

Glimpses into the creative hearts and minds
of over a hundred artists

What Inspires Art?

Compiled and edited
by Kevin Byron

What Inspires Art?

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The Usher Gallery Trust

The Usher Gallery is Lincolnshire's premier art gallery, officially opened in 1927 following a bequest to the City by Lincoln jeweller James Ward Usher. The Usher Gallery Trust was constituted in 1993 to support the work of Lincoln's Usher Gallery. This is accomplished in a number of ways, for example through financial support towards the purchase of works and in the conservation of objects in the permanent collection.

Of more relevance here, another of the Trust's activities is in funding and organising educational workshops, lectures and events. To mark the end of a protracted period of interruption to normal life that began in 2020 due to the Covid-19 lockdowns, the Usher Gallery Trust decided to fund and promote an art competition and exhibition that was open to anyone resident in the county of Lincolnshire. The idea of the competition was to act as a stimulus for the revival and reconnection of the artistic community following many months of isolation.

Almost three hundred entries were received from a diversity of artists working across the entire county. An aptly themed 'Art out of Isolation' exhibition was first hung in the Usher Gallery in collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council in October 2022. A video was also produced of selected work from all of the artists who had entered the competition which was shown in the gallery and on social media. Both the video and the exhibition amply demonstrated how artistic creativity flourished during the periods of isolation.

Building on these public showings of the art, one of the trustees - Kevin Byron - proposed the idea of capturing some written stories by the artists on what inspired their work, and the background to this is described in more detail in his preface. The result is this book, which we trust will be of value and interest to the public, to other artists, and to the teachers of art.

Ian Walter (Chairman of The Usher Gallery Trust)

Preface

In this book a number of artists share their personal responses to a question concerning an essential stage in the creative process. Artists' statements often on display in exhibitions, inform us of an artist's general aims for a body of work and how it was produced, but what inspired the art in the first place, sometimes remains unstated. The aim of this book then is to explore answers to this question on the inspiration that ignites the creation of art.

Towards the end of the city of Lincoln's Usher Gallery open art exhibition in late 2022, an invitation was sent out to all of the original competition entrants. This was to write a short account or story in a few hundred words on what had inspired them to create one of their artworks during lockdown. Rather than the familiar artist statement, a more specific description of the personal circumstances that inspired a particular piece of art was sought. The artists were also invited to provide a quotation by someone - not necessarily another artist - who had inspired their own art practice.

A hundred and ten artists responded to the invitation with a breathtaking variety of personal stories that relate to the creation of their art. They cover almost the complete spectrum of human emotion with accounts of love, loss, fear, hope and joy. Some are sad, some are humorous, some are disturbing and others positively uplifting. Some even give vital details on the artist's skilled techniques. Yet others reveal meaning to the art that one may never have guessed, and that applies both to figurative and abstract works.

It is hoped that the stories about these insights and that part of the ensuing creative process described by the artists will be of benefit to art lovers, artists and to teachers of art alike. In particular - with regard to the latter - whilst a teacher can prescribe exercises to develop the skills of aspiring artists; when left to their own devices, personal inspiration is their only guide on what they will go on to create with the heart.

Compiling and editing this book has been a pleasure given the openness and generosity that shines through in the varied stories and accounts. I trust the reader will find it equally pleasurable and informative too, as the artists share their personal responses to the question 'What Inspires Art?'

Kevin Byron (Editor)

March 2023

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks are due to the hundred and ten artists who have made this book possible, by sharing their art and personal stories on what inspires their art. Thanks are also due to The Usher Gallery Trust for funding the open art competition and exhibition. This initiative led to the independent production of the art video and ultimately this publication by the editor. Special thanks are also due to artists Suzi Stevens, Jan Keeley, Janet Glazier and Jonathon Joy for helpful discussions during the production of the book, and to Alan Reilly for his photographic work of some of the art pieces.

Last but not least, heartfelt thanks go to Phil Bowman and his gallery at St Martins, Lincoln. Had I not wandered into the gallery shortly after moving to Lincoln a few years ago, none of this would have been possible.

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Oil on board
18 x 24cm

‘Blue and Yellow - Colours of Spring’ by Twink Addison

During the late winter and early spring of 2022, Mr Putin's troops began to invade neighbouring Ukraine. We soon discovered, those of us that did not already know, that the colours of the national flag of Ukraine are blue and yellow.

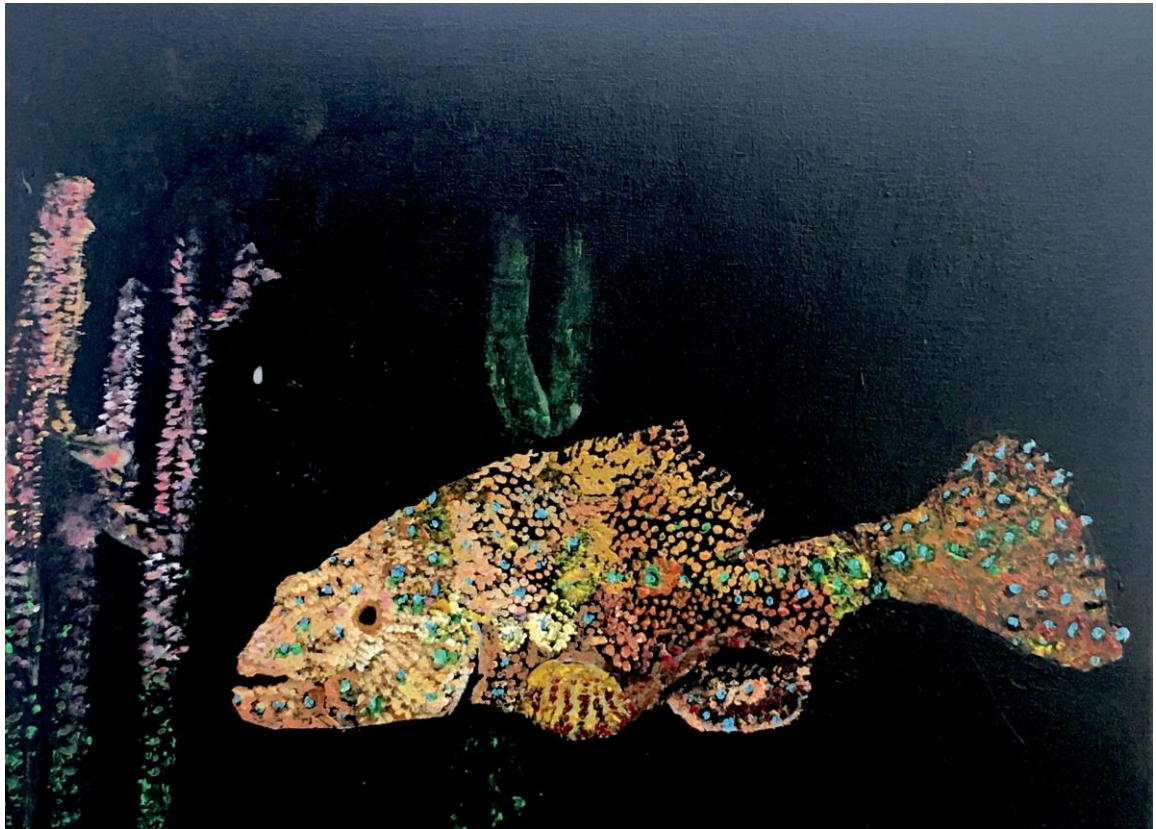
All through our tiny remote Lincolnshire village, and through the small towns, and the county and the country, blue and yellow ribbons, flags, buttons and badges began to grow on the walls and hedges, and the chests of quite ordinary everyday people.

At the same time, in my garden, everyday flowers - primroses, cowslips and narcissus, began to grow, all different colours, but all yellow. Complementing them, in nature's colour palette, were the many blues of muscari, omphalodes and anemone blanda. The flowers were all growing peacefully, harmoniously and fragrantly together - all beautiful, all welcome after the long solitude that was brought by the pandemic, all in blue and yellow.

Simultaneously the army of everyday Ukrainians wrapped themselves in the blue and yellow of their national colours. When they should have been emerging into spring, like us, feeling better and having new hopes after so much desolation, they had to go back under the ground.

Words can be irrelevant when trying to describe a painting - the image can often speak for itself. Ironically, when a negligible little flower painting has been used as a symbol for a ghastly conflict, as here, then there are times, perhaps, when this is necessary.

“To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.”
Robert Louis Stevenson



Acrylic paint on canvas
40 x 50cm

‘Coral Trout’ by Mark Adelman

Perth, the largest city in Western Australia, is the most remote capital city in the Southern Hemisphere. Little did we know when we left England in February 2020 - given the few cases of the coronavirus which had yet to become the Covid-19 pandemic - that our return flights would be cancelled within three weeks. We would be effectively marooned in Fremantle for the next seven months.

We found a little apartment, next to the "Broody Hen" coffee shop. A stone's throw away was the Fremantle Arts Centre, which closed for three months, but then re-opened with a wonderful exhibition of aboriginal paintings that were a revelation to me.

They had an open day during which I was given the opportunity to complete a large-format painting. I chose a traditional aboriginal ‘Dreamtime’ subject but incorporated Jewish symbols such as Challah loaves and six-pointed stars.

I used a 120 x 60cm canvas sprayed with mat-black acrylic and coloured dots applied with a wooden stick in the typical aboriginal technique.

Since returning home I have continued to produce Aboriginal-style paintings alternating with stylised dot paintings. Using this technique a few paintings of colourful Grouper fish were produced - an example of which is shown here. Sometimes referred to as coral trout, they are members of the sea-bass family and are often found in shallow waters around coral reefs.

“When people with Parkinson’s start to paint they recover their identity!” Nancy Tingey



Acrylic on linen
20 x 20cm

‘Tiny Nest’ by Laura Andrew

Being a lifelong wildlife artist, my paintings are inspired by the natural world. So, when a nest presented itself upon my front doorstep it had to be painted.

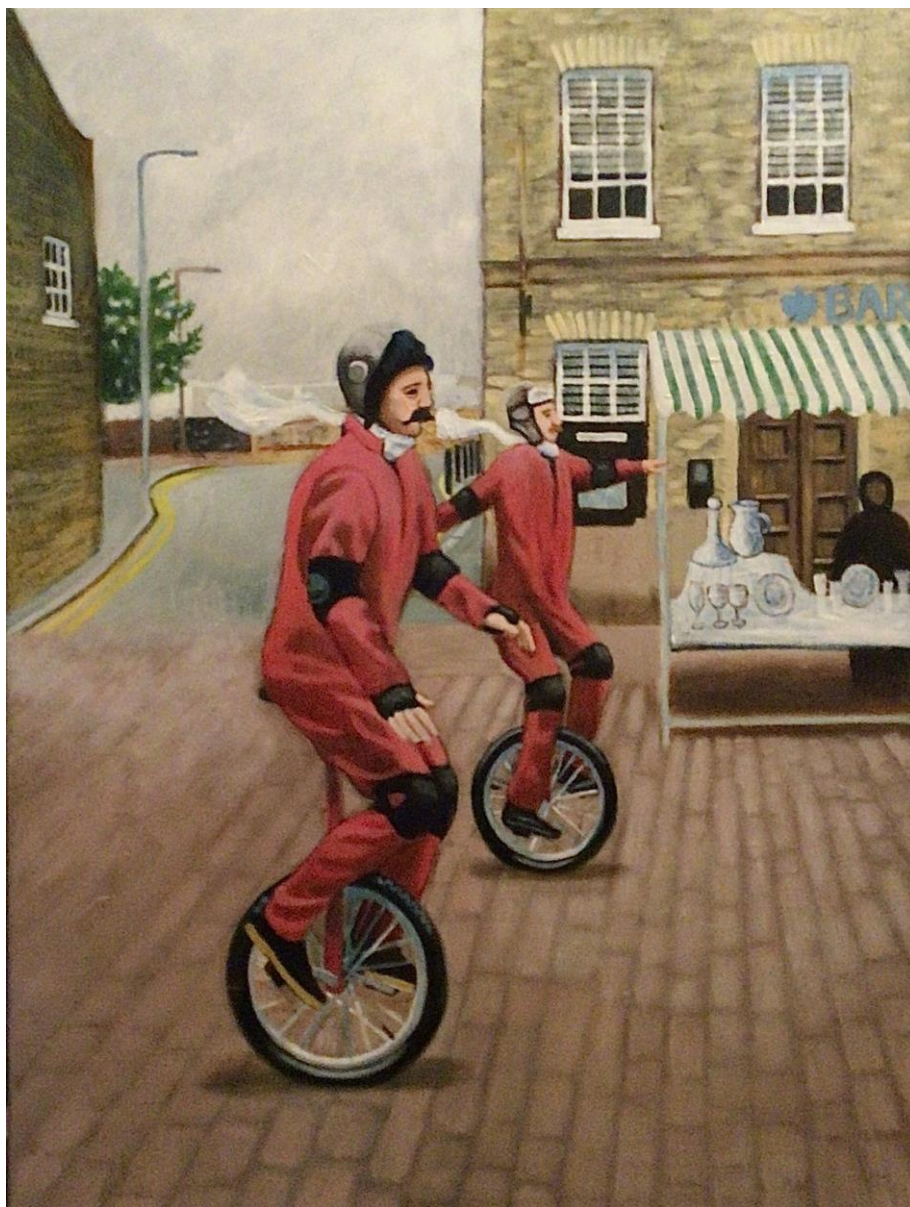
I suspect that it had blown from the bows of an arboretum tree, which stands opposite my studio. Perfectly created, its maker had woven it using the thinnest of twigs, hair and lichen, with just one purpose – to provide a warm, safe, temporary home for new life. And, indeed it did because tiny fragments of buff-coloured eggshell remained in the nest’s cup, evidence of inhabitants, now fledged.

Unsure which bird created this small work of art, I named the painting simply, ‘Tiny Nest’. And, indeed it was tiny, but like our homes in 2020, that nest offered a safe and protective place for a vulnerable period in the chicks’ lives.

Finally, their day of freedom arrived. Fear pushed aside; those fledglings took flight into the unknown.

Like us, they were ‘out of isolation’.

“Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working...” Pablo Picasso



Oils on canvas
45 x 60cm

‘The Red Sparrows’ by Darren Angove

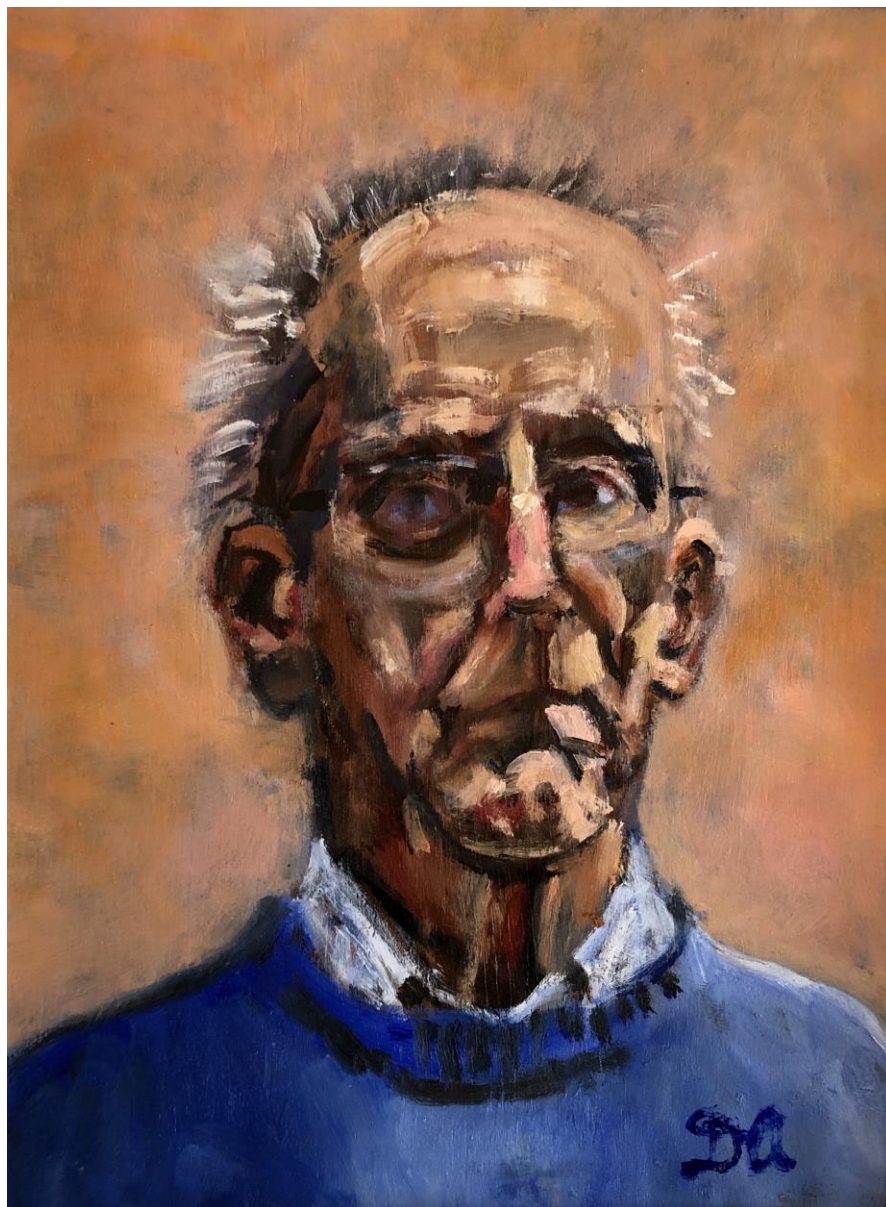
Our lives had dramatically changed. The crippling pandemic made us live a very restrained life. Anxiety and fear were all that we could see, hear and feel everywhere around us. The scientific image of the virus from television was etched in our minds. The empty, eerie bread shelf in the supermarket brought home the sheer panic of the situation. Socially distanced through shops, in an orderly way, was an experience we will never forget for the rest of our lives. Our freedoms were taken from us.

Suddenly one market day, when the paralysing pandemic began to unlock its rigid self, I noticed folk at the market being more cheerful and at ease. An energy of relief was in the air. A couple of street entertainers were meandering through the square on unicycles. I captured the moment on camera. It was a fleeting moment of comedy. Laughter spread and circulated around them; it was like the weight of the pandemic was being lifted from our shoulders.

We all love a bit of comedy in our lives and ‘The Red Sparrows’ were paying homage to one of the feelings of pride in Lincolnshire - ‘The Red Arrows’- The Royal Air Force aerobatic display team. This whimsical unicycling duo gave us a glimpse of light-hearted fun, with their flying scarves and false moustaches. We could laugh again!

Sparrows are birds, and birds fly freely and it was this metaphor that inspired me. As a visual person, the world around me holds a plethora of inspiration - it’s a beautiful gift. If something interests me; and strikes a chord for me, this gives me the desire to transfer these ideas onto a canvas with paint, which usually derives from sketches, and photographs.

“Drawing makes you see things clearer, and clearer and clearer still until your eyes ache.” David Hockney



Oils on board
23 x 30cm

‘Man in a Blue Jumper’ by Desmond Avery

I was thrilled by how the orange background and the blue jumper brought this picture to life. It was a Van Gogh self-portrait that suggested the background, and a Lucian Freud portrait that suggested the jumper, and the title. The colours seemed so right to me that they eclipsed the drawing problems – for a while. I can see them now, but I still find the picture brilliant. I avoided calling it a self-portrait because I don’t usually look like that, and even if I did, portraits can be fascinating pictures in themselves, regardless of whether they look like any actual person.

I seldom do commissioned portraits, because getting a likeness is so demanding. Even when you succeed (in your own opinion), the customer is liable to disagree, which causes stress. Self-portraiture can be a good way around this difficulty, but with it you lose the advantages of variety, objectivity and feedback. If I’m the only one to find my achievement amazing, I might be missing something.

Lockdown was good for my work because my daughter suddenly had time on her hands, and she built me a website. Seeing and selling the pictures online, putting ‘SOLD’ under some of them, and packing them up to send to buyers – some of them abroad – put things in a new perspective. On the other hand, I found that having no colleagues to paint with on Mondays and Wednesdays reduced my productivity.

“If only I could make you see!” Oskar Kokoschka



Oils on deep canvas
60 x 60 x 4cm

‘Gadfly Eight’ by Susan Banks

Dealing with both isolation and anxiety during lockdown, I worked on a new painting series ‘Gadfly’. *Keep making art no matter what!* has always been a principle to live by and had never been more relevant than during lockdown. Working in the studio has always been a solo occupation and therefore had an atmosphere of normality.

As a painter, I am curious about the lost painting of the ancient world and guess that traces of their content appear in more durable surviving mosaics and pottery. The Gadfly paintings steal from and simplify the ancient mosaics that were based on the head of Medusa. In ancient Greece and Rome, these dizzying patterns were intended to challenge the ‘Evil Eye’ and were positioned at thresholds to keep the occupants safe. So, the work alludes to both a liminal space characteristic of uncertainty and an ancient sign that was traditionally believed to avert danger. The intention is to be ambiguous or confusing and perhaps to access the subconscious.

Gadfly Eight continues the series that improvises on this theme. It explores the possibilities of alternating spirals and the dynamic of the spirals varies in different lighting conditions, operating in the uncertain realm of unintended effects and confusion. It is important to me, in respect of the ancient art that lies behind the painting, that the underlying geometry is essentially done by hand and eye. No computer programme or robot was involved and I think that inevitable inaccuracies probably add to the energy of the work.

The title ‘Gadfly’ is the metaphor used for an intentional irritant, someone who poses difficult questions and unsettles the usual order, it is also stolen from a nickname for Socrates.

“You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing.” Hélène Cixous



Wet Cyanotype Process
65 x 45cm

'Mother Earth' by Kelly Barfoot

During the intensity of the Covid-19 lockdown period, my family's saviour became the daily outdoor exercise that we were allowed to do, which for us was walking. We steadily walked all the footpaths around our home and town, happily avoiding crowds and vehicles and making new discoveries that had actually always been right there on our doorstep.

There was no simpler or better pleasure than spotting a fungus, wildflower or butterfly species and rushing home to identify it with a bit of research - a natural education!

Slowly but surely, I started to translate a connection to nature into my art practice during that time. I began making Cyanotype prints from the plants in my garden that I live alongside and incorporating the items we put in our pockets along the pathways, creating memory maps of our journeys.

Cyanotype printing is a wonderful process for capturing small detail in leaves and petals. It is so grounded in the elements because I use the sun to expose the prints and collected rainwater to develop them.

When I combined the plant prints with double exposures of my hand-prints and outstretched arms I felt I had hit on something. It enabled me to start to communicate in a very blue way that humans, animals, nature, weather and the biosphere are all one - connected and dependent on each other - with none having more rights to the planet than any other.

My family still walk regularly and follow different footpaths to this day. When it comes down to it, nothing seems better for our soul than connecting with Mother Earth.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." William Shakespeare



Acrylic and watercolours
55 x 78cm

'Seascapes' by Gillian Bassett

I started the very long-awaited and postponed sorting of my computer photos in lockdown. I was immediately struck by just how many pictures I have amassed over many years, of the sea, far more than any other subject (not including the children or so they say).

I put them together in a file which was a miracle as I am no computer whizz. Then sorting them and enjoying the memories they invoked, I started to play with colour and sketches, not following any of the rules of painting and just being thoroughly absorbed. I allowed myself the time to just literally get lost in the work.

When we were able, we visited my favourite UK beach in Whitby and continued to study the waves and the distinctive noises; and the feelings were transferred to paper when home again. The paintings definitely helped my mental health and not just because of lockdowns but in general, making time to paint became an essential part of my week.

After those early days, I made a studio in our outside garage with just a chair, table, easel, old shelving and some materials bought from eBay and at local auctions. The studio has grown with my art and is such a lovely space to work. Joining a local art class has meant socialising weekly which helps me focus. Sharing work with like-minded people who don't take things too seriously is amazing fun. And the bonus is that I can actually see my paintings improving no end.

*"Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in."*

Leonard Cohen



Oils
51 x 61cm

‘Cley Marshes’ by Cliff Baxendale

I love walking on the North Norfolk coast. On this particular day, we were approaching Cley. I stopped to look and take a few photographs looking over the pathways' weeds, over the reeds and small water channels towards the windmill in the village. The sky was splattered with clouds and the breeze was light enough to sway its way through the reeds. I took a deep breath and the faint tang of the sea swelled into a picture.

Three times now I have painted this memory. Once in pastel, once in gouache and latterly in oil paint.

We continued our walk reaching the steps down into the windmill's yard. Who should we see but Ben Robinson filming another chapter for the TV series "Villages by the Sea". He was standing by the small landing explaining that in the 1800s this was the site of a good-sized port, a place where large sailing boats docked to unload their continental goods.

Now there is only a narrow channel winding its way through the thick reed beds into the sea. A few small boats rested on the slipway, waiting no doubt for passengers to see the seals on the sandbanks on the coast a mile away.

The Covid-19 lockdown made me re-think how I used paint to express the energy, texture, colour and "music" of the landscape. I began to paint on chipboard to enhance the texture layering the paint by wiping colour over colour with rags, a palette knife and using brushes to vary the effects.

I have explored the power and majesty of the sea, trees and, in the past Blencathra peak in the Lake District at various times of the year. The painting of Cley Marshes expresses something of my feelings for the wild landscape and the power of the natural world.

"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for." Georgia O'Keeffe



Watercolours
25 x 35cm

'Cry Freedom' by Gillian Beale

It was a joyless time – a silent killer in our midst. Alone, incarcerated by illness with only the birds outside my window for company, I began to rely on their daily visitations. A veritable cabaret of sound, colour and animation.

I delighted in their hovering and twittering and the colourful feathers catching the light. Bouncing and squabbling they performed acrobatic feats; their numbers increasing daily - until the falcon came through! - Wham! Bang! - they were gone! He perched triumphantly on a wooden spar, turning his penetrating gaze upon me (behind the glass) ruthless, indifferent but breathtaking. Bereft of my pretty feathered chums, this beautiful bird of prey caused me to reflect on the precarious balance of life and how elusive freedom really is.

Tussling between how indebted I felt towards my former feathered friends and my admiration for this pop-up foe, I wanted to capture - using the translucency of watercolour - that moment of eye connection, the intensity of the gimlet stare in a framework so briefly glimpsed, of quivering wings suspended over lethal beak and claws – a second silent killer!

"Abstraction and representation, form and content, observation and the inner vision. The difficulty is to obtain a balance between these opposites." John Walker on Turner



Unglazed porcelain tiles
40.5cm diameter

‘Devil Birds’ by Sindy Benton

I love swifts! I find it amazing, given they are over here for only three months or so each year, that in such a short stay they raise a family and come back to the same nest site – (usually in the eaves of a roof or a hole in a building) – year after year. I love their screams and flying antics and their sociability.

The young swifts - once airborne - don't land again for three to four years, when they begin to look for nesting sites and a mate for life. They even sleep on the wing. Swifts are in trouble however because nesting sites are being tidied up and sealed off, denying them access. So please put up swift boxes under the eaves to help them. Watch them come, racing over the rooftops, faster than the eye can follow, screaming, these black bolts of wildness.

The term 'Devil Bird' is historic and could be due to their dark sooty colour and their inaccessibility, which in the past attracted more folklore than good natural history. Every year I look forward to their short season over here.

Working on this mosaic over December 2021 and early 2022, I cut the pieces of the main body of the larger swift first. That was glued in position and then I continued with the other parts of the mosaic from the bottom upwards ending with the top of the sky. The whole piece was grouted in one go. It hangs with two other mosaic pieces on the staircase wall, one is a dragon and the other a hedgehog.

“Every artist was first an amateur.” Ralph Waldo Emerson



Mixed media
60 x 60cm

'Allotment' by Margaret Bird

Back in the Spring of 2022, when the lockdowns were easing, the passionate allotment holders of Long Leys Road were under threat of losing their plots to a 'community' development. Naturally, having nurtured their plots for twenty or more years in some cases, improving the soil, digging deep, building their sheds and becoming very productive, they were upset about the proposals to move them elsewhere. As if one could just move from a beautifully kept productive piece of land to an area which had not been cultivated, ever, and all would be well.

So, in order to gain support for their cause they held an open day for the locals to see what they could do. I duly attended and was amazed by the variety of uses to which people put their allotments. There are those which are like an intensively farmed market garden of neat rows and deeply cultivated soil. One is an orchard where visitors are welcome to sit, some have raised beds surrounded by uncultivated areas, and some are a tangle of brambles, with a patch cut out where there might be an attempt at growing potatoes or beans.

The thing that inspired me most were the sheds in so many different styles and materials! Yes, some were conventional sheds, bought as one, but the majority are cobbled together from sheets of corrugated tin, old used doors and windows, random pieces of wood, plastic sheets and scaffold poles. Some are beautifully kept, with a veranda and a chair for relaxing, while others are covered in vine and almost obscured.

After taking a few photographs and doing some sketching, this was the result. You will not find this allotment as it is an amalgamation, painted in support of allotment holders everywhere.

"Bad artists copy, good artists steal!" Pablo Picasso



Stoneware ceramic, glaze and oxide
8 x 6.5cm

‘Spurn Point #009’ by Kate Boulton

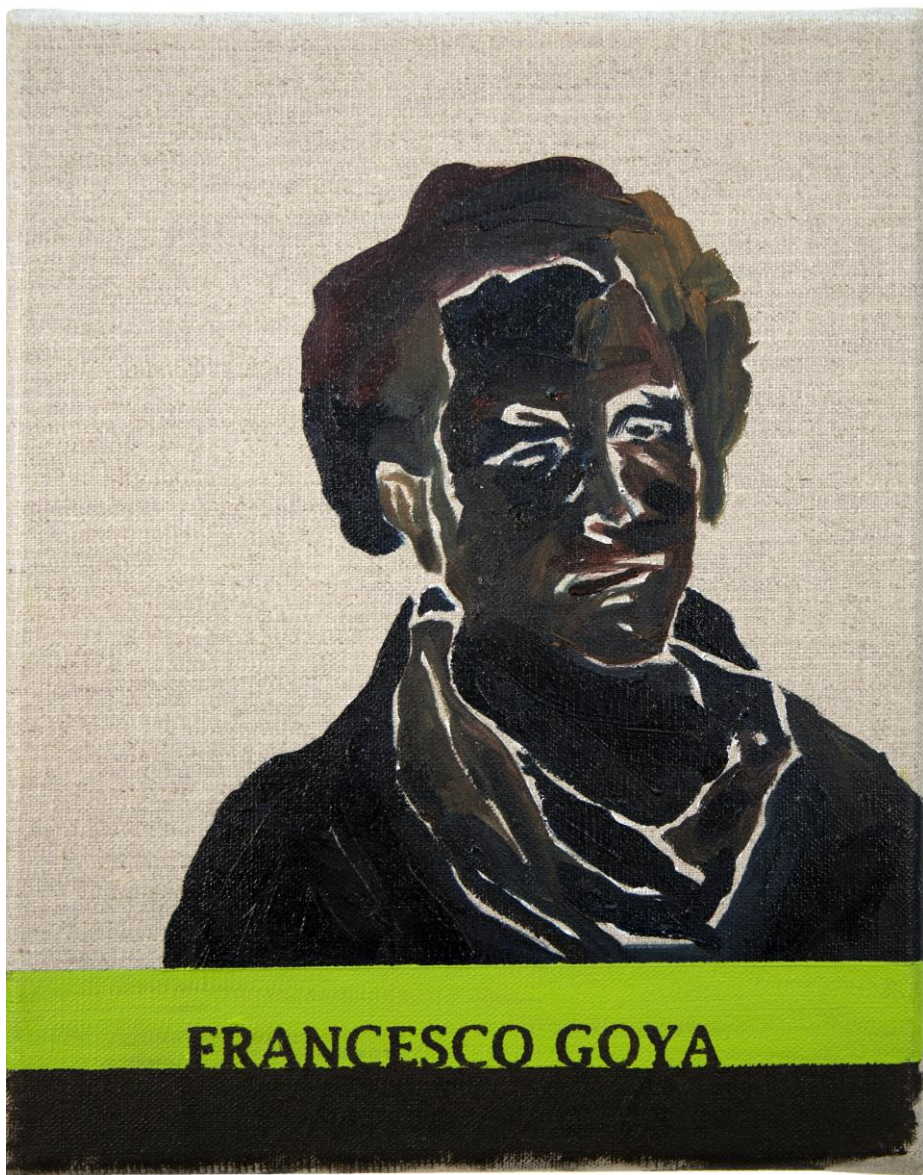
I began working with clay as a therapeutic antidote to the day-to-day stresses of work and life.

Being restricted by travel throughout the pandemic, I was able to focus more on the natural environments that surrounded me and on using clay as a medium to convey a narrative. My art became the stability of my day, grounding and motivating me. I have always been inspired by the rural landscapes of Yorkshire, where I grew up, and of Lincolnshire, where I now live. Landscapes are continually changing and evolving, though are paradoxically a constant.

The natural world became a constant for me during a time of unrest and anxiety during lockdown. Looking out at the fields surrounding my home, provided a sense of calm in an otherwise uncertain world and I wanted to reflect this feeling of peace in my artwork. Combining my passion for ceramics and landscape art, I began using slips, glazes and oxides in a painterly way, creating miniature abstract versions of the world surrounding me.

The unpredictability and volatility of the glazing and firing processes create unexpected and often beautiful results, which continue to keep me on my toes. And it is this unpredictability that has taught me to go with the flow, especially during times of hardship, embracing the faults as well as the successes.

“What does it mean for a painter to use one artist’s style or another? You have to paint like someone else.... But you make a mess of everything. And it’s when you make a mess of everything, you are yourself.” Pablo Picasso



Oil paint on canvas
30 x 24cm

'Self-ish Portrait (Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes)' by Andrew Bracey

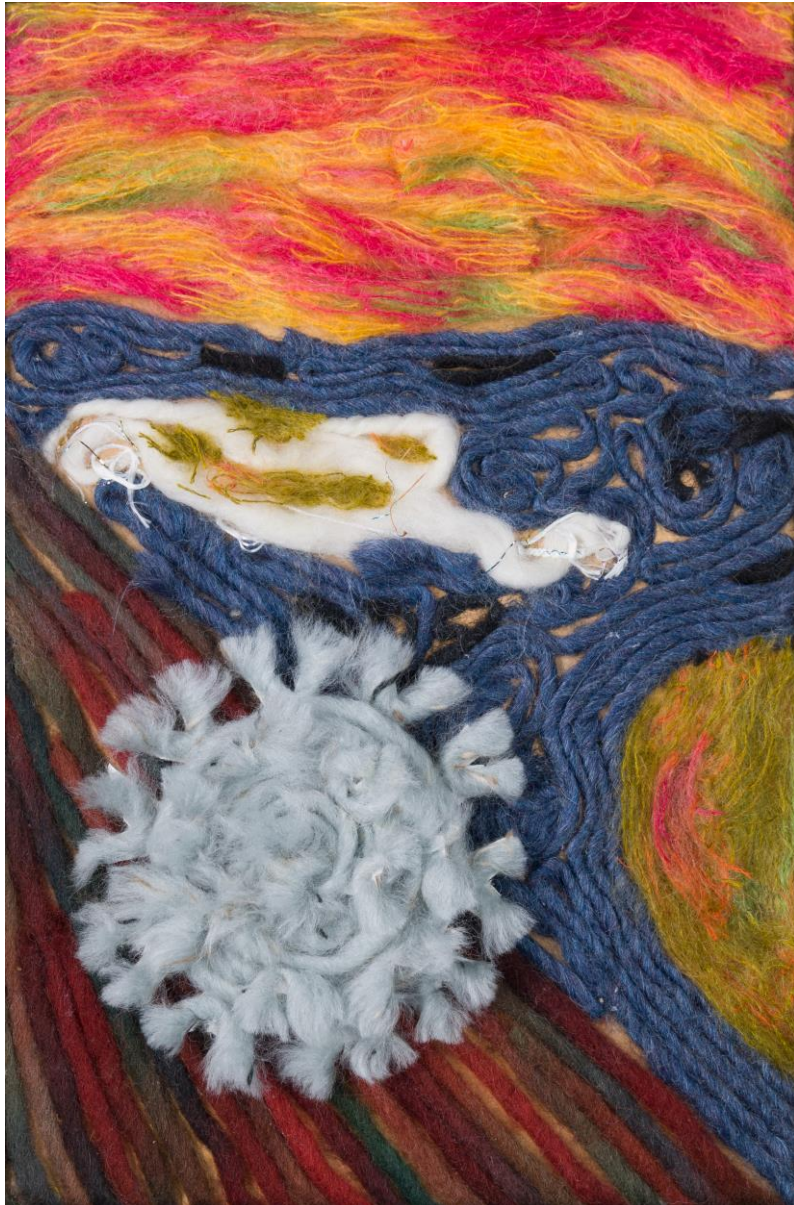
I am interested in having non-verbal conversations with existing paintings by other artists to create new artworks from them. Making each 'Self-ish Portrait' begins with a period of close looking, where I pay attention to a self-portrait - in this case of and by Francisco Goya - and then paint a simple outline of the artist on stretched linen.

I then put aside conscious knowledge of Goya, his work and this self-portrait. I approach the outline of the figure with fresh eyes. As is common to my working process, I initially covered the white gesso layer with a ground made from paint found on the palette leftover from other 'Self-ish Portrait' paintings. I did this with no intent other than replacing the white primer with a layer of colour. However, on multiple visits to the studio, I found I was unwilling to do any more to the painting, without knowing why.

One day I realised that the dark paint correlated uncannily with Goya's late Black Paintings. To repeat, this was not an approach I set out with consciously; the colour, marks and any connection with content were made intuitively and the decision to not make any changes was unknown to me for several weeks. Intriguingly the Goya self-portrait selected was made at a time contemporaneous to the Black Paintings.

This insight suggests I was being guided subconsciously, as I was not thinking about Goya or his works when creating the 'Self-ish Portrait' of him. I was intuitively directed to not make any changes to my initial colour and mark decisions and I felt that something was right before I knew what that was. I am constantly fascinated by the making-thinking that happens in the studio and the latent possibilities in our unconscious state of mind.

"Attention alone - that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears - is required of me." Simone Weil



Wool on cardboard
31 x 21cm

‘The Virus’ by Prue Chadderton

I love art in all its many forms but I’m not a practising artist, so I was thrilled when my one and only entry was chosen to hang in the Usher Art Gallery.

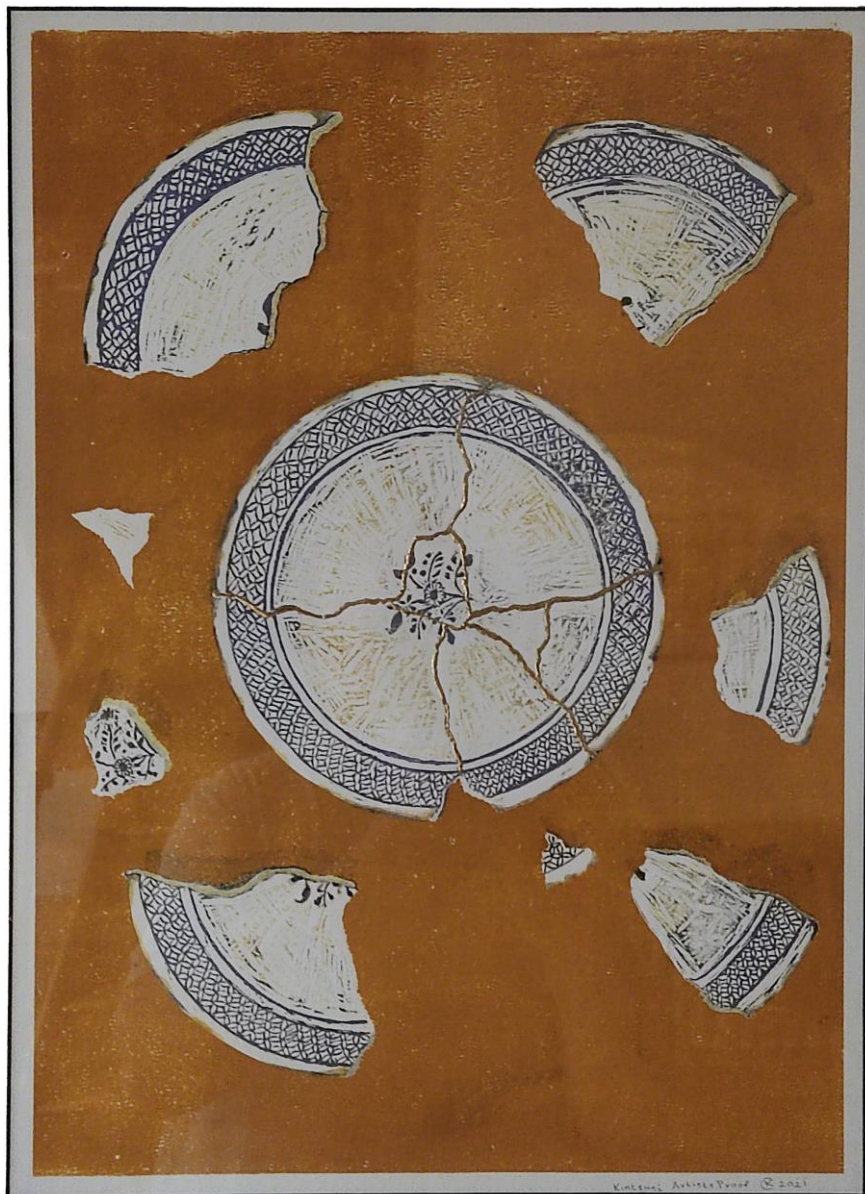
I would like to be an artist. As an infant teacher, I loved devising topic-based artistic projects for my pupils, so I am sure there is a creative person inside me trying to get out.

So! if I’m not an artist, what happened during the pandemic to inspire me to create ‘The Virus’?

Right from the start of lockdown, I had this strange compulsion to produce something to mark this strange phenomenon in some way. Ideas started to form in my head but I always came back to Edvard Munch’s ‘The Scream’. A painting, famous for depicting loneliness, isolation and despair, it seemed to sum up the sensations we were all feeling.

I couldn’t work out what to do. I knew the three-dimensional effect I wanted would be unachievable with paint and so the idea stalled. Then, quite unexpectedly, a friend who was moving house offered me a bag of wool. It was full of leftovers from her many knitting projects. It was a wonderful collection of colour and texture suddenly there it was! Almost instantly my vision came to life with nothing more than a sheet of card and some glue

“Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye. It also includes the inner pictures of the soul.” Edvard Munch



Linocut with gold leaf illumination
29.5 x 42cm

'Kintsugi' by Keith Charlton

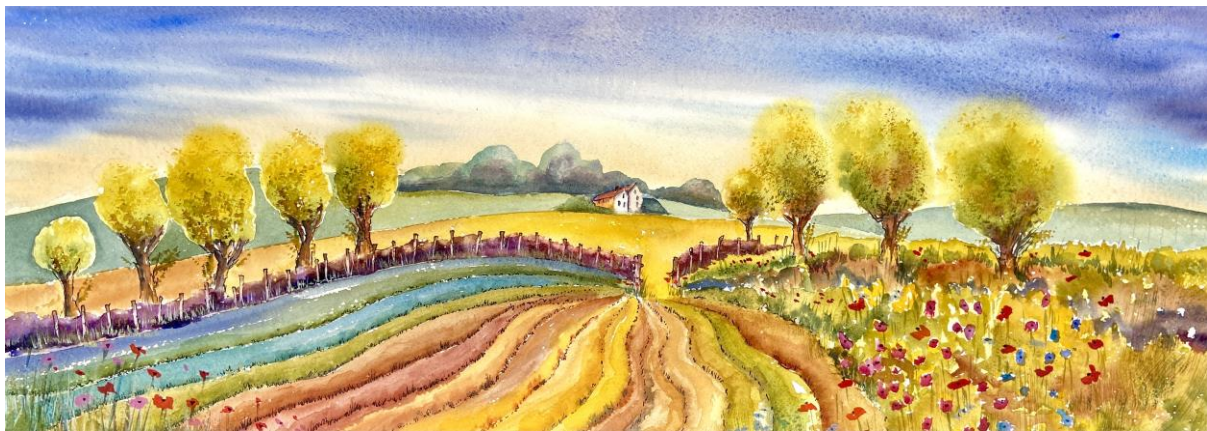
The isolation enhanced my powers of seeing. More and more, things which I observed became art. I felt that the process of making art in some way always involved adding value. That addition could be in the form of a superlative technique, the introduction of a political or social statement or the depiction of emotion and I'm sure many others. It is this addition that produces a response from the viewer, be it love, anger, desire or revulsion that defines the work as art.

That led to the problem of expressing these views on paper. I suffered from deficiencies in technique. At the same time, so many things were being broken, lives, families, travel, work and then one day a valued plate. I wanted to explore the process of mending. I needed a technique to express that a fracture had occurred but had been repaired, without trying to sweep the wreckage under the carpet, to deny that it happened, in the same way that severed lives and families might be mended without denying that once they were broken.

I realised that medieval monks used gold illumination to celebrate perfection whilst contrarily the Japanese enhanced a repair with gold to celebrate the defect, a process known as Kintsugi. I had been lucky enough before lockdown to attend courses in reduction lino printing with Ian Phillips and Gold Illumination with Toni Watts and there, had been provided with the techniques I needed. The print 'Kintsugi' was born.

I was particularly pleased with the printing of the multiple shadows cast by the shards of the broken plate and I'm pretty sure I invented the method of achieving this. I have every intention of passing this knowledge on to the next monk when I can no longer be repaired.

"Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful." William Morris.



Watercolours
25 x 70cm

'Rainbow County' by Karin Christensen

I had packed my watercolour kit and a camping chair after breakfast in the morning and headed north from Boston. Sitting in a farm field high up in the beautiful Lincolnshire Wolds, looking at the winding landscape of ploughed fields, I could now see a positive side to lockdown. I was not going out to work or anywhere else. I had time to paint.

And one of my first priorities was to find a lovely spot in the Wolds where I could park the car, get my painting gear out, find a quiet corner of a farmer's field and take a really good look at the landscape. Lush trees and bushes everywhere, lots of flowers along the edge of the fields and insects buzzing in the sun.

How privileged I felt having the luxury of a full day painting on location. The amazing Wolds landscape has always inspired me. Trees, farmland and sky combining in ever-changing moods and colours.

I painted many different pieces of the distant tree line and the rolling hills on that lovely early April day. These field studies inspired the larger watercolour painting I created later, and also helped me decide that a panorama format would work best. As lockdown progressed, we started using the rainbow colours as a sign of support for the NHS. This inspired me to include vivid colours in the farm fields of my painting, calling it 'Rainbow County'. This was in recognition of the amazing work many people were doing for their communities during this time.

Personally, I came to appreciate even more the significance of doing art, spending time in nature and connecting with my local community, and I still try to hold on to those priorities.

"Sometimes you just feel the urge to play with colour; let them loose on the paper and see what they get up to." Ian Fennelly (Layers of Looking)



Acrylic on canvas
65 x 45cm

'A Stand of Dead Olives' by Kathleen Clarkson

I have been painting and responding to the Tuscan landscape since the early 1990s. The unique protected volcanic Crete di Siena still manages to inspire and surprise me. The changing colours of crumbly, desert-like undulating fields with seasons and times of day, autumn richer than summer, dusk more varied than day. The special harvest of these lands - olives, grapes, different fruit and vegetables - in dry lava soil, delighted and enriched my experience, driving my desire to capture and share with others.

I have frequently studied olive trees, young and old. Sometimes their trunks are so worn and eaten away that great carved-out holes appear. Venerable trees with their main stems split in three so much that one client argued with me that my painting was of three interwoven olive trees, not one solid bole. Yet these battered ancients still produce young shoots and maturing fruit. Such regeneration is uplifting.

With warm expectations of the current season, two years ago we drove from the highway over high agricultural roads with twists and bends towards our destination. As familiar vistas opened up, we were lulled into that familiar relaxed pace of life.

We took a downward corner and I was immediately struck by the stark flame orange of a stand of dead olives. Shocked, we stopped as I questioned why this had happened. Was it neglect? Was this evidence of the destructive force of climate change, even here? Surely not here!

I sketched and photographed and was determined to return to study the scene in charcoal, coloured pastels and watercolour paint. Back in my studio during lockdown, I developed these into a mixed media working drawing, with a view to a final painting in acrylic. This involved composing with selection and simplification, in order to express the starkness of the image.

"Painting is just pools of coloured water manipulated around a page - do not be intimidated by the empty page or canvas but launch in." Dame Elizabeth Blackadder



Mixed media sculpture
30 x 30 x 40cm

'Heritage' by Graham Cooling

The original iteration of the work was made in 2019 and of course, life was different then. I'd already boxed away the piece as it was and resided it in the "well that's done" part of my brain. I'd had thoughts of modifying it but not for a long while, after all the world wasn't going anywhere.

I then watched the world unfold. We all did. We'd all in a way taken it for granted. The stability of it all, the consistency. We'd seen out in the wider world on the news and TV other nations dealing with other plights but never at home. No! - those things cannot happen here.

So, there I was, in my home, my glass dome, watching the noise of silence with another glass dome by my side and I thought "What gives you the privilege of staying so protected?"

I think as artists you can't help but recognise patterns, and the pattern I'd been seeing for years had suddenly been thrust upon me and engaged me. As humans we create, we engage with, and we preserve. And what we're left with is often more precious, as it reminds us of our mistakes and our victories. But the process is what makes up the core of being human. For better or worse.

Therefore, sitting in isolation, I took it upon myself to subject my work to the same. As an artist I think if I am to make work which is a reflection of society and the world I live in, how could I sit and allow my own creation to not go through the process as well? I couldn't, it would be dishonest and so compulsion took me, and in the end engaged with my own work. Probably the most cathartic thing I've ever done.

"We do not do this thing because it is permitted... We do it because we are compelled."
Alan Moore



Acrylics
80 x 60cm

'Rejuvenation' by Betty Cooper

One of the joys of driving through the Lincolnshire countryside is the prospect of capturing many of the long-distance views which can stretch for miles. It was whilst driving to Sleaford from the village of Folkingham on the A15, that I first caught a glimpse of a row of large buildings far away on the horizon. I was intrigued to learn more about these landmarks, called Sleaford's Bass Maltings, which were spectacular, not least in their scale, but in the beauty and intricacy of their architecture too.

Originally constructed in 1907 they were the largest floor maltings in the country and comprised eight malt houses, each with five bays and six storeys. At the centre was a water tower plus two engines to pump water around the site, but sadly by 1959 these immense landmarks were abandoned and fell victim to vandalism and arson.

The Maltings are situated off Mareham Lane on the outskirts of Sleaford but because of the loose masonry, unsafe floors, and open voids they are off-limits to the public and I could not explore the interior of the ruined buildings. However, late one afternoon I was able to make a few sketches and take reference photographs from across the field in front of the site.

In the fading light, these derelict buildings gave off an almost ghostly image, a sad vision of their unique industrial past. I tried to capture this feeling of dereliction in my painting but with the possibility of future resurrection.

"Art is a line around your thoughts." Gustav Klimt



Photography
42 x 66cm

'Reflections' by Jason Corrigan

Lincoln is a beautiful restful place to be, though life is quite hectic for me at times. It was 2020 however and the days ahead were going to change all that.

Coming home from work the television was on and rumours of a virus were spreading around the world. We started to see images from Italy of people being rushed into ICU wards. Week after week things got worse and you could sense the fear in people as panic buying started, leaving supermarkets with empty shelves.

The fear took its grip when the Government announced Covid-19 was in England. The lockdowns came into effect and the closure of shops and livelihoods had been halted. The jabs, vaccine passports and isolation of staying indoors began to take their toll. Everything we held dear was taken away from us bit by bit. Nurses working around the clock on the frontlines and lorry drivers delivering food to the supermarkets were now the new heroes and we applauded them. These were dark days and we were being pushed to our limits.

Everything was gloomy and grey and this is why I went out with my camera. My mind's eye retained visions of this colourful city. I knew the shot I wanted, so went out early morning in the snow, hunting for it.

I found the place of inspiration standing on the bridge near the Green Dragon pub and thought *That is it!* The melted snow on the roads and glimmer of the roofs gave me the fantastic, vibrant colours I had been seeking.

Lockdown prompted me to find this positive scene of reds, yellows and blues. The negative days of Covid-19 had been washed away and my vision of Lincoln was restored. Since taking the picture lockdowns have never returned and life is slowly returning.....

"You don't take a photograph, you make it." Ansel Adams



Textile
24 x 35cm

‘The Trail’ by Joan Currie

I live in the countryside and am often out walking; I even go on walking holidays with a sketchbook to capture what I see and feel. As a textile artist, I aim to go beyond the immediately observable, expressing an emotional response to landscapes in stitch using the sewing machine as a drawing tool.

In 2020, required by law no less, to stay at home without any distractions and not meet other people, proved to be a test of resilience. I enjoy reading and took the time spent alone to read novels, one of which was John Steinbeck’s ‘The Grapes of Wrath’.

I had started this as a schoolgirl plodding about a third of the way through before finally giving up. Decades later, hopefully with a little more maturity, I had another attempt. I became immersed in an emotional landscape, steeped in the plight of the Joad family’s journey of being unable to look back and unsure of what to expect ahead. This reaction to the text kept reverberating in my mind as an analogy of life’s journey during lockdown.

The Trail is the point at which the family had realised - after so much struggle coming over the mountains, only to see a seemingly endless desert yet to cross to reach California - their dreams of a promised land. So many parallels can be drawn just from this incident. The landscape has no people or buildings, just marks left over centuries adding the perspective of time into the mix.

“The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.”
Emily Dickinson



Acrylic on hardboard
60 x 60cm

'A Walk in the Fens' by Wendy Dabrowska

'A Walk in the Fens' is one of a series of paintings and drawings, also known as 'The Green Beret Series'.

The inspiration comes from the experience of living amongst the wilds of nature and its desolate landscape. Wild winds come from the East and at times one is barely able to stand up in them. Then there is the remarkable horizon, I had never seen a horizon before I came to live in the Fens, and here you can see where the sky and earth meet. The skies billowing and showing wonderful cloud formations of amorphous shapes. There is the magic of winter skies and the seasonal colours in the sky, the mauve, the oranges, the pinks.

The land is flat and you can see for miles and there is nothing to impede the huge skies. To walk in this landscape where you can be alone is quite a privilege, it is invigorating, breathtaking and truly joyous.

The strong, battering Easterly winds blow everything in its path, there is a loss of self in its strength, but profound exhilaration.

"..ask the wind, the birds, everything that is flying, everything that is rolling, ask the wind." Charles Baudelaire



Watercolours
20 x 30cm

‘Hidden Tulips’ by Debbie Davidge

This particular painting was produced for a unique and extraordinary exhibition, one in which I was extremely humbled and proud to be involved, during the latter part of 2022.

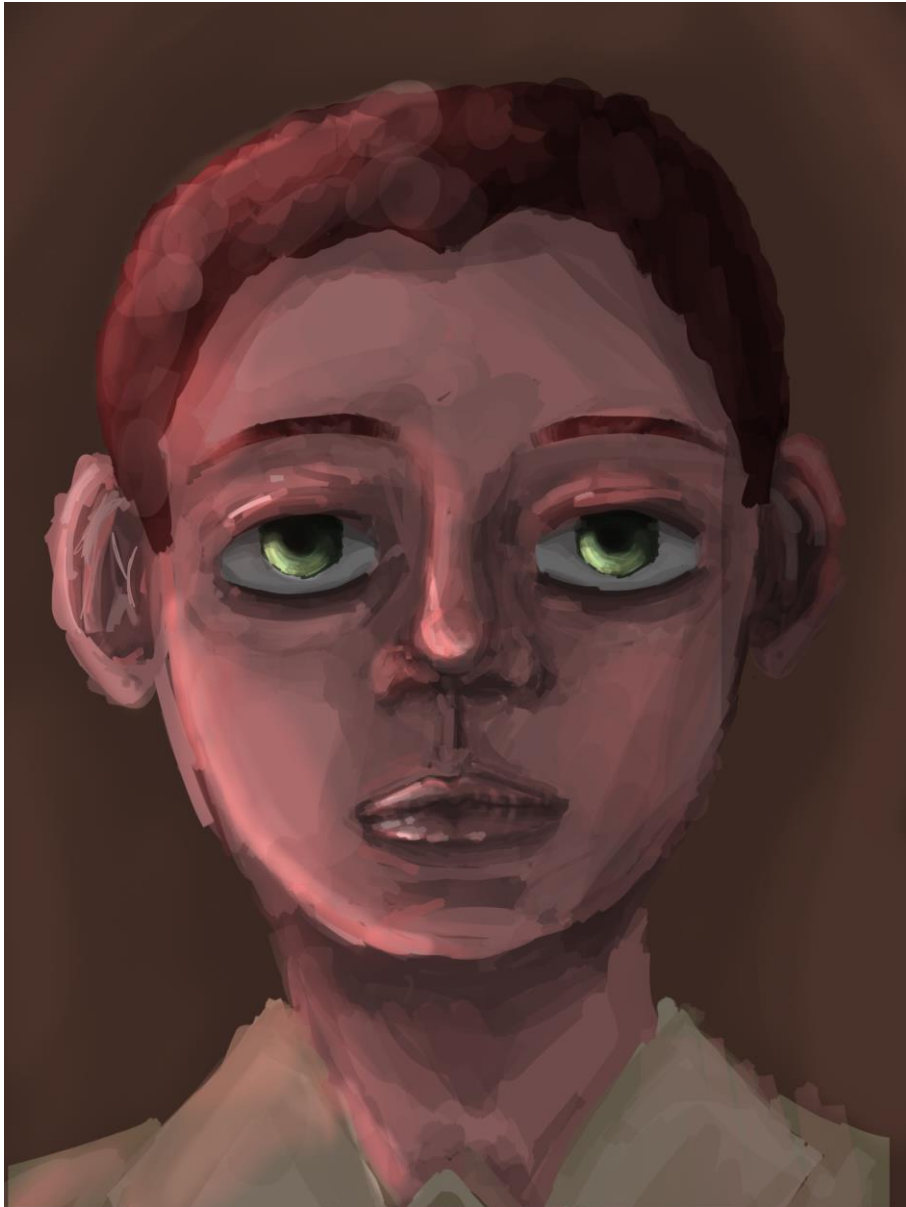
The exhibition was designed to support a centre and museum that highlighted the horrific events that took place during World War II. The diversity of the artworks was there to focus on the Jewish suffering, but also to alleviate inequality regardless of race, sex, or religion. The brief was simply ‘Back to Colour’.

So, after much deep thought and just trying to imagine those dark days of persecution during World War II, my painting ‘Hidden Tulips’ was created in watercolour.

To me, it represents the concealment of those that had to hide during the dark days of the war to avoid capture. The darkness of the background of the painting, just showing the odd ray of light and gentle colours, coming through when there was a chink of hope of being liberated or rescued. The leaves are shooting out in all directions which, again, represents their hopes of escaping from the cruelty and brutality of those times and finding any way or means possible of surviving or escaping.

Finally, and the most important parts of this painting to me, are the Tulips encouraging hope, openness, a new start and colour, back into their lives when the war was finally over and people were being liberated.

“Art has the power to transform, to illuminate, to educate, inspire and motivate.”
Harvery Fierstein.



Digital art on card
30 x 42cm

'Lonely-Digital' by Iris Drury

My painting was one of the consequences of being in lockdown that I experienced. It was an exploration of what the end result of a prolonged period of being inside meant personally. Because I started learning digital art in the early stages of lockdown, this portrait felt like a positive end result for me and a representation of how I had developed artistically over that time.

In addition, I aimed to put across the emotion related to loneliness through means such as the tired look in their eyes and the blank expression. The reason I chose to focus on loneliness is that it is such a prominent experience in people's lives at the time of lockdown.

I hoped that the eye contact the portrait makes with the viewer would provide some support to them and send the message - *you're not alone* - despite how isolated they looked.

I know I didn't feel particularly lonely at the time as I met lots of really close friends on-line. However, I wanted to provide clarity to myself and others, that overall, there are other people that understand the isolation (literally or metaphorically) that one feels in these circumstances.

"Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it." Andy Warhol



Giclee digital print on Canson Baryta archival paper
50 x 50cm

'Catastrophe' by Piers Eveleigh

"Long, long, ago, when the World was new and still a little unsteady, there were four Great Elephants - of the North, the East, the South and the West - who kept the World balanced and steady. And as long as they each stayed in their part of the World, the World remained balanced and steady.

And everything was as everything should be.

But one day the Great Elephant of the North invited the three other Great Elephants to a snow party in the North Pole, and the three other Great Elephants set off to join the Elephant of the North. But now, with all four Great Elephants at the North of the World instead of being where they were meant to be, the World was unbalanced... and it began to wobble and to wobble... and then it wobbled and wobbled even more... until suddenly it wobbled and wobbled so much that it turned completely upside down. CATASTROPHE!

Everything was completely shaken up and jumbled around.

And now left was right and black was white.

Up became down and in became out.

Fish flew and birds swam.

Clocks went tock-tick instead of tick-tock.

Cats murrred and cows pooooooed.

The sun rained and the wind shone. Mummies and Daddies became Dummies and Maddies, and Strawberries and Cream became Crawberries and Steam (still absolutely delicious!)."

What began as silly stories to entertain my children during long drives, became a rich source of inspiration to try and portray the extraordinary 'World of the Four Great Elephants', of which 'Catastrophe' is an example. Sadly, the problems of a world in disarray and under threat are becoming increasingly real.

"Never let anyone drive you crazy; it is nearby anyway, and the walk will do you good."
Lewis Carroll



Gouache on paper
52 x 46cm

'Dead Seal' by Jo Ferguson

Having access to the coast every couple of weeks during lockdown was hugely rewarding, not only in terms of open space, fresh air and freedom, but also for the endlessly absorbing trove of natural objects offered up by the sea. I'd always come back with something interesting (often a bit fishy-smelling) in my pocket.

I like to hold a particular place in my mind like a film set and view it from a variety of angles. This allows the cast, who are, in this case, my beach treasures, to romp around and interact, sometimes taking lead role, sometimes wandering off for a breather. I rarely know the whole story in advance, and can be as surprised as anyone else at the image I come up with. Looking back at the extraordinary circumstances of 2020, I think my pictures were inevitably going to evoke some sort of hellscape of disease and death. As news about a new nuclear disposal site at Theddlethorpe arrived, angst over the environment crept into the mix too.

In this gouache, a mauve and green sea urchin hangs, wind-blown, like a giant virus, together with a thing with branching capillaries (which started out as a bleached log). The ridges in the sand have morphed into a backbone, and scraps of seaweed and plastic pollution suggest cells and organs.

In the bottom corner, a seal skeleton (I left that where I found it!) reaches out a bony, desperate hand. On the horizon, clouds and turbines have melded to become a ghostly cuckoo.

My inspiration comes from the unexpected symbols and stories pulled from my subconscious, as much as any of the true-life components.

"Just like Alice...you've got to find your own doorway into things." Dame Paula Rego



Pinhole photography
69 x 64cm

‘Secret Hideaway’ by Melanie Gazda

The task of writing about the inspiration for my piece ‘Secret Hideaway’, could be likened to a mental assault course. Cognitively, I am void of the skills required to transfer thoughts and feelings into words. If I didn’t channel these intuitively through creating visual arts I would be ‘secretly hidden’. You could say my art has emerged as a response to dyslexia and dysgraphia; as a more natural way for me to express feeling, and emotion and to hopefully be understood by others.

With ‘Secret Hideaway’ created with a pinhole camera, I am relying on the photographs to evoke emotion within the viewer and for the viewer to conclude their meaning, as I struggle to do this with words.

Clearly, lockdown negatively impacted many people’s mental health. My work aimed to depict the emotional toll on myself during the pandemic and I hope that people might be able to connect with it. Already having existing clinical depression and anxieties, I had become used to feeling isolated. Only now it had multiplied.

Unlike other photographic instruments, pinhole cameras are not recognisable from the outside and in a sense, I was inside one. I had been abandoned and detained in a ‘secret hideaway’. The pinhole displayed with delicate focus, a situation of abandonment. The images I took reveal in detail, fragility and desertion. The visual characteristics of the place I found for my ‘secret hideaway’ created an atmosphere equal to my psychological state.

Revealing an experience that was so personal acted as a form of therapy, and a way of release from this confinement. I was reaching out to the glimpse of light beckoning in the distance.

“The light at the end of the tunnel is no illusion; the tunnel is. The tunnel is the illusion of separation, the illusion of being alone...” David Starlyte



Oil pastel on paper
14 x 14cm

‘Tide’s Out’ by Jaci Gill

I was born by the sea on the Suffolk coast, and I don’t think you ever get it out of your blood - always looking for that horizon, that blue distance. Living there as a child, I was convinced we lived at the edge of the world. The sea defined the limit, so we must be! This watery mass was endless and was transfixing – the sound of it, its moods, its eternal ebb and flow, high tide and low tide recorded by clocks outside the town hall.

Lincoln is now my home, but I still hear the sea, and when I look out from the Lincoln Edge, the view across the valley becomes a seascape with its layers stretching away to the blue distance. Its moods and colours are dictated by weather, season, time of day, and the sounds of the valley echoing the sounds of the sea. Transfixed again, this view has inspired my art for many years and still does to some extent.

Covid-19 and life in lockdown suddenly brought ‘living at the edge of the world’ full circle - to the limits of home. Creative expression was bounded by the garden, fences and trees demarcating the horizon. I was isolated, but it was strangely compulsive and healing to be working with the soil and the earth. I became reluctant to leave this safe place, but a chance to escape to the North Norfolk coast just before the second lockdown was irresistible. A very different coast, where the sea creeps inland on the tide and the coastal path meanders through the salt marshes, which you follow when the tide is out. It will return, and so will inspiration.

“Art is a form of experimentation.” Kit White



Acrylic and mixed media
20 x 20cm

‘As the Sun reaches out’ by Carly Gilliatt

You could say this painting, ‘As the Sun reaches out’, was the result of a bad day in the studio! I had been working on a collection of paintings based on a holiday in St Ives. I wanted to work on a lot of pieces at the same time, in different sizes and just see what happened. After a while I realised, I had stopped playing, I was overthinking, trying to finish things and generally feeling dissatisfied.

It became clear I needed to have a reset and get back to just enjoying myself. I took out five small wooden panels and decided on a limited palette of just one red, one yellow, black and white. I just had fun mixing as many colours and tones as I could from my selection of four, enjoying the energy and the marks I was making.

Out of that session came the start of five paintings that felt alive and joyful, of which, ‘As the Sun reaches out’, was one. It was a useful reminder, and encouraged me to go back to my other paintings with a sense of fun and pushed me to take some risks. It will continue to remind me. There is a reason I have “Don’t think just paint!” written on my wall.

Lend your ear to music, open your eyes to painting and ... stop thinking! Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to ‘walk about’ into a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want?” Wassily Kandinsky



Acrylic on board
39 x 49cm

'Three Lemons' by Janet Glazier

It was a blazing hot afternoon in the Mediterranean. We were walking past a small orange orchard and, seeking shade, I stepped under an orange tree into a tangle of branches. Throwing my head back I looked up at the orange globes against the deep blue sky and it was a heart stopping moment of pure joy.

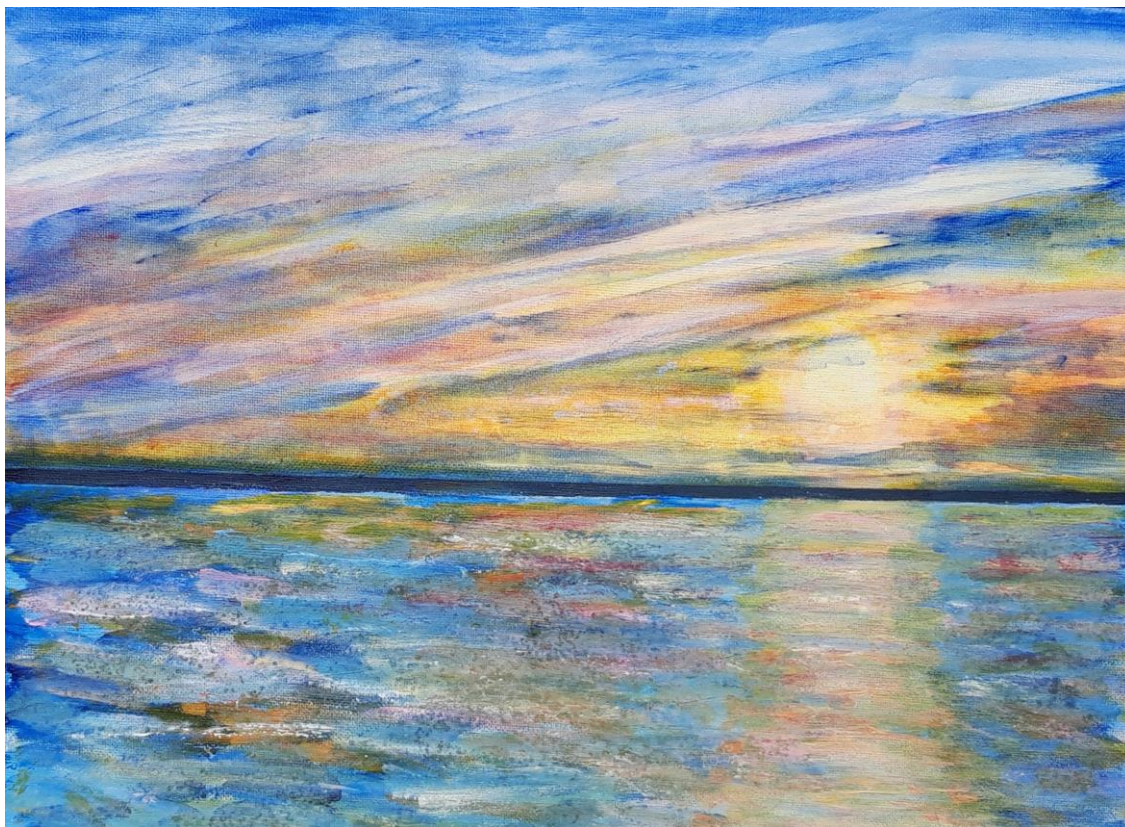
That was the start of an obsession with staring at, wondering about and then painting, oranges and lemons. It was, of course, those bright colours of yellow and orange against Mediterranean blue that drew me in initially, together with that heady perfume, but it was also those very simple forms of leaf, fruit and flower that were to become stylised on my canvases.

Whenever and wherever I travelled south, I sought out orange and lemon trees. For some reason, I was never interested in the texture of the fruit - it was the spare beauty of the spheres and ovals with their saturated colours that I needed to record. It was challenging, too, to sometimes set their simplicity against complex geometry.

A big birthday during lockdown brought a lovely lemon tree as a present and I was able to watch its growth, its flowering and fruiting close up. It became a source of inspiration when travel was not an option.

That initial, creative impact has stayed with me throughout the decades and has had an interesting influence on paintings of quite different subject matter!

"Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are." Gaston Bachelard



Acrylic on board
40.5 x 30.5cm

‘Tangalooma Sunset’ by Vanessa Glover

In February 2020 we flew to Australia to meet our son - who we hadn't seen for five years - his partner and their six-month-old, Hudson.

Covid-19 was just reported in China - who could imagine what it would become? We stayed at Tangalooma on Moreton Island - warm seas teeming with fish, giant sea turtles, dugongs and dolphins. It is an island paradise.

Clear blue sea reflected vivid blue sky through the day, until finally the sun slowly sank over the mainland. Golden rays of the sun were merging with the darkening blues of sea and sky, forming a kaleidoscope of colour. At sunset, a truly magical experience was wading waist-deep into the sea to meet and feed wild dolphins. They would swim around our legs, gently taking fish from our hands before returning back to the sea.

Whilst the rest of our stay with the family was wonderful, the world was slowly starting to shut down; dark days were looming. Tearfully departing, it became clear getting home was far from guaranteed.

However, stopping over to break our journey with our daughter and her husband in Vietnam turned out to be extremely fortunate. This was because things had become very serious indeed, with traditional air routes home closing down each day. Finally, after an anxious wait at the airport, we took off on one of the last flights out of Saigon, allowing us to get home just in time to be locked down.

During the dark days of lockdown, I took up painting again, after a break of thirty years. There was no end in sight for the pandemic and a vaccine was merely an aspirational hope. Not knowing when I would be able to hug Hudson again, I found solace in reliving the wonderful time at Tangalooma by recreating those spectacular sunsets.

“Even a mistake may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement.” Henry Ford.



Moonlight metallic glaze over ceramic body
28 x 25 x 35cm

'A socially distanced chat with Angie' by Elaine Gorton

During the period of isolation, it became clear what was most important in life and what you missed the most. I missed people, sharing a glass of wine and having a conversation.

When we were allowed to step out of our household and meet a select few, Angie was one of my few. This was a time of heightened emotions, so every word or gesture was weighted with intensity as we'd been starved of companionship for so long. I missed other people's perspectives. I missed their emotions and reactions to the world, reactions to the pandemic and our personal journey through it.

I asked Angie round and we sat in my kitchen with all the windows open, sun streaming in, talking about more personal things. We got to know each other more deeply during the three hours it took to do the sculpture. Working this way made it easier to resist the urge I had to hug a friend I had not seen for a long time.

We talked about the love we have for our children and our concern for the future. Angie is a very beautiful woman and is known for her laughter and her smile. That day however there was also an expression of exquisitely sharp sadness on her face, as she talked to me about her worries. What would happen to her disabled son if she were not there to care for him?

That impression stayed with me. As I worked the clay with my fingers it felt like I was touching the face I was shaping. The pandemic loomed large in our lives as I had lost a family member and friend. I hope my sculpture shows the human reality of Covid-19 behind the statistics and graphs.

"There are infinite modes of expression in the world of art, and to insist that only by one road can the artist attain his ends is to limit him." Jacob Epstein



Acrylics
41 x 51cm

‘Top Dog’ by Liz Graydon

The inspiration for the painting was my dog. I have always enjoyed studying dogs and have attempted to portray our black Labradors over the years. It's fascinating to observe their different characters and appearance; the size of their eyes and paws, and the depth of gloss on their coats. I am particularly drawn to dogs with large expressive heads.

Joey - our big black Labrador - came to us aged 10 after an illustrious career in the show ring. He was extraordinarily handsome and carried himself with dignity and elegance. He had a haughty way of viewing the world through half-closed eyes and I was totally inspired by the attempt to capture that special human look.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, when dog walking was an escape, distanced greeting with friends and other dog walkers showcased his special good looks and drew many compliments. He walked with head held high in a human way. I never tired of watching him and decided to concentrate my painting on his magnificent head. Joey was more than happy to pose!

Then I needed to emphasise his special character and decided to humanise him even further with suitable attire. I remembered an artist many years ago who painted the heads of many breeds of dogs and dressed them in historic costumes. Joey obviously needed something to reflect his stature and air of mature authority. So, I borrowed my husband's grand RAF uniform (No 1 Ceremonial).

Very sadly, Joey is no longer alive but my portrait of him makes me smile, as I remember a great character and much-loved companion.

“An accurate depiction of a scene.....will not move us as much as a picture where atmosphere of place is the inspiration....” George Clausen



Pencil and watercolour
30 x 21cm

'Man with Nice Tie' by Stephen Grey.

Faced with the blank first page of a new sketchbook was, as usual, daunting enough without having to search for inspiration. Morning became afternoon, one coffee became two or three before 'it' came to me.

I planned to create at least one drawing every day that reflected the unprecedented situation in which we all found ourselves. The decision was unlikely to be unique as I imagined fellow artists locked away for the foreseeable future, scratching their collective heads, and who may well have come to the same conclusion.

The cartoon-like doodles followed - small pencil and watercolour self-portraits. Captive in a cramped third bedroom which served as my studio, the pages became filled with what I called situation comedies. Some days three or four drawings were produced - visual comments primarily for my own amusement. I decided however to post them on social media and wait for any reaction.

My Internet 'friends' became my critics, and the most popular from the great many I had produced were placed in a folder titled, rather unimaginatively, "Life in Lockdown".

My submission to the open exhibition was in the top ten among 'friends' and family, all of whom were keeping the regulation social distance.

"To know what you want to draw, you have to begin drawing it." Pablo Picasso



Acrylic on paper
40 x 51cm

'Pub Fight (with a nod to L.S. Lowry)' by Paul Griffiths

It's Tracey's fifty-something birthday and it's the first Saturday in June 2021. We (Tracey, Martin, Phil, Mike, my better half Alison and myself aka Pablo) are celebrating the birthday and we are out of lockdown.

The Cardinal's Hat at the top of the High Street in Lincoln is our comfy location and we have been there some time. We are looking out of a window and the town is buzzing with young people drinking in the summer sun and, well yes! - we were drinking too. We of course remain completely sober and are just observing the scene. From nowhere a fight between two guys erupts outside, well, maybe erupts is too strong a word, it's more arm waving and posturing to an audience really. Tracey is getting excited and wants to go and stop them - we have to verbally restrain her, after all why spoil the fun?

Fast forward about a week and I am trolling through some L.S. Lowry paintings having seen a documentary about him on television and I come across one entitled 'The Fight'. It shows two chaps having a confrontation with each other in front of a house with several interested onlookers. This is perfect, I can see the previous week's outing in town moved up Lincoln's Steep Hill to the "Cultural Quarter". This could be fun, let's forget June sunshine and youngsters enjoying what they do best and install some Salford weather (I knew there had to be a use for mixing white and I found it).

N.B. Nobody was harmed in the painting of this picture and we were not in The Magna Carta pub!

"Success with painting leads to success in many things. It carries over into every part of your life." Bob Ross



Acrylic and collage on board
22 x 16.5cm

‘Swampings’ by Jacs Harris

I’ve spent most of the past few years within a two-mile radius of my home studio in the South Lincolnshire Fens. Unable to travel far, I explored on foot whenever possible observing my surroundings. Some days brought foggy, misty weather. It softened the distractions of detail, allowing a focus on thoughts.

I wondered about the history of the ground. *What has it been used for, by whom and why? What was it like before it was drained? Who had lived and walked here before? What was underneath?* I referenced aerial photographs and maps, looking at the landscape from a different perspective, a top-down view. I noticed that place names changed over time. ‘Swan Pens’, a nearby farm, used to be called ‘Swampings’, this seemed to be a good name for an old Fenland place.

I also researched and collected old Lincolnshire dialect, building a sort of land language. ‘Hum-closen’, ‘hither-fields’ and ‘forestead’ – are words used to describe the area nearest to the home. My sketchbook was a place to record the colours and textures of the landscape, my phone was used for taking photographs.

Returning to my studio, I started to work on the paintings. Gradually layers of paint were built up and then removed to reveal marks, patterns and shapes. I wanted to acknowledge the interventions, disturbances and changes in the land by successive occupants, both human and natural. Over time, ‘Swampings’ took shape.

“Inhabitiveness: A love of continuity, of endurance, of sameness, of permanency, of occupation.” Tiffany Watt Smith



Photography
76 x 51cm

‘Sitting On It’ by Hobden

So, what was 'going on' when I shot the fence?

Over the years, most of my pictures have been in my head. I seldom carry a camera (or camera phone) unless I think I'm pursuing a photo-project. But 'going unequipped' doesn't stop me seeing pictures multiple times a day.

I've been (more-or-less) thoughtfully taking photos for fifty years now. Unlike painters, or 3D makers, my initial 'making' takes a fraction of a second. Granted, 'processing' might take hours, especially decades ago when I did wet work in the darkroom, but nowadays, I mostly send carefully cultivated digital files to outside printers. For the last thirty years, I've had no patience in maintaining a reliable print facility.

So, what's happening when I 'see' a picture? Whether or not I 'take' it. Well, I think generally I'm influenced by several graphic 'frames'; as opposed to the cultural understanding of the subject. (In my teaching experience, it's that which motivates most people's snaps.) These frames are free-floating non-conscious design axes which I've picked up through (mostly) my early years: juxtaposition, contrast, (im)balance, repetition, reflection, complexity/simplicity, colour, incongruity, unexplained absence. I'm sure I harbour others which only exercise themselves when the moment is upon me. Sometimes the possibilities grow 'under' my composing eye, sometimes I think I'm conscious of a major axis, and other times it's only later that I find them 'in the mix'.

Anyway, I think that's what was happening when I shot the fence.

"The quest for certainty blocks the search for meaning. Uncertainty is the very condition to impel man to unfold his powers." Erich Fromm



Hand built ceramics featuring photo-collages
26 x 12 x 34cm

‘Bloom and Billet’ by Jen Holtridge

During lockdown I found that I couldn’t sleep. I would lay awake at night and stare at the ceiling listening to the deafening sound of silence; it was so loud it rang in my ears. Having moved to the countryside before lockdown, I began to miss the rumbling sound of the steelworks in Scunthorpe where I grew up.

I never realised before how reassuring the sound was, to know that people were out there at work is a comforting reminder that the world is in fact still turning. It made me think about the steelworks and the complicated relationship I have with them. It is an overbearing presence that can be seen, heard and smelled from far and wide, yet it remains much of a mystery to me - an authoritarian paternal figure always aloof. I was embarrassed by it as I grew up. It is working-class, dirty, polluting, and archaic, and yet it provided for my family and most others I knew. It is an inescapable part of my life.

Lockdown was a difficult time, between working from home and home-schooling I didn’t have a creative outlet as I was unable to access my ceramics studio. This I now realise, contributed to my insomnia. I decided to revisit some photographs I had taken of a rail tour of the steelworks before lockdown. I created photo collages of family beach holidays using the steelworks. I altered the saturation of the photos in the middle of the night to look distorted and dreamlike, to represent the way our memories of childhood become mixed up with memories with our children.

After lockdown I was able to make ceramics again. I created the cooling tower vessels and printed the photographs onto them, allowing the prints to burn off in the kiln, further fading and distorting the images.

“Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life.” Pablo Picasso



Acrylic paint and artists pens
69 x 55cm

‘Fenland Flowers’ by Michael Jackson

Fortune has smiled on me in that I have been lucky enough to have flown over our county many times in gliders and light aircraft, visiting all of the UK, and most of the countries in NW Europe as 'aerial gypsies'.

During the first period of lockdown, when we couldn't get out much, it occurred to me that there is much imagery worth recording in paint from above as well as from the ground.

This painting shows the richness of the Fenlands during the times of the year when the daffodils and tulips are in flower. There are many shades of colour here dependent on their varieties. I have also tried to show some of the effects that man has had on the landscape of the Fens. This includes the construction of the numerous delphs, drains, dykes and droves. There are other crops on these rich peaty soils, the remains of the railway network, and the development of habitation. A part of the Viking way - a long-distance walk of 147 miles - is also shown as a relatively recent addition to the landscape.

The media used are acrylic paints and artists' permanent brush pens, and the painting is one of a series featuring, 'Folds in the Wolds', 'Costa del Ingoldmells', 'The Scampton Bulge', and 'Brayford through the Ages'. All these have helped to make the time during the pandemic more tolerable.

"Artists notice many things others miss." Patrick Gogan (my co-pilot)



Acrylics on canvas
40 x 70cm

‘Concrete Border’ by Liam John

I have only been painting for the past eighteen months. I was self-taught through lockdown as a way of escaping the doom and gloom of being locked away with only twenty minutes of outside time allowed per day. I have always had an interest in beautiful landscapes and have been envious of others who can bring these landscapes to life through art. So I decided to take the plunge and get what I needed to start being creative, a paintbrush, a canvas – Oh! and some paints of course!

‘Concrete Border’ is based on my trip to New York in 2020, where I was fascinated by the calmness and serene atmosphere of Central Park, bordered by the manic chaos of the New York streets surrounding it. It was almost like I was transported to another place, a place in the countryside, whereas a hundred metres away I was just submerged in packed streets.

I took a few pictures in the park and decided to paint this one because of the level of detail involved, and the obvious concrete skyline hovering over the beautiful greenery. Then I wanted to push myself to see if I was capable of transforming the photograph into a painted work of art. This was only my second piece of art and since then, I have continued to test myself with other landscapes and sceneries from across the places I have travelled such as France, Barcelona and of course, the beautiful landscapes Lincolnshire has to offer. I am currently working on my first night landscape of Battersea Bridge, London.

“Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans.” John Lennon



Lateral flow plastic housings on board
21 x 26cm

A Testing Time' by Jonathan Joy

My wife Heather is a nurse. From the moment that Covid-19 hit this country, in early 2020, she had to be tested every time before starting work. At this early stage, PCR tests were being used. This test detected the virus by amplifying its genetic material to a level by which it could be detected in a chemical reaction. These tests had to be sent away however and processed in a laboratory for results, which could take some time.

Later the small plastic lateral flow testing kits were introduced. These offered a quicker, more rapid result. As you can imagine Heather got through quite a number of these lateral flow tests. I noticed that the square QR code on each test could be arranged to form a cross. The results windows would represent graves surrounding the cross. For it is estimated that, so far, worldwide there have been 645 million cases of Covid-19 resulting in 6.64 million deaths.

Wanting to use this idea in an artwork, I was able to place the used lateral flow tests arranged within an antique frame. Attaching the name of the piece 'A Testing Time' typed in sans serif added a shock element against the old frame. The Covid-19 pandemic was a shock to our old way of life which will never be the same.

Life changed. The cross, originally a symbol of a grim fate, perhaps could also be seen as a symbol of salvation. Looking forward, we have found new ways of connecting with loved ones and colleagues. New ways of working and in how we work. In fact, all told, daily life is different now and hopefully, lateral flow tests are a thing of the past.

"Sitting silently, doing nothing, spring comes and the grass grows by itself."

Zen master Basho



Oil on wood
22 x 17cm

'Here on the Edge' by Karina Kaye

It is still sunny outside and weightless curtains let the daylight into the bedroom. A naked female figure is resting on top of the bedcover. It is the hot part of the day. The warm and peaceful atmosphere of the room references the love of life, quiet happiness and harmony. The figure which is positioned with her back to us is dangerously close to the edge of the bed. It reminds us of our private moments, the pause before inevitable changes, a premonition before we step into the abyss.

I made this painting from a life sketch during a family visit to Malaysia. At the time it felt like this happy, careless time would never end. That it was woven into the lifetime bond of every single blissful and happy moment shared between mother and daughter. And yet unforeseen changes which cannot be undone, were now waiting for us. Even at that tranquil time, they were already announcing their arrival.

Eventually, I noticed that from our endless telephone conversations, her words dried up. Her communication with me reduced rapidly until the only words she was able to remember were "I love you". This was not the inevitable shadow of age, but the subtle and progressive decline of everything that made my mother who she was.

Then her private life started to be filled up with interference from professionals, new rules and a new home. Her memories, friends and members of her family started fading away. The void was filled with embarrassment and helplessness, which left us both at the mercy of strangers until everything was settled.

I sketched a moment of a quiet private life, but it became a painting of revelation; of the irreversible changes which were about to happen.

"Of all ruins, that of a noble mind is the most deplorable." Arthur Conan Doyle



Acrylics
46 x 36cm

'Early Morning in the Lincolnshire Wolds' by Jan Kealey

Lockdown amplified the sounds of nature, slowing down time and allowing the contemplation of trees, bushes, flowers and grass. It was a forced house arrest that gave permission to live guilt-free in the moment. While in the outside world disease, death and stress held sway, here was a magical garden with bird song louder and more joyful than ever before.

I am in the car, moving smoothly eastward along the main road, in the bright spring air. New leaves on the bushes brighten the hedgerows with their lime-green light. The first sight of the Wolds is always a heart-lifting moment. There is a wood. Amid the tangle of undergrowth, dead brambles and winter leaves, I find a fallen tree with fungi colonising its dark surfaces. Tiny jewel-like leaf buds twinkle like emeralds on the awakening trees as spring sunshine spills over the horizon.

Back home, the painting of the scene is quick and pleasurable. Over a wash of yellow and purple acrylic paint, the trees, the undergrowth and the sunshine come to life again.

"I believe that the very process of looking can make a thing beautiful." David Hockney



Acrylics
41 x 51cm

'The Cuillins, Isle of Skye' by Alison Kemp

Having more Scottish blood in me than English I have spent numerous holidays in various parts of Scotland. On one particular occasion, we toured all over the far north of the country and in due course - in freezing cold weather in May - I drove my family to the Isle of Skye to be met with thick fog and no visibility of the surroundings.

However, the following morning, on my birthday, the fog had lifted and we woke to the clearest, clean air and a beautiful, colourful vision of the Cuillins. That memory became the inspiration for my painting all these years later, born out of my inherent love of mountains, valleys, lochs and the inevitable sparkling waterfalls. We climbed the hills and had spectacular views from the top.

The Cuillins is a range of mostly jagged, rocky, mountains and the ridge is called the Black Cuillin. The peaks are mainly composed of gabbro, a very rough, igneous rock providing a superb grip for mountaineers, and basalt which is slippery when wet, as we found later to our cost. Most of us managed to stay on our feet whilst we scrambled down the hill, but my dear mother lost her footing and tumbled with a certain loss of dignity.

The ridge curves in an irregular semi-circle around Loch Coruisk which lies at the heart of the range. The rocks forming the ridge of Black Cuillin are dark, particularly in shade but in sunlight provide colours of greys and golden browns. The Red Cuillin consists of granite, paler than gabbro, giving a reddish tinge, therefore providing much scope for artists to explore wonderful colour mixing in acrylics.

"The light constantly changes, and that alters the atmosphere and the beauty of things every minute." Claude Monet



Acrylics
42 x 26cm

'Mr Palin in the Foothills' by Sue Kent

When I painted this piece of art, we were fully in Covid-19 lockdown, so I will be honest with you about my source material and about why I felt inspired. Yes! - I took the idea from a television documentary I had watched and it was chosen because I was in a place where frankly, I longed to be elsewhere, as so many of us did.

Those Himalayan mountains provided me with a new landscape, although initially it had been screened into my living room here in Saxilby. It provided an adventure I needed to be part of, in those endless trying days.

I used acrylic paints here - they were a fairly new medium for me, and had been purchased not long before the pandemic hit. I felt that using them was also liberating (after using watercolours for possibly too many years previously). Maybe that freedom is evident in this - you might also spot that I used cardboard packaging to paint on, as the shops only sold 'essentials' at the time, with art canvases not on that list.

I enjoyed mixing the whites for the different levels of snow behind the men, as Mr Palin is accompanied by his two guides through the foothills. The snow-covered mountains shine in pale blues, differing greys and some pinks too. They could easily have been on the moon and it felt so refreshingly distant after I had been pacing the same few local streets here daily. Therefore, as I painted, in my mind's eye I walked with them.

"Once the travel bug bites there is no known antidote and now I shall be happily infected until the end of my life." Michael Palin



Mixed media
42 x 19cm

‘Spaghetti Legs: A Self-Portrait’ by Stanley Kettleborough

Some bits of school I liked, such as double art on a Friday, but the uniform was so uncomfortable! Last year I started to find going to school difficult. I wasn’t allowed to fidget, or move, and I have to move. ‘Spaghetti Legs’ is a name I got at school because I am always moving my legs! When I was at school, I had to look at the teacher’s faces, and that was very annoying. I can concentrate better when I am not looking at someone’s face. The teachers said I asked too many questions. I can’t sit still because I need to move, but the teachers said I have to sit still. This made me sad and frustrated. I have to move.

This is the red. My feelings about being at school. It’s in the background because now I don’t go to school.

I am educated by my mum and lots of other people, such as local artists and I go to a forest club where I run around with my friends and can be free. At forest club I learn to whittle, build dens, light a fire, cook on the fire, gardening and so much more. I don’t get told what to do in the forest. Now, I can do spaghetti legs whenever I want! This is the blue in my painting, my spaghetti legs. Being educated outside of school means that I can spend most of my time doing art, visiting galleries, going to exhibitions, and meeting lots of artists. I can fidget. I can move. This is the purple. I don’t have to look at someone’s eyes to show I am listening. I can ask as many questions as I want. I don’t have to wear a uniform. I am free -this is the green.

Finally, there is Cactus Jones! This reminds me of Minecraft, which I love. It is also a reminder of how I feel sometimes *-don’t play with me, I’m too spiky!*

But now, I am free, wahoo! - I am Stanley.

"When you think you have made a mistake, think of it as an opportunity to make something beautiful." Barney Saltzberg



Recycled aluminium cans and copper wire
20 x 20cm

'Staycation' by Jeanette Killner

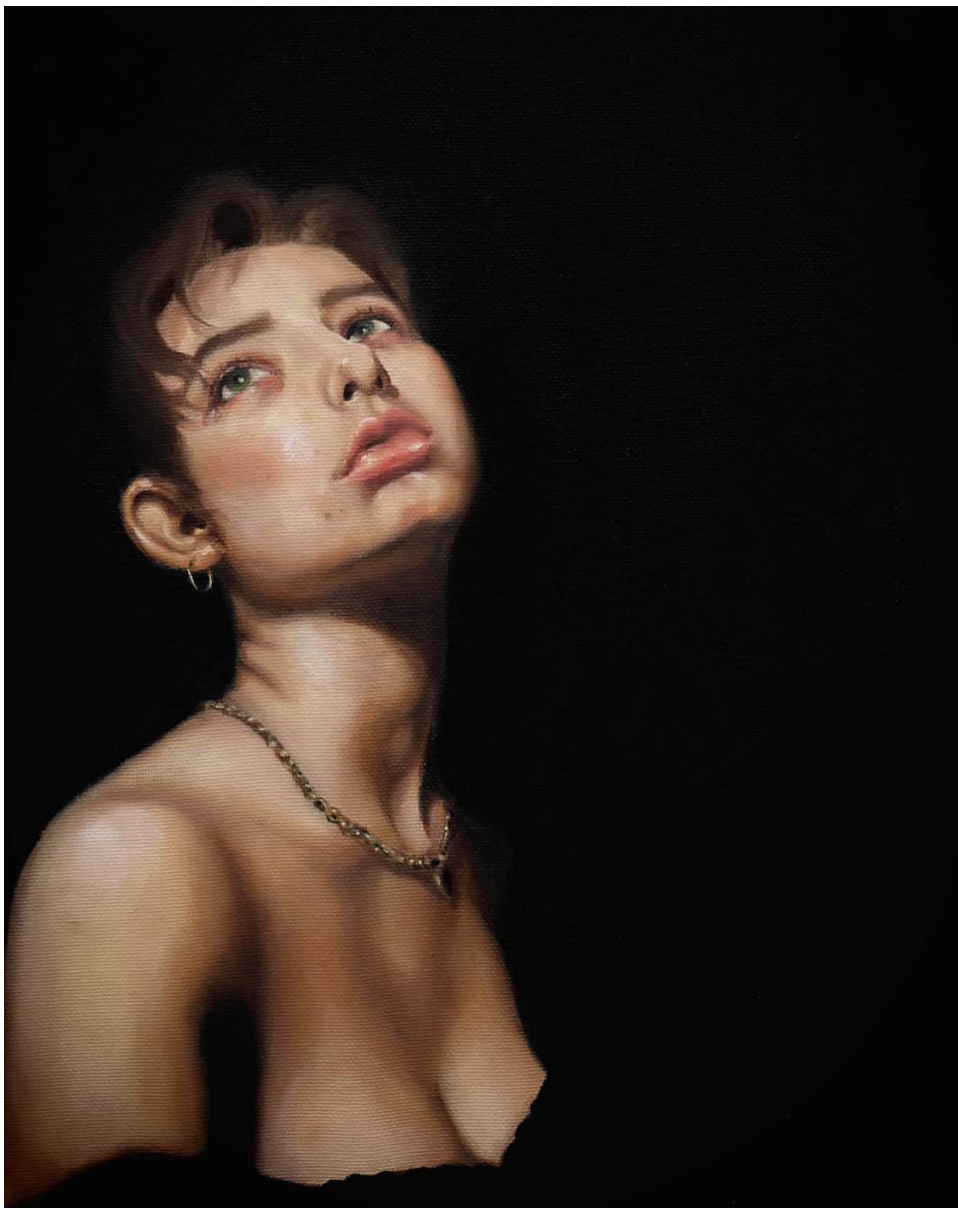
The pandemic brought many words into common usage, and 'Staycation' was one that seemed to be on the news a lot at one time.

Initially, the restrictions meant that the inspiration for my work came from the area around my house that I could walk to, as I do not have a car. This was no great hardship as I enjoyed observing and drawing the natural world at close quarters. Eventually, though, I yearned to go to the coast and see the sea.

I work with recycled materials whenever possible, and have done so for many years, enjoying the challenge of problem-solving and experimenting with different techniques to achieve the effects I want. My material of choice is aluminium obtained from drinks cans, which I can work with at home without the need for expensive equipment. All the metal is joined with electrical wire.

At last, I was able to go to the beach with my son and grandchildren, on a lovely sunny day. I drew the beach huts and the dunes. My fantasy of owning a beach hut is shown in this piece of work, and my grandson's 'Fanta' can from that day is incorporated into it - the orange bucket among other things. It was a brilliant day which I will always remember through this work.

"Art ain't all about paint." David Pye



Oils on canvas
30 x 42cm

'Self-portrait in Oils' by Sophie Kirton

In lockdown, it felt like everything was in suspense. Receiving my degree through the post and reading my results, sitting at a kitchen table, felt surreal compared with the expectations of celebration. After returning home for lockdown, I'd become anxious about leaving the house and had fallen into a state of flux between a peaceful acceptance of circumstances and despondency. As a result, I found myself looking for something to provide some sense of purpose. Lockdown, with all its drawbacks, gave me time to teach myself how to paint with oils.

I had a love of portraiture that I had neglected for several years, for which I was eager to re-engage. My first painting used only what I had and was an uninformed, very dry, self-portrait that was potentially toxic to the breath. After a few practice studies, a lot of research and restrictions, easing enough for me to get some safflower oil, I made this piece - my second full portrait in oils.

This self-portrait serves as a record of my process of learning and captures both myself and my own experience of lockdown. The painting is a reflection of the perpetual melancholy that I felt during that year of isolation. I hoped also to reflect the slight optimism that I held, despite the sense of uncertainty and loss that was experienced.

"I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well." Henry David Thoreau



Watercolour, pen and ink
21 x 29cm

‘Winter Trees near Market Rasen’ by Valerie Knowles

Winter trees have always haunted and inspired me. I find myself greeting them like long-lost friends as the days shorten, and the leaves fall. Perhaps I don’t actually talk to them or hug them (although I have been known to), but I love trees, in their spring lingerie, their summer finery, and their autumn glory. And then it’s winter!

There they are, greeting the winter with their strong arms lifting towards the sky. They are showing every branch, every small twig, and the odd leaf or berry clinging on despite the wind and frost. It is an invitation for me to pick up my pencils and pens.

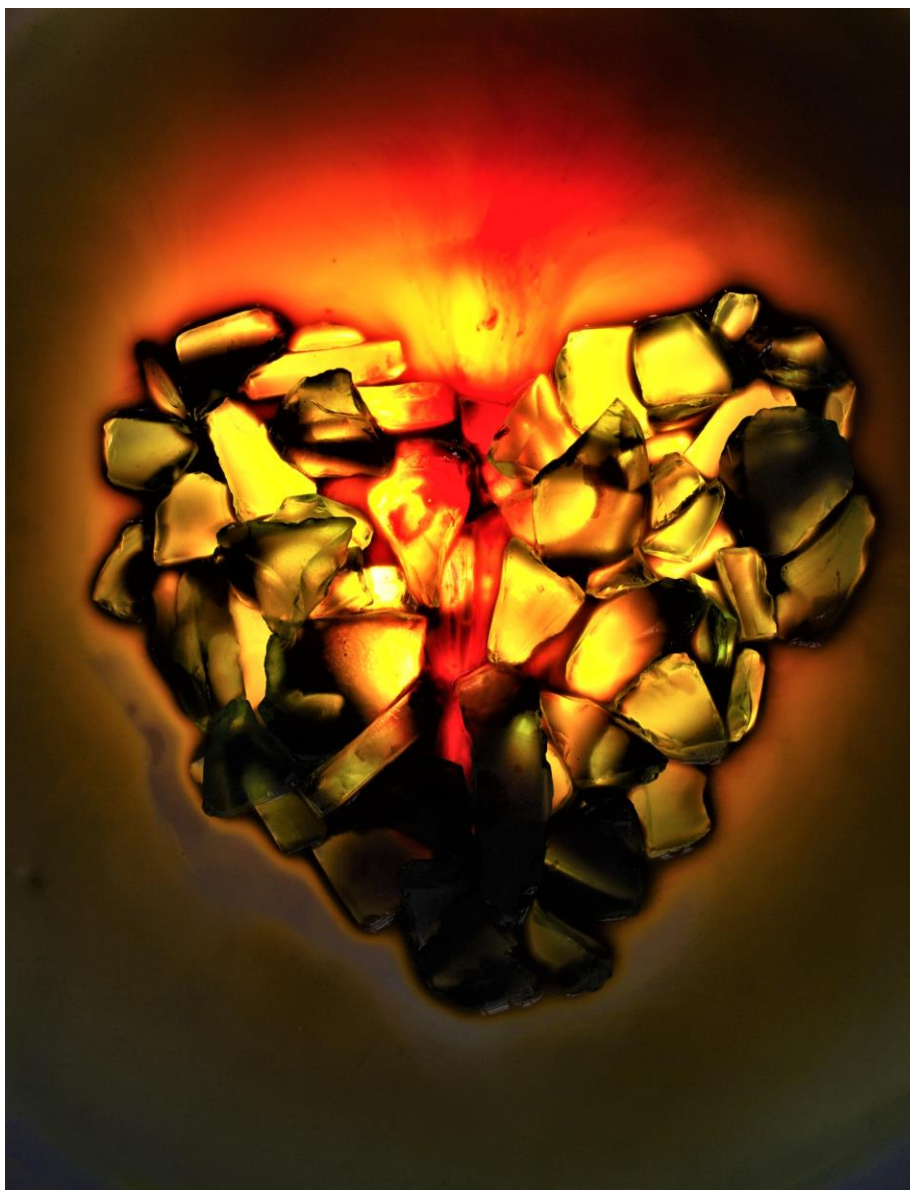
I dreamt of painting winter trees in the fenlands of my youth, only to find when I revisited that they are few and far between. In my memories, winter trees were everywhere in the fens. I think I’ll return, and paint winter sunlight on wet ploughed furrows and ditches.

I started looking at trees differently once I started painting them. I enjoyed rows of trees, trees with shadowy shapes, windswept trees with broken and bent branches, trees with rooks nesting high in them, chatting with their neighbours as dusk fell.

In late winter, or early spring, I needed to go to Market Rasen every day for a while. One day, on the way home, I saw this line of trees, marching in silhouette into the distance against a stormy sky, with a shaft of late afternoon sunlight falling through them.

A quick sketch, to be enhanced later at home, and a photo just in case, and that, as they say, was it! – ‘Winter Trees near Market Rasen’!

“Everything that is made beautiful and fair and lovely is made for the eye of one who sees.” Rumi



Photography
30 x 42cm

‘True Heart Breaking Open’ by Robert Lackerstein

My definition of abundance is *‘The ability to do what I want to do, when I want to do it’*. I have always considered myself a free spirit and enjoyed travelling, within the UK or abroad. This freedom was challenged however as the pandemic gained momentum.

With people fearing for their lives, the imposed restrictions and lockdowns began to elicit childhood fears of confusion and powerlessness. I felt angry and frustrated at not being allowed to visit my elderly father who lived two hundred miles away, as well as not being able to see my clients.

After a few weeks, I decided to just sit still, close my eyes and be with my upset emotions. All I could see in my mind’s eye were flashes of red and black which I found unsettling. But I was aware of my inner voice suggesting I keep my eyes shut, even though I so wanted to open them to re-orientate myself.

I was unsure of how much time had passed when the red and black flashes faded away. This gave way to a calm peaceful feeling washing over me accompanied by an insight of seeing the most wonderful shade of green. It proceeded to break up into fragments in a very gentle manner revealing a pulsing golden-red hue. I was left with such a calm and peaceful, yet joyful feeling in my chest, which I now interpret as being in my ‘heart space’. It was this experience that inspired me to create the image I titled ‘(True) Heart Breaking Open’.

“Be fully in your heart. Otherwise, whatever you do will be merely average or, at best, impressive not miraculous, not magnificent. Mooji (spiritual teacher)



Mixed media - photography and oil on board
31 x 23cm

'1/7/16' by Ian Lacy

On one side the horror and death of the Western Front, on the other the cheerful ceramic cheerfulness of scarlet poppies under a blue sky. I was working as a volunteer at Lincoln Castle in the summer of 2016 when some of the 80,000 ceramic poppies that had been in a public art installation created in the moat of the Tower of London, arrived in Lincoln.

Titled "Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red" they commemorated the First World War. They were displayed in Lincoln Castle cascading down the West wall of the Lucy Tower over the period of the centenary of the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1st, July 1916.

The day before I had been on a group bike ride with friends out in the country, hearing the birds and seeing the green of the summer trees. A hundred years earlier comrades had been together in the French countryside. Birdsong however was overwhelmed by the artillery barrage and the green woods and fields were to be torn apart the next day.

We all came home. So many of those soldiers did not. 19,240 British soldiers lost their lives on that day and another 106,000 during the four months that followed. The contrast between the two summer days, a hundred years apart, struck home when I did my next duty as a volunteer.

The poppies contrasted so poignantly with what I imagined the reality to have been. I wanted to try and express some part of the conflicting emotions of horror, sorrow, admiration for duty and courage and the sense of loss that is war. I aimed to express the incongruity of the ravages of war that a hundred years of remembering had turned into a piece of art.

"(The arts) are the highways into the centre of reality which cannot be glimpsed, let alone grasped, any other way." Tom Wright (Theologian)



Watercolours
38 x 50cm

'Peter' by Koda Le Put

I have always found myself fascinated by the wonderful and weird and all the beauties of nature. When I was little, I would visit a man called Peter Harrison and we would have fun running around the land he owned. The land was swarming with nature, and everywhere you went you could always find a group of mushrooms or toadstools enjoying the sunlight.

Peter passed away a few years before Covid-19 appeared and we stopped going to enjoy the countryside. When the pandemic struck, I couldn't leave the house to enjoy nature anymore and I lost one of the few things I had to remember him by.

One night I sat in my room with what little materials I had, and I started to paint Peter as a toadstool, and I found his kind smile in there as I painted more and more.

In the isolation, I was able to bring to memory someone I loved and missed in a painting. It also brought a little bit of nature back into my home. This was whilst I waited for the day that lockdown would end, and I could go hunting for mushrooms and toadstools once again.

"Ever make mistakes in life? Let's make them birds. Yeah, they're birds now." Bob Ross



Machine embroidery
12 x 22cm

'Borders and Boundaries No1' by Ruth Lennon

In December 2019, while Covid-19 was spreading, twenty-seven thousand birds were culled on a Suffolk farm after an outbreak of bird flu. They couldn't escape their cramped living conditions. There were floods too - nowhere for birds to land.

As Covid-19 restrictions spread, our cramped living conditions and the threats of domestic violence demonstrated the importance of escape, flight and movement. I spent time in lockdown taking photographs and began to play around with an image of a blackbird - beak to the sky - ready to take off at any moment. I started to think about bird flights, and from this, a narrative developed between the real and imaginary.

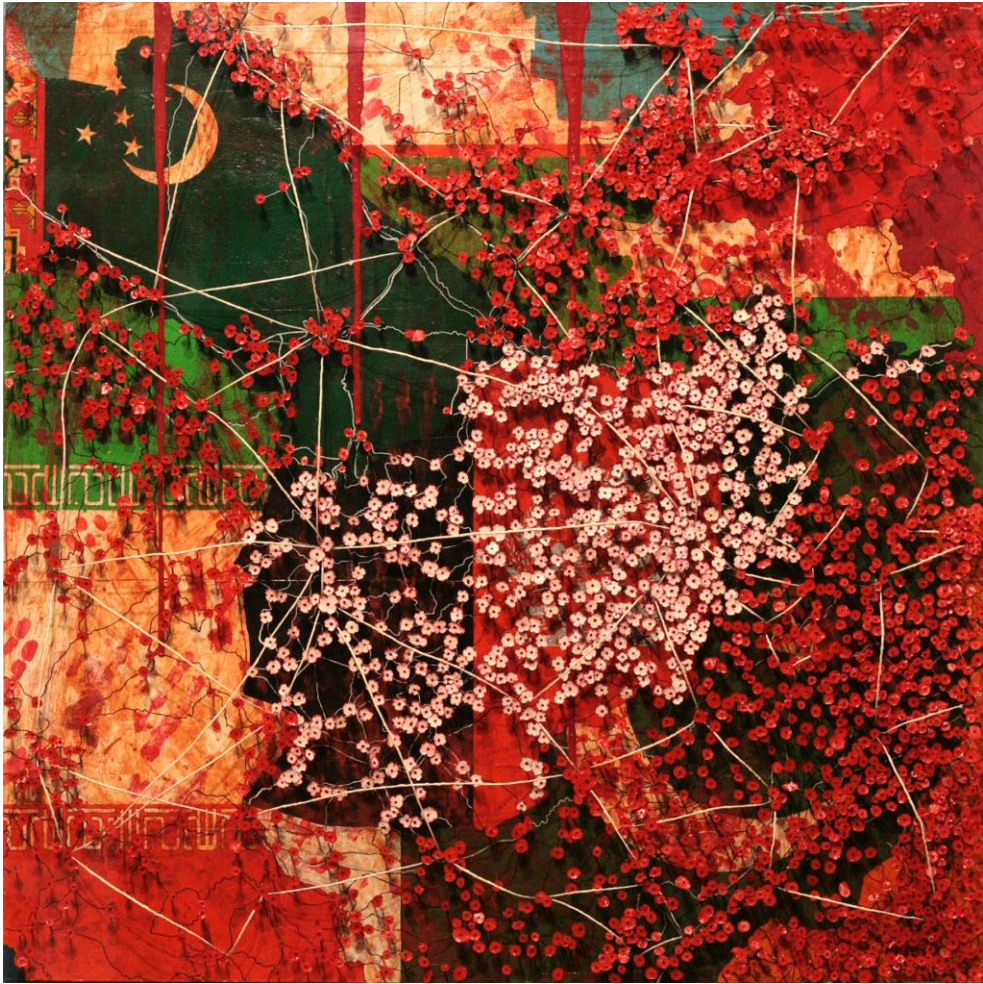
I imagined birds recording what they flew over, storing the data in their hollow bones, passing down this information through generations and monitoring the continually shifting borders and boundaries of Earth.

I visualised them mapping the history of human-made struggles on and in the world. Lines on paper maps demonstrating shifting geopolitical narratives, and the forces needed to keep us inside false borders and boundaries. I imagined the birds recording the rising sea levels and loss of habitats, deserts appearing and rivers disappearing. Birds have never asked us for anything, but we share with them now the need to ask our leaders for safe spaces and clean water.

Covid-19 felt like a shift in itself. New boundaries and borders were created and broken, and there was a migration across the boundary between the real and digital worlds. Coming out of isolation, I stitched together these narratives using a digital embroidery machine. Unlike art on a canvas, the borders and boundaries and general topology of fabrics are less distinct, they are subject to movement and can be unpicked.

*"Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul."*

Emily Dickinson



Acrylic on board, toothpicks and assorted polymers
100 x 100 x 30cm

'Afghanistan' by Graham Lewinton

My submission to the Usher Gallery open exhibition was a three-dimensional piece called 'Afghanistan'. I was moved to create this after watching the recent conflict on television. Here, many people were trying to escape at airports, following the most recent regime take-over after NATO peace-keeping forces withdrew.

I decided to dip a little more into the history of this war-torn country. There have been numerous invasions in Afghanistan over the years, but none have been successful for long. The first two attempts to advance British influence and control in Afghanistan were between 1839-1842 and 1878-1880 and these were not our finest moments. Many died in these first two of three Anglo-Afghanistan wars, and a lot of equipment was lost.

Another unsuccessful invasion took place in 1979, this time by Russia, which lasted ten years. Amidst an ongoing civil war, American forces along with NATO allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to dismantle the Al-Qaeda network. This was precipitated by the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York. This was a very difficult war to fight because the terrorists were hiding in plain sight amid the indigenous population.

Afghanistan became the world's largest opium producer in the 1980s, which overshadowed the growth of food crops; because there were bigger profits to be made from the illicit use of opioids such as heroin. It was alleged that the number of lives lost in America through heroin misuse exceeded the losses of Afghans due to the conflict.

Each poppy in my piece represents a life that has been lost. The white ones lie within the borders of Afghanistan and mimic opium. The red ones are remembrance poppies placed at road junctions; because that is where lives were lost by ambush or improvised explosive devices. The white wires represent contrails from planes leaving the airports.

"The more I practice the luckier I get, (practice gives mastery of tools and control, luck is just positive perception.) Gary Player



Recycled cardboard sleeves from yogurt pots on mount board
40 x 40cm

‘Freedom’ by Mary Maddison

In 2019 Danone - The World Food Organisation - invited four UK artists to design the packaging for a special edition of ‘Light and Free’ yogurt pots. They were invited to express their visions of creative freedom through art. I could not resist collecting the cardboard sleeves from these yogurt pots as I regularly create collages from household packaging.

When lockdown came and our freedom was limited, I turned to my art and out came the yogurt pot sleeves. Seeing how free the butterflies were in my garden I thought to myself - *Could these creatively designed sleeves become butterflies?* I was inspired by the four artists’ quite different designs. Morag Myerscough’s bright and vibrant colours became my large butterflies. John Poulter’s quirky fruits and lettering had to be included as they made me smile, thinking of happier times as days passed in this weird world we were living in.

Neil Stevens’ ships and whales and the softer colours of Nerone’s vanilla flowers and coconut palms, all gave way to thoughts of far-away places, whilst we lived in relative isolation with limited freedom.

I created a background to these colourful butterflies by using the inside of the yogurt pot sleeves to give muted shades. The ‘Light and Free’ wording from the packaging sat gently next to the butterflies to show how free they can be. As I cut and crafted the butterflies, gently placing them across the paper, I knew there was only one title I could give the piece: ‘Freedom’ - something we were all longing for.

“Go big with your collages and don’t be afraid of doing so.” Cliff Baxendale



Graphite and acrylic on wood panel
24 x 30cm

‘Diaphanous Autumn Moon’ by Phyllis Mahon

‘Diaphanous Autumn Moon’ is perhaps the image that best illustrates how I feel about my life right now: content and grateful. This night scene of a woman receiving the jewelled light of the crescent moon was painted in 2021.

Throughout lockdown my day-to-day life didn’t change very much because I have always worked from home. However, the creation of this image was special for me, because my son - a picture framer who works in London - sent a surprise gift because we weren’t able to meet up as normal. It was a set of beautiful, small, dark tulip-wood frames, with accompanying wooden panels to paint on, and I found them inspirational. They perfectly suited my reflective mood at that time and gave the promise of a series.

When I moved from the city to the Lincolnshire Wolds thirty years ago, it took me a very long time to get used to living in the open landscape. Early feelings of isolation diminished as the years passed. I’ve lately come to realise how comforting it is to live surrounded by huge beech trees and to follow the journey of the moon and planets in the clear night skies. Here, this woman delights in the moon’s light and in feeling the cool, damp grass on her bare feet.

*“My light shall be the moon
And my path - the ocean.
My guide, the morning star,
As I sail home to you ...”*

Enya



Oil on canvas
30 x 30cm

'The Conversation' by Clare Marti

During the first lockdown, determining how best to adapt and respond filled our time: how to work from home, how to best protect vulnerable family members, how to support the children's learning, how much news to watch, how to keep healthy, how to stay occupied, how to remain positive - all in the knowledge of so many other lives dealing with their own stresses and grief.

The thoughts and ideas of others, shared over a cuppa whilst visiting family or friends, can help us make decisions, give us confidence and ease our fears. When we were required to stay at home, such normal human contact just wasn't possible, consequently we had to deliberate more and more on our own.

During the lockdowns we had days of beautiful weather. We are fortunate to have a garden which was our escape from always being inside. For us, our garden became a place to mull things over in the clear air, under the warmth of the sun. Even within the sanctuary of the garden the stillness and quiet was peculiar, no planes overhead, no sounds from the school playground and infrequent traffic noise conspired to make the world around us seem almost empty. These were the foundations of the painting.

"The only wrong is in not trying, not doing. Don't put barriers up that aren't there just get to work and make something." Lisa Golightly



Acrylic and collage on canvas
41 x 51cm

'Cave' by Geoffrey Mark Matthews

I have lived alone since I left London in 1986. My then-girlfriend and I fell apart. It hurt. What brings back the visceral part of such a memory? If only we understood these things. I don't.

The first lockdown in 2020 had little effect on me. I just kept painting and writing. A year later, however, I saw a photo in the Museums Journal of a spider's shadow cast onto a wall. I kept it. Later, in an old Times Literary Supplement, a headline caught my eye and then the subscription advertisement at the bottom of the page. Involuntarily my brain put half of each together: *"Damned if / you missed Sue."* My heart thumped me in the head.

I suppose I am damned. My home is a cave full of riches - beautiful things, useful tools, engaging interests, somewhere to lay my head and dream - and I live with the illusion that I am in control of it all ... a puppet master of sorts.

I started the canvas on the last day of June 2021, painted the spider shadow across the top and collaged the newsprint elements towards the bottom left. A despicable thought then crossed my mind; no spider-woman ever trapped me.

I did not plan the composition; I collected more imagery and allowed the painting to develop as it wanted to. I finished it in three weeks.

This painting is an unbidden confession of guilt, embarrassment, and inadequacy, but there is more to it than that. It touches on something universal: a sense of self, an identity, a truth about being human. The web that traps every one of us is made of memories and if we stop making new ones, the old come back to haunt and taunt us. In Latin CAVE means 'beware!'

"Aesthetic modernity gives us an art of poisoned confectionery." Peter Sloterdijk



Acrylic on canvas
75 x 50cm

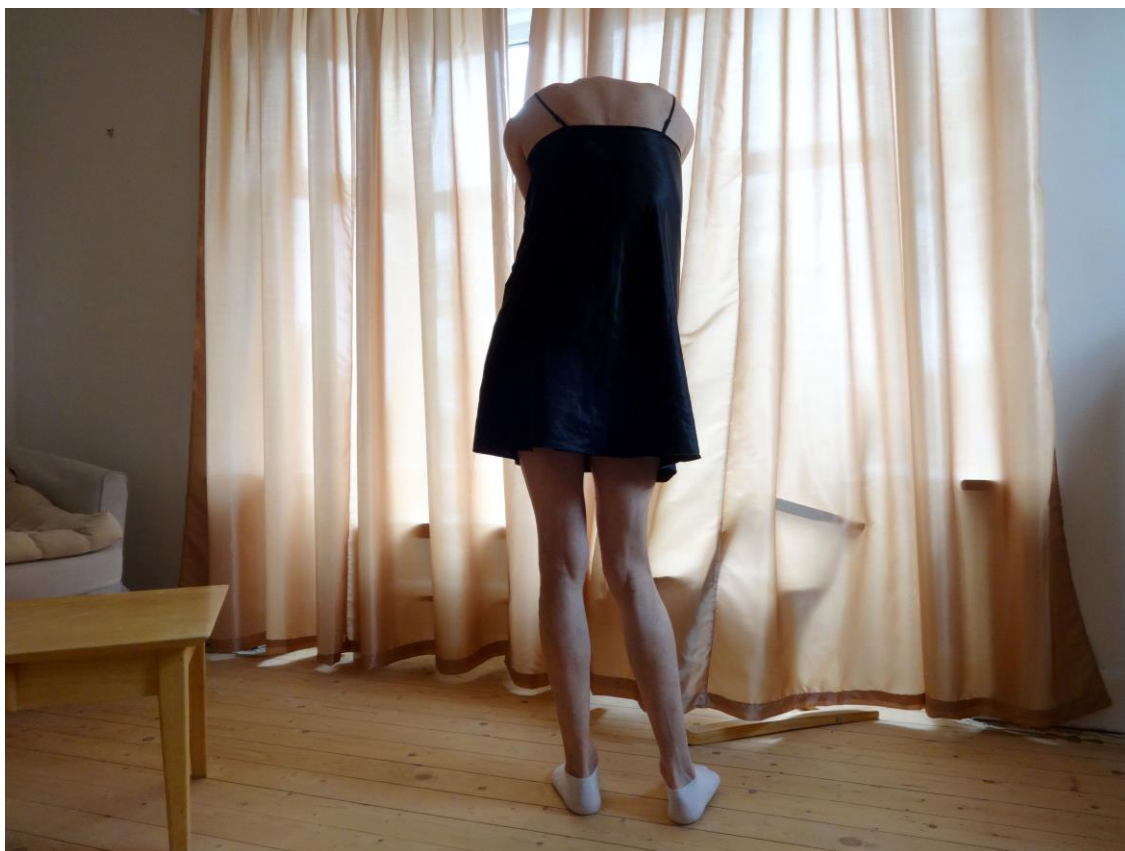
‘Parys Mountain’ by Anne Mayes

Parys Mountain on Anglesey is not a normal mountain. When an artist friend of mine asked my husband - a keen geologist - to give us a tour of it, she and I could only wonder at the colours we saw there. Copper, iron and zinc have been mined on the site since the Bronze Age. Our guide told us that weathering had caused the leaching of ores, giving the surface a vivid mix of colours. The reds, browns and yellows of the rocks, plus the waste, are exposed in many varied patterns all over the mountain. The colours are not muted by vegetation, because the surfaces are far too acidic.

From the top of Parys Mountain with its eye-catching look of desolation, we could see Wylfa Nuclear Power Plant which is currently being decommissioned; its waste is poisonous for another 20,000 years. This was industrial scenery at its most striking and evocative.

Overwhelmed by the geological detail (as told by my husband, the ‘Ancient Mariner’) we two painters could only marvel at the surreal scene before us, and the diversity of the coloured landscape. I subsequently painted Parys Mountain twice, once in startlingly bold acrylics and again in subtler oil pastels. The visit sparked my imagination and my ongoing fascination with colour.

“I think I shall paint here. This is a strange place!” Joan Eardley



C-type print
30 x 40cm

‘Other People’s Rooms’ by Pete McGovern

This was taken one morning in August 2021 while staying at a friend's house, and BEFORE breakfast, which clearly indicates the level of dedication I bring to photography. When I'm away from home I usually add to a long-term self-portrait project 'Other People's Rooms', and here found the one room in the house that seemed to have some potential and spent maybe twenty minutes taking pictures.

Amongst other things, as well as getting the room composition balanced, I was trying variants of my own general position within the frame and also folding and bending my body to obscure arms and head, the reasons for which probably get lost in translation.

While much of this is performative, I think I was aware at the time of the setting being theatre-like, (sometimes it's only reviewing later that meanings emerge), the curtains closed and me hiding away. But it was only months later when reading about Carl Jung that I came across his term 'the shadow', the inner, repressed persona in which resides our sense of social shame and fearfulness.

“The painter constructs, the photographer discloses.” Susan Sontag



Oil paint and printing ink
60 x 80cm

‘Treating’ by Teresa Milnes

We became a TV dinner family, that Spring of 2020.

We sat, plates on laps, absorbed in the unfolding chaos; listening to the experts, trying to grasp the graphs, and always the ever-present tv graphics of the angry-looking red and orange spiky virus.

Then the news. The desperate queues and the quiet crowds, the global chaos unfolding in our own homes. And sitting in our houses on the quiet and deserted streets, it all became rather normal as these disturbing and unsettling images streamed into our homes via the internet and news media.

How to respond? How to cope? We were told to “do Art” but we didn’t need telling, and there was an explosion of creativity.

Unable to effectively capture the nightmarish quality of the so recognisable tv virus graphic images, its angry and repetitive character, the solution was found in the most unlikely media- wallpaper.

Wallpaper is symbolic of home, comfort and the familiar. It can also be a derisive term, meaning mundane, humdrum; something we don’t really notice. ‘Treating’ then, is a wallpaper print in reds and oranges as the background to a study in contrasting PPE blues and greens. In the safe familiarity of our homes, we became immune to the imagery of Covid.

“Artists need strong feelings to motivate them to make things. I am often fuelled by anger.” Sir Grayson Perry



Photography
40 x 32cm

‘The Great’ by Mark Morris

My camera phone is an Iphone5. It’s really old and I used it for this photo.

I remember walking down the promenade at Sutton on Sea just after the pandemic had devastated the world and reshaped the way we thought about our lives. On that walk I snapped various parts of the beach, simply playing with my phone and hoping to get a good shot.

I saw the storm approaching after about half an hour of sauntering along the beach. I thought to myself; *Blimey I can’t remember ever seeing clouds as dark a blue as that before!* There were no other members of the public about, which gave the beach a serenity and solemnity not usually present.

The sunlight shone brilliant silver off the sand where I stood and outlined in vivid detail the small crevices, rivulets and channels in the surrounding wet sand. In some areas the brilliance stood out more than others, offering a contrast with the sand’s general golden hues and tones.

But it was the sky that drew my main attention. Dark blue with wisps of white cloud just about noticeable through the darkness of the main thundercloud.

A few days after I took this photograph, I went with my camera to the printer so that I could see how the image looked on paper. The guy printing it stared into his screen as he lined it up for printing and without turning around just said, “Have you ever been to the moon mate?” I replied, “No - believe it or not that’s Sutton on Sea!” We both laughed.

I didn’t use any filters or special added effects to take the photograph, or to enhance it in any way. I was just lucky on that day. You might say I was in the right place at the right time. The Great Outdoors.

*“Earth, ocean, air,
Beloved brotherhood!
Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have
Loved thee ever and thee only!”*

Percy Bysshe Shelley



Chine colle prints with mixed media collage
70 x 50cm

‘Woodman’s Cottage, Bag Enderby’ by Martin Moyers

The pandemic brought fear, isolation, loss and emptiness. We dared to go walking with our dog beyond our locality towards the rumbling waves of ‘Moggs Eye’. The journey brought with it a moment of disbelief as Robert Steadman from Alford, an eccentric atop his Penny Farthing, appeared out of nowhere! Dressed in Victorian garb, top hat and tailcoat he is a ‘time traveller’ and for a brief moment we were back in the 19th Century and the timeless Lincolnshire landscape.

This sense of timelessness and presence is the feeling you get when walking amongst the rolling hills and winding lanes of this ancient landscape, stepping back in time in the footsteps of people like Tennyson. The villages Harrington, Bag Enderby and Somersby are Tennyson country.

A typical landscape: lyrical undulating hills, oak and ash trees lining high hedgerows, wheat fields, rape fields, vast skies and vistas. It would be no surprise if Tennyson himself were to suddenly appear striding out along these picturesque lanes and hills. The ‘Woodman’s Cottage’ in the dell surrounded by Harrington Carr carpeted with snowdrops and bluebells leads to Somersby and the Rectory.

This gentle beautiful area inspired one of our greatest poets. Nature and landscape have provided inspiration to artists, writers and musicians since ancient times. In 4th century China the practice of landscape painting was the highest form of art.

My work is representational, with passages of abstraction and invention inspired through walking the Lincolnshire landscape, with my wife and our dog Rolo. "I recreate landscape as it has been observed at a particular moment in time, attempting visually to capture and extract memories, feelings and the sense of place as experienced.

“The cave you fear to enter into holds the treasures you seek.” Joseph Campbell



Mixed media
30 x 70cm

'Phoenix' by Kevin Newton-White

The submitted work comes from early childhood memories of the outskirts of Northeast Lincolnshire, in what was then the village of Immingham. It was whilst I was crossing a stream to play, and observing the stacking of baled wheat (the essential materials for den-making) in the field opposite.

Drawing had always been an issue at school, as I would not do the expected clear lines and cross-hatching of objects to define shape, shade and form. This was not for me. Reminiscing on the earlier memory of wheat straws, I found I enjoyed the ill-defined scribbled edges, short almost multiple z's or m's tightly packed, though still moving along the page, too close in on the subject's physical boundary. So, I think now I 'mark-make' as a way of challenging convention that invites the viewer to experience edges and boundaries in a different way.

Whilst my three years of discovery in art started late, at thirty-five years young, I had a fisherman's work ethic, combined with more years with a shop-fitting decorator's eye for detail. I thought I would study movie set decoration applied to visual performance.

It appeared that changing the way portraiture was created - for example by using mixed media - was one means to a productive career in art. However, my crunchy line and mark-making process came into its own with the use of juxtaposed materials when working as a wallcovering contractor. I found a palette of colours to overcome misshapes on overlapping cuts! That juxta-positioning of media, reminded me of the Pointillist methodology and inspired me to produce the 'Phoenix'.

"I don't know of any good work of art that doesn't have a mystery." Henry Moore



Greyboard emulsion and acrylics
49 x 70cm

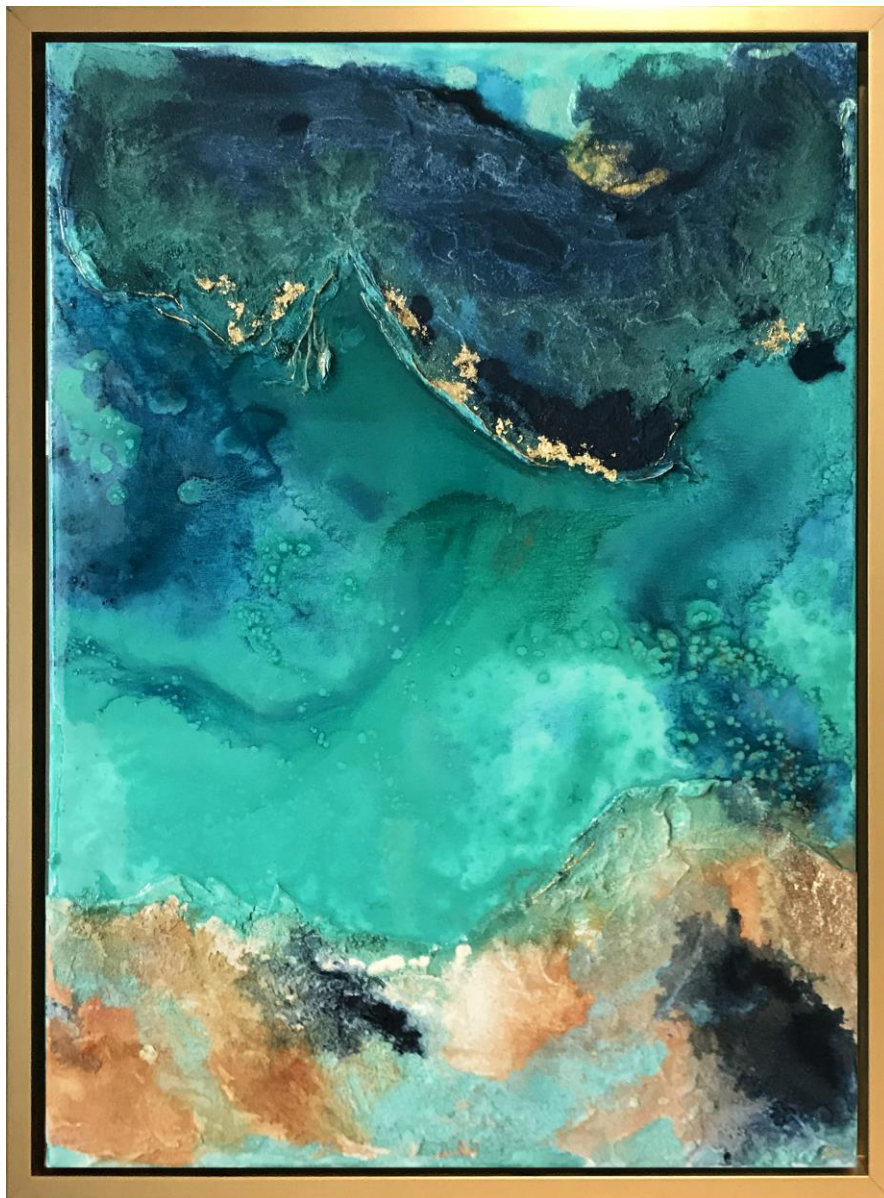
'Displaced' by Tiffany Odlime

To be displaced is defined as 'being forced out of your home by war or dangerous events'. The dangerous event in this case was Covid-19 except, instead of leaving, we were ironically forced to stay inside our homes.

I always considered my room comforting, a place where I could relax and wind down, but that quickly changed the longer we had to stay in quarantine. My room grew to be suffocating with just my thoughts and me. Days would swiftly pass without notice as I stared at bleached plaster walls; watching it turn from a sterile stark white to a grimy black ink that left me spooled in a swathe of darkness. It is then that the guilt, the dread and the sorrow would wake. They rasped unvoiced fears for a sweet symphony of cries as their cold dead hands tie my limbs tight. I yearned for escape.

Although, in the present day I am glad we no longer have to self-isolate, and we are free to do whatever we wish and whenever - some part of me will always be trapped inside that single small room.

"When will we be allowed to breath fresh air again?" Anne Frank



Acrylics and resin on canvas
50 x 70cm

'Es Torrent (Ibiza)' by Ana Ortiz

Descending the steep cliff side steps down to the twin beaches of 'Praia de Lagos' on the beautiful coastline of Galicia was the first inspirational step towards my initial exploits as a professional artist. The aerial viewpoint of the green and turquoise iridescent water shimmering with the early sunlight in the shallow bays and rock pools, has transcended into life-changing decisions to follow my love of painting, with a primary influence to record the beauty and fragility of the sea. The following two years have been an incredible journey, exploring my love of the sea and taking inspiration from my annual family holidays in picturesque coastal locations, in my home country, Spain.

The story behind the Triptych of paintings 'Es Torrent' is both heart-breaking and inspirational for myself and my family. The paintings were created in memory of my mum whom I lost during the first outbreak of Covid-19, a deep and sudden loss that gave me the strength and confidence to follow my passion to paint. Whilst grieving, my family and I decided to head to the destination of Ibiza, the Island I had always dreamed of going to whilst growing up as a youngster in Madrid.

My research drew me to 'Es Torrent', situated in an area south of the island, a particularly calm, white sandy beach surrounded by beautiful forest hillsides and with those all inviting turquoise Mediterranean Sea colours. Unfortunately, the second wave of Covid-19 and lockdowns hit. Flights were cancelled and despite the sadness during the turmoil of the pandemic, I found peace and respite in my art and studio, giving life to the three paintings. 'Es Torrent' now represents the freedom to travel again, bringing people and family back together.

In memory of Victoria Alcazar Fernandez

"A simple line painted with the brush can lead to freedom and happiness." Joan Miró



Photography [Giclée Hahnenüle Bamboo]
60 x 60cm

‘Winter Rose (fluorescent hellebore)’ by Esteban Peña Parga

Back in 2013 after finishing a Master’s degree, Caroline ‘the love of my life’ Peña Bray, despite only having visited Colombia once before and speaking no Spanish at all, took the big step of moving to Bogotá with me. We worked, studied, paid off the student loan, had two beautiful children, completed an art residency and got a full-time job at a university. We enjoyed a wonderful life with our family and friends and we have been supported so well by our collectors and work associates too.

However, the time had come for me to reciprocate with that initial leap of faith, and together we took the decision to move to England with the family, and it is here that we started our next chapter together. We arrived at Lincoln, Caroline’s hometown in 2020, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have set up a studio in which I am working hard to produce various artworks. Having spent years representing light that is visible to the naked human eye, I have set myself the challenge of portraying invisible light. During the unusual times of lockdown when everyone has been looking inwards, this artwork is inviting us to look down at the apparently insignificant wild flowers.

Winter rose (fluorescent hellebore) is part of the ongoing investigation of colour, and more recently about invisible colours. This particular flower gets its nickname from blooming in early spring, often in harsh conditions such as snow.

Flowers evolved not to please our eyes; their function is to please insects. Nobody can be exactly sure how insects see the world, but it’s certainly different from the way we humans do. Insects can see colours beyond the rainbow, they can see ultraviolet light. Nectar and pollen glow under ultraviolet light, like neon signs for the right eyesight.

“Nature once determined how we survive, now we determine how nature survives.”
Sir David Attenborough



Oils
20 x 20cm

‘Longwools at Heckington Show’ by Susan Pollard Gillespie

My studio routine didn't change all that much in March 2020, after we were told by the government to stay at home because of the looming pandemic. It seemed I had a little more freedom to immerse myself in my passion.

Painting and drawing for me is a constant routine, which I deeply enjoy. During the restrictions incurred by Covid-19, this practice became even more important to me. To ease the solitude, I was fortunate in being able to attend weekly Zoom life drawing sessions that gave me the interaction with fellow artists that was sorely needed.

Restrictions eventually eased, and in the summer of 2021, the Heckington Show was put on again, albeit in a smaller form than normal. As a welcome outing, I went with my family and was delighted to see the animals again. I was attracted to Lincolnshire's own Longwools* which stood in a pen watching the passers-by.

A few photographs later I had the inspiration for my painting, ‘Longwools at Heckington Show’.

*The Lincolnshire Longwool is the largest British sheep, developed specifically to produce the heaviest, longest and most lustrous fleece. It is now one of Britain's rarer breeds, categorized as "at risk" by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust.

“An artist should not be troubled by the indifference of his contemporaries.”
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Acrylics
40 x 30cm

‘Work Mug’ by Lorraine Presland

This is my pink coffee mug; it was a constant reminder of my time working in the NHS and I took my precious work mug when I moved house in June 2020.

One day, whilst daydreaming trying to find inspiration for a painting during a repeated lockdown, I set my mug alongside the orange vase of pink flowers from our garden on the dining room table.

Gazing at my mug I felt sad at first. It reminded me of a dear colleague who had passed away during that frightening time during those early days of Covid-19. My colleagues were being seconded from their usual duties, to ferrying patients around the hospital, and working on Covid-19 wards. We were all frightened, but just getting on with what needed to be done.

A serendipitous moment happened. A light breeze picked up a corner of the lace-edged curtain. It folded around the flowers knocking some of the petals onto the table and enveloping the mug almost like a hug.

I had this deep need to paint the image of that moment quickly, as the flowers would soon fade, the lemons would be gone and all that would remain would be my pink mug. I still use the work mug every day and it always reminds me of friends and colleagues. Along with the tears, there were good memories and lots of laughter and they are all represented in that mug.

“I write, only because there is a voice within me that will not be still.” Sylvia Plath



Oils on canvas
40.6 x 30.5cm

'Solo Bar' by Peter Ratcliffe

Tucked away in the top left-hand corner of the market place stands The Solo Bar. Not a singles bar, but a former card-playing club for the anti-social elderly. It's now the favoured breakfast haunt for Sleaford's better element. Outside sits John an old school friend and renowned beer enthusiast.

This building in my opinion possesses one of the finest Georgian facades in Sleaford, and is further enhanced by the quality of the breakfast served.

One early Sunday morning, I was impressed by the way the sunlight struck the front of the building and umbrellas and immediately photographed it.

The far-right window affords a perfect view of the market place allowing attendance at various events without the nonsense of standing in the cold. That's not to forget the amusing antics of the car park cat who enthusiastically controls traffic flow by washing or sleeping in locations which - for you or me - would be suicidal.

Having only obtained a low-grade school qualification in art, it's always been the debauched lifestyle of the late nineteenth-century Impressionists that has appealed to me the most.

The nearest Sleaford has to a Montmartre cafe are those benches and umbrellas, which, combined with the lighting made me feel positively continental. The painting evolved into a more realistic piece than intended, fortunately though, John came out more impressionistic. Any other rendering would have been unkind.

I only ever received one prize at school and that was for art and I was later told it was a mistake. I didn't give it back!

"The older you get the better you get, unless you're a banana." Betty White



Acrylics on canvas
60 x 90cm

‘Tranquility’ by Eugenie Reid

After the storm of the pandemic had begun to ease, and people started to regain a little more confidence in living their regular lives, that is when I found time to reflect on what the past two years had meant for me. Despite all the worry about the virus, I found solace in living day to day, without the burden and stress of the fast pace life normally brings us. Without the pressure of a strict schedule, I found time to appreciate the simple pleasures of life. Painting, going for a walk, hearing the birdsong. And I took up a new hobby – gardening! With some seeds from a Gardener’s World magazine, in the spring of 2020, I started to create a haven in our small, new-built garden. With nowhere else to go, we made our garden a beautiful place where we could escape the world’s problems.

Whilst still developing the garden two years later, we recently planted a beautiful lilac clematis called ‘Tranquility’. Sadly, with the drought this year, it suffered badly. The flowers dropped, the leaves wilted and I had to make the choice to cut it back, hoping the roots had held on.

A few weeks later, I could just see the signs of new growth. I was so happy it had survived, and it's now growing strong, ready to flourish again next year. With this in mind, I realised just how much nature can teach us about life. When things are difficult and challenges arise, we may struggle and waver, but if we don't give up and keep pushing through, we will make it through the storm and the bad weather.

I want ‘Tranquility’ to be a reminder that we can find peace and joy, and more often than not, it comes from valuing the simple things in life.

“It is the sweet, simple things in life, that are the real ones after all.”

Laura Ingalls Wilder



Sycamore, acrylics and gold
11 x 11 x 16cm

'Brighter Future' by Joey Richardson

I alighted upon using wood as a medium after a car accident and instantly fell in love with its therapeutic, haptic qualities. Creating became my therapy, my escapism. Over thirty years later I still benefit from its salubrious qualities and the feeling of excitement and fulfilment seeing each piece of art come to life in my hands. Losing myself in my art was my saviour through the isolation of Covid-19.

'Brighter Future' is created from reclaimed sycamore, destined for firewood, from the Scawby Estate where I grew up. It has a large autobiographical element and strong links to the history of the place and origin of the material. Although intensely personal and symbolic, it is intended to encourage the viewer to connect with it by drawing on their own life experiences.

Creating this piece, I was inspired by my happy carefree childhood memories juxtaposed with the current horror and fear of Covid-19 and lockdown. Transforming these stories into a narrative permitted me to make sense of life.

I explored and illustrated these stories through symbolic form and repeated motifs. The delicate filigree piercings represent fragility, and the open windows portray liberation, escapism and temptation. One of the panels alternates from red - representing the danger of Covid-19 - through to green, portraying the safety of childhood fields and woodland.

Through the abomination of the pandemic came the opportunity of spare time, which enabled me to experiment with new techniques. Learning how to gild was gratifying, adding sparkle and a shimmer of happiness to my work and my day.

For this artwork I created three loose butterflies with illustrated and gilded wings. Depicting freedom, transformation and strength, they disperse through the open windows, embracing the hope of a brighter future.

"Look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."
Albert Einstein



Watercolour and ink
27 x 20cm

'Ash Tree' by Rosemary Robinson

I've known this ash tree for 15 years.

In 2007 two friends and I bought an eleven-acre field, which had been in set-aside for five years. We planted several thousand trees and hedgerow quicks. Unplanted areas were left to re-wild. Mature ash trees were growing along the hedgerow boundaries to the field, and this is one of them. It is marked on an 1887 map, which means it must be at least 160 years old.

This ash tree, along with the other ashes, produces masses of keys every autumn. Within a few years of leaving the land to "do its own thing", thousands upon thousands of ash saplings sprang up – what was once a grassy field became a veritable ash forest.

And then 'ash die-back' struck. We noticed about eight years ago, the tell-tale signs of die-back - black diamond-shaped scars on the trunks of young saplings - caused by this chronic fungal disease. Die-back swiftly spread across the field. The last remaining saplings - perhaps a hundred - are now young trees, but many of these display other die-back symptoms and are unlikely to survive. Research suggests that up to 5% of ashes may be resistant to die-back.

The ash tree in my painting as yet shows no signs of die-back, but is nevertheless in very poor health. Various bracket fungi grow in a deep fissure down its trunk. The winds brought down two large branches last year. A woodpecker has started to excavate the dying wood in its search for food, and a barn owl roosts in a hollow.

"Losing [the ash] would mean not just a transformation of our view, but an unsettling shift in our sense of what constitutes a landscape, and what it contributes to a sense of home and security." Richard Mabey (The ash and the beech)



Mixed media on paper
35 x 35cm

'Heather near Ilkley Moor' by Rachel Rogers

The inspiration behind my painting 'Heather near Ilkley Moor' came from a very memorable car journey.

We were driving through the Yorkshire Dales, after taking the scenic route to visit my Mother-in-Law in Bingley. She's not the sort of terrible Mother-in-Law of politically incorrect jokes of old! - but my very lovely husband's mother, Jan.

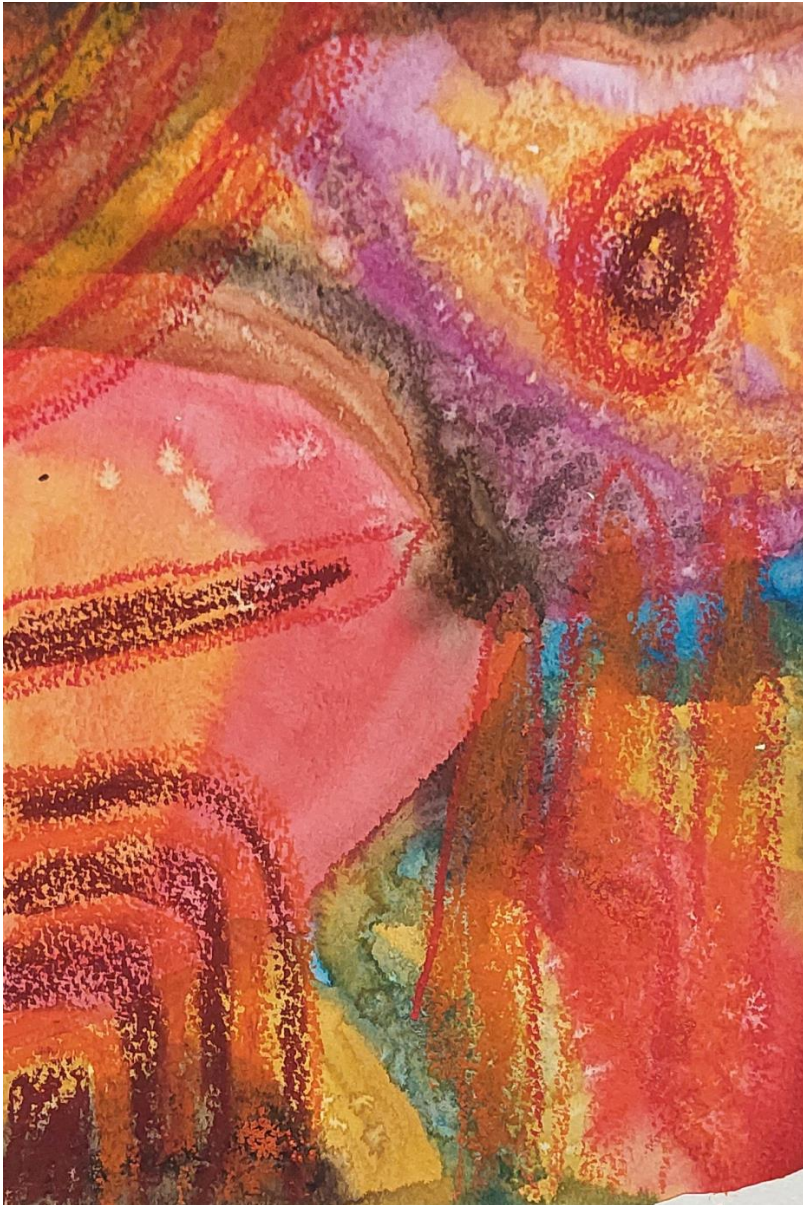
It was a warm, sultry late-afternoon in August (To be honest, not the sort of afternoon we're used to when high up in the Yorkshire Dales!) The sun was just beginning to disappear behind the heather-clad hills. I had been fast asleep and my husband had just awakened me, as he didn't want me to miss the view.

The colours emanating from the warm glow of the sinking sun across the rich mauves and purples of the heather, were truly amazing.

There's a well-known song about this area of The Dales that has the title 'On Ilkla Moor Baht 'at' which translates from the local dialect to: 'On Ilkley Moor without a hat' (in case you should catch a deadly cold). For an artist though, this was worse! – it was 'Ilkley Moor without a sketchbook!' This is quite unusual, as I love to work spontaneously when the opportunity arises and that means being prepared.

As we drove on, I scrambled around for something on which I could at least capture elements of this breathtaking scenery. A scrap of paper came to the rescue and I quickly jotted down notes and a line drawing. This was to be the basis of my painting when I got back to my studio. Luckily, I also held more in my memory of the scene - it would be very hard to forget - even if I was: 'On Ilkley Moor without a sketchbook!'

"Be brave, jump out of the God damn plane!" Phil Bowman



Mixed media
21 x 29.5cm

'Beloved' by Nayana Rosa

This painted piece called 'Beloved' was inspired by a period of isolation and the resultant inner workings of my mind. I painted the submitted artwork when - by necessity - I separated myself from society. This created time and the space in my mind to reflect on things beyond everyday matters, that would have otherwise filled my thoughts.

When I was reminiscing on learning about past practices in art, I remembered my fascination with pre-historic cave paintings, particularly their visceral effect on me when I first saw them. My fondness of the earthy hues in mixed media, for example, watercolours and oil pastels, was certainly influenced by the use of natural pigments in those early cave paintings.

I felt the palettes of colours that had been used and the mark-making in works I saw, resonated with me on a primal level. They enabled me to connect with something bigger than myself, for which I felt a yearning during the time spent alone. I felt that painting was this solitary ritualistic activity of creating something that held great meaning to me.

In a sense, the isolation imposed by lockdown was like a return to being in isolation in a cave of pre-historic times, when the inspiration for art was first being expressed.

"I have a deeply hidden and inarticulate desire for something beyond the daily life."

Virginia Woolf



Watercolours on paper
40 x 30cm

'Music in Lockdown' by Anne Samuel

Exchanged intense glances between mirror me and me,
unspoken conversations.

Has my hair grown?

What shall I have for tea?

Time stood still for those fourteen days.

Day could have been night for me then.

The rain, incessant - the daylight short - the dark nights stretching mercilessly.

I saw nobody and nobody saw me except her - my reflection!

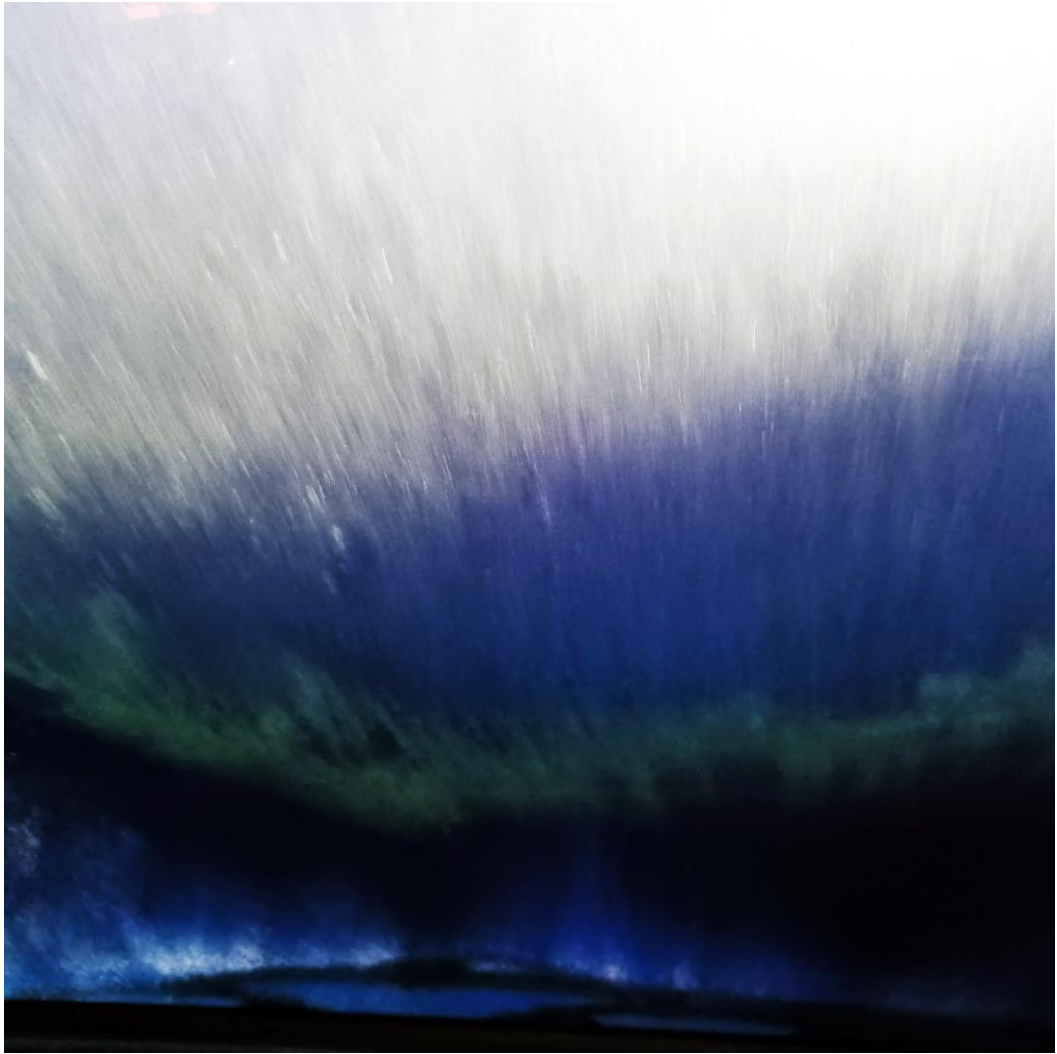
It was the loneliest of times, that time in isolation, not even having the virus. Been in contact though, committing the crime without even knowing.

The loneliness punctured my soul and so the thread of an idea blossomed and I painted her!

Mirror me is playing the guitar. In isolation we imagine she can play the sweetest music, reaching minors and majors never before heard.

As the painting unfolds, our promises of good things to come rush with a sense of urgency to the future. Then we will be out of Lockdown and know with a perfect certainty there will be better times to come. We will be able to leave behind those fourteen days when we were in total isolation - that very bleak time in November.

"Make your own bible. Select and collect all the readings, words and sentences that have been like a trumpet blast!" Ralph Waldo Emerson



Photography
40.6 x 40.6cm

'Carwash' by Marion Sander

Like anyone (everyone?) with a smartphone, I use it to take photographs and love capturing the quirks of everyday life. These images often contain an element of chance: a fleeting effect of light or movement, a moment of absolute still or a distortion of colour and form. I look for the extraordinary in the ordinary. But is anything truly ordinary?

Remember yourself as a child, sitting in the car, being driven slowly, tentatively into the local carwash. Watch the rollers descend upon the windscreen; the soap, the water. Remember that feeling of strangeness, almost other-worldliness, as the rollers envelop the glass, creating their own landscape, soundscape. I still get that feeling.

It's what moved me to make 'Carwash'. And what is 'Carwash'? It is a snap through the windscreen of my little car. It's an alien land, an abstract, watercolour world - a storm coming in. It's a memory of lockdown, of creating in isolation; of being alone, feeling strange.

"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." Henry David Thoreau



Oil on canvas
30 x30cm

'Baby Bird' by Cathy Servonat-Blanc

Have you ever dreamt that you could fly? Sadly, as one grows older dreams of such freedom seem to become less frequent and even dissipate into the ether. During the pandemic and during lockdown the desire for freedom lost became ever apparent amongst all of us. Those of us fortunate enough to enjoy our own outdoor space would listen to the ever-increasing prominent birdsong which - without the noise of traffic - became crystal clear. My garden became my place of sanctuary and this is where I found my baby bird, sadly separated from his family.

I nurtured him for many days in our greenhouse which we made cat and dog-proof and his parents came frequently to feed him. The little fledgling happily called to his parents who stayed dutifully by to feed him.

Early one summer morning I rushed out to see how my little baby bird was faring, to be greeted by my spaniel looking soulfully over the body of the baby fledgling. I don't think I will ever know how he died; however, I was filled with a deep heart-wrenching sorrow that seemed to epitomise the continued tragic loss of life that the world was enduring on a daily basis.

The words of Oscar Wilde came to mind in the Happy Prince when he asks his angels to bring him the two most precious things from the city of the Happy Prince. The angels return with the body of the little swallow, who did not return to Egypt but stayed loyally with his friend and the broken heart of the Happy Prince who had loved him.

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." Oscar Wilde



Acrylic on paper
61 x 49cm

'Handbag Clutter' by Sophie Sharpe

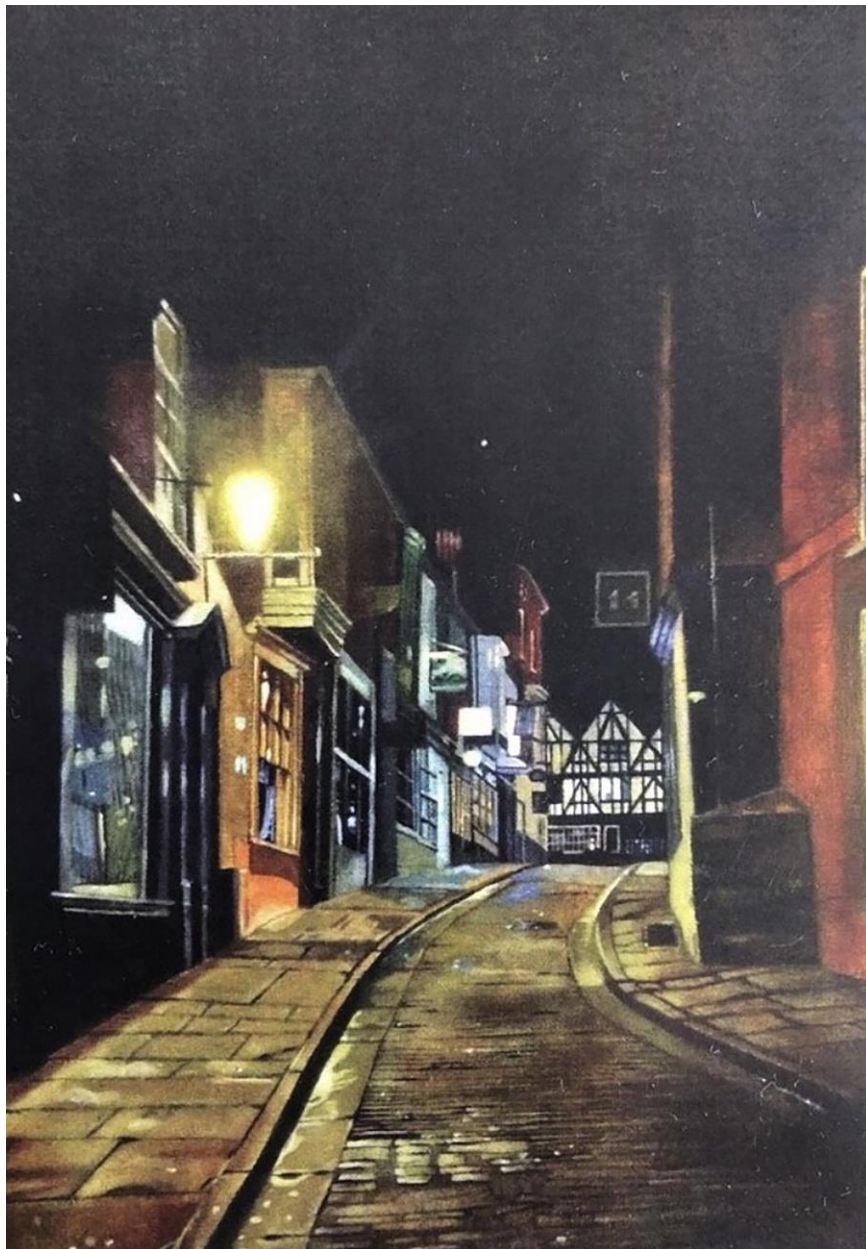
As everyday life, routines and freedoms came to a standstill or at least changed, a heightened awareness of priorities set in. At least for me there was a lot of time to reflect and re-evaluate my priorities. This involved assessing what I missed from my pre-covid existence and could look forward to returning to, as well as addressing what will remain behind me. Mostly I missed the company of others - socialising and travel - but in the meantime I had the privilege of free time and some acrylic paint.

I was inspired by the trivial on-line content trend - 'What's in my bag?' which I had consumed so regularly before the pandemic. These videos are often sold as 'girly' guilty pleasures, but are also very formulaic.

It was about performative image control - presenting who you are or what you want to be. Typically, it was celebrities flaunting their designer bag and high-end make-up products. They were often a little conceited and entirely out of touch, given the context of viewing during a lockdown. There could also be more quirky and interesting items revealed, all dependent on the individual concerned.

With the urge to paint a still life, I set about painting the contents of my bag with some additional items required post-lockdown. For some, the things carried are also purely for psychic and emotional protection - talismans that help you get through the day-to-day. The contents of my bag veer more towards the practical and mundane. A reflection of the times... or myself, or a performative version of myself. You decide!

"If I could say it in words, there'd be no reason to paint." Edward Hopper



Acrylic on canvas
30 x 41cm

'Steep Hill' by Jemima Sims

I created this painting during the lockdown period following the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, as a present to my father. It is one of his favourite views of Lincoln; especially relevant as one of the shops on the left-hand side used to belong to my family, long ago.

Every time I view this painting, I am reminded of the stillness of the city streets during the long quiet days of lockdown, when we all used our limited time outdoors to explore the city anew.

I seized the opportunity to combine free time and frustrated energy, hungrily devouring the landscape of Lincoln with my camera and art supplies. As a result, many paintings were created. Although these were difficult times, I will always be grateful for the freedom I was granted to manifest new works of art.

This image remains one of my favourite creations, a snapshot of Steep Hill which perfectly captures the classic beauty of the city of Lincoln.

"The extraordinary is in what we do, not who we are." Lara Croft



Acrylics
28 x 38cm

'Keep Out' by Tracey Smith

It is natural to be curious. What is it that lies behind a high wall, or garden gate, a locked door in a house or other building, where - to add even more to our curiosity - we are told: 'Keep Out'? A roughly made wall of boarding captured my curiosity. It was old and looked like it had been there a long time. It was too high to see over and there were no peepholes.

The words 'Keep Out' had been written long ago and were now faded. What lay behind the wall I felt had long been abandoned? The branches of a tree hung high over the top of the boarding. The sun was high and lit the blossom and fresh leaves. Despite being left, this tree was alive and living its life.

It provided me with an opportunity to interpret creatively what I saw. To make a painting 'about', not 'of' the subject matter I was observing.

I like to think that if my painting were someone's inspiration for a story, then it could be its start, middle or end. The author would use their own sense of curiosity and imagination to decide what may lay beyond the wall.

The viewer may choose to do the same.

"What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?" Vincent Van Gogh



Acrylics on watercolour paper
28 x 21cm

‘Foggintor’ by Trevor Smith

Lockdown! Isolation! - Lots of spare time.

What should I do? I can't waste the precious hours that are one of the few benefits from this whole sad time. I know - I'll teach myself to paint - it can't be that difficult, can it?

Countless hours of practice, scores of attempts (most of which are forever consigned to a locked drawer) lead to something that gives me satisfaction, if no one else!

Restrictions loosened, we can venture further afield, though keeping away from the dangers of meeting family and friends.

‘Foggintor’ is miles from anywhere, lonely, isolated, peaceful and quiet. The perfect place to stretch our legs with a slim chance of encountering others.

‘Foggintor’ is enclosed, sheltered from the constant Westerly winds over the moors, silent for many decades, safe from the elements, from prying eyes and the pandemic. But; it has its own secrets! The quarry floor has slowly filled over the years, with inky black water filtered through the surrounding peat. It's impossible to see the hazards of rocks, discarded machinery, tree roots, poisons of all descriptions, and the carcasses of moorland wildlife. Is anywhere really safe these days?

“Pictures deface walls oftener than they decorate them.” Frank Lloyd Wright



Archival printing paper and lino printing ink
50 x 35cm

'Feathers' by Gudrun Ståhl Sharpley

Like for so many others during lockdown 2020-2021 there was the challenge of home schooling. Armed with a clear plan of what a Year 5-6 child should learn, I devised an 'art-compatible' schedule. School basics were tackled in the morning and the afternoon was set aside for project work for us both. I needed artwork that I could leave at a moment's notice as there would be interruptions. Lino work can be left in stages and picked up without having to wait for things to dry, and was therefore perfect for accompanying home schooling projects.

I favour figurative art and I particularly enjoy the world of dancers. All artists tend to be rather insular, singular in their goals and absorbed in their world. Dancers exhibit similar characteristics. In movement, they convey emotion and stories, as do artists in 2-D work.

I aim to convey movement and emotion in my work, creating an imagined story. Lockdown was an opportunity to challenge myself with a different way of achieving that goal, by using lino as a template for monoprints. I try to create new perspectives in my pieces.

There is a freedom in using a template that is created in a semi free-style. As I am concerned to portray movement, I do not use rollers, but try to generate internal movement using brushes, moulding the colours within the template shapes. This is not dissimilar to the approach adopted by dancers who use various techniques to create stories through movement.

The reference for 'Feathers' is a beautiful image of a dancer absorbed in day-to-day exercise rituals. The Covid-imposed isolation seems to have been my catalyst for adopting a new and interesting way of creating pieces alongside my home-schooling duties.

"The good painter has to paint two principal things, that is to say, man and the intention of his mind." Leonardo da Vinci



i-Pad art
20 x 15cm

‘View from our drive’ by Richard Steel

Like many people, I have wanted to spend more time on my art and develop my skills. However, work and other commitments meant that was very difficult. When away from the office I could be pretty much anywhere around Lincolnshire, often during evenings and weekends too.

Lockdown changed all that. Rather than join the rest of the nation and use the extra time to bake banana bread, I decided to explore a sketching and painting programme downloaded onto my i-Pad. As I have little confidence in my skills in watercolour, I thought I would ‘play’ a bit with a computerised version of painting, and this is the result.

As the locations for drawing en plein air were very limited during Lockdown, this view is from my driveway - a surprisingly relaxing place to sit in the quietness and the sunshine.

The painting is of the 'Lincoln Cliff.' For those used to hillier areas, the name cliff seems something of a misnomer as it only rises 50 metres or so above the rest of Lincolnshire's predominantly flat landscape. This is in the form of a continuous limestone escarpment running for 50 miles from near Grantham to the river Humber.

The cliff has a second interest for me - two ancient roadways. What is now called the Viking Way runs right along the edge of the escarpment. This ancient route probably goes back much further in time than the Vikings. Further across is the Roman road known as Ermine Street.

With my upbringing in Surrey and my love of Yorkshire and Northumberland, to find somewhere to live near to at least a suggestion of hills was great. The ancient tracks appealed to me as a former archaeologist. All in all, that seemingly rather ordinary view from my drive is unexpectedly inspiring.

“Creativity comes through the making of previously unimagined connections – a connection which creates something new.” Arthur Koestler



Watercolours
16 x 26 cm

‘Reprieve’ by Toni Stefaniuk

A painting often has more than one inspiration and this was certainly the case with this piece. I am moved to paint by emotional responses to light, to colour and to situations. With the emotion may come the need to create a permanent reminder of that feeling.

Lockdowns through 2020 and 2021 and had been stultifying. Lives had been rendered in black and white. Moreover, there had been a threatened closure of the Usher Art Gallery in Lincoln.

I spent much of my time during the various different lockdowns walking through Lincoln and becoming even more familiar with buildings I have loved for years. On one of these walks, I was thrilled by the explosion of colour outside the Usher Gallery with a sweep of dazzling cosmos flowers guiding you up to the unused front entrance.

My painting at this point had flags hanging limply in the heat acknowledging the likely closure. The image was unpopulated, as had been so many public spaces through lockdowns.

On hearing of the ‘reprieve’ of the gallery and feeling liberated by the lifting of lockdowns, I revisited the work and added some vitality and more sense of celebration to the flags.

The feeling of liberation also led me to include an irreverent image of myself, in a similar pose to that of an artist added to a landscape by John Singer Sargent. It was Sargent’s brilliant use of luminous colour that inspired me to try watercolours in the first place.

“...see the sunlight and everything there is to see.” John Singer Sargent



Mixed media
60 x 60cm

‘Land and Sea’ by Suzi Stevens

The primitive Cornish artist Alfred Wallis only began painting in his 70th year as a way of coping with the grief of losing his beloved wife Susan. He painted what he knew and loved - the sea and ships. He painted prolifically and eventually these discovered works led to Alfred unwittingly becoming a huge influence for many modern artists in the following decades.

For me, the starting point of this painting was a day at home; an empty house with a feeling of isolation. Like Alfred, I instinctively knew that I needed to shut away those negative thoughts and be engaged in something I loved - creating pictures.

Stored away under an empty bed, layered with dust, was a lifetime of accumulated drawings. I pulled them out, searching for something that would spark my interest - and there it was - a simple pastel drawing of a shell, sparse ultramarine and raw umber lines lying closely together on the paper. Lying isolated in all its simplicity on the floor, something reminded me of a landscape. So what happened next?

I turned the paper sideways and ripped it into broad strips (I love the feathered edges of torn paper). I took each piece and overlapped them to get a better idea of what I might do. Then the lightbulb moment came when I lay them on a canvas and found the spaces that would become my sea and sky! And so the transformation began - from a simple shell to ‘Land and Sea’.

Days later, after paint, paper and pastels had been played with, it was complete. The excitement of creating this picture had transformed my days into fulfilment and pleasure. And, whilst I may not go on to influence decades of artists like Alfred, the process of creating art has been just as fulfilling!

“Only staying power can give a painter enough energy to peel nature back, layer by layer.” Fred Cumming



Linocut
20 x 30cm

'A Hot Afternoon' by Ann Stoker

On a family holiday spent in the Spanish region of Valencia, we experienced a long and intense heatwave. Temperatures rose to the mid-40's centigrade and although the severe heat was at times arduous and close to unbearable, the radiant and dazzling sunlight created clear, crisp shadows that were not only dramatic but were visually exciting, compelling and inspiring. The lino print 'A Hot Afternoon' is a response to that visual stimulus.

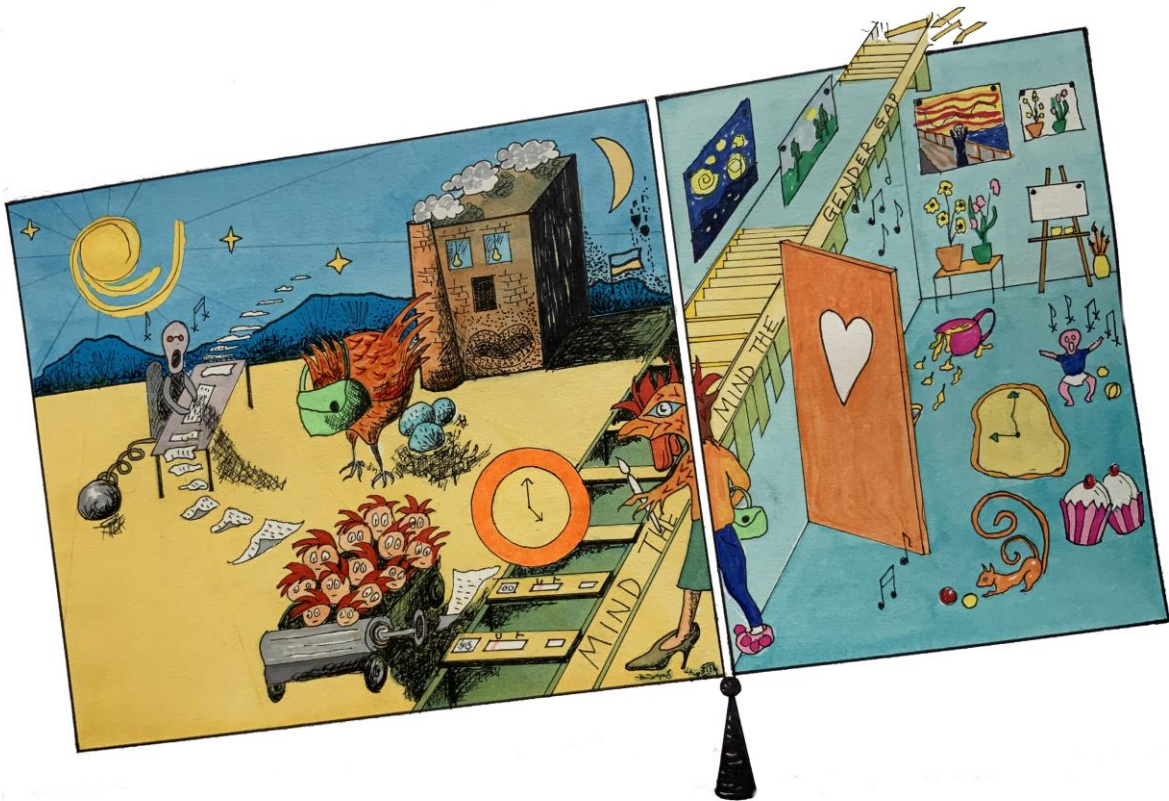
The reason I chose to use a linocut for this work was because as a printmaking medium, lino allows the depiction of a subject in an uncluttered and economic way. I believe this was suited to the contrast and starkness of the cast shadows being created by the powerful light of the sun.

I took many photos throughout our stay and made notes and drawings in my sketchbook. On the day I recorded the image for 'A Hot Afternoon' we found ourselves alone and lost on the streets in the outskirts of Valencia. We had been walking for some time, trying to find our way back to the train station.

There was an unusual silence and stillness present but not a single person to ask the way, because all sensible people by then were indoors and undercover! It was 3pm and the heat was ferocious when we discovered - as in a bad dream - that we had come full circle back to the bridge where we'd started! 'A Hot Afternoon' depicts this very bridge!

After a short while longer of trudging the streets, we did finally find the train station!

"Abstraction is real, probably more real than nature." Josef Albers



Acrylics and ink
42 x 30cm

'Stepping out with Hope 1' by Claire Strickland

All artists periodically struggle for inspiration, yet when faced with the premise 'Art out of Isolation', I found that I began doodling straight away and within an hour or so, had sketched what formed the basis of my submission 'Stepping out with Hope 1'. My response is a literal one inspired by surrealism, expressionism and other 'modernisms' new to me, after studying a few Zoom art classes with the Workers' Educational Association during Covid-19 lockdowns.

It is well documented that arts and crafts are pursuits that can enhance mood for people suffering from depression or isolation in society. This is reflected in the right-hand side box of my submission. Here, employees forced to work from home due to lockdowns, became isolated from their colleagues, family and friends, stuck within their own four walls - a fate shared similarly with non-employees. Some couples had 'lockdown babies' and/or 'lockdown pets.' Many found solace in baking, listening to music and the creative arts, whereby a superficial degree of harmony could be established.

When lockdowns were eased and it was possible for workers to return to work, old and new challenges had to be met, represented in the left-hand side box. Negative Covid-19 tests were required, the morning dash to get everyone out of the door was reinstated, smart, ironed clothes had to be worn and the 'work-head' had to be switched on for public scrutiny. Working mothers and those primarily responsible for child care in particular, soon became 'headless chickens' again juggling work and domestic demands.

The net result...? The struggle to maintain a fairly level work/life balance is more than ever prone to failure. For working parents especially, the brave new world seems destined to aggravate the gender gap in society potentially with a mental health cost as well.

"... Impressionism was ground-breaking for another reason: its inclusion of women."
Kelly Richman-Abdou



Wood sculpture
30 x 19 x 18cm

'Aqualung' by Helena Stylianides

'Aqualung' portrays my emotional state of being, before and around the time that Covid-19 impacted on the world. One end looks like a grimacing deep sea, predatory creature and the body like a gaping cockled shell of a mollusc. It suggests threat, danger and vulnerability all in one.

Aqualung represents a difficult period globally and personally. A time of turmoil, stress and sadness. For me this started in 2017 when my young nephew died suddenly and tragically. Then later, from Spring 2020, more family deaths during the pandemic - Mum and husband.

The sculpture embodies feelings of drowning from emotions, of being underwater and overwhelmed; submerged with the weight and intensity of grief. It's about being powerless and at a loss; in other words - 'All at sea'.

Yet there was an inevitability to all this - so many people suffered, our family was not the only one. Somehow disaster had to happen and because of it - as the title suggests - we can learn to breathe underwater. Even if it is a long, drawn-out distressing process, it is for a purpose, to allow ourselves to experience, learn and change. A higher learning of sorts, that helps us to grow. It is a memorial to a time of pain, and also to beauty.

"Should you shield the canyons from the windstorms you would never see the true beauty of their carvings." Elizabeth Kubler Ross



Oils on canvas
40 x 30cm

‘When you escape, don’t leave your ‘Self’ behind’ by Roy Summerfield

Lockdown was very difficult to cope with. The ongoing enforced isolation was hard enough, but it came at a time when my personal life circumstances were also very challenging. There was lots of time to look back and reflect on life.

So, I started painting as therapy, as a way of coping. I began to see the simple organic objects in my everyday life - like fruit and vegetables - as accessible metaphors for the human condition.

Something as simple as an onion, with its hardness, softness and sensuous shapes is suggestive of the human body. There are the colours, textures, life-force energy for procreation, and growth. There are also the multi-layered skins that separate as the onion goes through its journey from a seed right through to final decay. All of this happens to us - to me.

Then also, I was drawn to combining these organic objects with ordinary manufactured objects from my daily life. In the case of this painting, I included woodworking clamps from my workshop.

And so, I came up with this composition; to describe how I had long ago tried to escape an unhappy life, but in so doing, had left behind an essential part of my ‘Self’, still trapped and clamped in my past.

Changing your life is all very well, but don't leave behind a part of yourself that is fundamental - your spirit, your identity, your inner ‘Self’.

“There is no straight road in this world, only a labyrinth of intersecting crossroads.”
Federico Garcia Lorca



Soft pastels and pastel pencils on Pastelmat
25 x 22cm

'Seam' by Lisa Tank

It's May 2021. A cottage in Cornwall is booked for a week. "Will we be out of Lockdown?" Will we be able to go? Will it feel right?" Travelling so far felt strange after such a long time, but the road trip was relished. A car full of painting materials and Spring in my heart. Being in beautiful Cornwall felt wide open and liberating. The sea, the fresh air, the rocky coastline, and dramatic views were intoxicating. So, "What to paint? Where to start? How big? I can go anywhere....."

I found myself looking closely - drawn in - at details. At the small things, despite the vastness and the space all around me. The seams of colour striations in the rocks. The glistening nuggets and pings of pink and green, the algae and the lichen. Kynance Cove. Huge, crashing waves and imposing black shiny rocks. The tempestuous sea and salty air.

There I was, right up close to the seam of pink I'd spotted under a rocky overhang at the back of the beach. It was beautiful, like a jewel. It felt right. It felt close and intimate, like I'd got used to for what felt like so long. Perhaps I wasn't ready for all that open sky and space.

Tucked in close and studying the detail of the colourful seam in the rocks reminded me of being in isolation and how the minutiae of life, all the little details, had been made somehow bigger, more important. Everything was thrown into such sharp relief. I chose to keep close to that, to pick out the detail, the colours, the patterns, and fissures in the rocks. I worked in pastel and focused on colour. It was right!

"The soul will always do what it needs to do." Tracey Emin



Acrylic and Indian ink on canvas
70 x 45cm

'The Allotments and the River' by Christine Taylor

I love the human spirit.

Our ability to create something from nothing, to find pleasure in the mundane, to leave a mark so that others know we've been. My illustrations rarely depict humans, but often depict they have been, they'll be back.

The illustration of the allotments is a cross section of any community. Life is going on despite everything.

From Flip-flops under a bench, eggs for sale, a discarded space hopper in a garden with clean washing on the line, to the small patch of cannabis growing and tactfully ignored. Human presence is everywhere.

We must assume everyone is at home, tasks are briefly abandoned and soon everyone will be back. I worry that the fire in the incinerator is left, but it appears to be safe for the minute.

It raises my spirit to be able to create a tiny world where, even in isolation, we are all nearby. Maybe floating upriver, maybe making tea, maybe just in the loo.

"If we walk far enough, we shall, sometime, come to someplace."

Dorothy (The Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum.)



Lino-print and ink on paper
20 x 25cm

'Lincoln BLM Protest' by Claire Taylor

Spring 2020 and the country was in lockdown. Whilst many families were going through unspeakable sadness and worry, our experience was more mundane. Everything was about our family unit. The number of people ill and dying seemed - thankfully - far removed from our patch of Lincoln as we became more and more insular.

And then George Floyd was killed. Suddenly, there was a reminder that we are not meant to live in isolation. That communities work best when they look out for each other, defend each other and call out injustice. It suddenly felt very important to remind my children, and myself, of the world outside of our home.

I think everybody on the 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) march in Lincoln felt a bit nervous that day. But that feeling of marching united, as a community rather than an individual, was amazing and inspiring. The young people who led that march spoke with such passion. I felt ashamed that we had let ourselves settle into such comfortable mundanity.

I came home and quickly carved out my lino print. It is rough, the edges aren't straight, the words on the placard are wrong, but I wanted to immediately capture the pride of the speakers in front of our cathedral.

The fact that the speaker is very clearly wearing a facemask, sets this piece in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown and, what I find strange, is that we are now so conditioned to seeing people in face masks, that I don't think people looking at the print initially notice it.

I came out of isolation to march, but now that we are through the pandemic, do I ever find time to protest? Or have I let 'ordinary life' take over again? Have I remained an ally? I suspect you know the answer.

"The artist's job is to be a witness to his time in history." Robert Rauschenberg



Watercolours
59 x 42cm

'Out to Paint' by Spencer Thompson

I am an artist inspired by traditional and modern watercolourists and this is my predominant choice of medium. The work I submitted to the Lincoln Open call shows my love of working 'en plein air'.

The location of 'Out to Paint' was in Nottinghamshire and the challenge was the amount of green in the scene. To try to balance this I had brought along a friend and placed him in the focal point. I then moved the road sign further in to the painting on the left-hand side. This was in reality too far away to fit in otherwise. For a third object I used a light-coloured bush that I tried to ensure was of unequal distance from the figure and the road sign.

I tried to use the quality of watercolour for the trees wet-on-wet, adding and removing colour trying to keep light trees to show distance, lifting colour, and spraying water to add texture. I aimed to keep the darkest dark against the lightest light. The dark patch of the tree with the white of the shirt (which matched the paper) and the hat were made the focal point. I added some dry brush for a bit more contrast in the trees on the left, which I hoped would draw the eye around.

I think the idea was there, but I am not sure if I was that successful on completing the challenge. That is the great thing about painting for me, there is so much to remember, as well as the challenge to one's skill of the watercolour medium en plein air.

Fear of starting is always there before every painting. The best thing to do is just get your brush wet.

"What makes a painting is not technique; it's your vision and insight, we must paint from the heart." Alvaro Castagnet



Wire, plaster, wax and paint
6 x 19 x 22cm

'Future Animals' by Will Thomson

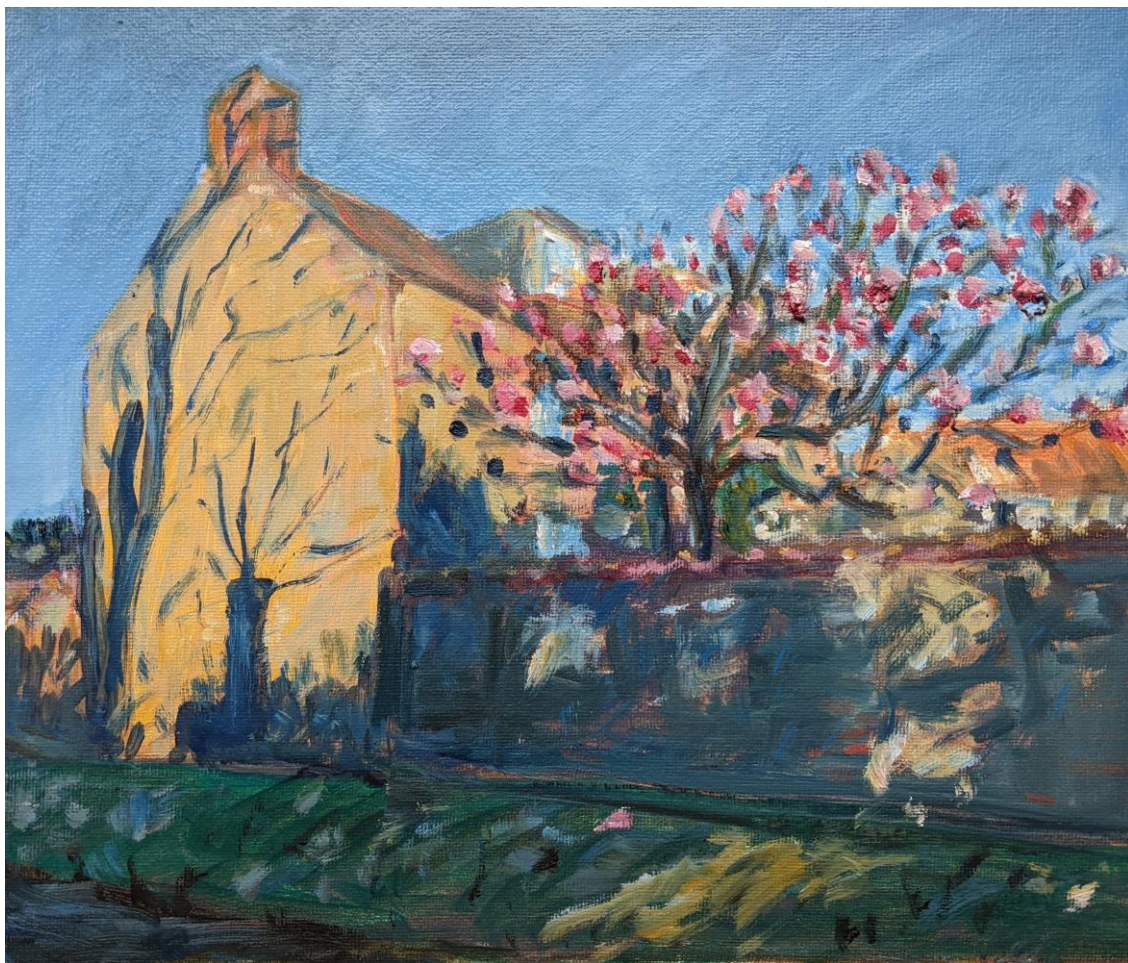
Life is full of random occurrences; all the little events that shape you, all your memories piling up on top of each other like layers of wax. Memories can merge together, some melt away entirely. I take my memories and I try to shape them into something, so that if one day I lose them all, then I can look back on my menagerie and recall what it meant to feel inspired, what I was dreaming of, and how I felt at that time.

Watching the steady drip-drop of wax becomes a form of meditation. As with life, you gradually learn to love all the random pathways it takes and all its messy (im)perfections. It takes time, it creates a space to think. My memories bleed into the wax, they fall with the droplets and settle into new shapes. My works are ghosts I have got to know very well. My art is a way to find answers in disorder and familiarity where there is none.

I created 'Future Animals' with a lot of things in mind: despair, extinction, climate crisis, a loss of control over my daily life, post-pandemic feelings of separation and fragility. They began as a representation of loss and anxiety, but now they remind me of my personal growth as I've learnt to better adjust to the new and unpredictable ways of the world.

"Safety, under any circumstances, is an illusion."

Leonora Carrington to Joanna Moorhead



Oil on board
31 x 25cm

‘Magnolia’s Last ‘Hurrah!’” by Stephanie Thorne

The everyday muddy gloom of Lincolnshire winters can make uninspiring material and how often I’ve thought how much more prolific I’d be on the Cote d’Azur. But Covid-19 restrictions urged me to re-examine my local and everyday sights and I found beauty in smaller things and in fleeting moments.

Using painting as a way of seeing the world has been a great tool to escape the craziness of it all and take time to calm down and focus on the marvellous.

Every year this beautiful magnolia tree on my street suggests better days are coming but so often the flowers are quickly ruined by frost, their full potential not quite realised, the creeping afternoon shadows from the trees opposite adding drama. Confronted with such brutal mortality, I thought I would capture their transience and say “yes! - I see you”.

Just after I painted this picture, I heard that the wonderful couple whose family had lived in the house for several generations had just sold it. Transience indeed.

I was surprised to discover the depth of affection I had for my adopted community and landscape, only truly revealed to myself once I started trying to capture it in pen and paint.

"I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams." W. B. Yeats



Acrylic spray paint with hand-cut stencils
60 x 90cm

‘Springtime’ by Penelope Toone

For me, the beginning of lockdown became an opportunity to make the most of this isolated situation. These new words have crept into our vocabulary quietly and unrelentingly. Now they have become almost every day speak. Isolation, shielding, lockdown, pandemic, vaccination - these words were never commonplace, now they are readily understood, used and part of everyday conversation.

The beginning of lockdown heralded a spring and summer with glorious sunshine and colour. It was at this time I started working on quite large canvases. I'd sit in the garden, parks and the common, drawing anything in front of me, leaves, flowers, undergrowth - until an idea took hold.

I hand-cut stencils and templates and - ensconced in my garage - I began layering and spraying through these stencils using cans of acrylic spray paint, then overlaying using positive and negative shapes to build up the basic background. Gradually the colours came through giving it the warmth of springtime.

Back in my studio, I began working on it, clarifying some areas and adding detail with acrylic ink, paint and pens. I wanted the colours of spring to be the basis of the work.

*“It was only a sunny smile
and little it costs in the giving
but like morning light
It scattered the night
and made the day worth living.”*

F. Scott Fitzgerald



Oil on canvas
60 x 90cm

'Self Portrait in Blue' by Sam Trevey

This piece is an attempt to explore the self; the one constant throughout periods of national lockdown and individual isolation. When the interaction with others was restricted, we found ourselves forced to turn inwards and focus on ourselves and our immediate surroundings.

For those lucky enough to have a family, this provided a rare break from our busy routines and an opportunity to get to know each other in minute detail. For others, it was a time of loneliness and introspection.

This piece inescapably imposes the face onto the viewer, the scale of the face filling the canvas with no other focal point, mirroring Covid's imposed period of self-reflection. The monochromatic blue palette is an obvious reference to sadness and despair. The lack of colour invokes feelings of boredom and lack of variety throughout lockdowns. However, the reflected yellow light on the side of the face hints at there being light at the end of the tunnel, and a brighter future ahead of us.

"Art is coming face to face with yourself." Jackson Pollock



Collage and mixed media
45 x 50cm

‘Sea Shrine’ by Simon Trodd

This piece entitled ‘Sea Shrine’ is the result of a lot of time spent rummaging about in junk shops and car boot sales for oddments that caught my eye.

Stored away in boxes and drawers, I would periodically mull over my collection with a view to creating a three-dimensional box, should the muse take me. On this occasion it was the black framed photo of two fishing smacks returning and the trio of ‘Little mermaids’ that got my imagination aroused. They reminded me of the story of Odysseus and other sea tales, in which unfortunate sailors are drowned at sea having been lured to a watery grave by the mesmerising but irresistible singing of the Sirens.

To this end, an old marching flute represents the musical element and conveniently provides the means of hanging a few ropes of black beads (traditionally Whitby Jet) used as a token of mourning in Victorian times. The effect of draping the beads from above evoked another meaning in me. I was reminded of the nest chamber of the octopus in which strands of eggs hang from the ceiling of her cave. She remains with her brood, lovingly keeping them clean and healthy until they hatch. She herself will die of starvation and exhaustion in the process, the ultimate act of sacrifice!

Once these thoughts were established it wasn’t long before the idea of making a shrine became inevitable. The mermaids in their pearly grottos become the Sirens. The beads become the octopus’ eggs and emblems of mourning. The flat pebbles become the seabed and gravestones of lost souls drowned at sea and mourned for by their relatives.

I’m not averse to mixed media constructions having no theme whatsoever - sometimes I prefer it, but in this case a theme just emerged, so the best thing seemed just to go along with it.

“What is drawing? - It is working oneself through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one feels and what one can do.” Vincent Van Gogh



Welded metal sculpture
84 x 18 x 56cm

'The Day After' by Chris Walshaw

When it had been suggested I might submit work to the Usher Gallery open exhibition, I decided to continue my quest to represent a human figure as a recognisable three-dimensional image using mild steel welding.

I started by making careful measurements to establish the accurate dimensions of the skull (a technique learned in portraiture classes). Next, I built a skeletal framework around which the head and neck could be formed (known as an armature). Once these vital proportions were achieved, I was then able to allow myself more freedom to suggest their characteristics in a more 'Expressionist' way.

Having decided to create two individuals, I chose to place them so as to give the appearance that they were in conversation. To do this I found it useful to mount them on a solid hardwood base.

I named the piece 'The Day After'. Hopefully the viewer can imagine these two characters meeting up again after a period of enforced separation. Here they show a degree of confusion as they suddenly encounter that which they had missed so much, that most vital of commodities.....human interaction. The relief is tangible, but is tempered with a certain nervousness after so long hidden away from the outside world.

There can be no doubt that the experience arising from the lockdown situation has left a mark on us all. My figures are hopefully reflecting some of that unique mixture of joy and tension as they make their first steps back towards reality.

"The sculptor's ability, [is] to let his intuition guide him over the gap between conception and realization, without compromising the integrity of the original idea."

Alberto Giacometti



Soft pastels
60 x 42cm

'Keep Out' by Bryony Watson

'Keep Out' is inspired by an act of defiance. A small but powerful taking back, reclaiming, forging.

In the background, the first lockdown was in full swing and Covid-19 was wreaking havoc on our lives. For the first time in many of our lives, being outside was heavily restricted.

Something about that path, forged through persistence, inspired me to turn to art in that dark time and gave me back the sense of purpose that furlough had taken from me.

It is hard to describe my life at the time I drew 'Keep Out'. Those awful months of being bullied and torn apart by a now-sacked director at work. How I was made to feel like an outsider and how it felt to be on the outside looking in. The strength it took to force apart those railings - otherwise, to stand up for myself. Thinking about it, while defiance is present in and part of this drawing, maybe it should be re-framed.

This drawing was inspired by a small victory, and that is what 'Keep Out' was for me.

"May you listen to your longing to be free." Colum Kelly



Oil on canvas
28 x35cm

‘The Light at the End of the Tunnel’ by Sarah Watson

This painting in many ways demonstrates the ways in which lockdown had an impact on me as a landscape artist. I used to be obsessively strict about only painting en plein air, directly in and from the landscape, which limited my working practice to about four months a year. But the Pandemic brought about a necessary change to my painting habits in those warmer months, curbing my ability to travel and even to paint outside at one point.

Rather than restricting me, this finally opened me up to working from photos that I had taken, thus gifting me another three whole seasons of painting! So instead of channelling my immediate emotional response to a view in real life, I had to learn how to find joy in working from a photograph.

What surprised me most was how my style changed. My work en plein air is wild, full of abandon, joyful and dramatic. But I was unable to replicate that feeling. Instead, I discovered a passion for texture and detail, for views or angles that I may not have been able to access for longer than the snap of the shutter.

This tree tunnel was one of several paintings I completed from photos taken during a cold February on the Cornish coast. The small size of the canvas reflects the intimate nature of this little tunnel with a big personality, and I loved the contrast between the dark interior and the bright, crisp February sunshine waiting for us at the other end. Whilst the outside was bleak and bare, the inside was verdant, green, damp and earthy, protected (and protecting us) from the biting wind beyond.

“I’m not trying to do something different; I’m trying to do the same thing but in a different way.” Vivienne Westwood



Photography
60 x 90cm

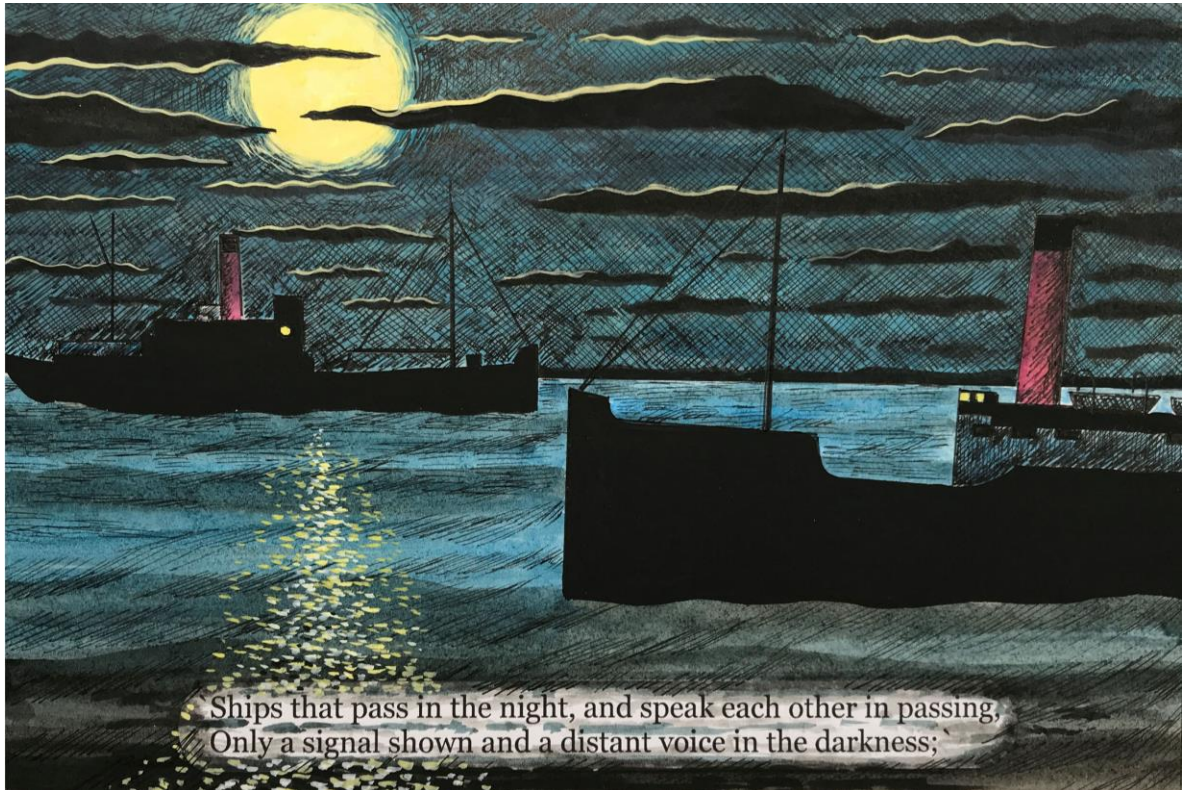
‘Brighton Clouds’ by Andy Weekes

I’ve endlessly wandered this stretch of Brighton beach, from pier to pier. Passing those static monoliths rising from the sea. But it’s my obsession with the thing that is forever alive, continuously fluid and morphing that always draws me to this spot. I love that beautiful, dark sense of foreboding that is created just before a storm is unleashed. Watching as that kiss of light illuminates an edge or separates forms.

That combination of sea and sky is a place of peace for me, a place to reflect and remember. I’ve lost too many people and that late May night I just came down to watch the sunset. But unfolding in front of me was a spectacular scene of drama—clouds shape-changing at rapid speed, combining, growing darker, tones that only nature can paint. I waited till it felt right, then captured the scene.

Back in the studio, I was trying to make a print that reflects both our moods that night. Nature and myself.

“Love, Love, Love.” Terry Hall (The Specials)



Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;

Mixed media (gouache, fine-line pen and collage)
30 x 20cm

'Ships in the Night' by Graham Wells

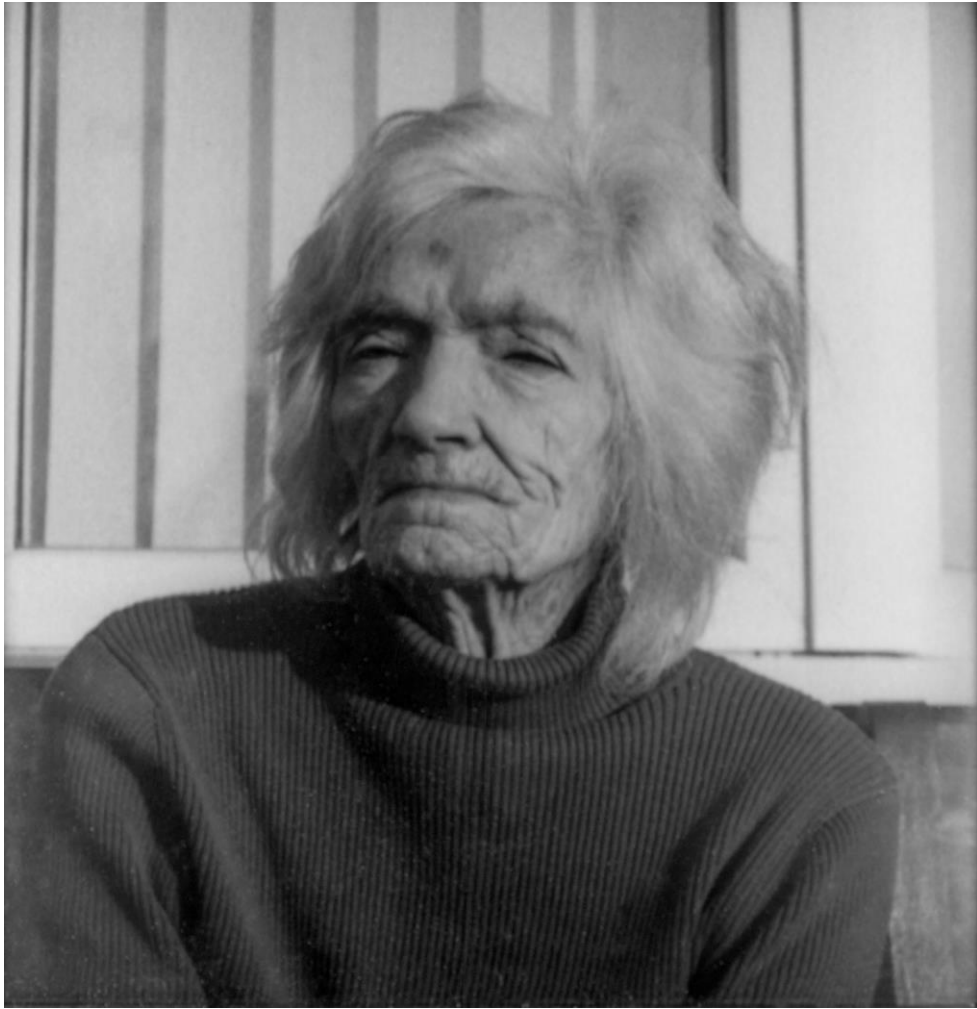
'Ships in the Night' developed from a small sketch done about twenty years ago when I was still teaching. I always encouraged my students to treat their sketch pads as a personal playground where any ideas, no matter how basic, could be scribbled down for future use. In my case, my sketchbook was always a refuge from the interminable staff meetings I endured.

In this case, noting the date and context of the drawing, I see that it helped me through a Heads of Department meeting in 2002. The message is probably: *"Hang on to those drawings and ideas, you never know when you may make use of them."*

My two paintings 'Ships in the Night' and 'Storm in a Teacup' are based on relationships. Taking the word 'isolation' not in terms of working under the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but as an expression of the distance that occurs between individuals at times.

With 'Ships' it's a reminder of those conversations we have when we discover how close we were to another person, without actually meeting them face to face. With 'Teacup' I think the lines of poetry say it all. How often does a mutual and loving apology calm things down after an emotional outburst? The paintings were also an opportunity to work in a style similar to that of a favourite artist of mine, namely Eric Ravilious.

"I paint what I like, when I like." David Hockney



Photography
23 x 25cm

‘Thinking of Life’ by Megan Westwood

I have been making imagery for several years and have been greatly inspired by how art is surrounded by today’s modern and historic formats. This has shifted the way I express my narratives and pushed me to adventure out of my comfort zone. It has led me to document what is out in the world, and express how the narrative can speak for itself. This includes drawing on the grittiness and heaviness of a black-and-white image, which can speak for itself between the photographer and the story resident in the image. It’s in the contrasts and the details of a portrait: *What was their life story? Did they enjoy life? Do we take life for granted?*

After losing her husband six years ago my grandmother regained her independence. The sudden strike of the pandemic oozed a variety of emotions, of distortion and despair from elderly residents and family members. Being fortunate enough to visit my grandmother during the hardships, the conversation slipped into lockdown questioning: *What will happen next? What will be our future? Will this be permanent? Will we see our friends and loved ones?* Our thoughts spiralled everywhere. The opportunity was in front of me. Heavy as I was with emotions, my film camera framed the expression which I captured as she sat on her garden bench, naturally looking out into the distance.

Through lockdown, I studied the emotion and perception of loneliness, from the point-of-view of an elder, from gaining their independence to living surrounded by isolation. This opened a world of quiet roads, empty streets, and forbidden entrances to homes. It gave me the determination to document the raw moments of what could be considered a piece of history. I loaded my film, composed, and photographed the environment, and then I returned to the red room where the imagery began to appear in front of me.

“When you take a photograph of someone, you take a portrait of their soul.”

Winna Efendi (Refrain)



Sand texture acrylic on deep-edged box canvas
50 x 50cm

‘Broken Vows’ by Marzena Wilkes

The ‘Broken Vows’ painting was based on my own life experiences. Feelings of huge disappointment with people living in the same room, whilst also feeling very alone. When the complicity and closeness that used to exist between them have disappeared, then the situation has failed beyond repair. ‘Broken Vows’ - it’s not only about a broken marriage, but also shows positive aspects of this situation. It is very important to know when enough is enough and having self-respect is everything! When one chapter ends another begins. Life? - it’s a journey - enjoy what it brings you and learn lessons from the failures.

Back-to-back chairs symbolize a new path full of hope, the beginnings of a new, better and happier life - new destiny!

My aim was to create a very meaningful and expressive piece using everyday objects painted in black. Using magnolia colours and concrete texture in this particular creation was meant to make the audience feel like the piece is a part of their wall, a place they are living in and a symbol of the reality that many people experience.

It seems this timeless modern creation is both a boldly, personal experience of the artist who made it and a universal truth hidden under a recognisable layer of form and texture. This piece speaks through the emotions and feelings of broken hearts. ‘Broken Vows’ - it’s a life story of many, expressed in a universal visual language.

“The painter has the Universe in his mind and hands.” Leonardo da Vinci



Pastel on sanded paper
23 x 30cm

'Into The Light' by Sarah Windle

"2020, this feels like an important year." I proclaimed to my grown-up children. *"Do something significant and memorable."* Then in the blink of an eye, the world descended into organised chaos. I've been drawing, painting and creating all my life. Now it had become the linchpin to normality. My artistic journey took a whole new direction as we were told not to leave our homes.

Nature inspires me in so many ways. As an artist, the play of light on the elements around us continuously moves me to capture moments in time. Walking amongst the trees on a beautiful spring day is never something we should take for granted. But, in the Spring of 2020, we felt robbed of our simple birthright, and for so many of us we realised just how much we do exactly that!

I listened to birdsong through headphones and imagined as I painted, the rich colours of the places we couldn't go, they were too far to travel and risk infection. So, stifled literally and figuratively, it felt liberating to create the movement of the trees, the paths we couldn't tread and the sunlight filtering its reassuring light into our fragile existence.

"I know of no genius but the genius of hard work." J.M.W. Turner



Acrylics on canvas
61 x 76cm

‘Rosie Baking’ by Peter Wood

This scene attracted me to paint it, mainly due to the lovely plays of warm and cool colour hues and reflected light. The surfaces were interesting textures of metal, cellophane, foil, plastic, cloth, wood and plaster with unusual shapes that caught these opposites in lighting.

Also, I felt that the cosiness of the household interior subject related to lockdown in Covid-19 which was the theme for the call for submissions to the Open exhibition. By subtly playing with the opposites in the colour circle it gives added luminosity, sparkle and tonal value to the painting.

The joy of seeing these luscious facets, inspired me to use pure colour for vibrancy in order to create the light and atmosphere of the mood. I have been painting a series of works entitled ‘Secrets’ for several years now. Here the subject matter always includes figures that are subtly relating to each other and communicating. The settings are usually interior café, pub or street scenes.

The painting that was actually accepted for the exhibition is one of these. In the case of this work, I feel that the painting can come under that title even though the figure is not communicating directly with another in the picture. She is in her own personal, secret, world and we share this, and her mood, in the painting.

“They are mere impressions!”

A critic at an early Impressionism exhibition



Pen and paper
21 x 29.7cms

‘Cat Café’ by Matthew Wright

Returning to my home city of Lincoln after fifteen years away was never originally part of life’s plan, but then neither was an international pandemic and lockdown. With a baby on the way and an unpredictable work situation, Lincoln seemed like a logical and safe option during very uncertain times.

As I pushed my newborn son around Lincoln’s historic Bailgate I was pleasantly reminded of the incredible architecture, not just in the cathedral and castle, but in every shop front, cafe and bar. However, what also struck me was how desolate everything now was due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

I would catch my tired and pale complexion reflected in the glass of empty shop windows, a ghost myself in a ghost town. Haunting myself.

This formed the idea of artistically exploring Lincoln’s less appreciated architecture, but with a haunted twist. Buildings once thriving and bustling, are now isolated, their occupants merely ghosts.

The Cat Cafe illustration, submitted to the exhibition, is 1 of 30 illustrations I completed over the next year exploring this theme.

*“One need not be a chamber to be haunted,
One need not be a house;
The brain has corridors surpassing
Material place.”*

Emily Dickinson

Brief biographies of the artists

All artists at the time of submitting entries to The Usher Gallery Trust open art competition in 2022 were resident in Lincolnshire.

Twink **Addison** studied at Newcastle upon Tyne Art School and Goldsmiths College. She worked in various jobs from teaching to gardening, while simultaneously working as an illustrator, cartoonist, and jobbing artist.

Mark **Adelman** was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease at age 60. As he states: "When God closes a door, he opens a window and through that window has emerged a painter, author and Illustrator". 'Painting for Parkinson's' has raised more than £3,000 for research into this disease.

Laura **Andrew** studied for a BA in graphic design and then had a career as a scientific and natural history illustrator. She is a lifelong artist, who focusses on creating paintings inspired by the natural world.

Darren **Angove** studied foundation art in East Sussex, and later graduated in art from Sunderland University. He worked in various jobs and is presently a carer. His recent work includes a series of ten still life paintings.

Desmond **Avery** was taught art at school by the sculptor John Bunting. He continued to paint sporadically whilst working abroad, then more steadily after returning home to Lincolnshire.

Susan **Banks** studied painting in the 1960s and gained an M.A. in 1995, and an M. Phil. in 2000 at Hull College of Art. She has exhibited since 1970 and her most recent solo show was 'False Doors and Timeless Thresholds'.

Kelly **Barfoot** is a self-taught artist working predominantly with camera-less photographic and printing techniques. Her work 'Mother Earth' was selected as the jacket illustration for the book 'What Inspires Art?' published in 2023.

Gillian **Bassett** studied art at college in Doncaster. She moved to Louth in the 1970s and continued painting through teaching and with her children. She re-kindled the artistic spirit on retirement in 2013 with a few commissions.

Cliff **Baxendale** studied at Leeds College of Art and then Goldsmith's College. He taught art in secondary schools, Further Education, and then became head of an arts and crafts centre and college principal.

Gillian **Beale** started life drawing at Newcastle University, then studied at Leeds and finally Lincoln College of Art and Design. In her latest exhibition 'The Art of Burning Man' at Chatsworth in 2022, she was an invited guest artist demonstrating skyscapes.

Sindy **Benton** studied at Portsmouth College of Art and Design in 3D and Interior Design. She has worked in drawing 'small finds' from archaeological sites, as a planning officer and an architectural drawing and administrative officer.

Margaret **Bird** used to be a primary school teacher. In her art she aspires to represent a sense of place in landscapes, to reveal its layers of history, human and geological, and also to paint like a child - with no fear.

Kate **Boulton** studied Art and Design at Leeds Metropolitan University and then did an MA in Museum Studies at Leicester University. She worked within the museum sector for a number of years before rediscovering her love of ceramics.

Andrew **Bracey** is now based in Waddington after growing up in Devon and studying at Liverpool and Manchester. He has gained an international reputation as an artist for over twenty years and also teaches art at the University of Lincoln.

Prue **Chadderton** studied at a college near Barnsley before teaching in London, Sheffield and Lincoln. Artistically, she has dabbled and experimented with most art and craft materials over the years.

Keith **Charlton** studied at Sheffield Medical School and worked for forty years as a doctor serving the NHS. After many more years looking at art, he took the plunge and began creating it through printing.

Karin **Christensen** is a Lincolnshire watercolour painter and urban sketcher. She has a background in psychology and the NHS, and is author of two books on mental health. She now works full time as an artist and art tutor.

Kathleen **Clarkson** graduated in Painting from Edinburgh College of Art. She has painted in Canada, the USA, Scotland, Europe and the Middle East and was a prize-winner in the Scottish Pernod Competition.

Graham **Cooling** studied Contemporary Lens Media in Lincolnshire. He is an artist, illustrator and compulsive creative who worked for ten years finding stability and found he was just 'yelling at concrete'. He recently relocated to New York City.

Betty **Cooper** has been employed in various fields including her own interior design business, which allowed her to develop an interest in colour and design.

Jason **Corrigan** is a self-taught photographer who has worked in construction, factories and industrial cleaning. Many of his photographs have appeared on the BBC and ITV channels and in other social media news networks, as well as in galleries.

Joan **Currie's** earliest memory of sewing was for a Brownie badge. She then went on to dressmaking but was made redundant at the age of forty. This led to her taking a Higher National Diploma in Textiles where she learned how to express an emotional response through the medium of the stitch.

Wendy **Dabrowska** studied at St. Martin's School of Art and taught in Boston and at the Universities of Leicester and Nottingham. She has worked for Country Life magazine and has exhibited internationally. She is a member of Lincolnshire Artists Society.

Debbie **Davidge** was born in Texas, USA. She worked in banking, then in the pharmaceutical industry before joining the NHS. She is now retired and discovering the wonderful world of art!

Iris **Drury** is studying her GCSEs at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School and is planning to continue to Advanced level. She is interested in portrait art and in exploring creative ways of using paint to convey a message.

Piers **Eveleigh** lives in France and Lincoln. He was banished to boarding school at a young age and later escaped to Hornsey Art College, followed by the Royal College of Art. He is now amusing himself by writing stories for children.

Jo **Ferguson** graduated with a fine art degree from Bristol. Two careers and many locations later, she is painting and potting on the East coast of England.

Melanie **Gazda** studied Fine Art and Contemporary Lens-based Media at Lincoln University. She is undergoing her own art therapy by working in multiple disciplines and with mixed media to positively influence her well-being.

Jaci **Gill** studied Art and Education at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln. Her lifetime passions of art and travel have shaped a career in teaching and then art advisory work. The resulting experiences still influence the development of her personal artwork.

Carly **Gilliatt** studied Textile Design at Nottingham Trent University followed by a PGCE in Design Technology. She has shown her own work in textiles and mixed media since 2012, before turning seriously to paint in 2019.

Janet **Glazier** studied at the Universities of Leeds and Nottingham, which lead to a varied career in education. After retirement she graduated in Fine Art from Birmingham City University.

Vanessa **Glover** studied Garden Design at Riseholme College after having three children. She has had various jobs from nursing to farming. Lockdown awoke a lost love of art, which led to her joining an art group.

Elaine **Gorton** studied and taught art in Sheffield. She has exhibited sculpture work in Oxford, Lincoln and Sheffield. She owned a pottery studio and gallery, and is currently working with Lincoln University on a sculpture.

Liz **Graydon** is largely self-taught and a member of Lincolnshire Artists Society. She has exhibited at the Mall Galleries representing the Armed Forces Art Society. She has won several prizes including Sleaford Art Festival and was a portrait finalist in the Artists and Illustrators exhibition in London.

Stephen **Grey** worked as an art director in advertising before freelancing in graphic design and illustration. He is currently a part-time student at St. Martin's School of Art in London.

Paul **Griffiths** studied engineering in London and is now retired and has returned to a love of art that never really went away.

Jacs **Harris** studied Art and Design/Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan, Salford and Sunderland Universities. Her recent work explores the landscape of The Fens.

Hobden trained in photography, film and television at The London College of Printing in the 1970s. His working life drew upon that in various ways. Since premature retirement, he has returned to 'pleasing myself' pretty much with his art.

Jen **Holtridge** discovered pottery whilst in adult education and studied Contemporary Craft in Lincoln, and then Museum Studies at Leicester University. Her work alternates between her pottery studio in the Wolds and engagement with the local arts centre.

Michael **Jackson** studied pharmacy and then teacher training at the University of Southampton. He has taught in the UK and East Africa. Then after being a pharmacy owner, he studied Landscape and Garden Design at Pershore College of Horticulture.

Liam **John** was educated in various places determined by where the RAF stationed his parents. He started working in software development as an apprentice at 16 and remains employed in this industry to the present day.

Jonathan **Joy** graduated from Southampton College of Art and St. Martin's School of Art. He worked as an illustrator and designer and is the author of Mr Peel's Posters.

Karina **Kaye** studied fine art at the Universities of Westminster and Lincoln. She has exhibited in the UK and abroad.

Jan **Kealey** studied languages in the UK, France and China. She worked in magazine editing while enjoying painting at home and has worked in textile art, photography, stained glass and pottery.

Alison **Kemp** has no formal art training other than good art teachers and attendance at night school for many years. She studied with the Open College of the Arts whilst working in the Civil Service.

Sue **Kent** graduated in English and the History of Art from Hull, and after teacher training became an infant teacher. She retired early due to Multiple Sclerosis and is pursuing her love of painting, which includes experimenting with several different media.

Stanley **Kettleborough** is eight years old and educated outside of school. He exhibited 'Tom and Ted', a ceramic sculpture in the Royal Academy of Arts Young Artists' Summer Show in 2022.

Jeanette **Killner** studied Printed and Woven Textiles at the University of the Creative Arts. She combined making, designing and exhibiting with work as an art and design lecturer. She is interested in developing ideas using other materials (recycled where possible).

Sophie **Kirton** read Media Studies at Leicester University before moving back to work at the University of Lincoln in professional services. She is currently attending regular life drawing classes at the Usher Gallery.

Valerie **Knowles** worked for Lincolnshire Standard newspapers, and the Lincolnshire Police. She returned to drawing and painting during lockdown. At this time, she finally published a children's book - 'The Herd' - which she will leave for her children and grandchildren.

Robert **Lackerstein** studied to be a mechanical engineer. He was trained in car trimming and furniture upholstery and in 1985 started his own business in upholstery and interior design. He is now focussed on mixed media art.

Ian **Lacy** studied medicine and worked in Pakistan for a number of years. He began painting after retiring as a General Practitioner and aims to use visual images and poetry together to explore life, hope and faith.

Koda **Le Put** studied Animal Management at Riseholme College, Lincoln. He is a volunteer at a rescue farm, and also owns an art business.

Ruth **Lennon** studied at Winchester School of Art and then Lincoln University. She worked in education as a specialist in dyslexia and learning difficulties, while simultaneously following her own art practice.

Graham **Lewinton** moved to Lincoln in 1983 and was employed in the mental health sector. He has painted all his life though with no formal art education, and has exhibited in the UK and Germany.

Mary **Maddison** studied hospitality at Leeds Polytechnic and had various jobs in the sector with art always as a hobby. She specialises in textile appliqué, creating celebration cakes and watercolour painting. She was recently inspired by a local artist to create collages from household packaging.

Phyllis **Mahon** studied Fine Art and then Printmaking at Belfast College of Art. She spent many years in London before moving to the Lincolnshire Wolds in 1992. She has exhibited widely and occasionally works as an editorial illustrator.

Clare **Marti** studied illustration at Norwich Art School. She is interested in exploring colour and the figure and has been focusing on oil and acrylic painting since 2021.

Geoffrey Mark **Matthews** studied Art and Design in Scarborough and Leeds and completed a PhD mid-career. He is a designer in a national museum and lecturer at the Universities of Hull and Lincoln. By nature, he is a painter, poet, musician, and an assemblagist.

Anne **Mayes** graduated in French from Cardiff University and taught French and German for 25 years. She is inspired by rural Wales, Southern France and Japan. She is currently attending life classes and curating and exhibiting in Cardiff, Conway and Lincoln.

Pete **McGovern's** family home was 100 yards away from the Usher Gallery, where he saw his first photography show by Edward Weston. This later led to him studying a 3-year Creative Photography course at Trent Polytechnic.

Teresa **Milnes** studied Fine Art at Leeds University. She travelled widely, and then settled in Lincolnshire to raise a family. She is teacher of art and practitioner in Sleaford. She is currently working on paintings dealing with social issues.

Mark **Morris** initially trained as a mechanic and worked as an Oxfam fleet manager in later years. He retired in 2018.

Martin **Moyers** graduated from the University of Newcastle and undertook postgraduate study at Manchester Polytechnic. He was awarded a Printmaking Fellowship by North West Arts Council and teaches Fine Art to Advanced level and in adult education. He is a member of Lincolnshire Artists Society.

Kevin **Newton-White** studied visual performance at Dartington College. He worked as a fisherman in Grimsby and Dartmouth and this was inter-woven with work as a shop-fitter and decorator. He is currently engaged in making more inter-sensory images, whilst also being a carer.

Tiffany **Odlime** is a sixth former at the Priory Academy Lincoln. She is a member of the Creative Collective and the UK New Artist Foundation Programme.

Ana **Ortiz** is from Madrid and has a background in technical architecture and building engineering. She spent ten years working in Lincoln as a design and technology teacher, and became a full-time artist in August 2022.

Esteban **Pena Parga** was born in Bogota and now lives in the UK. He specializes in exploring the materiality of works of art through drawing, painting and new media and the influence of technology on our daily experience.

Susan **Pollard Gillespie** received a degree in art in the USA, followed by 20 years working in corporate art. She is now sustained by a passion for painting and drawing, capturing the beauty of life.

Lorraine **Presland** studied Art and Design at Anglia Ruskin University. She had an assortment of jobs including window display, retail and working in the NHS. She has exhibited her work in Essex, Suffolk and Lincolnshire.

Peter **Ratcliffe** studied at New College Durham, then the universities of Brighton and Strathclyde. He is a member of the Royal College of Podiatrists. He started painting in watercolour but now prefer oils, and has been awarded two prizes in local exhibitions.

Eugénie **Reid** is an artist working with traditional media. She studied art, design and fashion at college level, and now works as a part-time artist and illustrator.

Joey **Richardson** graduated with an MA in Fine Art from the University of Lincoln. She is an internationally renowned woodturner and sculptor. She is also a Court Assistant of the Worshipful Company of Turners and a Queen Elizabeth Trust (QEST) Scholar.

Rosemary **Robinson** had no formal art training and has spent the past 20 years improving her watercolour skills and developing her own style. She specialises in painting wildflowers, trees and landscapes.

Rachel **Rogers** graduated in Illustration from the University of Wales and now works as a freelance artist. She is a member of the Lincolnshire Artists Society and Harding House Gallery.

Nayana **Rosa** is an artist working with mixed media with a particular interest in abstract art. Her inspiration comes from nature, studying mythology and visiting art galleries.

Anne **Samuel** studied fine art at the University of Nottingham. She was a finalist at The Mall Galleries at Derwent and was awarded the drawing prize in 2013. She was also a finalist as part of the Jerwood drawing prize in 2016 at Bankside, London.

Marion **Sander** was born in Germany and worked in the creative events industry. She studied at De Montfort School of Art and Design, and is an arts professional and maker who has been working in Lincolnshire's cultural sector for 25 years.

Cathy **Servonat-Blanc** graduated in Fine Art from University College London. She worked on the creation of props and artefacts for film and television, and is a practising artist, illustrator and educationalist. She is currently working on a series of figurative large-format narrative paintings.

Sophie **Sharpe** studied History of Art at the University of York and is currently working in marketing. She is a long-time arts and crafts enthusiast and is mostly interested in painting and more recently crochet.

Jemima **Sims** studied Art and Design at Lincoln College, and then Illustration at the University of Derby. She has exhibited at various local galleries and the Excel Centre, London.

Tracey **Smith** has a background in teaching and community development work. She moved to Lincoln from Yorkshire where, after finishing work, she set out to teach herself to paint through attending workshops and courses coupled with sheer determination.

Trevor **Smith** studied Physics at Leeds University and worked in industry as an engineer for forty-five years. He learned to paint during the pandemic with the help of YouTube.

Gudrun **Ståhl Sharpley** is from Scandinavia and is an ex-retail manager and self-taught artist. She is motivated to capture movement and intent, particularly in dancers, and four-legged dancers - horses. She also takes inspiration from visiting art galleries.

Richard **Steel** is a clergyman who got into art accidentally, and finds it deeply satisfying and a way to help others to see the beauty and wonder in Creation.

Toni **Stefaniuk** attended Nottingham University and then worked as a solicitor and teacher of law. He began painting on retirement which continues to date.

Suzi **Stevens** studied art at Keswick Hall College, Norwich. She was an early years teacher for thirty-five years and on retiring devoted more time to creating art. She is a member of Lincolnshire Artists Society.

Ann **Stoker** studied fine art at De Montfort University. Her main discipline of drawing is in using a combination of media and she has a continuing fascination with the language of line, mark and pattern.

Claire **Strickland** read law at Cambridge University and most recently taught post-graduate law at Northumbria University before retirement. She has always found art a very enjoyable hobby which is currently manifested in paint pouring.

Helena **Stylianides** studied art at Epsom, Brighton Polytechnic and Chelsea School of Art. Alongside teaching, gardening and care work, her varied art activities have taken place mainly in Cumbria, Waltham Abbey, London, Greece and Lincoln.

Roy **Summerfield** was born in South Africa, and relocated to the UK in the 1970s. He graduated in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, and after a career as a guitar maker and author, he returned to his first passion of painting with a focus on still life.

Lisa **Tank** studied art at Lincoln then ceramics in Cornwall. She returned to Lincolnshire and worked in industry whilst continuing with her art. She is a member of the Lincolnshire Artists Society.

Christine **Taylor** worked as a graphic designer and was creative director of 'Choccywoccydoodah' running to 76 episodes of television. She authored a book and became an artist in Lincolnshire to get through lockdown. She is currently learning pottery.

Claire **Taylor** graduated in Politics and Spanish from the University of Sheffield, before training as a solicitor. She worked for an international law firm and then in the public and charitable sectors. She is Mum to three young sons and art is a welcome diversion.

Spencer **Thompson** studied fine art at Carmarthen College and De-Montfort University. He worked for the British army, Camp America and P.G.L adventure and is currently employed at Lincoln County Hospital. He enjoys the opportunities to paint for exhibitions.

Will **Thomson** is an artist from rural Cambridgeshire who is studying Fine Art at the University of Lincoln. He has a particular interest in the natural world.

Stephanie **Thorne** is an Irish-born painter who emigrated to England in 1989 after graduating from Trinity College Dublin. From her rural Lincolnshire studio, she continues a lifelong exploration, study and development in figurative works, primarily in oils.

Penny **Toone** studied Screen Printing and Textile design at Loughborough Art College. She then graduated from Leicester University with a teaching degree. She became head of art at a Lincoln secondary school and is now retired and enjoying personal development.

Sam **Trevey** studied art at Leicester De Montfort University and pursued a career in the food industry. He is an amateur painter in his spare time.

Simon **Trodd** studied at Norwich School of Art. He worked at Rowland Wards Ltd (Taxidermists) London, then in the conservation of National History Museum Collections and the Area Museums Service for South East England. He is currently working as a phlebotomist for an NHS Trust in Peterborough.

Chris **Walshaw** attended college in London and later worked as a dairy farmer where welding work led to his interest in experimental sculpture. He has attended various art classes and exhibited the sculpture 'Queen of Sheba' at the Ropewalk Gallery in 2022.

Bryony **Watson** studied Fine Art Practice at the University Centre, Grimsby. She is a landscape artist and advocate of keeping a daily sketchbook.

Sarah **Watson** studied for a combined Arts degree at De Montfort University. She then spent twenty years in the music industry, before returning to the countryside to paint the landscape. She is represented by Gallery 6, in Newark.

Andy **Weekes** studied at Lincoln Art School. He joined the military and later became a freelance editorial photographer, educator and wonky potter. He is still travelling the world.

Graham **Wells** studied at Manchester School of Art followed by one year in London at Hornsey College of Art. He then worked both as a teacher and with a number of Examination Boards.

Megan **Westwood** studied photography for a number of years, and is now finishing the final year of a creative arts degree. She currently uses a digital and film format expressively and is focused on capturing moments of still-life and portraits.

Marzena **Wilkes** is from Poland and has lived in the UK since 2005. She qualified as a dental nurse and dental technician and is currently self-employed running a small business, whilst also caring for two young daughters. She loves to create art in her spare time.

Sarah **Windle** is a self-taught artist who has had a number of commissions over the years. Her art practice is interspersed between office and retail work, with a break to raise her three children. She recently held a solo exhibition and currently has gallery representation.

Peter **Wood** graduated from Camberwell Art College, then trained as a teacher at Brighton University. He taught for 28 years in schools as a head of art, crafts and technology and has had a number of international art residencies and exhibitions.

Matthew **Wright** studied and worked in music in Leeds before moving to London. He is self-taught in art and has illustrated, authored and published a number of children's books. He currently specialises in architectural portraits.

About the editor

Kevin Byron graduated from Hull University with a Ph.D. in Applied Physics and then worked in photonics research for twenty-five years. He is currently a freelance educational consultant specialising in creative and research skills, working with UK and European Universities.

The Usher Gallery Trust open art video

As mentioned in the preface, a video was produced showing selected work by all 289 artists who entered The Usher Gallery Trust open art competition in 2022. The video was accompanied by music specially composed and performed by local musician Ruth Bell, and it can be viewed via the weblink or QR code given below.

<https://youtu.be/BblfRI9G5Uw>





As the saying goes - "Every picture tells a story!" - and here is a book to prove it. These stories and images of works by a hundred and ten Lincolnshire-based artists, address the central question in the creative process: What is the inspiration behind the work?

Almost every human emotion is captured here, as the artists generously share the unique and personal circumstances during lockdown, that lead to the creation of their art.