



CURATOR VISIT

The Black Mountains, Wales
Abergavenny – Crickhowell – Brecon

Artists:

Catherine Baker
Philip Watkins
Stefhan Caddick
Pip Woolf
Morag Colquhoun
Tessa Waite
Susan Adams
Chris Nurse

PEAK is an initiative devised and delivered by **Arts Alive Wales**, seeking to research and develop platforms for the creation and presentation of contemporary art in the Black Mountains.

Supported by the **Arts Council of Wales**.

www.artsalivewales.org.uk/projects

CATHERINE BAKER

Biography

Born in Bristol, Catherine studied in London at Kingston Polytechnic (1979-82) and gained her postgraduate diploma at the Royal Academy Schools (1992-3). She has exhibited every year since 1983 both in the UK and abroad, including the Showroom, Chisenhale, Burlington Galleries, RA Summer show and Whitechapel Open in London.

In 2007/8 Catherine collaborated with a scientist from Nottingham University to study the effects of different light sources on pigment, and exhibited the work at the Bonnington Galleries, Nottingham. In 2012 Catherine was invited to participate in an international residency in Palanga, Lithuania. The resulting work was included in a touring exhibition throughout Eastern Europe.

Catherine travelled to the Czech Republic in August 2013 to take part in the Jicin Plener residency programme, responding to the surrounding landscape of Bohemia.

Since moving to South Wales in 2012, Catherine takes her inspiration from walks in the Black Mountains, and is just embarking on a collaborative project with poet, James Roberts. Work from the project will be exhibited at Arts Alive Wales, Crickhowell, later this year.

Artist Statement

I am passionate about landscape. The paintings I produce are the result of a distillation of the essential colours, sensations, marks and lines I encounter on walks through the landscape. Memories, associations and traces of the history of a place – geological or man-made – are important to me. I'm looking for poetic rhythms and echoes to make resonant statements.

My work has a fragile, raw quality and a sense of uncertainty. Whether the image has gone through many changes or not, the work must have a freshness for me to feel there is no more I can add. It should have an openness and provoke questions.

www.cathbakerpaintings.co.uk



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Catherine Baker

1. *Disused Landscape*, mixed media on canvas

2. *Death of the Year*, acrylic on card

3. *Strange Light*, acrylic on canvas

PHILIP WATKINS

Biography

Philip Watkins studied Fine Art at Newport Art College in the 1970s and was tutored by Ernest Zobole, Helen Chadwick, David Hurn and Keith Arnatt to name but a few. Philip has painted ever since and has exhibited work nationally and internationally.

Philip spent twelve years working in animation – winning a BAFTA and an EMMY as part of the Siriol Animation Team. He also taught drawing to young offenders and worked for seven years as a full-time youth worker on some of Cardiff's peripheral housing estates.

After 30 years in Cardiff, Philip moved to Crickhowell three years ago and his work has steadily responded to the transition from an urban to a rural environment – literally and artistically.

Artist Statement

I am interested in townscapes and the urban environment – anywhere where human activity comes up against nature. In my painting I work from observation. I make drawings of places that hold some particular 'atmospheric' interest for me. Often the places that act as starting points for paintings have a personal meaning, sometimes they are just places I come across where I get a particular feeling of desolation. I then work things up in the studio, using light and subtle colour relationships, added to memory, to convey a mood that I hope others will identify with.

'The lack of human presence in Watkins' paintings creates an unsettling quiet: the kind that makes the viewer feel strangely vulnerable'

- David Trigg, arts journalist and writer. 'Missing Person', 2008 solo show at the Washington Gallery, Penarth, received critical acclaim.

www.axisweb.org/artist/philipwatkins



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Philip Watkins

1. 'A' Road, oil on canvas

2. M4, acrylic on canvas

3. A Place Near You, oil on canvas

STEFHAN CADDICK

Biography

Stefhan Caddick works from his studio in Crickhowell and teaches on the Creative Sound and Music course at University of Wales, Newport.

He works in video, installation and performance and often presents his work as a one-off event, usually outside and frequently after dark. Many works are constructed with materials sourced from institutions, communities and individuals, an inherently collaborative process, which challenges the idea of the artist as sole creator.

Recent projects include Ephemeral Coast, curated by Celina Jeffery, Pickle Line for Outcasting Fourth Wall Film Festival, Ghost Parade for Adain Avion, part of the London 2012 Festival and The Nihilists, a night-time event on a mountain near Abergavenny.

Artist Statement

I am a Wales-based artist who works in a variety of media. I am interested in the savagery of the natural world, misremembered episodes from political history, the three-minute single and not knowing the way. My work, whilst taking a range of forms from film to installation, drawing to performance, is unified by an intellectual and aesthetic rigour. I approach the act of making work with an interest in the process itself and will sometimes invent ornate, often ridiculous systems or methodologies as a mode of production. My work is at once darkly melancholic and blackly comedic.



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Stefhan Caddick

1. *Ghost Parade*

2. *Nihilists*

3. *Pickle Line*

PIP WOOLF

Biography

Pip is a visual artist with a background in environmental interpretation. Her work is embedded in her landscape and community and explores our place on the planet focusing on a combination of practical, physical, emotional, political and philosophical questions. Drawing underpins all aspects of her work.

In 2002 Pip received an Arts Council of Wales, Creative Wales Award to create Re-Presenting Wool, a film and installation. Recent bodies of work include Marking a Point, arising from observation of the Welsh Assembly debates and Water Power, an artist book responding to the installation of a micro-hydro electric scheme at her home and workplace.

In 2009 she conceived the Woollen Line and has facilitated it ever since making connections between a diverse set of participants and drawing both on the hill and back in her studio, pushing the boundaries of her art practice.

Pip works collaboratively with artists Kirsty Claxton and Elizabeth Adeline to explore and develop process and as a partner in Artistseeking Attention to facilitate community engagement for a range of clients, currently Tai Calon in Nantyglo.

She is a member of Swansea Print Workshop and the Welsh Group and has exhibited widely in the U.K and abroad.

Artist Statement

I am curious about how we as human beings are part of a dynamic and limited life system.

Conceived in 2009, Woollenline has marked a departure in my work consolidating years of observational drawing where I have sought to find a visual language for the everyday world that I encounter. I want to capture the mark that articulates the subtle nuances of behaviour, informs understanding and inspires insight into the complexities of relationship and power.

I put myself alongside others in order to find points of connection; artists, students, farmers, politicians, whoever enters my view and I take my cue from their world as to how I might use its materiality to help inform my marks. In seeking an aesthetic I use found colour, physical material and elemental forces within conceptual frameworks to create work that aims for full integrity.

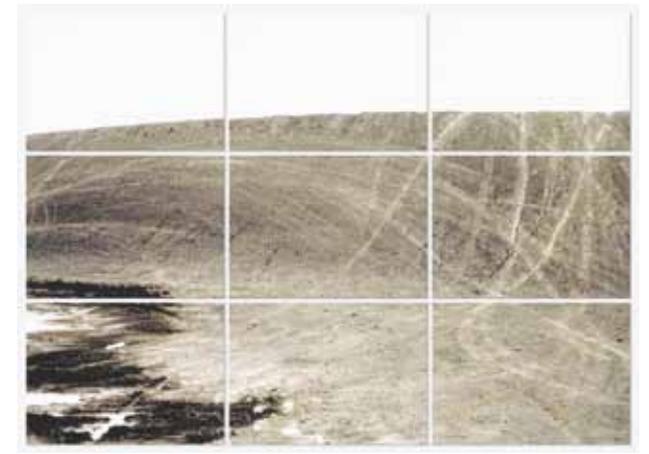
www.axisweb.org/artist/pipwoolf
www.woollenline.wordpress.com



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Pip Woolf

1. *Burnt Patch*

2. *Carbon Capture and Mountain Triptych*

3. *Tracks, 2G Design and Print*

MORAG COLQUHOUN

Biography

Morag Colquhoun initially studied and worked in archaeology (in the Hebrides, South America, the City of London) before retraining in forestry and working as a horse logger. She then worked as an artist on a range of environmental and socially engaged art projects (supported by Arts Council of Wales, Natural Resources Wales and Oriel Davies Gallery amongst others) as well as public art commissions for Powys County Council, Shrewsbury Council and Hereford Council. Morag has developed artist led projects at Penpont, Brecon and in Eglwys Faen Cave, Crickhowell. She has exhibited at: Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown; Tullie House, Carlisle; Oriel Mwlidan, Cardigan; and the National Eisteddfod of Wales.

Morag received an Arts Council of Wales, Creative Wales Award in 2006. In 2009, she gained an MA in Fine Art from the Cardiff School of Art where she now teaches art and design. In 2010-12, she worked for Artes Mundi, the international biennial art prize. In 2013, she received a major production grant from Arts Council of Wales. In 2014, Morag is investigating the Elan Valley reservoirs in Mid Wales (in partnership with Dwr Cymru and Arts Council of Wales) and exhibiting new work in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Artist Statement

My recent work combines sculpture, installation, photography, digital media, and performance. Entropy, ecology, modernity and resistance are recurrent themes in the work. Recent projects include: the creation of a solar-powered darkroom, which documented its own construction; the creation of beeswax plant dioramas (in collaboration with the National Museum of Wales) and bronze and rubber castings of artefacts from Wales and South America.

I have often worked site-specifically in collaboration with communities in environmental contexts and I am interested in developing work that emerges from a zone of uncertainty, exchange and dialogue. In a project supported by Safle, I explored the construction of a contentious gas pipeline across South Wales with anti-pipeline protesters and local people. The project combined renewable energy technologies with digital audio and video in artworks that probed the developing uncertainties of the fossil fuel era in relation to the archaic, the technological, the natural and the cultural.

www.moragcolquhoun.com
www.axisweb.org/artist/moragcolquhoun



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Morag Colquhoun

1. *Four Seminal Moments (Dancing Guerillas)*, beeswax plant model and mixed media
2. *Four Small Deaths: 31 December 2010 (Carlos Arguedas Mora)*, beeswax plant model and mixed media
3. *Four Seminal Moments (Fela's Wives)*, beeswax plant model and mixed media (image Bernard Matussiere)

TESSA WAITE

Biography

Tessa Waite (BA Hons. & MA Fine Art) moved to Powys to take up a four-year residency at Mid Wales Hospital in 1990. She witnessed the power of art as a motivating force for people during times of deep distress. This experience was seminal in developing a socially engaged practice. Her residency programme was nominated for the Astra Arts Award.

Tessa took part in the first Rajasthan/Wales Arts Exchange in 1994. Working and exhibiting with Indian artists and travelling from Delhi to Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur was an experience that made a lasting impression, deepening her sense of cultural diversity. With a studio at Penpont, near Brecon, she was co-founder of Penpont Artists and co-curated two publicly funded arts events in 2007 and 2009, involving over 20 artists, who were invited to make site specific responses to this historic setting.

Completing two residencies at Hereford College of Arts has taken her work in new directions; in 2012 she made a series of animated films based on drawing and collage.

She is currently lead artist on a commission for an art installation at Nevill Hall Hospital for Arts Alive Wales and Garth (Gwent Arts and Health Trust), which includes working with vulnerable adults.

Artist Statement

The complex and subtle workings of relationships to self and others and the nature of transition and change; of what is manifest and what is unseen; are central themes for me. Shadow forms, the spaces in between, empty fragments that remain – the allusions to events past, present and yet to come, draw my attention.

Responding intuitively, I engage in the interplay of theme and choice of materials which offers a challenging dialogue between form, content and meaning. This has led to key developments in my approach. In particular, developing a site-specific installation practice has opened new possibilities of counterpointing object and subject and creating layers, which can conceal or reveal. Animation has enabled me to work with time and the subtle shifts from one state to another as images mutate.

'Tessa Waite's works demonstrate a remarkable range of technical means and of resultant imagery. This implies a searching spirit responding to a variety of impulses and situations, and the need to operate through different structures. Her work brings colour and form into delicate interaction and movement. They take us into an enchanted world.'

- Norbert Lynton, art historian and critic.



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Tessa Waite

- 1. *Girls, installation using plywood and acrylic paint*
- 2. *Facing out, installation using projection onto cotton vest*
- 3. *Under the table, scratched photograph*

SUSAN ADAMS

Biography

Born in Kent, Susan Adams now works at her studio near Brecon and teaches on the Fine Art Degree programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Her practice embraces various media including painting, print, polychromed wood-carving and video.

After studying Painting at Norwich School of Art and the Slade, Susan became Fine Art Fellow at Cheltenham College of Art. She then worked as Artist in Residence in India, the USA and the UK including at ArtsAcre Calcutta, Millay Colony New York, Welsh National Opera, Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island), Oriel Mostyn and Shaftesbury Abbey. She was also selected to become the first Artist in Residence at Gloucester Cathedral.

A recent recipient of an Arts Council of Wales, Creative Wales Award, Susan is currently engaged in a period of in-depth open-ended research in order to loosen her control of the narrative in her art by allowing stories to emerge whose meanings are less clear to her. She is working collaboratively, holding creative conversations with writers and interviewing artists.

Susan Adams has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally, recent venues in Wales include Oriel Mostyn, Oriel Mwldan, Attic Cardiff, MoMA Wales; also venues in London, Paris, Maastricht and Zagreb.

Artist Statement

I am interested in exploring the relationship between fantasy and the real and the locations in which these two worlds collide. I am drawn to effigies of the living, uncanny, half-alive objects such as puppets, automata, figures that were made with a specific purpose in mind such as to embody religious beliefs. Being in the presence of something borderline raises questions as to the nature and perception of reality, the nearness of death or absence of reality.

Another strand in the work is an attentive watchfulness for meaning, a hermit-like craving for signs. I have long been fascinated by the texts of riddles or questions that have no answers. Saints and mystics who journeyed to the wilderness in the hope of hearing a truly meaningful 'voice from above' have long been of interest to me; it was looking for a contemporary equivalent that led me to work on a project with people who hear voices. One of the voice-hearers said that "hearing voices feels like picking up peoples' thoughts on the ether". This struck me as highly relevant to the age of mobile phones and the internet as we are now all transmitters and receivers of information, invisible information that comes from the sky.

www.susan-adams.co.uk



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Susan Adams

1. *Growth, kinetic/audio work, copper pipes, floor boards, concealed circuitry and audio equipment*

2. *Receiver, kinetic work, wood, metal, oil paint, hair, quartz crystals, writing/drawing tool*

3. *Mysterious Communication, etching*

CHRIS NURSE

Biography

Chris Nurse uses a variety of media including painting, printmaking, drawing and object making. He studied at the Central School of Art, the RCA and the British School at Rome and is Head of Art at the University of South Wales. He works from assemblages of found objects reminiscent of art made by non-artists, children and amateurs, wider research interests include museums, outsider and popular art and work that bridges between two and three dimensional, printed or painted outcomes. Selected exhibitions include: Chris Nurse fffffff... Oriel Mwldan, Frederick J Fredericks Craig Y Cilau Caves Brecon Beacons National Park, Shelter/ LLoches Oriel Mostyn, We have the mirrors, we have the plans at Oriel Mostyn, A tale told by an Idiot at the Art Centre Kings Lynn, Free Association at the John Frost Museum and Gallery Newport and Something Funny in the Woodshed at the Aberystwyth Art Centre.

Artist Statement

I am interested in portraying the difference between a romanticised ideal and mundane reality and the way these two versions of things can coexist in a work of art. It might be a comment on my own deficiencies of skill, but I am drawn to childlike, DIY and amateur renderings of reality and the use of contingent and un-monumental materials that emphasise the pedestrian while attempting the heroic.

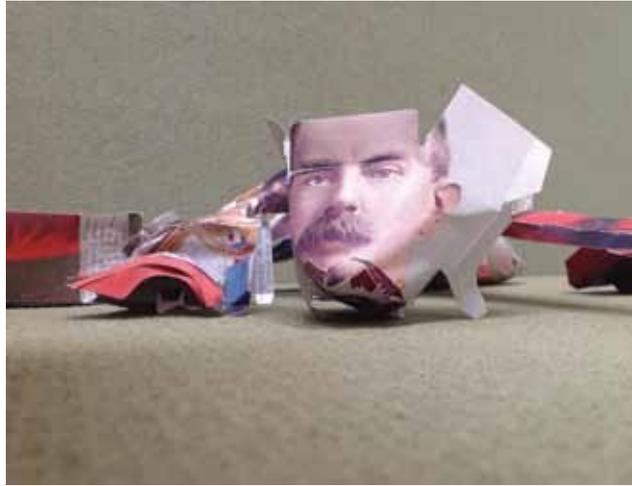
*In 2012, I picked up a second hand book entitled *Celebrities of the Army from 1900*. I was struck by the term *Celebrities*, which in my mind is associated with contemporary popular culture and seems quite out of place with the British Army. The Admirals, Generals and other officers portrayed in the book strike proud self conscious poses that project an assured arrogance that seems a little ridiculous from today's perspective. The book has enormous pathos because these whiskered faces and scarlet tunics will be no match for events 14 years later. I have been sacrilegiously cutting up the book to make planes, cars, tanks and missiles to paint from causing disfiguration to the images of the soldiers, a process that seems a small-scale echo of the violence of WW1.*

For a video of the exhibition Chris Nurse - fffffff... courtesy of New Frontiers and Culture Colony visit: www.culturecolony.com/videos?id=12342

www.chrisnurse.wordpress.com



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Chris Nurse

1. *Army Celeb, oil on canvas*

2. *Paper Models*

3. *Tank, mixed media*

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