

2024 marked Art First London's 30th Anniversary!

Beginning at No 9 Cork Street in 1994 – now the offices of Frieze London – we enjoyed an exciting fifteen years in our first floor gallery with a dynamic exhibition programme, participation in Art Fairs in the UK, USA and South Africa, and we regularly held memorable dinners with talks by artists and guest curators, supported by our dedicated Patrons Group.

It was a time when British museums were building their collections, and we had an active relationship with them, and also with the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. which acquired six of the South African artists we exhibited; William Kentridge, David Koloane, Louis Maqhubela, Karel Nel, Georgie Papageorge and Jeremy Wafer.

From 2010 the gallery space was moved to 21 Eastcastle Street in Fitzrovia from where we continued and expanded our exhibition programme, opening with Simon Lewty's *Major Works 1985 – 2010*, accompanied by the new monograph *Simon Letwy: The Self as a Stranger* (Black Dog Publishing).

From 2017 to Summer 2024 we were at 15 St Mary's Walk in Lambeth in a charming 1830's workspace. Soon after Lockdown we were able to take on the second upstairs space as a gallery, which opened in September 2022 with Helen MacAlister's exquisite exhibition [The Glamour of Backwardness](#).



1994–2009
9 CORK STREET W1



2010–2017
21 EASTCASTLE STREET W1



2017–ONWARDS
15 ST MARY'S WALK SE 11

The final Lambeth exhibitions during 2024 were part of that 30 - year legacy. **Simon Morley's** [Modern British](#) related to the show we held at our Cork Street gallery back in 2007 entitled *The English Series*. In a group of four paintings, the texts derive from the cover designs of The Penguin Modern Painters series, published between 1944 and 1948, and featured Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, Victor Pasmore, and Stanley Spencer, all painted in the carefully considered signature monochrome colours Morley adopts as appropriate evocations either of the original book or of the artist's work.

A suite of A4 size paintings based on the cover or title page designs of first editions of works by British poets and novelists from the first half of the twentieth century included W. H. Auden, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, and Virginia Woolf.

The largest work comprised sheets of paper on which Morley painted over the verses on all the pages of T.S. Eliot's famous poem of 1922, *The Waste Land*. Eliot may have nodded his wry approval, but not Pound!

Morley left the UK in 2007, and he now lives in South Korea and France. Thinking from a distance about 'British culture' is one of the motivations for making the new series. This distance also inspired him to complete his latest book for Thames & Hudson, in their World Art Series: *Modern Painting: A Concise History*. It is an excellent, concise, refreshing account, worth reading every page. Copies are available from [Art First](#) or Thames & Hudson for £18.99.

In April **Bridget Macdonald's** [*A Deeper Landscape: paintings and drawings around the theme of landscape and memory*](#) brought Spring to the gallery. From farming activities to ancient battle sites around the Malvern Hills where she lives, and occasional new landscapes from her travels, the works subtly depict places of individual memory and experience.



Simon Morley *The Waste Land*, 1922, 2021-23
Acrylic on Penguin book page, 103 x 67cm

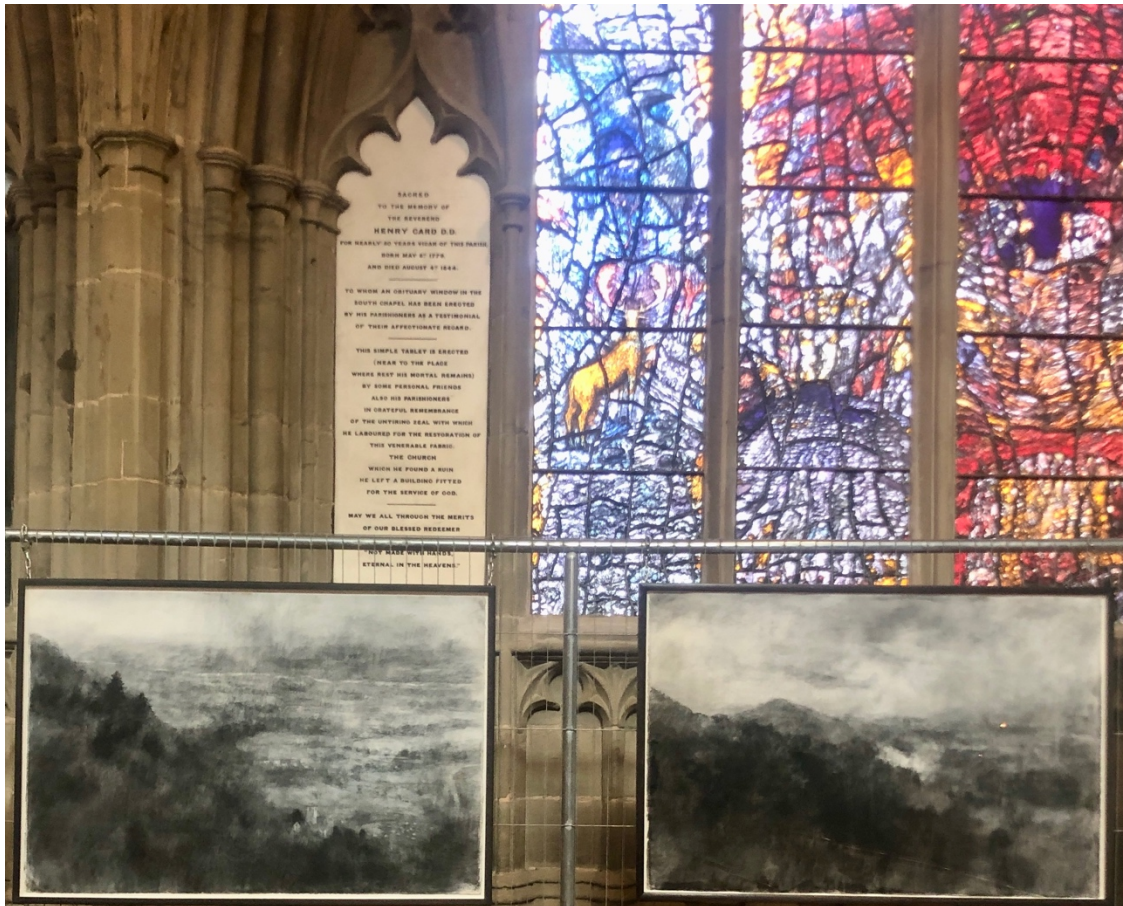


Bridget Macdonald *Gascony Pastoral*, oil on linen, 40 x 50 ins/101 x 127 cm

The exceptional charcoal drawings included in this exhibition follow similar lines of interest and overall the work is imbued with a distilled poetic quality that addresses the deeper aspects of landscape and its resilience of meaning.

Macdonald's large drawings were shown later in October 2024 at Great Malvern Priory: *Rain, Wind & Change* documents her response to Catherine Swire's book of poems, 'SOIL', with an emphasis on the story of Prince Arthur, eldest son of Henry VII, whose tomb is in Worcester Cathedral and the historic landscape between Worcester and Malvern. (LINK to exhib)

Works are held in the permanent collections of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Worcester City Art Gallery and the House of Lords at 1 Millbank.



Installation view of *Wind, Rain & Change*, Great Malvern Priory

From May 23 to 21 June, **Donald Teskey's** exhibition *Currents* swept the salty fresh air off the Atlantic Ocean onto the walls in a group of superb paintings that emerged from his Western Cape Residency in South Africa during February 2019 when Art First took part in the Investec Cape Town Art Fair. They were shown in this exhibition alongside the more familiar scenes of the Atlantic crashing onto Ireland's West Coast around Co Mayo where Teskey now lives.

The River Dodder in Dublin also featured, with currents of a very different kind from those generated by the Atlantic Ocean. The group of *Riverbank* paintings are redolent with leafy summer growth and the ebb and flow of water levels nudged by the river's gentle movements.

Teskey's works are held in national, corporate, university and private collections throughout Ireland, including Dublin's Irish Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Ireland, The Royal Hibernian Academy and the Arts Council of Ireland.

(LINK)

As usual, Art First occupied Stand 10 at January's **2024 London Art Fair** at the Business Design Centre in Islington. It was to be our final appearance there after over 30 years. We were delighted to present work by **Simon Lewty**, **Kate McCrickard**, **Will Maclean**, **Jack Milroy**, **Simon Morley** and new ceramics by **Marisol Jacquemot Derode**. (LINK)

