

COLLECT



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Collect: An exhibition by SoCo Artists
at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery
7 July – 30 September 2018

John's Place, Bohemia Road
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hmag.org.uk

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Introduction

Sinéid Codd

*Chair of SoCo Artists
(2014–2018)*

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery (HM&AG) is an important cultural asset for Hastings and St Leonards. This gem of a museum retains a sense of the early wunderkammer, which originated from human curiosity and the desire to collect, as well as to learn from artefacts. It contains a richness of cultural, political and technological histories and narratives, which hold huge creative potential for artists and audiences alike.

SoCo Artists (founded in 2003 as South Coast Artists) is a group of professional artists, based in East Sussex, presenting a programme of exhibitions and events in a range of venues throughout the year. Catherine Harvey (Keeper of Art & World Cultures, HM&AG) welcomed the proposal for *Collect*, our first exhibition with the museum.

The *Collect* project and exhibition has been devised and curated by members of the SoCo Artists Committee: Mary Morris, Jean Davey Winter and myself, Sinéid Codd, working closely with Catherine Harvey. The fourteen selected artists responded to the collection themed project brief: the majority basing their proposals on artefacts within the museum and archives of HM&AG.

Collect demonstrates the museum's interest in encouraging artists' responses to the collections and in showing new visual narratives to the public. Thanks to Catherine's suggestion, their works are exhibited throughout the museum, including within some collection cases, encouraging audiences to explore the whole museum through the exhibition.

Each artist set out on a journey of experiment and enquiry, posing questions of the stimuli that had sparked their interest in developing a new body of work. Individual artists' research used a variety of approaches and venues to carry out their research. This included visiting the

museum archives, other sites and related exhibitions in different venues. They investigated the local environs through drawing and photography, used imagination and intuition and experimented with materials, concepts and ideas. In meetings artists shared their research and insights, and ongoing creative dialogues emerged.

Several artists view their research as a type of mystery or detective story – something to be solved. But the 'truth' is slippery, especially in the 'museum', where objects are dislocated from context; where the past is rightly continually re-evaluated in the light of the present, giving us fresh perspectives. There are forgeries and fakes in this murky world where authenticity is highly prized, and artists question these notions.

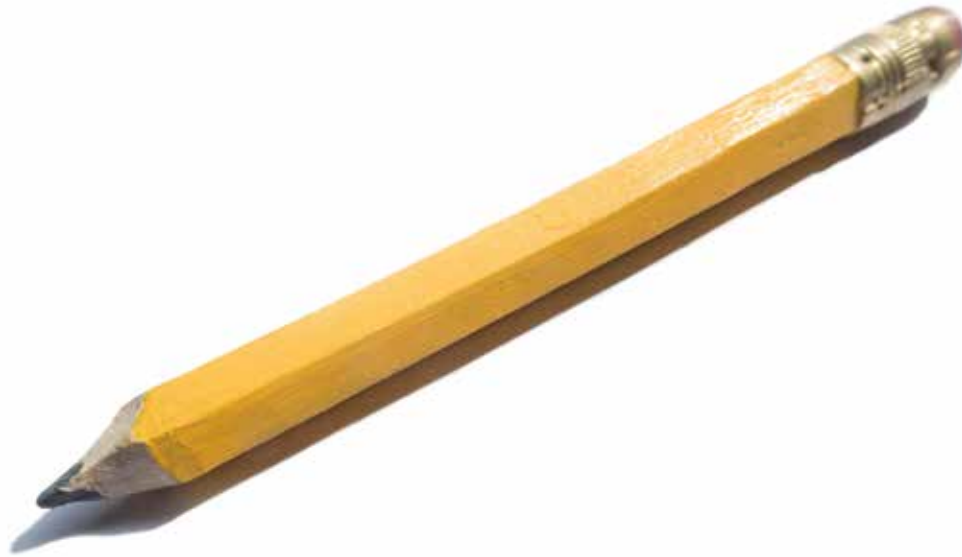
For the duration of the exhibition, the artists' own work becomes part of HM&AG. Like the other objects, these works will be scrutinized and questioned by visitors, who might then look around the museum to see the collection afresh, or re-consider their own personal collections and archives, through the artists' interpretations.

We thank

Catherine Harvey for giving SoCo Artists the opportunity to work with the collections and archives and exhibit at HM&AG, and for having been hugely generous with her time and expertise; Mary-Alice Stack, curator, for her involvement in selecting artists; Mary Morris and Jim Northover, for co-ordinating the production of this catalogue, working with Clare Playne and her team at Playne Design; Tim Morris and Colourfast Print for technical support and printing; the HM&AG technical team for installing the works.

Oona Ball

Pencil



Pencil cast brass, life size, 2018. Photo credit: Oona Ball

Oona began her career working in the film and television industry making props, models and sets for film before taking up a lecturer position at the University of the Arts London. She now lives in Hastings.

Charles Dawson's collection of archaeological fakes including: Cast of a Stamped Brick, Cast of the Piltdown Skull, 'Prehistoric' Hammer, Cast Iron 'Roman' Statuette.
Photo credit: Alexander Brattell



In a film environment nothing is as it seems: objects that appear to be made from cast iron are actually made of foam and are light as a feather. It is this visual trickery combined with an interest in process that informs Oona's current practice.

In film the illusion is often one of a complex and fantastical world in which the film medium keeps the audience at an unapproachable remove. In a museum or art gallery environment the physical work can be considered much more closely by a viewer; its materiality scrutinised. Oona does not wish to create a fantastic world but rather to make an illusion of the mundane and everyday.

In Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, Oona presents a series of fake objects within Charles Dawson's cabinet of archaeological deception: this work is 'legitimately' sited alongside the fraudster Dawson's objects. Other works in the exhibition have gone rogue, imposters in permanent dioramas, unannounced and unaccredited, these objects lie in wait to be noticed or ignored.

Sinéid Codd

A day by the sea

Sinéid Codd studied MA Printmaking at Camberwell College of Arts, UAL (2014-16). Her multidisciplinary practice spans the personal, the collaborative and the participatory.

www.sineidcodd.co.uk

***Carnelian locket** containing views of Hastings, from the collection of Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. Photo credit: Sinéid Codd*



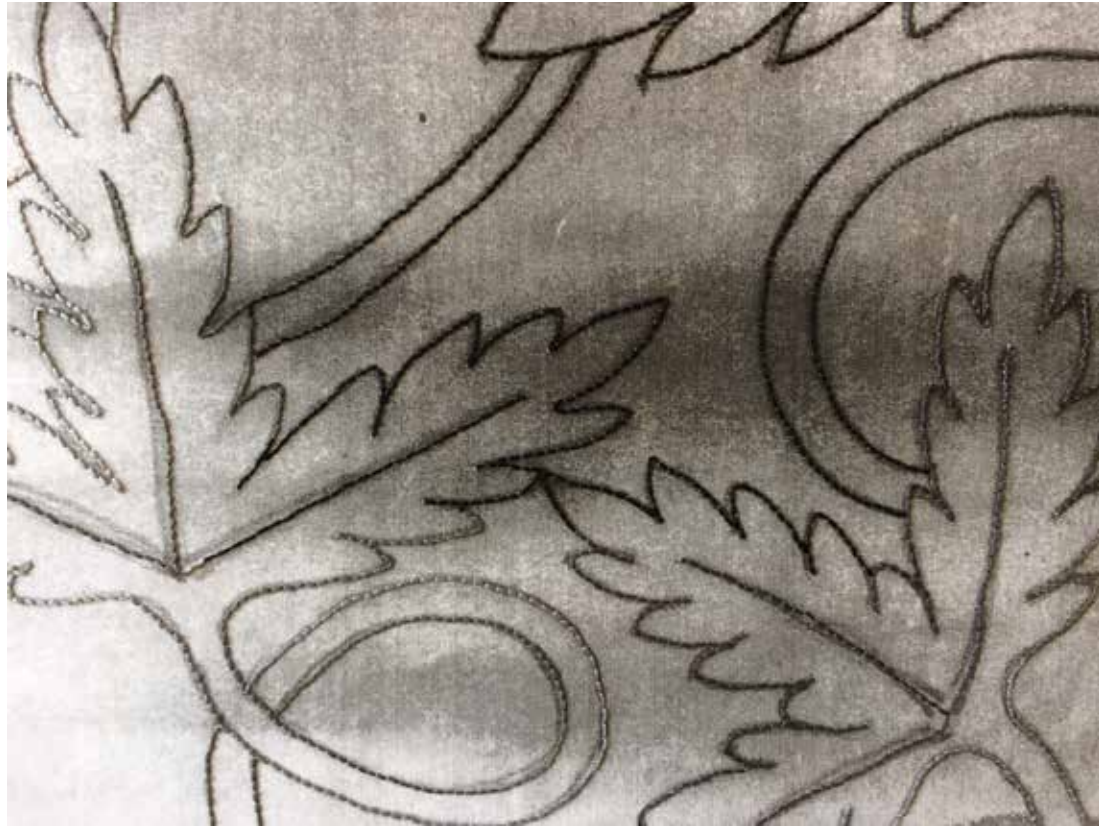
The work of Sinéid Codd is a visual dialogue between the literal and the imaginative, in which she uses found objects as a source of enquiry in connection with place and time.

A tiny 19th century carnelian souvenir locket containing multiple views of landmarks across Hastings captured Sinéid's interest. Objects can become the custodians of our memories and dreams – the 'souvenirs' of our lives, but the manufactured souvenir is the only object designed to commodify the 'needs' of nostalgia for the tourist industry, which originated in the 19th century.

Born by the sea, in new work, Sinéid gives the sea itself centre stage and questions the role of the timeless, ever changing seascape in the making and remaking of memory and identity. She constructs narratives in new digital collages that are personal souvenirs of living beside the sea in Hastings and St Leonards. Her installation, in a glass museum case, brings images and objects together in a playful and poignant reverie referencing the seaside.



A day by the sea; archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Museum Etching, 30 x 20cm, 2018. Photo credit: Sinéid Codd



Tracing William Morris (detail)
photocopy, embroidery silks, 60 x 40cm
(approx full size), 2018.
Photo credit: Roz Cran

Roz Cran

Tracing William Morris

Roz was educated at University of Brighton and Royal College of Art, London.

Bundle of rolled up tracings of wallpapers
in Museum archived box of papers from
Windycroft, Hastings.
Photo credit: Alexander Brattell



Our relationship with the natural world is at the heart of Roz Cran's art practice and she has an ongoing interest in the plant-dominated designs of William Morris. She was fascinated to find out that Hastings Museum has archived information on Windycroft, a Hastings house, renovated in the 1880s which has original Morris & Co wallpapers. She discovered a number of rolled-up, unlabelled, undated tracings – a mystery. Roz visited Windycroft, courtesy of the present owners, and was thrilled to see original Morris wallpapers in situ. She was able to see that the tracings matched some of these wallpapers.

Roz photographed the tracings, made large black and white copies. After seeing an exhibition of the work of May Morris, daughter of William Morris, an accomplished wallpaper designer and art embroiderer, Roz decided to retrace the designs with simple embroidery. When the images were enlarged the lines on the age-mottled rolls exposed how the tracer pressed hard at places or slipped. Using shades of graphite, grey and black silks Roz backstitched the pattern. Her hand added another layer to the hand of this unknown tracer and the hand of Morris the designer.

Jean Davey Winter

Gold in the Mountains

Primarily a painter and mixed media artist Jean Davey Winter also works with folding book structures, a format she has chosen to use for its relevance to 'telling a story'. Her work is included in a number of private and public collections and she exhibits regularly both nationally and internationally.

www.jeandaveywinter.co.uk
www.axisweb.org/artist/jeandaveywinter

Installation Big Hole Battlefield,
Montana, USA.
Photo credit: Jean Davey Winter



In Montana USA, 2015, Jean Davey Winter photographed an installation of skeletal tipis commemorating the 1877 'Battle of Big Hole' and the defeat of the Nez Perce tribe by the American army. She thought no more of this until she saw an image of tipis here in the Museum and discovered that evidence of the Nez Perce also exists in the archives; providing the catalyst for this work.

After a period of extensive research the tragic history of the Nez Perce unfolded. These people had lived in peace on their ancestral lands until 'white men' discovered gold and confiscated approximately ninety percent of their land, leading eventually to the war, which culminated in the 'Battle of Big Hole'.

Sadly this lack of respect for Native North American people continues today with recent news that Donald Trump's Wall will dissect the lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Gold in the Mountains two mixed media concertina 'books', materials include collage of photo imagery, monoprint, paint, gold leaf and feathers. Five clear acrylic cubes each approx. 8cm square, containing small 'found' or made objects, overall size 53 x 114 x 24.5cm, 2018. Photo credit: Jean Davey Winter





A Walk In The Country
screenprint, 40 x 40 cm, 2018.
Photo credit: Maggie Henton

Maggie Henton

A Walk In The Country

Maggie Henton lives and works in Hastings and London. She frequently works on residencies and in response to specific locations. Working methods include: drawing, print making, photography, and mixed media installations. She has exhibited widely; in Europe, America and Australia. Her work is represented in major collections, including the V&A.

Found family photograph
Photo credit: Maggie Henton



Maggie Henton's work for this exhibition was prompted by the discovery of an old family photo album. We live in an age of the ubiquitous digital image where every moment is recorded in an intangible form. The physicality of the album, the materiality of the little paper photo corners, the curling, aged and fading photographs, with their posed stillness, is strange to us now.

The family photo album suggests a detective story. It is an object full of clues. The physical evidence in the deliberately cut and torn photographs, a violent tearing from family history, is suggestive of strong emotions, of hatreds, rivalries and long remembered slights. But of whom and what, is now forgotten and unnamed.

In reworking these photographs Maggie Henton attempts to investigate the clues they contain, but what she found only suggests more mysteries. We can only imagine the stories behind these images.

Adrienne Hunter

Hastings from East Hill

Adrienne has lived in Hastings and St Leonards for 25 years and works from a studio in her garden. Her work is inspired by nature and the drama of the local coastline.

For this project Adrienne was drawn to the work of Victorian landscape painter William Borrow and decided to follow in his footsteps in order to explore the same scenes today, and produce work en plein air.

Easier said than done. Blocked by trees, buildings, car parks and bad weather she nearly gave up.

Finally, clambering down a steep slope off the path on the East Hill, and onto a ledge, she found herself confronted with the same cliffs in Borrow's *Hastings, East Sussex, from the East Hill*. The same but different; prehistoric, pre-Borrow, but still defiantly there whilst being constantly eroded by nature.

Further forays were made to Galley Hill, Bexhill and the rock pools of St Leonards at low tide. Sketches and photos were taken back to the studio to be worked up into larger drawings.

In contrast to Borrow's oil paintings, Adrienne works quickly with compressed charcoal, ink and gesso to convey the energy of the landscape with freshness and immediacy.

Hastings, East Sussex from the East Hill
by William Borrow.
Photo credit: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery



Hastings from East Hill charcoal,
ink, gesso, 70 x 50cm, 2018.
Photo credit: Tim Nathan



Study for Durbar Reflections
handrolled felt with silk, linen and
cotton inlays, 15 x 15cm, May 2018.
Photo credit: Sue Johnson

Sue Johnson

Durbar Reflections

Sue Johnson trained at Hornsey College of Art and Design and taught in South London for many years. She has worked as a Gallery artist at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in the education department and on their outreach programmes. Sue teaches feltmaking masterclasses in the UK and France and has exhibited in Iceland and Europe.

Durbar Hall entrance door
made 1885-1886.
Photo credit: Sue Johnson



Handrolled felt is made with wool fibre, water and the makers energy. The fibres are organised into a flat surface soaked thoroughly with water and rolled vigorously, so that they wrap around each other and shrink to form a firm and supple material. The wool can be multi-layered with woven and coloured fabrics before the wetting process to create a change of surface texture and pattern.

The particular qualities of the highly refined and decorative wood carving in the Durbar gallery contrasted with the stained glass windows above it produce reflections and shadows which play onto the vitrines and their contents. The rhythm and repetition of shapes produces highly decorative surfaces which alter in the light and build decorative surfaces. They bring to mind the North African haitis, made from pierced cloth and used as a light filter by Matisse in his studios.

Alex Leadbeater

Vessel

Foundation Course, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. BA (Hons) Fine Art, Preston Polytechnic, Lancaster. Lives in St Leonards on Sea.

Roman hoard pot containing coins.
Photo credit: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery



Alex has been working as an artist and exhibiting since the Serpentine Summer Show in 1981, when she painted a series of life-size garden tools which launched her career.

She still paints domestic objects, isolated from any context so as to appear like museum artefacts. Often damaged and patinated over time, they seem familiar and timeless, discarded yet treasured.

Collect gave an opportunity to explore what we revere and what we take for granted. Inspired by the Roman pot containing a hoard of coins found in Hastings, the paintings depict amphorae – ancient pots that are still being made and used today throughout the world. Buried underground or submerged in shipwrecks, many pots were smashed in order to get their contents. It is intriguing to guess their use; perhaps they held wine, transported fish sauce or hid treasure. As empty vessels they are common items in any museum collection.

In an age of mass production and increasing historic discoveries, values change and not everything can be kept for posterity. Perhaps museums of the future may look very different from today.

Vessel acrylic on paper, 75 x 55cm, 2018. Photo credit: Alex Leadbeater





Looking Back In Time
stoneware, glass and resin,
4 x 3 x 3cm (approx.), 2018.
Photo credit: Tim Morris

Mary Morris

Looking Back In Time

Mary Morris has a BA (Hons) Art & Design (Fine Art) and an MA Textiles. She lives and works in Mayfield, East Sussex.

Having a fascination with collections and collectors, Mary was delighted by the diversity of objects on display in Hastings Museum and the intriguing stories behind some of the collectors of these objects. Research into Charles Dawson led her to consider the collector as not only a finder of objects but also a creator of them.

Walter Gale, the schoolmaster in Mayfield from 1750-1771, left a diary, fragments of which were discovered by the Mayor of Hastings in about 1850. Gale undertook many other occupations whilst acting as the village schoolmaster; mapmaker and land surveyor, sign painter, designer of needlework, wood and stone carver and a maker of wills. His interest in the world around him, in history, astronomy and many other subjects can clearly be seen from his diary. He may well have been curious about the local landscape and its industrial past, the historical sites of iron making, charcoal production, and textile processes such as weaving and fulling.

If, like Dawson, Gale had been a collector what might he have found or created in his search for knowledge?

Bloomery Find
Photo credit: Playne Design



Kathleen Mullaniff

Work

Kathleen Mullaniff was born in County Longford in the Republic of Ireland in 1957. She trained at University of the Arts, Camberwell College of Art and Design (BA Fine Art Painting) and at the University of London, Goldsmiths College (MA Fine Art). Kathleen has been a Senior Lecturer on the Middlesex University BA Fine Art course since 1990 and was a founder member of Chisenhale Studios and Gallery (1981-2007). She is a member of the London Group.

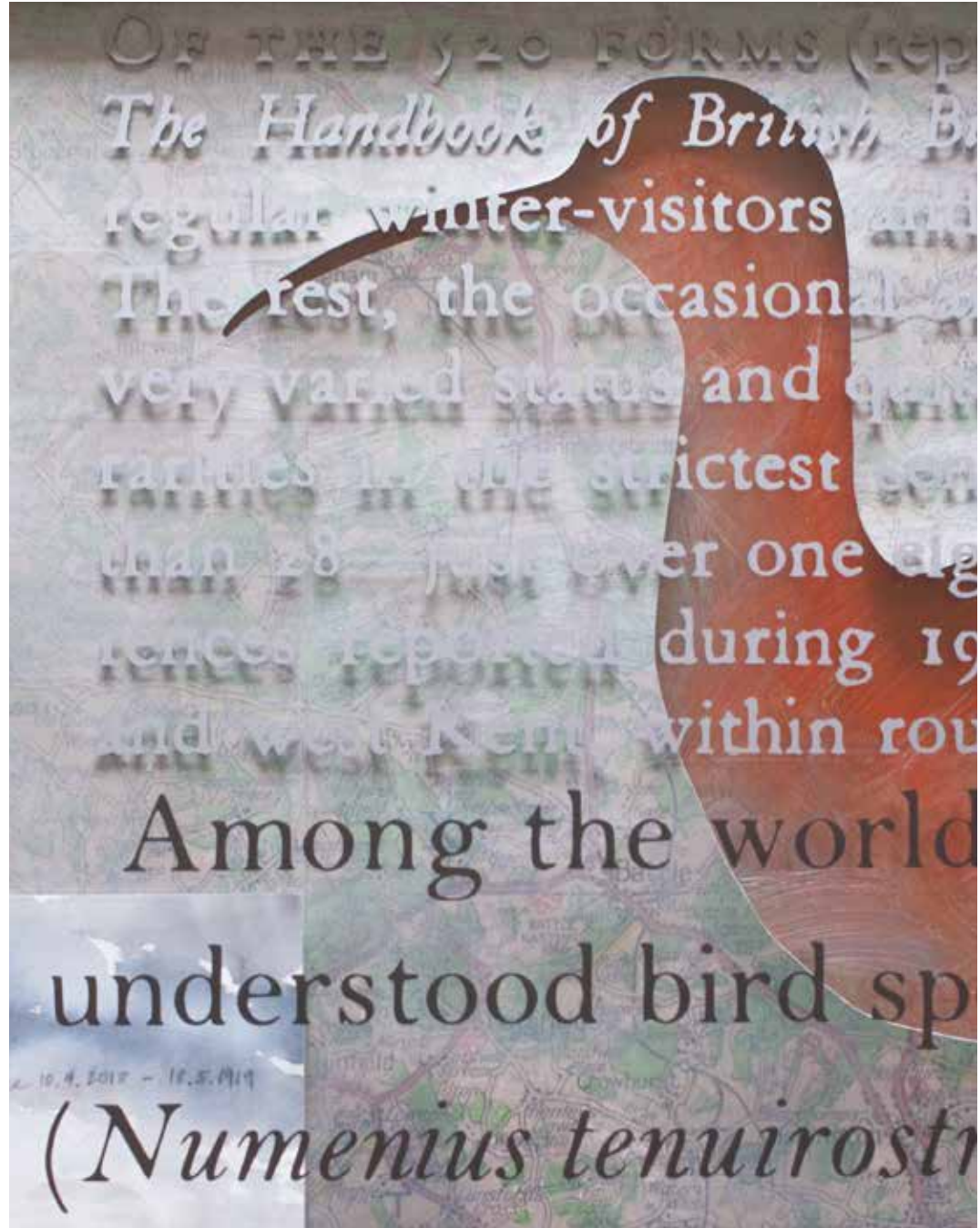
Socialist Literature Depot at 51 Robertson Street, Hastings with a display of banners for the Independent Labour Party & Church Socialist League c.1906.
Photo credit: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery



Kathleen Mullaniff read the book *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell, which is based on the town of Hastings. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery hold an archive chronicling the life and work of Robert Tressell (Robert Noonan). Accounts of the novel imply that the plot is based on the author's own experience of working as a sign writer and builder in Hastings. The main story takes place in a house described as 'the cave'. Kathleen was affected by the lucid descriptions of the poor working conditions of the builders and decorators employed in the fictional town of Mugsborough. She has responded to the archive collection by producing a set of paintings in black and white depicting poor women and children of the Victorian period engaged in piecework and in textile mills. The paintings are reminiscent of printed socialist pamphlets distributed at the time.



Work oil and ink on canvas, 80 x 100cm, 2018.
Photo credit: Kathleen Mullaniff



Shadowbird detail, mixed media, 74 x 110cm, 2018. Photo credit: Max Northover

Jim Northover *Shadowbird*

Jim Northover studied graphic design at London College of Communication and has an MA in design writing criticism from the University of the Arts London. He co-founded and ran an international design and branding business for many years, and now combines his art practice with independent creative consultancy. Jim lives near Rye.

Slender-billed Curlew from the collection of Hastings Rarities specimens. Photo credit: Peter Greenhalf



Shadowbird is a reflection on disappearance and loss.

In researching the birds identified in the Hastings Rarities affair Jim Northover found that only the Slender-billed Curlew has not been officially recorded in this country since. Today it is registered as 'critically endangered', but is probably extinct. Even the common (Eurasian) Curlew is now under threat.

In his response Jim reflects on how observation and information can become multi-layered, shifting in perspective, altering over time. Understanding the impact of habitat and species loss by recording locations of sightings, by observing detail and through scientific commentary all bear witness to the changes in our environment. But some things, like our own futures, are unknowable.

Jim's work is also a celebration of birds, creatures that fly free in the skies above us, coming to earth to share our lives and landscapes. They respect no human borders; their horizons are global and their spirit is an inspiration to us. We need them, and they us.

Carly Ralph

Armour

Textiles and Mixed Media artist. Born in St Leonards, Carly studied BA Textiles at Central School (CSAD) and has an MA in Textiles from Goldsmiths College. She taught at North London Collegiate School and was a Senior Lecturer at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design from 1980-2009. She lives and works in central St Leonards.

Samurai Armour 19th Century
Photo credit: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery collection



This work was initiated in response to Samurai Armour, chosen for the significance it places on ornamentation; armour as an art form. Around the world, ancient armour reflected differences between cultures but shared some features in common. These included the rhythmic repetition of a single element, the combination of hard and soft layers and a demand for ingenuity using materials to hand.

As a practitioner who enjoys improvisation with found materials and surfaces, Carly saw the creative potential of this new context, leading indirectly from her previous work on erosion, the shoreline and ephemerality.

A collection was made of small metal components from everyday life, including nails, chains, washers and grids, together with 'found' fabric fragments. Processes such as crushing, rusting, fraying, layering and stitch were used to alter their identities. The resulting armoured panels are intended to suggest an aged or archaeological aesthetic.

Metalled Cloth 1 rusted linen, lurex net, steel & brass, 50 x 42cm, 2018. Photo credit: Carly Ralph





We Are The Mods collage, 2018. Photo credit: Helen Scalway

Helen Scalway *Mod Scooters*

Helen Scalway trained at Chelsea College of Art. Her work is held, among other places, in The National Art Library at the V&A: Chelsea College of Art Artists Book Collection: The University of the West of England Centre for Fine Print Research, and London Transport Museum Contemporary Art Collection. www.helenscalway.com

Mod Scooter Hastings Museum & Art Gallery.
Photo credit: Helen Scalway



The Mod scooter in the museum comes with a great whiff of the 1960s. That turquoise and chrome styling! It might easily have carried a young man to Hastings on Bank Holiday of August 4, 1964, right into the battle of the Mods and the Rockers along Hastings beach and promenade.

The journalists waiting that day are said to have encouraged the mayhem in order to get more spectacular pictures. The lads were apparently quite good tempered. Nonetheless, there were broken bottles and thrown stones, drugs, alcohol. It was a tribal battle.

What were those boys were looking for? Excitement, a release of energy, exhilaration?

All the words in the book were spoken to Helen by men who were of an age to have been there in 1964. She asked: Back then, would you have been a Mod or a Rocker? And why?

Their answers surprised her.

Charlotte Snook

Callender Girl

Charlotte Snook trained at Hornsey College of Art and the Royal College of Art where she was awarded an MA in Painting. She has taught at several art schools and universities, principally Central Saint Martins, where she was Senior Lecturer in Foundation Studies from 2002 to 2009. She has exhibited widely and has work in private collections in the UK, Germany, France and the USA.

Photograph Early 20th century
Labrador Group 2
Photo credit: Taylor Collection 336



Charlotte Snook's series of paintings for this exhibition represent snapshots of lives long gone. They speak of moments in time: a photograph of a Canadian Inuit about whom nothing is now remembered, taken by an unknown photographer; a young woman's face from an early 20th century formal group portrait that seems to tell of suffering but may not; a couple of well known characters involved in the Hastings Rarities Affair; details of porcelain figurines with sumptuously modelled surfaces telling of a pastoral idyll. The choice has been eclectic and very personal. The principle behind this project was to make a series of painted 'portraits', which work in their own individual right, that have a keen presence, but as a collection, seem to talk to each other across time.

Callender Girl, Makkovik, Canada, oil on board, 20 x 15cm, 2018. Photo credit: Tim Nathan



Collections & Collaborations

Catherine Harvey

*Catherine is Keeper of
Art & World Cultures,
Hastings Museum & Art Gallery*

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery has an incredibly diverse collection. In fact, amongst its 100,000 or so objects, it's hard to think of a collection area or object type that isn't included. Every period, from geological time, deepest prehistory, to the present is there, represented by artefacts or specimens from every continent.

Indeed, this was the objective of the many cultural philanthropists whose interests in education and society led to the growth of local municipal collections in the late nineteenth century across the country. Hastings was no exception when, in October 1889, a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of founding a Public Museum for the town. And, as a result, the Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association was formed in August of the following year. The committee drew on their own expertise and that of their wider circle of Association subscribers, as well as eminent curators, collectors and specialists to develop the first collections. The Public Museum opened on 16 August 1892 in rooms provided by the Hastings Corporation in the Brassey Institute, which was also home to a reference library and an art school. The building had been built by Lord Brassey and was a hub for literary and cultural discussions. This wide scope of museum collecting and programming has continued ever since.

Hastings has been a popular destination for artists since the late eighteenth century, when the Napoleonic Wars made travel on the continent more difficult and artists started to look for subjects closer to home. They found plenty to inspire them in the town's natural landscapes, beautiful quality of light, historical significance and

picturesque fishing quarter. These continue to be a draw as new generations of artists relocate to both Hastings and St Leonards, giving the town its vibrant cultural buzz.

Working with creative practitioners is nothing new for the museum, and such collaborations have much to offer both parties. At its simplest, this has been done through the almost continual exhibition of contemporary work, often leading to the acquisition of new works to the collection. The museum has also acted as commissioner – both for the collection, such as the topographical views of disappearing Hastings by Evacustes A Phipson (1914-20) and E Leslie Badham (1920s/30s), or to encourage both staff and audiences to see familiar objects and spaces in new and creative ways, such as the new poems written by John Agard, Grace Nichols and Imtiaz Dharker (2007), or the installation by Imran Channa (2017). Previous group exhibition projects have also explored the potential that objects offer in developing creative practice, most notably The Hastings Rarities Affair (2010) and Rooms For Ideas (2011).

What these collaborations between artists, objects and the museum has shown, and what is being explored again in *Collect*, is how the artist's eye can see the familiar through a new and alternative lens. They make surprising connections, intriguing juxtapositions and share all sorts of new ideas. It is true that every object has a story to tell, but also that they each have the potential for so many stories, both real and imagined. This is where working with artists proves both so challenging and inspiring, as it enriches the interaction with our collections for all of us involved with and visiting the museum.



Early museum displays at the Brasseley Institute

