



A FINE LINE

Lizzie Farey | Angie Lewin | Frances Priest | Bronwen Sleight

LIZZIE FAREY

Born in Singapore, Farey has been based in rural Galloway, in Scotland's South West for the last 30 years. The rural setting of her home and studio is her guiding inspiration, her sensitive handling of wood revealing an interaction with nature that is deeply personal.

Lizzie Farey is represented in public and private collections including the National Museums Scotland, City Art Centre, Edinburgh and Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. She has received many awards and exhibits both nationally and internationally including, most recently, in Chicago, Geneva and Berlin.

FRANCES PRIEST

Frances Priest's work uses drawing and ceramics to explore and interpret languages of ornament from different cultures, places and periods in history. From her Edinburgh studio, she creates ceramic objects, using clay as a canvas on which to build surfaces of inlaid line, coloured glaze and enamel decals.

Frances Priest graduated from Edinburgh College of Art with a BA (Hons) and PGDip in Ceramics in 1999. She combines a studio based practice with site-specific projects, through residencies and commissions, including work with Atlas Arts, Cove Park and Artlink Edinburgh.

ANGIE LEWIN

Angie Lewin depicts native flora in the coastal landscape - from North Norfolk to North Uist. Her images evoke a sense of place, the essence of certain plants and how they are shaped by their environment.

Angie Lewin studied BA (Hons) Fine Art Printmaking at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design, followed by a year's postgraduate printmaking at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. She is a member of the Royal Society of Painter - Printmakers, the Royal Watercolour Society, the Society of Wood Engravers and the Art Workers' Guild.

BRONWEN SLEIGH

Born in 1980 and raised in Mid-Wales, Bronwen Sleigh received her BA from the Glasgow School of Art and MA from the Royal College of Art, where she was selected for a six week exchange to the University of Calgary, Canada. She has also worked for arts organisations including the the Royal College of Art, the Royal Academy Schools as a Print Fellow and at Edinburgh Printmakers as their Etching Technician.

Bronwen Sleigh has exhibited widely both in the UK and overseas. Her work is held in numerous collections around the world. Sleigh lives and works in Glasgow.



A Fine Line showcases works by four contemporary artists based in Scotland - Lizzie Farey, Angie Lewin, Frances Priest and Bronwen Sleigh. Working with a variety of media, but united by detailed observation and strong draughtsmanship, this group of artists experiment with linear mark-making and drawing in its widest sense.

Each artist produces work inspired by places and spaces in either the natural or man-made environment and their relationship to concepts of memory and time. For them drawing is a vital, often daily activity and through close observation and the practice of drawing, the results can shift perception and understanding of the world and of themselves.

This exhibition explores the boundary between art and craft, bringing together artists working across a diverse range of disciplines including sculpture, willow, ceramics and printmaking. The exhibition title *A Fine Line*, has been chosen to suggest that the line that is sometimes perceived to exist between these different areas of formal practice is in fact always fluid.

The exhibition has been curated in collaboration with the artists Lizzie Farey and Angie Lewin, and is a partnership project between the City Art Centre, Inverness Museum & Art Gallery and Gracefield Arts Centre.



Bronwen Sleight
'Kiyembe Lane' (detail)
Hand coloured etching

In a recent British Museum catalogue¹ the curator suggested seven thematic groupings as a way of linking the distinct but common approaches evident in artists' drawings through time.

'the thinking medium'; 'the likeness of a thought'; 'brainstorming'; 'enquiry and experiment'; 'insight and association'; 'development and decisions'; 'drawings from drawings'.

What these phrases reveal is the complex interplay of conscious and unconscious processes that inform human perception and the vital part that visual notation and the practice of drawing play in those processes. In practiced hands, therefore, such as present in the four artists in this exhibition, artists can not only clarify their own thinking through drawing but can stimulate, through their self-structured languages of line, deeper awareness of the possibilities of our own rich perceptual and imaginative capacities. As the scientist Henry Disney suggests² 'drawing is a powerful heuristic tool': we learn from it as well as through it.

The lines in this exhibition are drawn in a great variety of ways: pencil on paper, carving into woodblocks, etching metal plates, weaving and bending stems of willow, hazel, ash; assembling 3D wire structures; cutting into and patterning clay surfaces. There is evidence of deep craft and hands-on knowledge of particular materials and processes learnt through experimental time at the workbench and in the studio. The choice of the exhibition title *A Fine Line* is, in part, inviting us to consider the lines, or boundaries,

that exist within contemporary understanding of the relationship between visual expression and hand skills; material knowledge and the ability to achieve expressive objects that echo the depth and complexity of human experience.

Each exhibitor has followed a distinct path into their form of expression, although drawing is a common thread to all. Angie Lewin trained as a printmaker at Central St. Martins and then Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. She worked for a number of years as a successful illustrator in London then moved to Norfolk, retraining in horticulture, but followed this with a return to printmaking, establishing a line of printed fabrics as well as works on paper and then moved to Scotland, first to Speyside then Edinburgh. Her work offers 'a landscape viewed through plants'; intricate patterns of seedheads, skeletal outlines of dried flowers – layered up through collage or different print processes – wood engraving, screenprinting, linocuts. Present is a homage and acknowledgement of the skills of earlier artists who also applied their lines to many surfaces such as Eric Ravilious and Edward Bawden. Lizzie Farey studied painting in Canterbury but for the past thirty years has lived in Galloway creating a unique artist's studio in the form of a planted field of willow surrounded by woodland which give both impetus to and materials for her work. Her immersion in the cyclical rhythms of the natural world is articulated through weaving together materials grown within it: the intimate knowledge of the materials plays out in the structures she is able to create. Line and place are intimately connected.

Frances Priest studied ceramics at Edinburgh College of Art, establishing an early reputation for bold, slabbed clay sculptures that were widely exhibited and collected. She developed a parallel career in site-specific projects working with communities to explore interwoven elements of place and people through drawing and making. These distinct areas of work are brought together in an emerging series of intricately patterned clay forms that reflect cultural histories of line and ornament. Bronwen Sleigh studied design and illustration at Glasgow School of Art and printmaking at the Royal College of Art. Her constructivist vision represents her direct experience of places – often roadsides or urban intersections – through vivid assemblages of vertical lines both drawn and fabricated with wire and wood into three dimensions. Her command of line and tone create powerful spatial echoes for the viewer as well as summoning links to early twentieth century Soviet artists.

What one senses with each of the four is what artist William Kentridge describes as use of drawing as a ‘rethinking medium’³. The idea that close acts of observing things beyond the boundary of self – something channeled through the act of drawing – can shift how we perceive, and consider, the world around us. As geneticist Adelaide Carpenter commented: ‘unless I draw, I won’t look carefully enough to see the unexpected’⁴ – a useful reminder also that drawing has linguistic currency beyond the visual arts.

Priest’s recent ‘Patterns of Flora’ commission for Atlas Arts, a permanent installation of tiles, door furniture and Parian ware vessels at Raasay House for example, grew out of attentive observation of Raasay flora in the company of local botanist Stephen Bungard. She re-thought relationships between pattern and place following

her observational drawing of local flora in dialogue with Bungard’s botanical knowledge. As with Farey’s work, line and place became intimately intertwined. This in turn has led her to re-examine pages of Indian designs of the Victorian Owen Jones’ *Grammar of Ornament* for this exhibition, re-seeing these patterns in the light of a recent period of travel in South West India.

Lewin’s collages of driftwood and plant images printed on fine Japanese paper – sketches, in the broadest sense, of walks through particular coastal landscapes in Norfolk and the Scottish Highlands – direct attention to the material qualities of remembered environments. Her work insists on the essential physicality of perceptual experience, something echoed in all exhibitors’ works. Farey for example, is developing a new body of work recalling a deep associative connection between her mother and the different gardens of her childhood. She does rough sketches ‘incomplete but hopeful’ to record an impression or thought often on scraps of paper that may later suggest a new structure of willow, an approach that emphasizes a sense of drawing as a form of dialogue beyond chronological time. Priest’s ‘Making Memory’ project with the ‘Living Memory Association’ in Edinburgh inhabits similar territory. The artist works with older participants to devise practical, hands-on workshops which explore the ways in which the physical acts of making and drawing can access hidden memories.

Sleigh’s dynamic webs of intersecting lines suggest the wider currency of visual notation in fields like engineering or mathematics. There is a sense of purposeful decision in the lines, as in the descriptive boundaries of architectural plans or diagrams giving linear equivalents to biological and mathematical structures. The purposefulness is

enhanced by the carefully constructed layers of colour of the drawings and the often complex joints and intersections of the sculptures. But works in the end evoke memories and impressions - 'places of the mind' to use Geoffrey Grigson's phrase. The shift between a worked detail of a metal grating, to radial and apparently random collections of lines is associative rather than explanatory.

John Berger suggests that a line is 'not really important because it records what you have seen but because of what it will lead you on to see'.⁵ The work of these four artists leads the viewer on to see new possibilities in the living edges that mark our relationship to place, memory and time. The collaborative venture of this exhibition may also lead the artists themselves to see new relationships within, and between, their evident mastery of line. *Amanda Game* © 2017

Notes:

1. Isabel Seligman *Lines of Thought: Drawing from Michelangelo to now* British Museum/Thames and Hudson 2016, London
2. Dr. Henry Disney, entomologist, Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, quoted on p. 42 Barry Phipps *Lines of Enquiry: thinking through drawing* Kettles Yard catalogue, Cambridge 2006
3. p.29 *Lines of Thought* (op. cit.) quoting 2009 interview with William Kentridge, 2009 The Guardian
4. Dr. Adelaide T C Carpenter, geneticist, Department of Genetics, University of Cambridge, quote p. 41 *Lines of Enquiry* (op. cit.)
5. p. 18 *Lines of Thought* (op. cit.)

Amanda Game has enjoyed a thirty-five year career as an exhibition maker, curator and events producer with a specialist interest in supporting contemporary makers: their thinking and their objects. A twenty-one year career in commercial practice, at the Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh (1986 – 2007) has been followed by establishing and running independent studios in North Argyll and Oxford to foster imaginative exhibition making in both public and private galleries. She recently authored (2016) 'Contemporary British Crafts: the Goodison Gift to the Fitzwilliam Museum'.

Image credits:

Front cover: Frances Priest, 'Gathering Places | Grammar of Ornament - India i' (detail). Photography by Shannon Tofts.

Page Three: Lizzie Farey, 'Folium' (detail), willow. Photography by Warren Sanders.

Back cover: Angie Lewin, 'Findhorn Feather and Thrift', mixed media.

Booklet design by Simon Lewin www.simonlewin.com



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City Art Centre

Edinburgh

From 18.11.17 to 18.02.18

www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk

Inverness Museum & Art Gallery

Inverness

From 03.03.18 to 12.05.18

www.highlifehighland.com

Gracefield Arts Centre

Dumfries

From 19.05.18 to 07.07.18

www.dumgal.gov.uk/gracefield



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