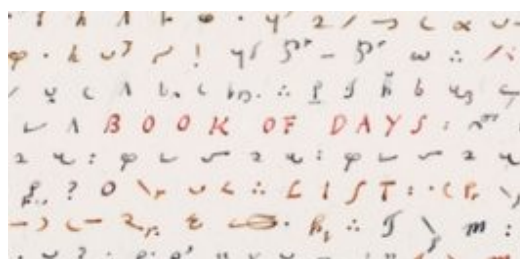


SIMON LEWTY / WILL MACLEAN

Charting a Decade II 2006 – 2016

12 April – 11 June



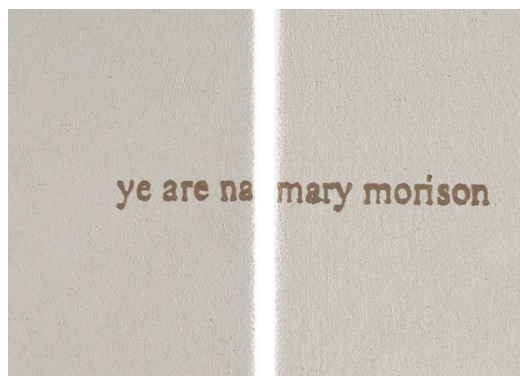
The many points of contact in the work of Lewty and Maclean are celebrated in this exhibition, marking their sustained production over the past decade. The evident dialogue is mutually enriching to the eye and it engages all the more for having a narrative that is implied, without ever making full disclosure. Titles hint at this patient sense of restraint: Maclean's *Mariner's Museum/Taxonomy of Tides*, or his series of small box constructions with found objects called *Pages from an Inventory*, and then Lewty's *Fragment from a Shorthand Diary*, or his *List: Tide – Cloud*, which is a new work written in silver grey pencil on gesso treated tissue paper, a thing of the greatest delicacy and beauty.

They are now seasoned artists with teaching days behind them, with good monographs covering decades of work, and each has undertaken a recent collaboration with a poet, resulting in newly published volumes. All of this and more features on our website, with on-line catalogues, new writing, installation images and everything needed to entice you into the gallery.

In addition, Maclean has had a touring Museum exhibition, *Veering Westerly*, launched by An Lanntair, Stornoway, and continuing to Inverness, the place of his birth. Lewty's survey exhibition, *The SIGNificance of Writing* takes place in his hometown, Leamington Spa from 28 April – 10 July, with a planned tour (see page 3).

WRITING ON THE WALLAlex Knell / Helen MacAlister / Jack Milroy
& Simon Morley

12 April – 14 May



The word as image is familiar to ancient cultures, especially in China and Japan, but its particular emergence in Cubist collages as a 'jeu de mot' and onwards through Surrealism, Pop Art and then the monumental light projections of Susan Hiller, Fiona Banner and Tracey Emin, is the subject of Simon Morley's groundbreaking study of the subject published by Thames and Hudson in 2003, and still selling well. His monochrome book paintings, his watercolours of words and dates, sit well beside Helen MacAlister's six piece *Open Canon*, a drawing of a list of what defines Scottish literature from pre-Christian times to now.

Alex Knell's text streams across the surface in filmic fashion – an unleashing from his sub conscious, whereas Jack Milroy deploys the ready-made, printing the text of Hans Christian Andersen's *Snow Queen* onto a midnight blue ground, with 'snow' falling in the form of white dots within the enclosed g's b's d's of the lettering. There is much food for thought in this elegant gathering of the visual/verbal.

RASHA KAHIL

Anatomy of a Scandal

19 May – 11 June



Many artists come to see solo exhibitions as significant staging posts in the evolution of their practice, and the development from one to the next a sign of the rate and nature of that evolution. Rasha Kahil's second solo presentation at AF Projects, though, is a little more literally part of that process than usual in that the second show has been *generated* entirely by the first.

In 2011-12, in London and her hometown of Beirut, Kahil presented her major series *In Your Home* - a photographic group of nude portraits taken covertly in the living spaces of her friends and acquaintances. In 2014 an Arabic satellite channel featured her work as a 'news interest' story, and encouraged viewers across its 20-nation Middle Eastern audience to make their opinion known through social media. Her 2016 exhibition *Anatomy of a Scandal* creates an intense and immersive multi-media installation that reflects and interprets the deluge of 'opinion' that followed.

ALEXANDRA HAYNES

The Shapes of Nature

16 June – 12 August



We are delighted to introduce this vibrant body of recent work by Alexandra Haynes in her first exhibition at Art First. Re-adopting an exhibiting life as someone who elicited much attention as a young artist starting out, Haynes now returns with the assurance of a long-continued studio practice away from the public eye.

This is a substantial and singularly developed artistic personality. The paintings make magpie borrowings wherever she is - be it the Caribbean, Australia or pottering around in Cornish rockpools. Colours are uncompromising and mesmerising and the spatial engagement consummately makes use of the liberties carved out by surrealist and expressionist forebears.

There will be a fully-illustrated publication, including an essay by Anna McNay.

GRADATION

Recent Graduates of the Royal Academy Schools

16 June – 16 July



The AF Projects *Gradation* brings together a group of recent graduates from the prestigious Royal Academy Schools MA course – spanning graduation years 2013-15.

The RA Schools have been well represented in the AFP programme going back to the opening of Art First's new gallery space in 2010, but this will be the first time that such a group is shown together.

Artists include Hannah Bays, Sean Steadman and Max Prus, pictured left (albeit in cardboard cut-out form) in his installation at the 2015 RA Schools final show.

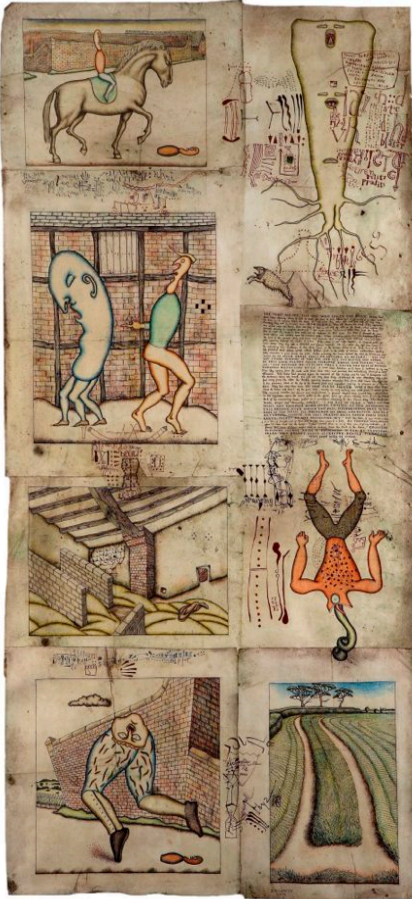
ART FIRST ARTISTS CURRENT MUSEUM SHOWS

SIMON LEWTY

AT LEAMINGTON SPA ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

The SIGNificance of Writing

28 April – 10 July 2016



Five decades: half a century of drawings based on writing. Not William Blake, but Simon Lewty, and for this marvellous survey the poet and writer Ian Hunt has made some incisive observations in the essay published for the exhibition:

Of the narratives and incidents within the work, Hunt points out that they were not “*once upon a time*” but simply “*the day before yesterday*” – gone, yet strangely present. Lewty’s works have developed considerably since the 1990s, and the role of depictions and images as such has diminished, but the statement holds good as an account of his strategies of telling, overlaying and disrupting, and of the peculiar optic on the modern and the new provided by his various ruses of antiquity – from italic typewriter fonts to 16th-century ‘secretary hand’.

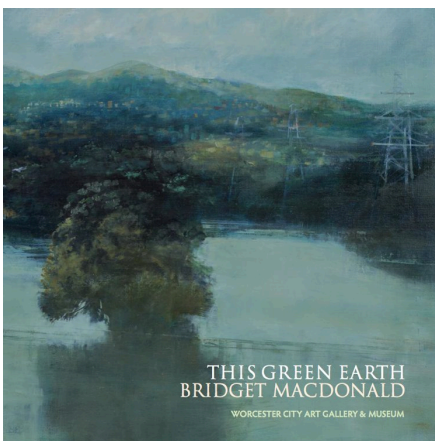
“....The words frequently tell of everyday experiences, that are being related to us in as straightforward a way as possible. It is precisely in the shifts between obscurity and directness in his work that such unexpected power can be found.”

Summarising, Hunt suggests that “Lewty’s way of working and of involving us in his thinking and what we might call his ‘world’ – it is also ours – is an expert and original way of making us aware of what is unknown in ourselves. The singularity of Lewty’s aesthetic thinking is as prominent in the work of the last twenty years, which is rightly emphasized by the selection, as it was in the first works by him that came to be widely exhibited in the 1980s. This is work that is not simply humming to itself but which also, without warning, SINGS.”

BRIDGET MACDONALD

AT WORCESTER CITY ART GALLERY

13 February – 25 June 2016



This Green Earth demonstrates Macdonald’s deep engagement with myth, animals and the landscape as mediated by her acknowledged fascination with the Old Masters, particularly Claude Lorrain (whose *Landscape with a Goatherd* has been lent by the Ashmolean) and Sir Peter Paul Rubens, as well as Samuel Palmer, one of Britain’s greatest artists of the Romantic period, whose *Bright Cloud* has been borrowed from Manchester Art Gallery. More than anything, the exhibition reveals a rare contemporary vision that relates the landscapes of the past to those of the present day.

Now based in Great Malvern, Macdonald grew up on the Isle of Wight, to which she returns regularly. Her training in fine art took place in Wolverhampton, so her Midlands base has rooted her in both urban and rural environs, a fact which perhaps makes for the strong synthesis of observed reality with memory, and artistic or poetic source material.

Catalogue with essay by Paul Spencer-Longhurst available.