



## ANGHARAD WILLIAMS

*The security dilemma*, 2021  
Sculpture

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To say no-thank-you, I'm out; to assert that this is not for me, this story not mine to tell, this history not mine to take up, contain a specific capacity to resonate across eras and geographies. The poet Gwennallt was imprisoned during WWI "for refusing to wear khaki clothes." T.E. Nicholas, another influential Welsh poet (and revolutionary socialist, minister and dentist), refused to partake in that war on the grounds that he couldn't be made to fight against his fellow workers.

Such simply-stated refusals speak loudly across the work of Angharad Williams, who piles up associations the way others might layer paint, boiling complex webs of research and anecdote down to evocative, quip-like artistic gestures. Her practice is deeply engaged with the contemporary mythologies of her home country, whose recent history of near-total cultural reconstruction has both exacerbated and deeply challenged its ingrained codes of silence around the racial and class dynamics of belonging and not-belonging, yes and no. I can see her as part of what Anne Boyer calls her "pantheon of 'not this,'" among other artists, poets and refusers whose work attests to the "stealthy, portable, unslouching" *no*. That *no* is a *no* of keeping quiet, staying put, letting what's in front of your nose do the talking. Straw dolls lined up mischievously against a white wall could not speak even if they wanted to, but they suggest a curiously all-encompassing moral strength. *To what*, it's impossible to say, but there is a gravitas in the clarity of the assertion that these objects *object*. "Saying nothing is a preliminary method of *no*." There is too much of everything, all around us, all the time, inescapable, piled-up so that it can be hard to see. To turn a blind eye (see, hear, speak no evil) is not an option. But *no* can orient us, loud and celebratory, towards a future in which it is possible to say *yes*.

