



Flora McLachlan

CASW STUDENT AWARD SUBMISSION

Spells

Flora McLachlan

My work investigates the act of making art. I want to examine, without dissecting or destroying it, the idea of inspiration; a breath from elsewhere which directs the artist in their work. An altered state is implied, a heightened mode of existence.

I see this state as a receptive, shamanistic mode, so I use ritual and divination in my work to provoke unexpected connections. The rituals are invented by me to reach into the collective unconscious and evoke a deeper current of being than the everyday. I use very simple methods to assume my cloak of power. Barefoot walks, gathering plants with mythical, fairytale echoes and using them with pulped etchings to make masks, using words from a fairy story drawn from a hat to determine the progress of my work – these have all helped me. When I work like this, I feel I am writing incantations and casting spells.

When I began my MA, I wanted to embark on a re-enchantment of my practice. After ten years of motherhood and making work for sale, I needed to ask, what is the wellspring of my inspiration? How do I find it and stay true to it?

In this spirit I worked with found marks on my etchings and lithographs, and I let my materials run and bleed according to their nature, before scrying into them to divine my imagery.

I also tried to remove myself from my comfort zone, which I did by defamiliarizing my working places, my methods, and the medium I worked with. I wanted to infuse my process with an alchemical, innovative spirit. I wanted to interact with alterity – to reach into the chaotic well of matter, to drink from the dark stream of the collective unconscious. Susie Gablik's *The Reenchantment of Art* (1996) was a key text for me, as it opened up the way to using play and magic in my artistic practice. It also helped me move away from the repressive model of a lone original artistic genius and towards a fruitful model of a conversing, responsive artist who is part of a community.

From working in traditional printmaking, I travelled to printmaking in the expanded field...through sculpture and eventually to film and installation. I found I had things to say about materiality, storytelling, magical making, fetishistic objects, appropriation and witchery that I could share with other people. The excitement of co-creating with an Other, be it person, place, imagination, otherworld, or random chance, was life-changing for me.

Portfolio

Chance and found marks



Fairy Tale, 2020

A series of etchings, 5 x 9cm

Journey
Arrive
Confront
Escape

After reading Clarissa Pinkola Estés' Jungian meditations on the structure of the fairy tale as a pattern of initiation or learning through action and process, I decided to embark on making prints in the same way.

I wanted to echo the fairy tale journey into the dark forest in my process. I used inherited copper etching plates which were coated with scarred and scratched marks. I bit the chance marks into them, and then used those as guides for the images, in conjunction with randomly drawn words written on bits of paper – Bread, Hut, Loom and Handkerchief – objects taken from the tale of Baba Yaga. A playful divination therefore determined the form of the work.



Defamiliarisation

I found a starting point during lockdown focusing in one tiny details culled from digital photographs of past prints...

I zoomed in until all suggestion of the original subject was lost.

These tiny glimpses felt like portals I could enter and move through, and thus explore what images were hiding in my deep self. In the following series of six etchings, the tiny panels were worked into according to the affective atmosphere each tiny image held for me.

I made ink drawings turning each image into a mystical interaction with the beasts and landscape of an imagined Otherworld, drawing on fairy tales, Arthurian myths, and dreams, and I used unfamiliar and experimental print processes for each, feeding off an alchemical battle with chaotic matter in order to re-enchant my practice.



The bone gate

2020

Etching on copper. White ground,
sugar lift, aquatint and hard
ground.

Somerset Velvet 300gsm paper
40 x 44cms



The burning tree

2020

Two-plate etching on copper and
aluminium. White ground, sugar
lift, aquatint reversal, and spit bite
aquatint on Somerset Velvet

300gam paper

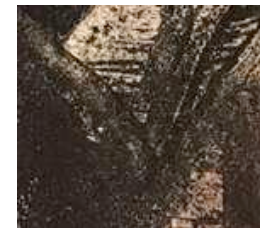
40 x 44cms



Kindling

2020

Etching on copper. White ground
etching with burnishing, on
Somerset Velvet 300gsm paper
40 x 44cms



Out of the garden

2020

Etching on copper. Soft ground,
oiled sugar lift, white ground, hard
ground, burnishing and spit bite
aquatint on Somerset Velvet

300gsm paper

40 x 44cms



Underworld
2020
Etching on copper. Aquatint with
offset monotype resist on
Somerset Velvet 300gsm paper
40 x 44cms



The witch's garden

2020

Drypoint and spit bite on
aluminium, on Somerset Velvet
300gsm paper.

40 x 44cms



Defamiliarisation II

A residency at Stiwdio Maelor in Corris, 2019.

Leaving my home for one month and living in a strange place gave me immersion in my thoughts and in my work.

As a stranger to the small village of Corris, I began to imagine a wierd hidden life for the village, its own obscure myths and rituals, which might take place in the riverbed or behind the graveyard, in the rank nettles.





Installation view from my final MA show of three stone lithographs, 74 x 54cm, hung with nails.

Shapeshifters, 2020

Spells, 2021

A woman out of goosegrass, 2021

Dream village lithographs

Intersecting loosely with the stories of 'The Goose Girl', 'The Wild Swans' and 'Rumpelstiltskin', permeated as they are by an atavistic sense of female magics – these lithographs speak of the power of blood, and of weaving plants, and shapeshifting in and out of stories. The village of Corris appears in the background as smoking chimneys and satellite dishes glimpsed from the dark edgelands, the tangled wet woods, and the green goosegrass-sticky riverbed, where things change state and become enchanted.

This series of work was made by flowing lithographic tusche across the litho stone in random patterns, which I then responded to. They are installed pinned to the wall like specimens, to imply their aliveness – it is a temporary hanging, not behind glass, to suggest that they could flutter away again, and to express the flow, mutability and fecund nature of image-making.



Hearthfires, 2019. Lithograph, 74 x 54cm



Mythos, 2020. Lithograph, 74 x 56cm



Spells, 2021. Lithograph, 74 x 56cm



Shapeshifters, 2020. Lithograph, 74 x 54cm



A woman out of goosegrass, 2021. Lithograph, 76 x 56cm



Awakening, 2021. Lithograph, 76 x 56cm

The beginning of my transformations and shapeshiftings



Possession I, 2021

Stone lithograph cancelled with soap wash body print on Hahnemuhle paper, 74 x 54cm



Possession II, 2021

Sugar lift and spit bite etching on aluminium, 74 x 54cm

Becoming beast, 2021

Stone lithograph with drawn and scratched hair, 74 x 56 cms



Cancelling a plate or stone is traditional - adding marks to obscure the image, in order to show that the printed edition is closed.

I used experimental soap wash litho to impress myself onto the stone and into my imagined world, and in doing so blotted it out.

The image thus left its frozen editioned state and became fluid once more; I magically freed it.

'Cancelling' a lithograph with a soap-wash impression of my own body on the stone

'Dressing up' in the weeds and undergrowth from the lithograph to become a shamanistic figure

'Transforming' into a hairy beast by drawing hair over the print of my own body



Shapeshifting and Magic

I began to develop a mechanism for consciously acknowledging my presence and my practice. I wanted to explore the possibilities of physically stepping into my artist-persona. I wanted to invent my own ways though; I know I am not a shaman. I wanted to keep them a bit makeshift, a bit 'gaffer-taped', free.

Apparatus 1

2021

Disco headband, springs, Araldite,
twigs, white paint

66 x 88cms

I threw together shamanistic costumes to wear for ritually making paper pulp, with nettles gathered by moonlight and pine needles from the forest floor



Give me the power of speech, mask, 2020
Paper pulp, forest floor, pine needles, birch leaves



Give me the power of sight, mask, 2020
Paper pulp, nettles, stirred with thorn twig



Inspiring

Breathing life into the myth

Inflating the unicorn

Digital photograph of artist performance

Fine art photo paper

Photo taken by Sam Perry

25 x 42cms

<https://vimeo.com/591111022>

Directed by
Flora McLachlan and Sam Perry

Story by
Flora McLachlan

Filmed and Edited by
Sam Perry

Hunter
Flora McLachlan

Unicorn Handler
Christian Stamas

Armourer
Rheinallt James

Wardrobe
Erica Frances George



Do you go hunting, or do you wait
for it to come to you?

The film *In which I go hunting* uses the unicorn as a symbol of ‘something beyond’, as I have used the unicorn in my etchings for some years. As the unicorn comes to you and lays its head in your lap, I felt it could represent an artist’s evasive and unpindownable inspiration. I have learned that to wait for inspiration is less reliable than starting to make something with the hands and going from there – stalking inspiration, in other words – approaching it physically and casting your spells of authority upon the materials.

Inspiration...myth...image...vision, all these concepts are referenced in this video, which was filmed over the course of one day in the spirit of Monster Chetwynd and the pop-up happening, and in the tradition of folk effigies and rituals which channel a beneficial power (or diffuse malignant forces) on behalf of a community.

In which I go hunting

2021

Film, 4mins 37seconds

Photo credit: Christian Stamas



After making the film, I knew I wanted to display the unicorn hide as part of the installation.

In making the hide I wanted to build a strange composite beast...I gave it my printed hands for limbs, hidden in nests of hair, and added the hair of wild horses, snagged in bracken – as if this creature had been running over the moor.

It is a fetishistic object, a magicking...in a way a trophy of the hunt, a skin hide, yet also a hide-and-seek, as what have I caught? Does this exist?

Hide, 2021

Stone lithographs on Shoji paper, collaged and constructed, three-inch iron nails, the hair of wild horses gathered by moonlight

200 x 300cms



Close-up of the unicorn
hide head, with arrow
hole placed where I shot
the inflatable unicorn in
the film.

Made with lithographs
printed on thin Japanese
paper, the process was a
tightrope of on-the-spot
creative fervour. It turned
out there were exactly
the right number of
prints to make the
unicorn, and matching
the hide patterns and
body printed elements
was magical...hands for
hooves, breasts for eyes,
rolling the horn and
knotting the tail hair...

Appropriation and Fertile Influence

Here follows an exploration of my influences.



Glenn Brown. Layered Portrait (after Lucian Freud) 4. Etching, 2008. 78 x 59.8cm.

As part of my MA course, putting my work in context and being aware of the influence of other artists has been transformative for my practice.

Appropriation and influence is to be celebrated and shared, not hidden – the struggle for originality is a restrictive chimera.

I was fascinated to see how Glenn Brown worked with scans of Lucian Freud's portrait etchings to build obscured anti-portraits in his *After Life* series of etchings from 2008. The result is to produce a kind of portrait of Freud himself, as his lines are the only recognisable element – the original sitters are blotted out in the layers and distortion. I love this fruitful interaction of two artists.



I made this sculpture 'Shrine' to reflect upon the creative fecundity that results from communication with artists across time and space.



Shrine

2021

Cupboard, electric candles,
wax, printed paper, ink, gum
Arabic, wallpaper paste, key
and label

40 x 30 cms

A velvet ribbon hangs from the key,
with a label upon which are written
Samuel Palmer's words, iconic to all
who make etchings:

'O! the joy - ...plates the *Liber
Studiorum* size got out of the dear,
little etching cupboard where they
have long reposed; great needles
sharpened three-corner-wise like
bayonets; opodeldoc rubbed into the
forehead to wake the brain up; and a
Great Gorge of old poetry to get up
the dreaming.'

The wasp-nest-like structure is of
papier mâché, torn strips of prints
made during my MA. Some of the
etchings were made using Samuel
Palmer's acid biting times. I
wanted to make it into a kind of
fetish or altar, a magical symbol of
power.

The influence grows in the
darkness into a new form under
your different hand and eye.

I had been reading a quote from
Gilles Deleuze in Marina Warner's
Forms of Enchantment about
'pleats of matter' – how folds and
frills are an 'aesthetic of
generativity', a multiple fecund
layering.

In *Shrine*, the dripping juices
luxuriantly escape the confines of
this fetishized 'dear, little etching-
cupboard' and run down the walls,
in an unstoppable rush of honey.



Bedwyr Williams

I saw Bedwyr's work first at Aberystwyth Arts Centre and I love how he leaps into images from the past like a mouse into a set of bagpipes. Or a fart into a plastic unicorn.

Bard Attitude by Bedwyr Williams,
2005

C-type print



Installation view, Monster
Chetwynd, Hell Mouth 3,
Eastside Projects,
Birmingham, 18 May – 27
July 2019
Credit: Eastside Projects,
Birmingham and Sadie Coles
HQ, London
Photography: Stuart Whipps



Images taken from
*Wilder Mann: The
Image of the Savage*,
Charles Fréger



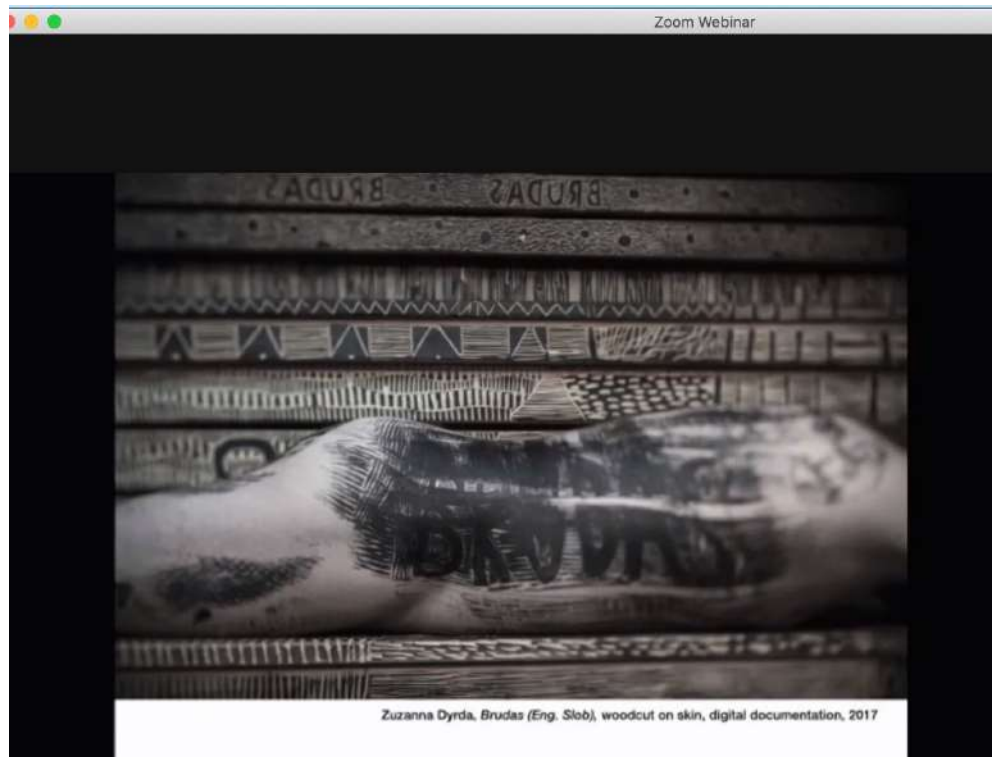
Wilder Men

The left hand image shows the
Burry Man – a ritual figure from
the north of England.

Lots of these folk costumes are
made using tablecloths, straw, and
skulls - materials found
immediately to hand.

This idea of the figure of power
boiling quickly up from the
surrounding materials gave me the
idea to make my own ritual figures
and appearances – masks,
goosegrass costumes, and thus I
feel I emerge as something
reimagined, not traditional, made
up on the spot, involving pritt stick
and sellotape, which feels joyful
and enlarging.

Monster Chetwynd's work uses this
gaffer-tape-and-old-bedsheets
aesthetic to create an event or
performance that rises up from a crowd
of people to become a magical fable in
real life. Her shamanistic practice
inspired my film 'in which I go hunting'
which was filmed in one day, following
an idea and seeing how it grew and
changed as a vision shared between
five creative people.

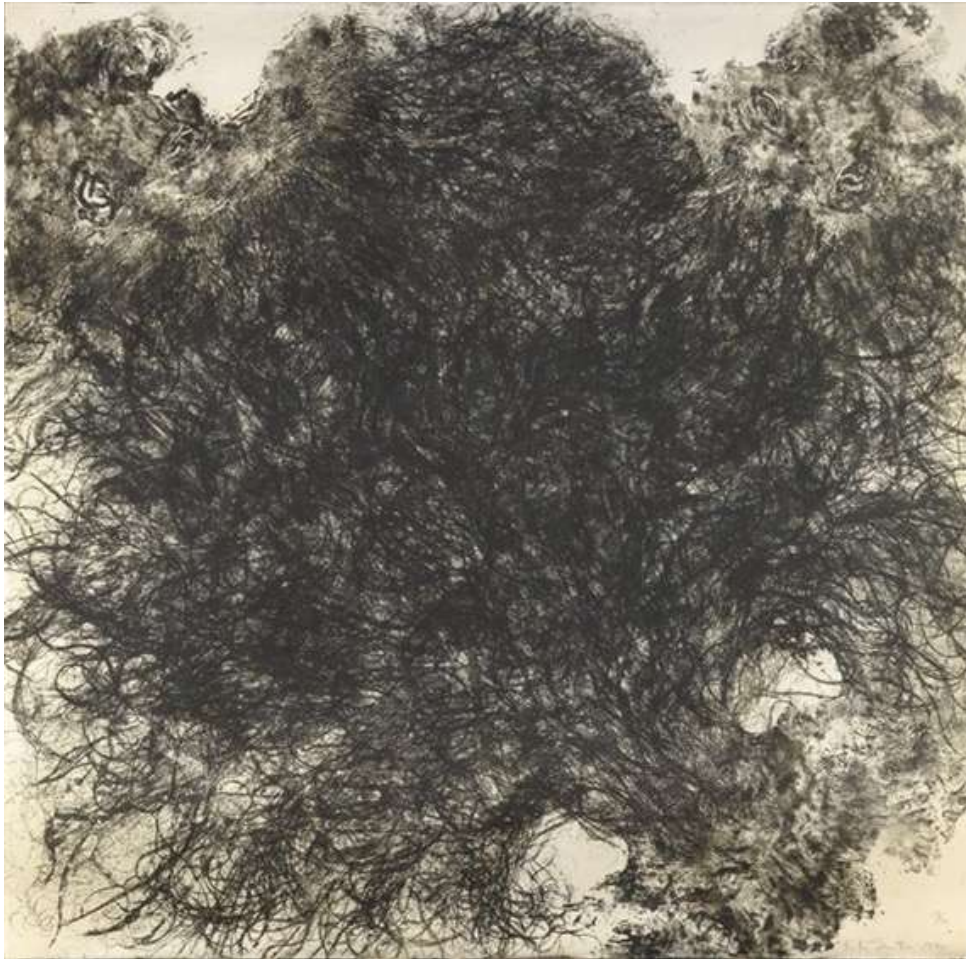


Body Printing

I saw Zuzanna Dyrda's work years ago in *Printmaking Today* originally and then I was able to watch her talking about her process at the IMPACT 2020 print symposium...which happened in 2021, on Zoom. I took this screenshot.

Again the idea of using one's own body in printmaking was interesting...printing woodcuts (cut into a bath house and inked) onto the body and photographing it as an installation.

I was attracted by the disguise or costume or even shapeshifting and transformative aspect of having a print on the skin...patterns of hair or stars or mud could be worn, turning you into a beast or spirit being. I used this idea to make my Unicorn spirit hide out of prints made from my body, then drawn over with long hair.



Untitled: Hair. Kiki Smith, 1990. 91x91cm



Kiki Smith

Kiki Smith's large lithograph 'Untitled: Hair' has preoccupied me ever since seeing it in MOMA Oxford...It is printed in two runs, a sepia and a grey-black which gives it depth...I was pleased to see the same effect when I printed my hairy Unicorn hide, which was referencing the same fetishistic ritual uses of hair, and the soap wash image was slowly taking ink so it initially printed soft grey.

(seen on nose of unicorn and front left leg in photo)



YouTube video screenshot

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z2GhLfCpDE&ab_channel=KunstSpektrum

Antoni Tàpies

Antoni Tàpies working on huge copper etching plates, drawing round his own foot, making his mark, unafraid, in his tweed trousering!

The idea of putting yourself into the print was one I chose to run with – I used soap wash to do it, loving the conjunction of washing and mark-making.



Figures and Materials

Shamanic, unserious but important and powerful figures from contemporary painters and a Japanese woodblock printmaker:

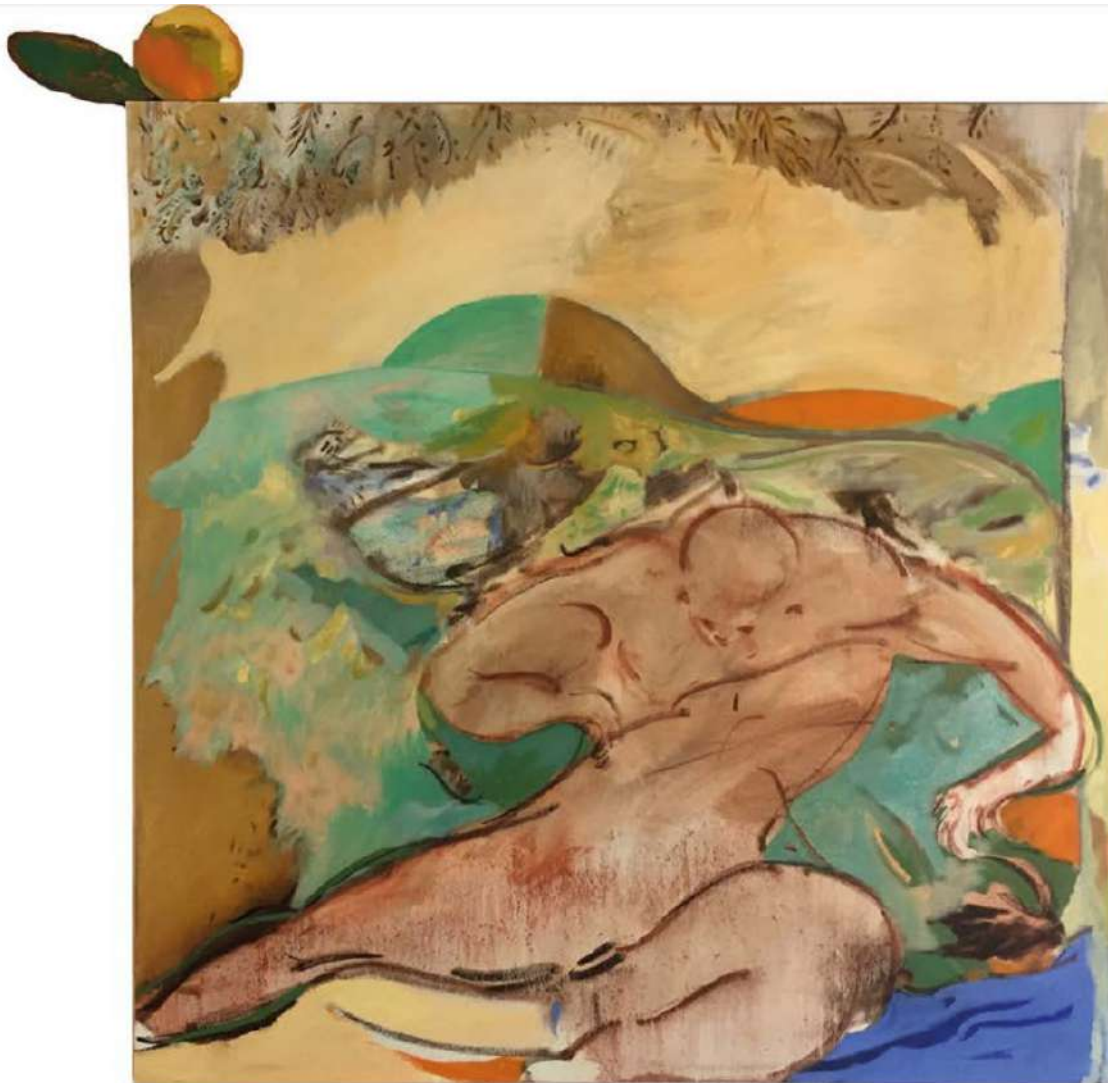
Clockwise from top left:

Ryan Mosley
Peter Linde Busk
Neal Tait
Shiko Munakata
Christopher P Wood

I also admire the free use of materials in these works, especially the colour staining in the Munakata and the Wood.



I've tried to carry over this technique of letting the medium collaborate with something beyond – in lithography, I began my images with pools of tusche and let them slowly dry to form a ground to draw into.



Iwan Lewis

I find Iwan's work inspirational in its evocation of an undefined mythical otherworld that permeates the everyday - Annwn is there but not there, a place of magic and fantasy that is invisible, but shared and present.

Iwan's work grows out of his Welsh cultural heritage...I feel that with my work, I wish to express the idea of sewing an imagined heritage together out of the odds and ends I grew up with...making something that is recognisable to anyone as the stuff of folk tale, something particular but also universal.

Orennau by Iwan Lewis
oil on canvas, 2018

BIRD, THE TREE AND THE STONE

2017-05-20 - 2017-09-17



Magical beings, spirits in wells and demons in trees and caves inhabit Jumana Emil Abboud's multifaceted universe. Inspired by Palestinian folklore, she imparts new interpretations to stories and myths that she has collected. Through delicate paintings, poetic cinematography and oral performances, she explores personal and collective memories and what myths can tell us about ourselves, our history and the place where we live.

The exhibition touches on existential questions about identity, loss, longing and belonging. Abboud hails from her homeland of Palestine, but her work invites us to weave stories of our own.

Jumana Emil Abboud (b. 1971, Galilee) lives and works in Jerusalem. Her work has been exhibited at venues such as the Istanbul Biennial (2009); Acción! MAD-Festival, Madrid (2010); Sharjah Biennial (2011); Bodies that Matter, Galeri Man, Istanbul (2013); the Venice Biennale (2009, 2015); Baltic, Newcastle (2016); and Kunstraum, London (2016). This is

Jumana Emil Abboud

Jumana Emil Abboud is a major influence on my work with her threading of place with lost or buried magic and myth. She both researches and imagines, making a porous and egalitarian world of human stories.

Her work springs from being of a nationality that is being violently disinherited from its lands and its old tales...in a less extreme way, I have the feeling of a broken thread with my spiritual and mythical inheritance today...a sense of loss, an absence. I want to spin a material web gently out into the dimness, a web anchored on books read in childhood, in numinous visions of landscape, in communication with other artists, and inch my way along it towards some kind of nourishing mythology.

Publications and links

Article:

McLachlan, Flora. *Soap Wash Lithography. Technical*. Printmaking Today, 2019. Winter Issue, 34

Exhibitions:

Link to *The Wood Between the Worlds*, solo show 2020 at Sarah Wiseman Gallery, Oxford, UK

<https://papermine.com/pub/32877286/>

Instagram:

@floramclachlan

Website:

<https://www.floramclachlan.co.uk/>

Bibliography

- Alpers, Svetlana. *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*. Chicago, 1988
- Bachelard, Gaston. *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*. Gaudin, Colette, ed. and trl. Spring Publications, 1988
- Benjamin, Walter. See McCole, John.
- Boon, Marcus. *In Praise of Copying*. Harvard, 2010.
- Chambers, Emma. *An Indolent and Blundering Art? The Etching Revival and the Redefinition of Etching in England 1838-1892*. Cambridge, 1999
- Chetwynd, Monster: Oreto, Elda.
<https://www.xibtmagazine.com/en/2020/10/monster-chetwynd-if-spirits-and-demons-become-reality/> accessed 30/1/2022
- D'Alleva, Anne. *Methods and Theories of Art History*. Laurence King, 2012
- Danto, Arthur. *After the Death of the Artist*. Princeton, 1997
- Elkins, James. *What Painting Is*. Routledge, 1999
- Fyfe, Gordon. *Art, Power and Modernity: English Art Institutions, 1750 – 1950*. Leicester University Press, 2000.
- --. "Reproductions, cultural capital and museums: aspects of the culture of copies." *Museum And Society*, Mar 2004. 2 (1) 47-67. Accessed via Primo.
- Gablik, Susie. *The Reenchantment of Art*. Thames & Hudson, 1991.
- Glennbrown.co.uk/videos, accessed 12.10.2018. "After Life: Rembrandt House Museum 2017" Grunenberg, Christoph; Stubbs, Michael. *Glenn Brown*. Tate, 2009.
- Harrod, Tanya. *Craft. Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel, 2018
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, 2nd edition, 2013
- Ivins, William M, Jr. *Prints and Visual Communication*. Harvard, 1953.
- Jeffries, Stuart. "Inside Frankenstein's studio: Glenn Brown on his macabre mashups". *The Guardian*, 24.01.2018
- Jones, Amelia ed. *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Blackwell, 2006
- Krauss, Rosalind. 'Poststructuralism and Deconstruction', *Art since 1900*. Thames and Hudson, 2016.

Lang, G. and Lang, K. *Etched in Memory*. North Carolina, 1990. (40-52)

Langer-Berndt, Petra. *Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel, 2015

Lyons, Siobhan. *Camera Copia: Reflections on Rephotography in the Instagram Age*. NANO, December 2016.

McCole, John Joseph. *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*. Cornell, 1993.

Myvillages, ed. *The Rural. Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel, 2019

Oyler, Lauren. *The Artist Making Appropriation Look Good*. Broadly.vice.com, 10.12.2015.

Pelzer-Montada, Ruth, ed. *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking*. Manchester University Press, 2018

Perry, G. and Cunningham, C., eds. *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art*. Open University, 1999

Perry, Grayson. *In the best possible taste*. Channel 4. Quoted in *Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences*. Education pack, British Council, 2017.

Pinkola Estes, Clarissa. *Women Who Run With Wolves*. Rider, 2008.

Prettejohn, Elizabeth. *Modern Painters, Old Masters*. Yale, 2017

Scott Rohan, Michael. *The Anvil of Ice*. Willam Morrow & Co., 1986

Simmons, W.J. *True to Form: Deborah Kass Shakes Up the Canon*. Modern Painters, Dec 2015.

Smith, Terry. "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art". *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 92, No. 4 pp. 366-383, 2010

Stonard, John-Paul. *Glenn Brown: Etchings (Portraits)*. Ridinghouse, 2009

Sutcliffe, Jamie, ed. *Magic. Documents of Contemporary Art*. Whitechapel, 2021

Taylor, Michael, ed. *The Mechanical Hand: Artists' Projects at Paupers Press*. Black Dog, 2012

Vitale, Christopher. *Tips for reading Deleuze (time and image)* Networkologies.wordpress.com 29.04.2011

Weird Studies, podcast. Professor Phil Ford and writer/filmmaker J. F. Martel host a series of conversations on art and philosophy, dwelling on ideas that are hard to think and art that opens up rifts in what we are pleased to call "reality." www.wierdstudies.com

Williams, Robert. *Art Theory: an Historical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2004; Chapter 6, 'Postmodernism', esp. pp. 244-46