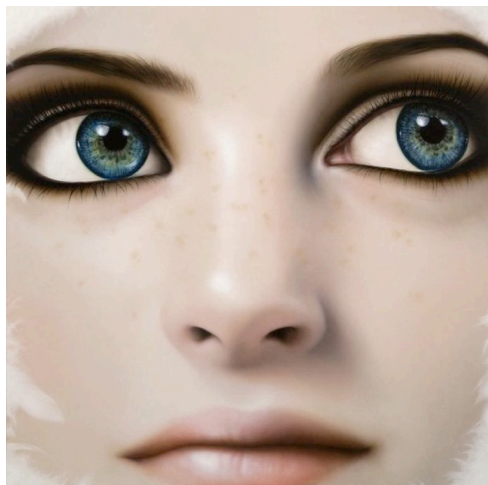


CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Both continuing until 20 February

FIGURE

Works by Güler Ates / Christopher Cook / Eileen Cooper / Machiko Edmondson / Bridget Macdonald / Jack Milroy / David Price / Partou Zia



This group exhibition presents a range of artworks formally using the body, or areas of the human figure as a principal subject. For January we have refreshed the show with new inclusions: from Bridget Macdonald we have *Eclogue 3*, a seductive charcoal drawing of a dreaming youth set in a classical landscape, conjuring Giorgione. The setting in fact is Glyndebourne, where Macdonald was invited to enjoy a residency and attend rehearsals in between exploring the Sussex landscape.

To the photography section we introduce Güler Ates's *Black Trace*, showing a mysterious veiled figure set in the Royal Academy's enthralling Print Library with its stacks of large leather bound volumes and modulated lighting. Also in this section, we re-present a group of Graeme Williams's South African 'Born Frees' from his compelling photographic essay on post-apartheid South Africa titled *Where the Grass Grows*. (We are showing a dramatic group of his works from the *Refracted City* series at the Cape Town Art Fair 18 – 21 February).

Many of you may have seen the article on South African Gideon Mendel's *Drowning World Series* in the Guardian Weekend magazine (14 Nov 2015) – work for which he was shortlisted for the Prix Pictet global award in photography and sustainability. His images were shown on billboards around Paris during the Climate Change Conference and his frequent instagram postings @gideonmendel continue his compassionate, moving recordings. We include a group from the series in FIGURE.

Also on view is work by Joni Brenner, Christopher Cook, Eileen Cooper, Margaret Hunter, Liane Lang, Kate McCrickard, Jack Milroy, David Price and Partou Zia.

Illustrated, top: Machiko Edmondson – *Pirouette*
Bottom Gideon Mendel – *Drowning World Series, Nigeria*

THE POSTCARD PROJECT

Works by over 20 gallery and guest artists on a uniform scale and at a single price of £400

The Post Card Project is ever changing: an enticing selection of post card sized works by gallery artists, all available at the uniform price of £400. It's a great way to begin collecting an artist new to you, or to add to what you already have, with something different to enter your home and start the year on an uplifting visual footing.

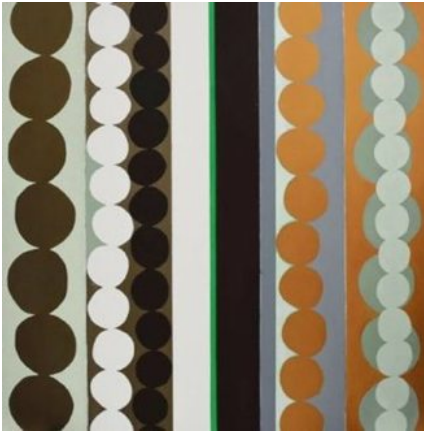
Illustrated: Postcard work by Luciano Bonomi

JENNIFER DURRANT RA / KEVIN LAYCOCK

Chromatic Intuition

Opening Thursday 25 February

Exhibition dates – 26 February – 9 April 2016



It is with great pleasure that we bring together the paintings of Jennifer Durrant and Kevin Laycock for this exhibition. Abstraction, chromatic brilliance and music infuse the works, in which themes and variations, irregularities and intuitions combine to heighten our awareness of pictorial space and form – the tensions, energies and pleasures. Sarah Kent describes Durrant's nuanced complexities as 'singing with effortless grace', in an essay she wrote about the *Ghirlanda Series* first presented in Durrant's 2008 exhibition at Art First - *With Garlands Drest*.

From her studio in Umbria, Durrant says 'It's all there, outside. It's just a question of how you translate it. I start with an idea prompted by my inner thoughts or what I see. You have a sense of the colour going through the painting and giving it coherence. I want people to read them across as well as up and down; my concern is rhythm, and the painting being a solid object, built of layers of stuff, which underlines the whole and locks the shapes together.'

A rigorous investigation of the analogy between painting and musical composition is a preoccupation of Kevin Laycock's, but his paintings are ultimately self-referential. Stephen Whittle commented on the work in *Uncertain Harmonies* (2008), that the intellectual basis of Laycock's paintings is not immediately obvious to the viewer and nor is it intended to be... the success of his paintings rests in their ability to engage our emotions so immediately and forcefully without reference to the external world.'

In 2011 Laycock began a collaboration with composer Michael Berkeley, resulting in a cross-disciplinary work combining sound and digital visuals. Concurrent original works on paper accompanied the immersive piece, and Richard Cork and the musicologist Anthony Gritten wrote illuminating essays in the Leeds University publication, *Collision*.

The new paintings abandon the close relationship with music, returning to the dictates of the picture plane and a more intuitive enjoyment of the dynamic formal arrangements of brightly coloured triangles and rectangles, floating across the picture surface.

The visual and emotional energies which charge both Durrant's and Laycock's paintings give them their immense appeal. We hope the new partnership established within the show will introduce collectors and followers of each artist to the other.

Jennifer Durrant was elected Royal Academician in 1992, and now lives and works in Italy. Kevin Laycock is a senior Lecturer in Art and Design History and Practice at the University of Leeds.

Illustrated, top two: Jennifer Durrant – Ghirlanda Series
Bottom two: Kevin Laycock – Chaos and Roses Series

AF PROJECTS: KATE MCCRICKARD

Belleville

Opening Thursday 25 February

Exhibition dates – 26 February – 9 April 2016



In Paris, where she lives and works, Kate McCrickard's images come from fugitive, observational pencil sketches made in Belleville's cafés and in the street, on the metro, the bus and at home, in a diaristic manner. Chinese prostitutes, barflies, children in parks, a still life – all offer both historic subject matter and formal intrigue, where a small child can be as interesting as the stalk of a leek.

The subjects function as the cosmopolitan messengers that they are. Familiar types - drinkers who prop themselves up at the *zinc*, smoking, sipping on tiny espressos or a demi-pression beer, one eye fixed across the room on the horses, bets in hand. The butcher comes in from the charcuterie next door. Street walkers linger on a corner in pvc thigh-high boots and cat-fur coats.

Working up sketches back in the studio, oils on canvas, offset drawing or mixed-media multi-pass monotypes emerge, and these comprise the exhibition. The French premise continues with figures observed obliquely from behind, the grittiness of the street subjects reflected in the treatment of surface. Corrections, scrapes, tears, finger prints and irregularities are left alone. Such lack of polish rubs against the taste for beauty in art, so quintessentially French, but leaves a certain vigour in the work. This is image-making as a way of simply attending to the world.

McCrickard's second solo show at Art First expands the interest in FIGURE and brings us the poignancy of Paris *now* as it deals with the atrocities so recently foisted upon it, very close to where she and her young family live.

FURTHER NEWS

BRIDGET MACDONALD

AT WORCESTER CITY ART GALLERY

This Green Earth - The Landscape Tradition of Peter

Paul Rubens, Claude Lorrain and Samuel Palmer

13 February – 25 June 2016



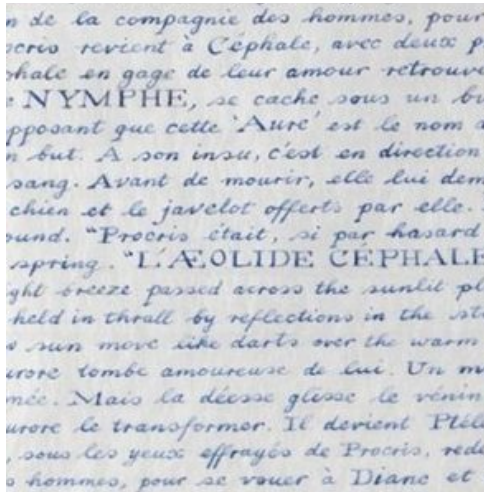
Paul Spencer-Longhurst was Senior Curator at Birmingham University's Barber Institute when Bridget Macdonald's exhibition *Pictures at an Exhibition* took place at MAC in 1996. Inspired by old master works at the Barber, she created a body of charcoal drawings, and her interest in art history, in literature and poetry in particular, have continued to fuel both her painting and drawing over the decades. His catalogue essay for *This Green Earth*, brilliantly charts Macdonald's roots in landscapes known to her personally, but which are also consciously connected to the preoccupations of other artists from earlier eras.

For this selection of her work, borrowings have been arranged which illustrate perfectly her affiliations and influences. From Manchester Art Gallery comes Palmer's *Bright Cloud*, while the Ashmolean has loaned Palmer's *Drawing for the White Cloud* and Claude Lorrain's *Landscape with a Goatheard*, to amplify the connections. Macdonald's paintings and drawings, ranging from postcard sized works to the expansive canvas of *A Bridge across a Flooded River*, completed in 2015, provide us with a contemporary insight of the British landscape today, and the abiding classical antecedents which remain for those who choose to see it.

**SIMON LEWTY AT LEAMINGTON SPA
MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

The SIGNificance of Writing

28 April – 10 July 2016



This is a major survey covering five decades of Simon Lewty's work, with a particular emphasis on the overriding 'mark' in his drawings, which is writing, or forms of transcribing language and sound. Leamington Spa is his home town and the exhibition marks his 75th Birthday, including new work while also looking back to its earliest manifestations. With a commissioned essay by poet and writer, Ian Hunt, a re-presentation of Leamington's own Lewty, *The Men Who Lie in the Road* (1991), a film of Lewty at work responding to questions by the poet Peter Larkin, and a sound recording of Lewty reading the text of a typescript work, and the recently published monograph *The Self as a Stranger* (Black Dog Publishing, 2010), this promises to be a fascinating and timely presentation of his oeuvre. A new generation as well as long standing friends and colleagues from the West Midlands and beyond will have an eagerly awaited opportunity to savour a remarkable body of work.

**WILL MACLEAN AT INVERNESS
MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

Veering Westerly

20 February – 26 March 2016



Jackie Wullschlager (Financial Times) describes Maclean as "a conceptual poet of Gaelic maritime life (who) takes his language equally from global minimalism – assemblages of found objects, sometimes boxed into tableaux with a lyricism comparable to that of Joseph Cornell – and from a deep emotional bond with his native culture". This exhibition began its tour at An Lanntair, Stornoway and ends in Inverness, where Maclean was born.

An illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition with essays by Lindsay Blair, Malcolm Maclean and Dr Findlay MacLeod is viewable on the Art First website (news section).

**SIMON MORLEY AND SIMON LEWTY
AT THOMAS PARK GALLERY, SEOUL**

BOOKISH

8 March – 8 April

Curated by Simon Morley, *BOOKISH* addresses reading as an aesthetic object. "The artists are concerned not only with the role of the book as the carrier of linguistic text, but also with the visual language of books, and with reading as something more than a source of information.

ART FIRST AT THE CAPE TOWN ART FAIR

Cape Town Convention Centre

18 – 21 February 2016

The Cape Town Art Fair, 18 – 21 February. This year the fair takes place in the Cape Town Convention Centre and we will be on Stand 5A, showing Joni Brenner, Kate McCrickard, Karel Nel, Richard Penn and Graeme Williams.

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ART FIRST