

heads & tails

PICTURING PEOPLE AND OTHER ANIMALS

MEDIA RELEASE FOR 02 AUGUST 2023

CONTEMPORARY
ANDCOUNTRY

The Fermoy Gallery and Shakespeare Barn

St. George's Guildhall
29 King Street, King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 1HA

9 September to 28 October 2023

Heads and Tails will be a group exhibition of ten artists exploring the interspecies bonds formed between people and animals and how they look within the home, the workplace or in the wild. The artists propose various disciplines that engage with human as well as animal behaviour and how that is represented in art now. Heads and Tails will open Saturday 9 September, until Saturday 28th October 2023. It will be open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 11am to 4pm and entry is FREE. It takes place at The Fermoy Gallery and Shakespeare Barn, St. George's Guildhall, 29 King Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1HA.

Heads and Tails will focus upon depictions of people and animals, by ten contemporary artists based in East Anglia, each with a different approach to their subject. Included within the exhibition will be portraits of people accompanied by animals, these may be domestic pets, working animals in their work setting, or wild animals in their natural habitat. Nine of the artists included are based in Norfolk, one in Suffolk. They have exhibited widely throughout the country. Their work is approachable, showing how animals interact with us and are impacted by human activity. Others are mythological beasts or symbolise a human quality. Media will include painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, taxidermy, and clay modelling.

There will be paintings and drawings by **John Kiki** and **Colin Self**, well-established artists who have enjoyed long and distinguished careers. They are both in their eighties and have their work in national museum collections as well as private collections internationally. John Kiki is well-known for his lively part poured paintings of figures and animals in friezes, often painted on a large-scale. Colin Self is a Pop artist who has used advertising and discarded materials like used stationery, train tickets and chocolate bar wrappers to make his intimate paintings and drawings on paper, maquettes for sculpture and prints. Colin is raising funds for veterans by selling copies of a print based upon his original drawing on an envelope of a former soldier and his dog.

Emily Mayer was a taxidermist and sculptor who had a distinguished career traversing both realms. Emily's life-like dioramas of animals are virtuoso examples of the techniques she was instrumental in establishing in contemporary art. Complimenting these playful tableaux will be photographs by **Katayoun Dowlatshahi**. Her images are built up physically by building up layers of carbon as each photographic print passes through the printer, giving the image a slightly raised three-dimensional presence. They are highly detailed, she finds affirmative signs of life where most would see deterioration and death. Sculptors **Roger Hardy** and **Rachael Long** both make constructions from found materials. Rachael Long has carried out several large-scale public art commissions like Lifeboat Horse in Wells-Next-To-The-Sea harbour. She has a fluid approach, using steel from scrap as well as other reclaimed sources that she transforms into an animal's thigh, or rib cage. Her observation of the animal is present in each of her sculptures. Roger Hardy takes water eroded or treated timber that he forages for and subtly alters, applying natural clay and pigments, creating deceptively simple figures. His figures frequently carry markings or take on a morphology from the timber that lend them animal qualities, like flight.

Louise Richardson has been making mesmerising images from found materials, like early black and white photographs, feathers, textiles, and articles of antique clothing for many years. Her work is presented as 'memento mori', framed assemblages that connect to tell a story by their close association. **Jessica Perry** makes drawings on paper that explore the difference between the lives of real creatures and their anthropomorphised versions in stories. These will be the subject of a forthcoming book. **Nessie Stonebridge** paints, makes clay sculpture, and creates drawings on paper often including 3D elements. Her work is expressive and finely drawn emphasising the qualities of the animals in moments of flight or fright, life or death, observed in the rural surroundings of her studio. And **Rosie Phillips**, the youngest artist in this group, is a self-taught Norwich-based painter who has worked to commission, painting contemporary portraits of people in the home, often with their pets, in their workplace and even on public transport!

Check this website for opening times: <https://www.guildhall-events.co.uk/>

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PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

We have selected recent work by a diverse group of artists who span the generations that will sit well together visually and provide ample opportunities to draw together strong narratives around the exhibition theme. The materials and techniques used by this group of artists should appeal to both seasoned art lovers as well as non-art or 'new' audiences.



Katayoun Dowlatshahi is an artist, printmaker and fine art photographer with 27 years of experience in the field of public art, lecturing, mentoring and strategic development work. She has pioneered Carbon Prints that are enormously difficult, time consuming and expensive to make but no other pigment-based process can produce blacks and depth of shadows as dark as the carbon process. Another highly sought-after characteristic of the medium is the depth of the pigmented gelatin layers that render the image with a subtle relief.

Artist statement about the Contemplations Series

This an ongoing series of images that are inspired by my garden in Norfolk. These are intimate and self-reflexive portrayals of nature. Connection to memories, delightful discoveries, opportune moments, study of and meditations on the natural world around me are reflected in my choice of subject and compositions. These works evoke a North European tradition of the 'Vanitas' still life and conversely contemporary representations of birth, death and life.

I trained as a traditional printmaker in fine art, embracing fine print photography and drawing into my practice, which in 2000, led to my Doctorate research into 'Drawing With Light' using the carbon transfer process. My passion is in the analogue potential of historic photographic processes and how these may be employed as fine art mediums. I have chosen to create this series only ever as handmade colour carbon prints. I am possibly the only person in the UK that is doing this professionally. My most prestigious commission to date is the production of 25 large colour carbon prints for a major retrospective exhibition 'Yevonde, Life and Colour' at the National Portrait Gallery in London. I have also established a reputation in the field of public art and have work in both private and public collections in the UK and the USA.



Roger Hardy's sculpture is figurative, made from reclaimed wood, metal and with clay additions, configured to create the human or animal form. His figures represent individuals of all types, either single figures or assembled in groups resembling nomadic tribesman. The starting point for his creative process begins with natural erosion and seasoning of his wooden component parts, often in the local river, the Alde.

As Hardy says himself: "The estuaries and coastline of Suffolk has been my source of inspiration for several years. Whether it is searching at low tide for wood, worn by time and tide or collecting fragments from the boat yards, these found elements are relics of a history and time gone by. Using found river and sea wood in sculpture which has a previous life and a story to tell. Strangely most of my finds have human characteristics worn into them by nature. I like to work with the timeless quality of the sculptures. They seem to have a soul/life becoming an icon of humanity. This aspect fascinates me".

"I like to work with the timeless quality of the sculptures. I like them to take on a totemistic resonance. They seem to have a soul/life becoming an icon of humanity. This aspect fascinates me". Roger Hardy

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John Kiki has lived and worked in Great Yarmouth for the past 50 years and has developed a rich figurative language that encompasses a fluid abstraction alongside a changing cast of characters borrowed from Greek mythology, history genre paintings, and his own observations of how people interact in daily life. John Kiki's long career has included exhibitions in museums and galleries such as the Royal Academy, Tate, Hayward Gallery, Barbican Gallery, and Serpentine Gallery in London; OK Harris Gallery in Soho, New York, and Galerie Wahrenberger in Zurich. The influences on his work are many and varied. There are elements of Jackson Pollock, Francis Bacon, Matisse, de Kooning, Baselitz, and Picasso.

"John Kiki is a very unusual artist. Unusual, not for his clear and immediately recognizable way of painting, but because he emerged, painting in his distinctive way, when he left art school fifty years ago." John Kiki: Fifty Years in the Figurative Fold by Keith Roberts



Rachael Long makes large-scale sculpture of animals and birds, using steel and redundant farm machine parts. They are welded together and sometimes forged to subtly change them. The alchemical transformation of cold hard metal into a fluid animated creature is what interests Rachael. She graduated in History of Modern Art BA in 1990. An award-winning artist with successful public commissions across the UK including Lifeboat Horse at Wells-Next-To-The-Sea, she has work in collections based in France, Austria, New Zealand, and the US. Rachael says:

"For me stories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact. This is what I hope to translate into three-dimensional work. On an intuitive level visual imagery holds yet deeper and more valuable truths through non-verbal communication."

"My choice of the natural world as subject matter developed from my farming background and living in a remote part of Scotland. Working in forged and recycled steel I have found a way to draw with the materials, aiming to capture movement and strength in the animals I portray. "

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Emily Mayer began her immersion in the natural world as a youngster drawing the tiny, perfectly preserved bodies of dead field mice on the kitchen table. She spent many years in the UK and the USA learning traditional and 'cutting edge' taxidermy techniques that proved to be an unorthodox route into complimenting her activities as an artist and model maker. In 1986 Emily attended Norwich School of Art (Norwich University of the Arts) studying Fine Art Sculpture BA (Hons).

The disarmingly life-like quality of Emily's taxidermy preceded that of artists like Damien Hirst and Dorothy Cross. She moved the creative potential for taxidermy beyond the baggy and balding specimens that populated the display cases of regional museums, introducing taxidermy to sculptural production and changing perceptions of what 'natural' could be in sculpture. For this reason, other artists came to her seeking her expertise as she carved out a parallel career fabricating sculptures, honing her skills on larger animals and developing extraordinary techniques like erosion moulding. The animal carcasses she has used are usually donated or ethically sourced.

Emily's displays are composed with the spirit of the animal in mind, her approach avoids compromising a subject's integrity.

"It is the attentiveness of the naturalist as much as the technique of the craftsman that she brings to her work." Catalogue essay on Emily Mayer by Rachel Campbell-Johnson.



Jessica Perry trained at Norwich School of Art (B.A. Fine Art, London, exhibiting paintings and sculpture in group and solo shows. -She is a resourceful and inventive artist whose personal narrative combines humour and idiosyncratic detail in closely-worked miniature drawings. Focusing on the hidden imaginary worlds of underground creatures has given rise to Jessica's 'WeatherMole': an ongoing, wry visual commentary observed from the perspective of the common-or-garden mole, vole, snail or slug. A brief, sardonic paragraph accompanies each drawing in the form of an abbreviated and adapted local weather forecast (lifted from the localized BBC forecast for her area).

Over the years, Jessica has led a wide range of hands-on art projects in outdoor settings and in the classroom, working with groups of all ages and abilities, combining her broad knowledge of traditional processes with recycled and natural materials. This has included collaborations with other artists on art in the landscape working along the Norfolk coast, using simple raw materials such as soot, chalk and sand to create powerful visual images that address coastal erosion and climate change. Large-scale public commissions include wire-art assemblage pictures in the permanent collection at the N & N hospital in Norwich, and as East Anglia's leading instructor in earth oven building, she has hand-built many sculptural clay ovens as large, functional features in gardens and community spaces.

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Rosie Phillips is a self-taught portrait painter, she has worked to commission, spending time teaching herself traditional methods and how to achieve a sense of realism. Portraiture is highly competitive as a genre and difficult to make a name for yourself in when young, like she is. So she has done well to get her work featured in an episode of the prestigious Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year competition. Rosie has managed to introduce something new to what can be a rather staid area of art, toying with texture, composition, and colour, leaning into the creative potential of experiments and chance marks. Attention to detail and achieving a likeness is really important to her, time and time again she finds herself inspired by the people and animals around her. Most of her sitters have been people that she knows and is close to. This has allowed Rosie to communicate expressions and relationships that feel both specific and universal. She strives to convey a sense of narrative and personal flair. She thinks it's fun to get people treasuring and re-remembering certain moments from their own lives:

"Some stories I would have never heard if it wasn't for my paintings. I want to encourage people from all walks of life to see the magic in these 'in-between' moments". Rosie Phillips



Louise Richardson is a multidisciplinary artist working in mixed media sculpture, textiles and photography. She studied art at the Norwich School of Art and Design where she obtained a Fine Art BA (painting) in 1992 followed by a Fine Art MA (multi-disciplinary) in 1995. Previously represented by Robert Sandelson Gallery, London she has shown nationally and internationally and her work is held in many private and public collections. She lives and works in Norwich.

Artist Statement

'My work has evolved from a process of discovery and investigation, collecting and eliminating ideas and materials enabling me to build up a library of resources to draw upon for each new piece of work. I am currently looking at the idea of memory and identity, bringing universal messages to the viewer, through the portrayal of objects in my own memory. The diversity of materials within my work – both found and processed – gives me the opportunity and freedom to invent metaphors which run parallel with the subject matter.'

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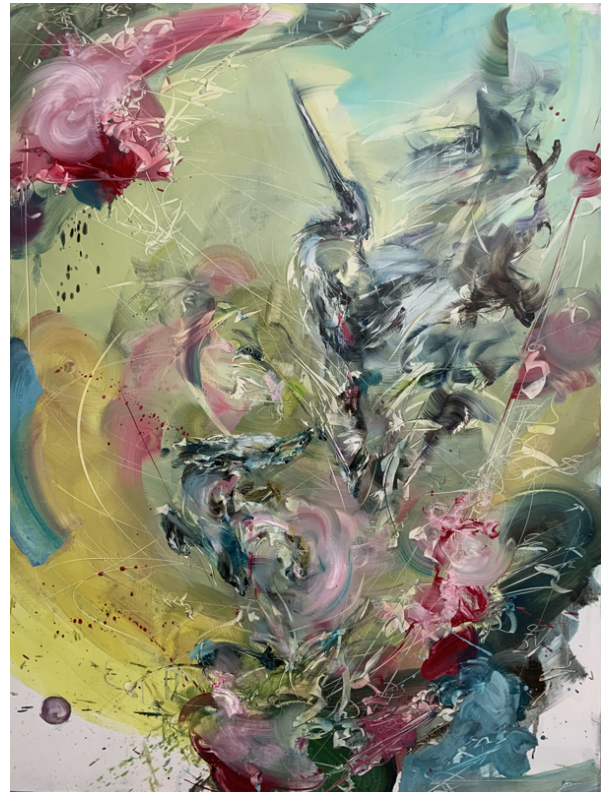


Colin Self was born in Norfolk, studied at Norwich School of Art and attended the Royal College of Art (RCA) in the early sixties. Self is one of the leading protagonists of the British Pop Art movement that he helped start in the early 1960s. His clever, irreverent drawings have been sort after ever since. He began his training in the visual arts while a boy at school at Wymondham College, Norfolk. He grew up in rural Norfolk near Norwich. He honed his creative skills by attending Norwich Art School (Norwich University of The Arts, NUA) and the Slade School of Art in London (UCL). He achieved success early coinciding with graduation, becoming one of British Pop Art's finest exponents.

He has remained true to his Pop roots and sees potential in the everyday objects that surround us. His work is fresh, immediate, and frequently delivered with a punchline.

His take on popular culture was different from that of his contemporaries. Colin developed a more political approach to his art that has set it apart. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was in its infancy in the early 60s, the threat of impending nuclear war ensured Colin identified with the movement's anti-nuclear stance. His drawings and anti-war collages from this period share German anti-Nazi propagandist artist, John Heartfield's attacking approach.

Colin calls himself a 'hunter', seeking out connections between objects he has selected out from the detritus of mass consumption.



Nessie Stonebridge's work resembles some sort of mid-air collision or interstellar explosion, with a palpable centrifugal energy at the heart of her paintings, sculptures and drawings. Often small in scale, they nevertheless explode beyond their boundaries - their vectors suggestively reaching out beyond their pictorial edges into the gallery space. Her works draw inspiration from the bucolic, of wild and wind-battered Norfolk, where she now has her studio.

At the heart of her work are a fury of beaks, encircled by fanlike, semi-abstracted wings. The result is an aviary of attack and defence, intimating the basic fight-or-flight behaviour of even the most diminutive of birds. Beyond their avian references, these images are impressive for their counterpoising of formal elements. The gestural brilliance of her mark-making - her paint is scored and splattered with a palette knife, brush or by hand - is contained within a deliberate and considered structural vortex.

"I see the transformation from painting to sculpture, especially using clay, as a natural progression in my work. Using clay in its raw state allows for an immediate response that captures the energy and emotions of my encounter into a solid form." Nessie Stonebridge

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Fundraising for Veterans

We will be selling limited edition prints of an original work by Colin Self (left) with proceeds from sales being donated in support for ex-servicemen and women struggling to reintegrate back into society. **Veterans Aid** is unique. Not just because of what it does, but because it does it immediately. Within hours of someone walking through the door, they can be provided with food, new clothing and accommodation. And that's only the beginning. For more see <https://veterans-aid.net/>

Contemporary and Country (C&C) present contemporary art and handmade objects by established artists and makers from the east of England in pop-up exhibitions that celebrate our rural surroundings. C&C work with artists and makers who include the natural world in their subject matter or production process. They bring about a closer understanding of the countryside, what makes the east of England landscape so unique. Their artists and makers look creatively beyond the passing trend and encourage greater consideration for nature, as its appreciation and preservation becomes ever more prescient to our time. C&C was established by Paul Barratt and Paul Vater with artists and makers from across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. Past exhibitions have taken place in the Stables at Houghton Hall, Norfolk, alongside international exhibitions of sculpture by Tony Cragg, Anish Kapoor, Henry Moore, Damien Hirst and Richard Long.

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FUNDING

The Guildhall and Creative Hub project already has a budget of nearly £9m, with just over £8m from the Government's Towns Fund and a further £750k from the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's capital funds. Opportunities for additional funding are being explored continuously should the final agreed design prove, in this inflationary environment, to need more than the current budget. The vision for the St George's Guildhall and Creative Hub is published on the Vision King's Lynn website <https://www.visionkingslynn.co.uk/>

THE ST GEORGE'S GUILDHALL

The Grade 1 listed St George's Guildhall and associated buildings have hosted every significant phase of English theatre. The first performance was recorded here in 1445 and recent academic research also supports local tradition that Shakespeare himself performed here in 1593, when London theatres were closed by plague and his comedian, Robert Armin, was born in King's Lynn. It was saved from auction by Alexander Peckover Doyle Penrose and sold to the National Trust upon his death in 1951. Today it's leased to the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk on a full repairing lease.

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ABOUT BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk covers an area of approximately 550 square miles and is the 2nd largest district council in the country by area. It serves a population of over 150,000 and functions as a sub-regional centre serving not only west Norfolk but also Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. It provides a wide range of services and facilities to the people who visit, work or live in the area. Services provided by the council include environmental health, planning, payment of housing and welfare benefits, collection of Council Tax, electoral registration, management of public open spaces, recycling and collection of waste (managed through an external contractor) property services and a number of housing functions such as choice-based letting and housing standards.

The council also provides non-statutory services which are highly valued in the area. These include the provision of leisure and cultural facilities through a wholly owned council company, a home improvement agency, the delivery of physical regeneration projects, a crematorium, a successful CCTV operation, car parking services and various services providing direct support to communities in the borough. The council works with partners, including the QE Hospital, College of West Anglia, National Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England, Homes England, National Trust, county and parish councils and social housing providers, to achieve the very best outcomes for its communities.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people: Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we continue to look after places so people and nature can thrive.

Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust cares for more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline and 500 historic properties, gardens and nature reserves. **For more information**, see: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

ABOUT NORFOLK MUSEUM'S SERVICE

Norfolk Museums Service is a multi-award-winning service comprising ten museums and a study centre, ranging from the Norman splendour of Norwich Castle to the beautiful 50-acre site of Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the restored herring works at Great Yarmouth, home to the atmospheric Time and Tide Museum. All NMS sites are Accredited museums under the Arts Council Accreditation scheme and many of the collections in our care are Designated of national importance. NMS is now regarded as one of the leading museum services in the United Kingdom, being recognised in 2012 as an Arts Council England Major Partner Museum (MPM) and a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in 2018, tasked with providing leadership to the sector, including through our SHARE Museums East Museum Development programmes. Norfolk Museums Service is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's district councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants. www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk.

ABOUT THE KING'S LYNN TOWN DEAL BOARD

The King's Lynn Town Deal Board has brought together a diverse range of individuals representing communities, business, and elected representatives from local authorities. In offering, together, a vision for the town their focus will now be on further strategic opportunities to enhance and grow the prosperity of King's Lynn.

Vision King's Lynn <https://www.visionkingslynn.co.uk/>

For further information please contact communications@west-norfolk.gov.uk

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