



LIFELINES



Ascending II *Ink and acrylic on Paper* 39 x 30 cm 2013

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New work by Lisa O'Brien

Saturday 8th June — 14th August 2013

RHUEART GALLERY,

RHUE, ULLAPOOL, ROSS-SHIRE SCOTLAND IV26 2TJ

01854612460

flick@rhueart.co.uk

www.rhueart.co.uk

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Memories are not tangible. What is a memory? What is it made up of? If you open up a brain you don't see a memory in there. A pattern of neuronal firing explains the physical processes but there is so much more than the purely scientific to memory and our consciousness. A thought, a fleeting picture in our mind's eye, a memory of a smell. Can we do that, remember a smell? The memory of a sound, someone's voice, how is it that we can recall a tone of voice in our heads? We conjure the person up before us but can only grasp at wispy threads of what once was. And how we remember will be influenced by what has happened since and where we are now, so it can never be an exact replica of the moment being remembered. Sometimes that's a good thing. It protects us. Even when we do manage it, it is very hard to hold on to the recalled sound, image, place, person for very long, just seconds if we're lucky, and so much more is embroiled in the sensation of remembering than those discrete senses I have just mentioned. They all combine to make much more than a whole. The sad irony of making artwork that stemmed from an interest in memory and duration, whilst simultaneously losing my dad to Alzheimer's, has not been lost on me. The progression of his illness laid bare the gradual breakdown of his ability to engage in anything other than the present for any length of time, and again by that I mean seconds. He often talked about what was directly in front of him or out of the window, of aeroplanes flying over the garden, of birds, 'dicky birds' as he refers to them in one video – in the months before he died. I remember now that he called them dicky birds when I was little, again I'm effortlessly collapsing time, years, decades in to seconds as I write. The complexities of the human brain, how it functions or deteriorates when combined with the heart wrenching confusion of emotional attachment are an overwhelming combination. At times I stood back fascinated, detached, at others I wept and still do.

In the past I have used video and sound in my work and I began working with video stills a couple of years ago in order to slow time down, all the better to examine it, experience it, relish it even. A freeze frame from a video has a different quality to a still photograph, it is charged with fleetingness.

My dad became a master at living in the present, he taught me a lot, with his loss of understanding of time, his loss of something – I'm not quite sure what. Eventually he had no concept of money, no sequential understanding of the order of events, no concept of linear time, he became like Donald Crowhurst, the subject of Tacita Dean's film 'Disappearance at Sea' (1996) , a man lost at sea for weeks with a faulty chronometer, he had no physical geographical reference points or idea of time. Crowhurst eventually lost his sanity and it is assumed he jumped over board. Then there was my dad, lost at sea, in his own front room on a land locked suburban housing estate. As he forgot his previous life and who I and other people were and how we were connected to him, the worries of a lifetime were lifted from his shoulders and he lived a contented and happy life for a while, well cared for, loved and funny.

What we experience right now, this second, has already gone. By the time we think about it consciously it can never be reclaimed. That is quite something to realise.

In this new series of work I have taken some of the apocalyptic looking local landscapes and migrating birds as my reference points, all inspired by stills from videos – (one of migrating geese when I was with my dad in a car park in Beaulieu). Echoing my inner state with my outer world, there is a comfort to be found in the predictability of migration, the goodbye, the letting go and then the circle of repetition. In this work I'm combining my present, with what went before in order to wrestle something concrete from the ephemerality of life and create something which projects a little into the future.

As most artists try to I imagine.

LISA O'BRIEN 2nd June 2013

References

http://www.frithstreetgallery.com/shows/view/tacita_dean2/ (accessed 3 June 2013)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/tacita-dean-recent-films-and-other-works/tacita-dean-recent-films-12> (accessed 3 June 2013)



Lifelines II Relief printing ink, acrylic, pastel, pencil on paper 47 x 31 cm 2013



Lifelines I

Relief printing ink, acrylic, pastel, pencil on paper

47 x 31 cm 2013



Lifelines III Relief printing ink, acrylic, pastel, pencil on paper 47 x 33 cm 2013



Lifelines IV Relief printing ink, acrylic, pastel, pencil on paper 47 x 33 cm 2013



Ascending III *printing ink, acrylic and pastel* 60 x 30 cm 2013



Ascending IV *printing ink, acrylic and pastel on Paper* 53 x 31 cm 2013



Ascending II *Acrylic and Indian ink on Paper* 42 x 31 cm 2013



Geese and Crow

Pastel and acrylic on Paper 30 x 42 cm 2013



Migrating Geese on a clear windy day relief printing ink, acrylic and pencil on Rice Paper 140 x 31 cm 2013



Migration Relief printing ink, acrylic and pencil on Rice Paper 130 x 42 cm 2013



Winter Piglets III Torridon (Tamworth) Ink on Paper 22 x 15 cm 012



Winter Piglets I

Torridon (Tamworth) Ink on Paper 22 x 15 cm 2012



. *Winter Piglets II Torridon (Tamworth)* Ink on Paper 22 x 15 cm 2012



Single Piglet Mr Scratcher, Torridon (Tamworth) Ink on Paper 22 x 15 cm 2012



Trees at Coile Badan Mugaidh / near Shiedaig Jan 2013 Ink on Paper 42 x 31 cm 2013



Trees at Coile Badan Mugaigh II near Shiedaig Jan 2013 Ink on Paper 42 x 31 cm 2013



Trees at Coile Badan Mugaigh III near Shiedaig Jan 2013 Ink on Paper 42 x 31 cm 2013

Curriculum Vitae

Selected Exhibitions and Residencies

Jun- Aug 13	The Wave, banners exhibition (group exhibition) West Jutland, Denmark. http://93.166.201.10/et4u/index.php?id=226	ET4U Contemporary Visual Arts.
Jun 13	Lifelines, Solo Exhibition, Rhue Art , Ullapool	
Oct 11	Transition, Solo Exhibition. Left Bank Gallery , Tarland. Aberdeenshire.	
2011-12	Water Petal. Great Ormond Street Hospital , London 2011.	
Sept 11	Sublime Film Festival, Inverness, IOTA	
Mar 10	Disturbance, <i>Architectural Disorder</i> curated by Launch Collaborative, Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency. (OVADA)	
Oct 09	Artist's residency Sound Scotland Festival , Left Bank Gallery, Tarland, Aberdeen. http://www.sound-scotland.co.uk/site/2009/artists/OBrienLisa.htm	
Aug 09	<i>Island Arc</i> , Verracott, North Ronaldsay, Orkney.	
Mar 08	<i>Nexus Communities</i> , An Tobar , Mull. http://www.antobar.co.uk/Tobar_documents/Nexus%20Poster%20A4.pdf	
Nov 07	<i>Leeds International Film Festival 07</i> . Pavillion, Leeds . Swing. http://www.pavilion.org.uk/project.php?pid=11	
Sept –Oct 07	<i>Sealladh 6</i> . An Tuireann , Skye including work from the Nexus collaboration.	
Dec 06 – May 08	<i>Single Track Road</i> . Video. New Media Scotland . B-sides programme. Upgrade! International Festival, Toured to Belgrade, Boston, Vancouver, Paris, Melbourne, CCA, Glasgow.	
June 07	Nexus, Limousine Bull , Aberdeen. Collaborative week long residency.	
May 06-Feb 07	<i>Disturbance</i> . Sound installation. JIPB Cube Gallery. An Tuireann , Skye, May 2006. Jarnac, France and Grays School of Art, Aberdeen August 2006. Ichinomiya, Japan November 2006. Bovlingbjerg, Denmark , February 2007.	

Other Current Employment

05- present Associate Lecturer, Open University, art tutor Open College of the Arts, and occasionally University of the Highlands and Islands.

Education

2007 Master Fine Art (with Distinction). Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

1994 Postgraduate Cert Education - Expressive Arts, Manchester Met University

1989-91 International Centre for Study of Italian Language and Culture, Milan, Italy

1989 BA (Hons) Expressive Arts 2:1 (first in music) Brighton Polytechnic. Fine art and music.

Awards/Commissions

2011 Artists Award. Hi-arts. To create new work.

2009 Artists Award. Hi-Arts. To take part in SOUND Scotland festival residency.

2007 Visiting Artist in Japan for JIPB cube.

2006 Selected for Open Frequency on Axis and Axis Audio Gallery.

Curated online programme presenting new developments in contemporary art. Axis Artists. <http://www.axisweb.org/ofSARF.aspx?SELECTIONID=16096>

2006 Scottish Arts Council. Artist of the Month. <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinscotland/visualarts/features/featuresarchive/artistlisaobrien.aspx>

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