

Curating Curoosity

Becca Harris, Karen Gazey, George Wagstaffe, Zarina Keyani, Brian Cook, James Girling, Deb Catesby, Stuart Layton, Lizzie Carriss, Emma Hardicker, Carolyn Morris, Ann Bate-Williams, Tor Hilyard

Becca is in her final year at Worcester University studying Fine Art Practice, Becca prepared two texts for the exhibition.

A Story of a Painting

There is a deep red; plush and runny. Next to it a purple, dressed in white. It smears me across its surface.

A glance upward and beyond reveals an isolated glow of mint green, blurred and murky.

That purple-white unsettles. Its vagueness; the smudginess drains my eyes. Squinting to find form, object, surface, I am faced with nothing. It sits like a heavy fog, a silt-filled pool.

I am blind - a tension halves me.

Forms erupt with vulgarity and heaviness. Bloody, clotted mounds arise from a vaporous haze, interrupted by sharp cliffs of black and grey.

Ghostly traces of white slippery mucus, or the deposits of a slug.

Things are erased by an engulfing blankness, yet just as quickly they dart with clear intention. I am unsafe.

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That little glow of green beckons me...

I gravitate towards it, eyes fixed, fearful it may be nothing more than an illusion. Its tiny peeping presence twinkles amidst the violent swarms of red and purple.

Is it light?

Is it hope?

It is suspended, isolated.

It ebbs and pulses.

Quickly shifting it is barely visible, submerged beneath that oozy, dank, weeping red.

Is it nothing?

Is it something?

I realise what it must be to feel drawn to danger.

Consider:

a moth to a flame
an insect to a light
a fly to a Venus.

I climb up towards its gentle, sparkling rhythm.
I scramble over harsh black contours that dip in and out.
I push through the sticky, viscous red that sucks me in and swirls me around.
I slip and slide between translucent white.

Ahead of me exist jagged lines of lilac and violet, flung around a ground of black. Lines cross, jump, drip and swell. I am forced toward a mass of furious marks; a sea of danger.

I stumble upon the rutted surface.

A screeching black bursts from a pool of throbbing blue, hurling me in every direction.

I land in a vast expanse of white that sucks me in and breathes me out; a form that engulfs my own; my breath is no longer my own.

I writhe, fold and struggle.

I push closer to that compelling green

Alluring and imaginary...

(Edited by Denise Startin, Studio Artist)

Karen Gazey: Time May Tell



My work explores the complex relationships between pattern, meaning, image and site and the effects of re-presentation and multiple interpretations. Past works have used weathered, worn and pierced surfaces which combine with the play of natural or projected light to present glimpses of detail or fragments of intricate, delicate pattern. Fluctuations in natural light levels will determine the viewers' relationship with the installation at the moment of engagement creating a sense of immediacy and reinforcing the transient nature of the experience, or the work may play on a past encounter with the presented form then acting as a touchstone or vessel of personal experience.

The domestic space, which acts to fulfill the stabilizing persistence of place as container of experience, assumes metaphysical qualities in addition to its physical qualities. The worn surfaces are etched with traces of existence; the spaces and holes are pockets of compressed time. In the Old Grooms quarters *Time May Tell* is presented as a layering of reality and artifice, through the intangible ghostly nature of light and the historic remains of a domestic dwelling. The work engages memory and uses perception, or the spirit of the form, as a prolonging of the past which is repositioned in the present. The original design created as pinholes in parchment in an act of virtual embroidery acknowledges the role of homemaker, while the title of the work is a metaphorical reference to the domestic dwelling as a private space, where events and secrets could remain 'behind closed doors' or indeed be 'swept under the carpet'.

Karen recently took part in **New Art West Midlands 2013,**
— **The best new art by emerging West Midlands graduates.**

James Girling - Music

James Girling DipABRSM is a student at St.Benedict's Catholic Sixth Form, Alcester, where he is currently studying for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. He is the recipient of an Advanced Musician Award for classical guitar from Warwickshire County Music Service, and the guitarist for the Warwickshire Youth Jazz Orchestra. Following conservatoire auditions in November and December 2012, he was awarded guaranteed places – together with several scholarships – to study classical guitar for the Bachelor of Music commencing September 2013, at The Royal Academy, The Royal College of Music, The Royal Northern College of Music and The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. The RNCM notably offered James an intensive fast-track route, challenge he has decided to accept. His tutor at RNCM will be internationally renowned classical guitarist Craig Ogden.

George Wagstaffe



George Wagstaffe studied at Coventry College of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London. In 1958 he won a prize for his sculpture, *Naiad*, at the Young Contemporaries exhibition held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London after which he received his first public commission. The Coventry City architect, Arthur Ling, saw the *Naiad* at the ICA, and in 1960 a bronze copy of it was made for the Earl Street Courtyard in Coventry. Arthur Ling then commissioned the *Phoenix* which now stands in Hertford Street in the city centre. George Wagstaffe has since worked on a number of local and national commissions and it is these and related works that provide the thematic content of his work. The *Naiad* initiated a number of drawings, paintings and other sculptures that explored the female form and rocks in a mythical context.

The *Phoenix*, commissioned during the post-war reconstruction of Coventry, functions as both a memorial and a symbol of rebirth and resurrection. These early works established key themes and metaphors that appear in George's later work. The theme of rebirth and resurrection can be seen in the working models for *Resurgence*, a major work in bronze, commissioned for the Shell Chemical Headquarters. Rather than represent an industrial company through mechanistic imagery, George chose a symbolist approach, expressing figuratively the resurgence of dormant powers released from below the ground.

The *Naiad* prompted a chain of ideas and metaphors exploring the dichotomies of organic and mineral form; of women against rocks, in which the vulnerability of the flesh is set against hard, inert, crystalline, brittle and crumbling substances. Similar dichotomies of vulnerability and strength can be seen in the *Egg and Rock* bronzes where the fragile egg; breaking on a column suggests new life at its point of destruction. The breaking eggs appear to inseminate inanimate matter as new life threatens to open the unyielding rocks or re-energising decayed and dead organic manner. Like the *Phoenix*, the egg is a symbol of resurrection and rebirth. Similar ideas are embodied in the ambiguous female torsos which reveal not just their pregnant state, but also the ruthless exploitative, and ultimate destructive powers of nature. Fertility and energy is also suggested in the powerful composite image of the phallic *Horsewoman* – a manifold in which several layers of meaning and association are locked together. **Professor Richard Yeomans.**

www.georgewagstaffe.co.uk

Zarina Keyani: Cedar Forest



The work explores the accessibility of landscape first experienced then translated to become a series of paintings in oil and watercolour. It questions what place is to me as an artist and the connections that are made in terms of history and memory. These remain within, dormant, until triggered by imagery, colour or sound. This can be subtle or immediate where you find yourself back in the moment. This 'introspection' is brought to the viewer through the work. What is realised is as much to do with the viewer's own perceptions as it is to do with my interpretations.

Zarina was recently shortlisted for both the Neo Art Print Prize and the Sunday Times Watercolour competition in such quick succession. We are very proud of her contribution to the prestigious exhibition at the Mall Galleries. The Sunday Times Watercolour Competition is the most prestigious watercolour competition in the UK. It aims to present and reward originality and excellence in the watercolour art.

www.zarinakeyani.co.uk

Brian Cook



I see my work as a process of development that comes together over time, so each new work becomes part of the previous work. This intimate knowledge of hand and mind creates a space to map out my practice. Sculpture has to be seen from within as a three dimensional journey offering a view from every direction, a painting is framed by the gallery wall but the sculpture must play and please the space in which it is placed. Sculpture has to have an element of weight and stature otherwise it just doesn't make for a robust piece of art. My work at present is firmly based within abstraction and my choice of medium is concrete. This isn't a new way of working as many have trod this path before however it is relatively new to me. I began working with cement and sand in my final at University year making small pieces that gradually increased in size to finishing up as concrete monoliths 6 feet high. I have developed the making and finishing processes radically over the past year, reducing the weight and bringing sanding, caving and polishing to the finishing stages

My research stems from classical architecture, in particular the orders of architecture, tracery and caved stone work. A worked piece of stone is a tactile surface that has to be felt to understand the work that has gone into its making. I take photographic and drawn documentation however I work from my memories of these surfaces and sites. This can be problematic but for me there is no error or mistake just added chances of change.

An award winner – Elmley Foundation Trust - Shortly after graduating Brian was awarded the Elmely Foundation Trust's Fine Art Award for the sculptures created during the final year of his degree.

Deb Catesby: The hug in the hall



‘A picture is not thought out and settled beforehand; while it is being done it changes as one’s thoughts change. And when it is finished it goes on changing, according to the state of mind of whoever is looking at it. A picture lives a life like a living creature, undergoing the changes imposed on us by our life from day to day.’ Picasso, quoted by Patrick Heron, New English Weekly, 1946

a seaside town – barefoot summer freedom, swimming in cold, cold sea, rain, wind, jam sandwiches;

Deb Catesby’s starting points are stories, conversations and psychological dramas and her painting practice is influenced by her background as a professional writer. Debs’ plays have been produced on main stages, in studio theatres, in the back rooms of pubs and on BBC Radio 4. She has written a thriller novel and taught creative writing at Birmingham University for 10 years.

a long leather overcoat and some brightly coloured beads under a car;

Her work still has literary connections, but increasingly the stories are submerged, changed through the act of painting until the paintings themselves become the story they are telling. Beginnings frequently resemble scenes, something dramatic is happening but usually the only clues are hidden in the images. Often painting in a small series the works connect through imagery, application of colour and scale.

an old piece of driftwood with a faded multicoloured rope caught round it.

Paintings evolve over time.

www.debcatesby.webs.com

Stuart Layton: I Laugh Now, Tomorrows Not So Easy



Theoretically rooted within simulation and the hyper real, my work explores the passing down of history, folklore & childhood recollections and analysis of to what extent history is actually fabricated to suit the political agenda of the day. Bordering on conspiracy theory I question the notion that not everything we are led to believe is strictly true. Stuarts' practice oscillates between video and painting. One acting as a counterbalance to the other, whilst – simultaneously feeding off each other. His video work incorporates digital and celluloid found footage taken from personal collections, the internet and charity shops, with personal clips that are shot surreptitiously and then archived until a use is found. Stuart says “My paintings relate to my video works – either directly or circuitously from memories, personal narrative and storytelling.”

Stuart recently took part in **New Art West Midlands 2013,**
— **The best new art by emerging West Midlands graduates and Stuart came joint runner up.**

www.stuartlayton.co.uk

Lizzie Cariss: Afternoon



Having spent nearly thirty years with woodland and water my daily view, it is unsurprising that landscape has been the subject of my work. Landscape has always provided a language for painting that is both accessible and allows the viewer to apply his own interpretation. In an attempt to develop other means of communication I have more recently painted objects that have relevance for me, which in turn have become their own landscape. The current battle is to convey something meaningful through simplifying the subject of the painting even more.

Emma Hardicker



Emma works as a printmaker and designer producing vibrant artwork for your interiors. The majority of her work is designed and silkscreen printed at Emma's studio at the Cistard Factory in Birmingham. Emma's work is heavily inspired by nature and botanicals from walks around the Midlands and sketching in the garden as well as the harder urban surroundings which also feature in my designs. Emma's limited edition prints have attracted a loyal following of collectors and her has been reproduced as a London Underground poster, part of The London Design Festival. A range of Emma's prints can be found in Liberty London.

"These collections of designs have all been beautifully hand printed with acrylic paints onto a heavyweight cotton paper, this helps to reveal different textures in the printing. I hand draw my designs and separate them into stencils which I layer up with each colour to produce striking floral and cityscapes. Because I am producing something by hand, you do get slight variation in the textures and depth of colour, this is part of the charm of hand printing and makes each one in the edition a little different to the next."

Carolyn Morris



No matter whether I paint, or photograph, or build from clay, texture always emerges as a very important element of what I produce. I've come to see it as a way of connecting the tangible world with the internal world of thought and imagination – like a bridge between the Romantic and the everyday; the world within the image and outside it. I like to experiment and work my way through a subject using a variety of media, often in combination, and ideas come in the form of abstract shape and colour as well as figurative motifs. Usually I'm happy for people to touch my work and it's sometimes presented in a form designed to be held – a book or 3d work.

Inspiration can come from a personal event, a place, a feeling, an idea, which starts a long period of meditation and exploration. I like to focus in on a subject and, very simply, think about it visually. There are no plans, just an idea and an organic development where previous work informs the next without an end in mind. I developed a method of combining photograph and painting and some pieces work within that framework, again relating to the real and the represented. Now, the next step I'm working on is to continue without physical reference, combining of all my thoughts in a large-scale painting.

I see what I do as a conversation; a mulling of all sides of an argument. Prior to pursuing Fine Art I had a career in journalism and I know that behind every door there's a story to be told, that something remarkable can be found in anything and that everything is relative - there are always more viewpoints than at first appear. Sometimes the very small things in life are just as significant as the grand gestures of the world.

Anne Bate-Williams

Art and life are inextricably woven; art, family and faith are the fabric and texture of my life.

"I have a passion for collage. Collage suits the organic nature of my method of working...inspiration might come from a building or a ruin...something that sparks a sense of discovery...I love old buildings – imbued with history the feeling of what has gone 'before' can sometimes be an overwhelming emotion that informs and moulds my artistic response...the unusual beauty of things that are falling down or in decay can speak deeply of the joy of what has passed or the anticipation of resurrection. I use photographs and mixed media to develop a piece, which grows naturally out of my personal view and experience of a place. Perhaps my love of collage is born out of my keen sense for the surreal and 'alternative' which has been with me since my art student days; I enjoy the juxtaposition of things and ideas as a way of communicating, recognising Dali and the psychologist Carl Jung as important influences on my thinking and art.

Recently I have been exploring my roots in the west of Ireland and this has given me a new perspective, appreciating how my origins, my training and work as a teacher, my interests, passions, inspiration and influences and my love for family have all come together and created a picture of their own.

Tor Hilyard: Head II collagraph



Tor is an award winning printmaker, whose current pictorial concerns are with capturing the body language of both human and animal forms. Her interest in experimenting with new techniques, images and printing methods allows her to challenge the boundaries of printmaking and enables her to produce the right marks and textures that relates to each of her subjects. The nonverbal signals that we use to communicate in our everyday life make up a huge part of daily communication. From our facial expressions to our body movements, the things we don't say can still convey volumes of information.

Facial expressions are also among the most universal forms of body language. In these prints Tor is hoping to convey emotions that we have all experienced at some point in our lives, but at the same time allowing the viewer to bring their own interpretation to each image. The constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing during the making of the collagraph plates became a very integral part of the work. The process began to echo the decisions, thoughts and feelings that through a lifetime have subtly engraved themselves on a person's spirit.

Tor works and lives in Worcestershire, where she runs Printmaking and painting workshops from her studio in Offenham.

www.torhildyard.moonfruit.com