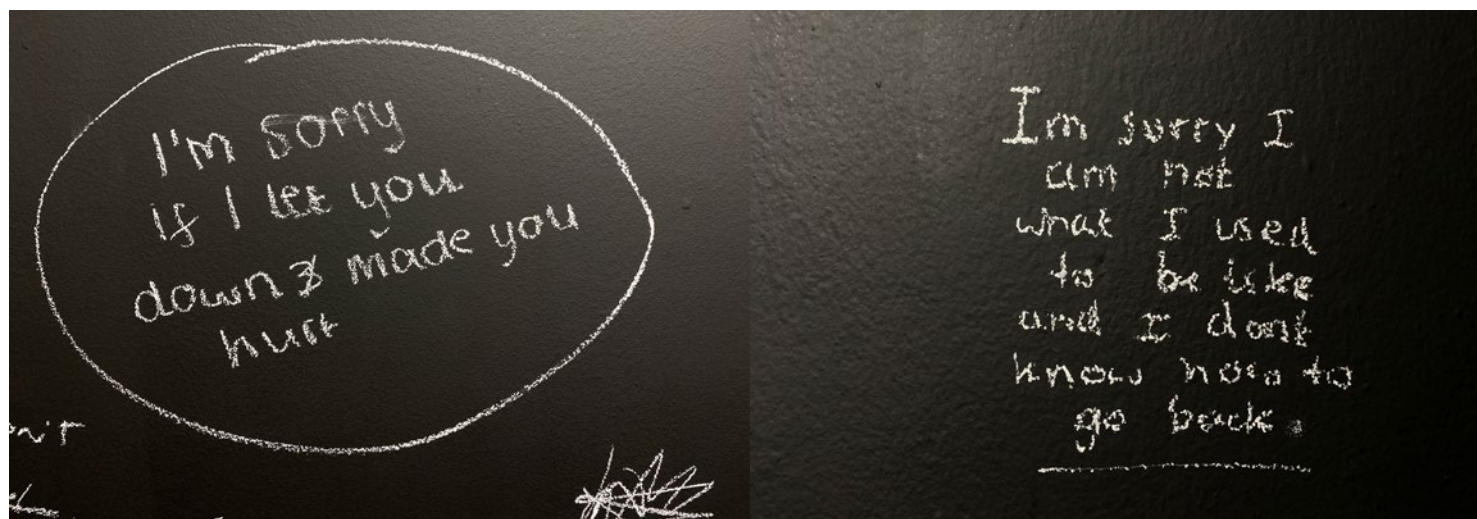
Glass: 'I'm Sorry'
Colour: Clear glass neon Fill

Size: 40mm- 60mm letter height
Glass Diameter: 8mm
Glass blocking out paint: Standard Black
Transformer





APOLOGY ROOM



Please use this area to write your own "I'm Sorry" on the wall if you would like to. This could be an apology to someone you know, you could contribute to a collective apology or it could be an apology to yourself. Whatever "I'm Sorry" means to you leave it here, anonymously and without judgement.





CONTEXT

‘Sorry’ has to be one of the most overworked words in the English language. It can be spoken out of a sense of obligation, a confessional impulse, to soften an email or as a catch-all for guilt, planted into our psyche long before we understand the reasons why. It might be used breezily to acknowledge an error, or defensively to ward off blame. Rarely, though, do we say sorry and really mean it. For Annabel McCourt, whose latest exhibition I’m Sorry is now showing at Barnsley Civic, apologising is an opportunity for growth. Using a small neon lamp spelling out those words as a starting point, she invited twenty-six people to have their photograph taken with it as they offered up their own unspoken apologies. It was a way of confronting uncomfortable emotions – and of letting them go.

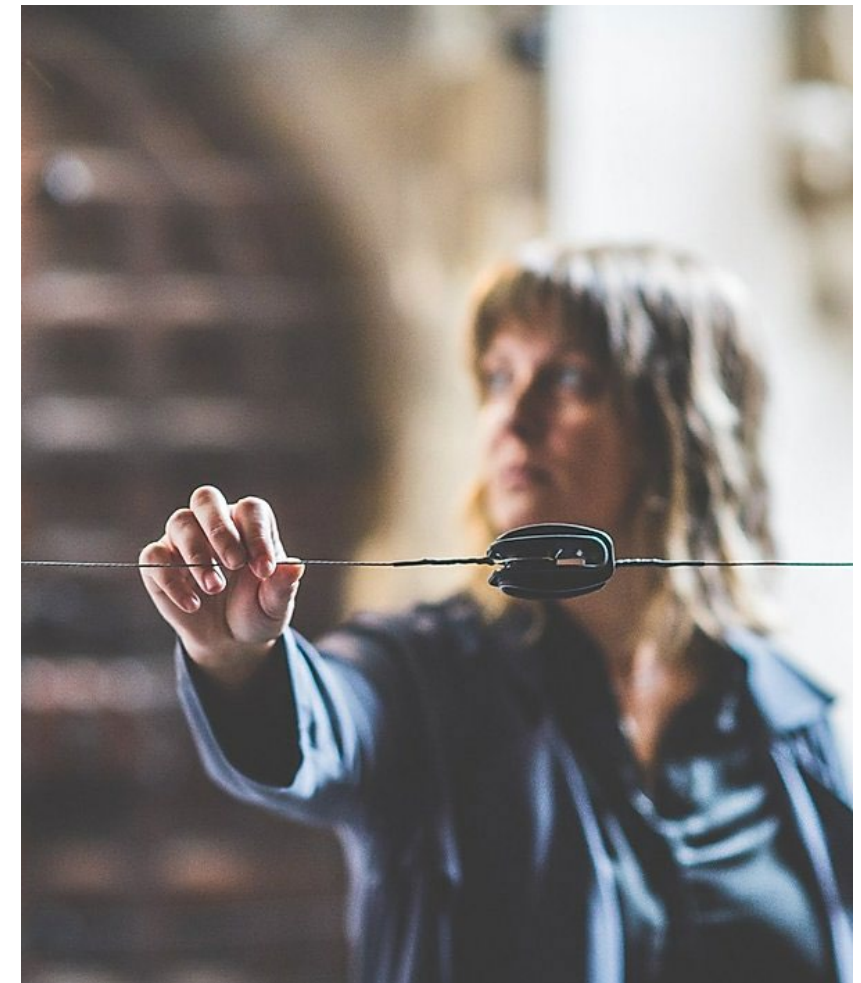
The exhibition marks a vulnerable moment for McCourt too. She has been taking photographs since the day her dad presented her with her first Olympus camera at fifteen, but exhibiting photography on this scale is a first: ‘Art for me has always been people hanging off a building and playing with chain-saws and fire... It’s never really been about painting or drawing’. Whatever the medium, McCourt tends to work on a vast, almost carnivalesque scale, infusing dystopian concepts with mordant humour. Her 2017 ‘Electric Fence’, for example, is a giant electrified enclosure she assembled in response to an American pastor’s hate-fuelled rant about wanting to imprison and electrocute LGBTQTI+ communities. Then there was ‘MAGA Grabber’ (2019), which brought the worst of Donald Trump’s ‘locker room talk’ to life in the form of an interactive arcade grabbing machine. Both explored ideas of complicity by encouraging visitors to participate in the spectacle, to defy their strongest impulses and touch the works.

In an understated way, I’m Sorry is also about touch. When McCourt placed this small, totemic object into the hands of strangers, it created a moment of catharsis. ‘You’ll lose somebody for five minutes while they’re watching that neon gas looping about, as though it’s living’, she says, ‘Just to see that transformation wash over somebody was utterly fascinating’. She first came up with the concept after her dad died, though inspiration arrived slowly. While she knew she wanted to make something that would address the grief and regret she was experiencing, it was important for the work to provide an outlet for others too. The answer finally came in this tiny neon lamp, which people could use to channel the kind of feelings that might otherwise get swept aside in the rush of everyday life. It was a simple ritual she could bring to anyone who needed it.

The artist set up the first meetings unsure of where they would lead, arriving to photograph strangers in the darkness of gardens and outhouses, and leaving the results more or less to chance. The neon sculpture clasped in each person’s hands came to symbolise the fragility of human connection, and the moment of mutual trust in which McCourt handed over this delicate, breakable object in return for their image. She was aware that one clumsy gesture could end the project, had the neon slipped out of their grasp and shattered, but that sense of precariousness only made the moment more precious.

Orla Foster - Corridor8

Read the full review here: corridor8.co.uk/article/annabel-mccourt-im-sorry/



Annabel McCourt, ‘Electric Fence’, 2017

Annabel McCourt is an international contemporary artist based in the UK. Her work ranges from lens-based gritty social-realism, through to public & installation art, moving image and architectural interventions inspired by fact, folklore & legend. Her celebrated LGBTQIA work ‘Electric Fence’ was commissioned for Hull City of Culture in 2017 and has been touring since; including the Biennale of Contemporary African Art, ‘Dak’Art’, in Dakar, Senegal.

Annabel has exhibited artwork in the UK, Brazil, Australia, Dakar and China. In 2022 she was artist in residence at Diversa Arte Cultura in São Paulo inviting local people to be participants in an artwork ‘campaign’ coinciding with the world’s biggest Pride parade. She also exhibited at Midsumma Festival in Melbourne, Australia as part of the British Council’s UK/AUSTRALIA Season. Recently her work has escaped the gallery into the public realm, where she has enjoyed critical acclaim.

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