Bringing It Together

Clare Phelan

Kathryn Desforges

Nigel Morris

Theresa Taylor

15 January – 19 March 2022

Unit 2, The Piazza, Huddersfield HD1 2RS

I had two important things before me; the one was the carrying on my Business and Shop; which was considerable, and in which was embark'd all my Effects in the World; and the other was the Preservation of my Life in so dismal a Calamity, as I saw apparently was coming upon the whole City; and which however great it was, my Fears perhaps as well as other Peoples, represented to be much greater than it could be.

Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*

2022 marks 300 years since the publication of Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. The novel is a fictionalised account by a survivor of the last great 'visitation' of plague in London in 1665. The narrator, who decides to remain in the city while others (with means) leave, provides a detailed description of life and death in the face of an epidemic, and there is a remarkable resonance and relevance to our own situation over the past couple of years.

This exhibition brings together four artists who have continued to make art - 'carrying on… (their) business' - in the shadow of Covid 19. The pandemic has put particular pressures on many lives and livelihoods. The threats to physical and mental health, of economic hardship and limitations on resources and workspaces have impacted on artists. Whilst this is not a display of artworks 'about' a pandemic, it emerges from within it.

The staging of this exhibition has been affected by circumstances around Covid. Conceived over two years ago, the project was shelved for twelve months because of restrictions last year, and its focus has changed. Artists have continued to make work, but the collaborations and discussions have been curtailed and socially distanced until now.

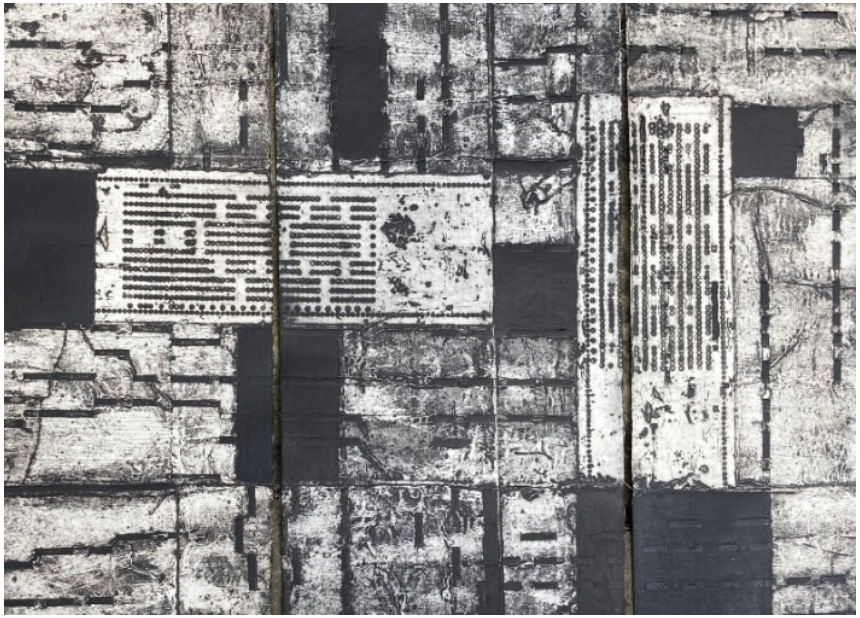
Many artists are accustomed to working in isolation, but most have the need to engage with others to share ideas, elicit feedback, and present the results of their endeavours to an audience.

Each of the printmakers in this exhibition has developed their practice over many years, pursuing areas of interest with rigorous investigation and experimentation, drawing on observations of the visible world filtered through subjective experience and imagination. Much of the work employs languages of abstraction, from geometric structures to gestural mark making, with the printmaking process key to the final production. There is a constant dialogue between the image (which might include elements of outmoded industrial technology, glimpsed in-between spaces of urban or natural landscape, or the symmetry of constructed shapes and lines) and the evolving processes of using ink, paper, plate, screen, roller, press, etc.

There are other threads of connection between these artists: reflections on experiences of time; feelings of anxiety and distance; of being in control or not in control; of continuing to research and develop ideas despite the pandemic or acknowledging its influencing presence and effect.

Art can offer a resistance of hope – perhaps even in times of 'so dismal a calamity'. In these challenging times this exhibition brings us together at a particular moment. The artworks now have the chance to converse which each other.

Clare Phelan



In the early weeks of the first lockdown, I felt unable to use familiar materials. I wrote the following during the summer of 2020:

'Black ink has been central to my practice for many years and at the beginning of lockdown I lost my emotional connection to it. My creative response to the pandemic has been to focus on the subtlety and sensitivity of blind embossing, so essentially, I have moved from black to white. I'm also using a process called chine collé which bonds a thinner paper to the main printmaking paper. I've used a small accent of colour which appears and disappears in the image in the same way as the blind embossing, depending on the light and shade that is cast across the surface of the finished print. This new body of work is called 'Evanescence' and references the loss, the fragility and uncertainty of the present time, the project also holds the quiet beauty of some of my experiences during this unique moment.'

As the year progressed, I was able to adapt and develop ongoing work 'Weave' and the Triptych piece in the exhibition were printed in my home studio during 2020/2021. In 2020 I bought a small very old exposure unit enabling me to continue exploring photo etching. The 'machine age' series shown here were also made at home.

Working primarily in the field of printmaking, Clare has developed an interest in mass produced found objects using them as her printmaking matrix. Influenced by the post-industrial landscapes of Northern England where she has lived all her life, her current practice utilises nineteenth and twentieth century coding technology artefacts such as textile jacquards, music box discs and IBM punch cards.

Clare explores these artefacts as carriers of narrative, the paper creases and the rusty damaged metal tell stories of obsolete technologies. They hold memories of their past, of their making and function. They also evoke memories of those who made and used them.

The traditional analogue printmaking processes she employs echo the labour inherent in the making of these materials whilst the binary language of the machine dances in rhythmic patterns through her work as a signifier of our digital age.

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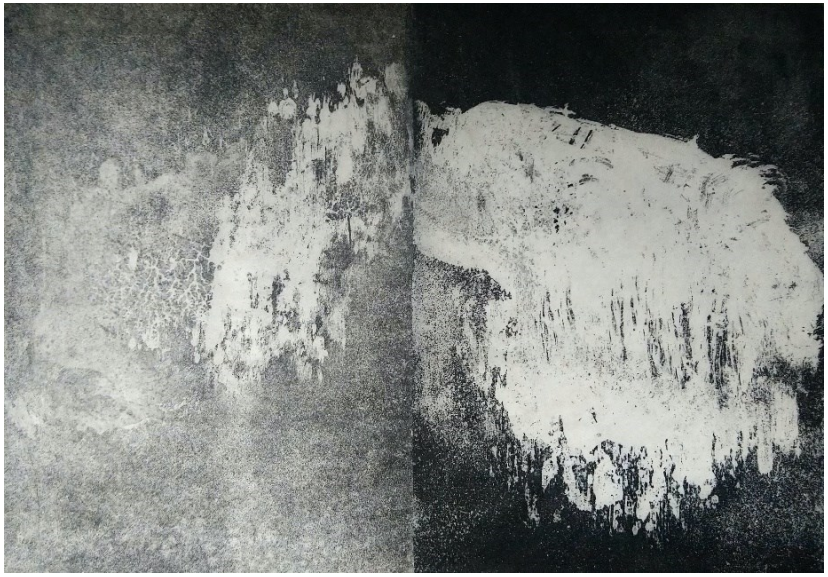
Kathryn Desforges



The pandemic didn't change what I made work about, but it did change the way I approached it. Suddenly I had time on my hands, and despite anxiety about what was happening in the world, I also felt lucky to feel safe in my own little studio bubble, experimenting and finding new, unfamiliar ways of using familiar processes.

I create work from an amalgamation of a collected archive of visual references. Containing, overflowing, spilling out, migrating - while all these ideas have been bubbling away under the surface for a while now, the pandemic has created an alternative frame of reference for the work.

Control, contain
The desire to master
To rein things in and to dictate;
Where a river should go
Where water should flow
Constantly, trying to keep the elements out
The drops, the ants, the moths, the wind, the rain;
Close your windows to it
Design the most elaborate structures – monuments to human endeavour
Create corridors, passageways.
Where only water can go, can see
Turn it off, turn it on, turn it up, turn it down
For our convenience
The dammed
Homes sunk, relics emerging slowly
The weight of water, finding the lowest point
Creeping through
The bedrock, the roots, the tangles;
The foundations
They meet at the surface, rough and smooth, cold and warm, caressing each other, always entirely separate.

Kathryn currently works from her studio in West Yorkshire, teaches printmaking classes at various UK venues, and is Print Studio Co-ordinator at West Yorkshire Print Workshop.

She is driven by her preoccupation with ordinary, overlooked and in-between places, making work as a direct, emotional response, or as a bringing-together of fragments of these places, exploring dissonance, tension, harmony and balance.

Her approach to creating work is fluid – sometimes urgent and spontaneous, sometimes thoughtful and considered - and always keeping the physical act of making at the core of her practice.

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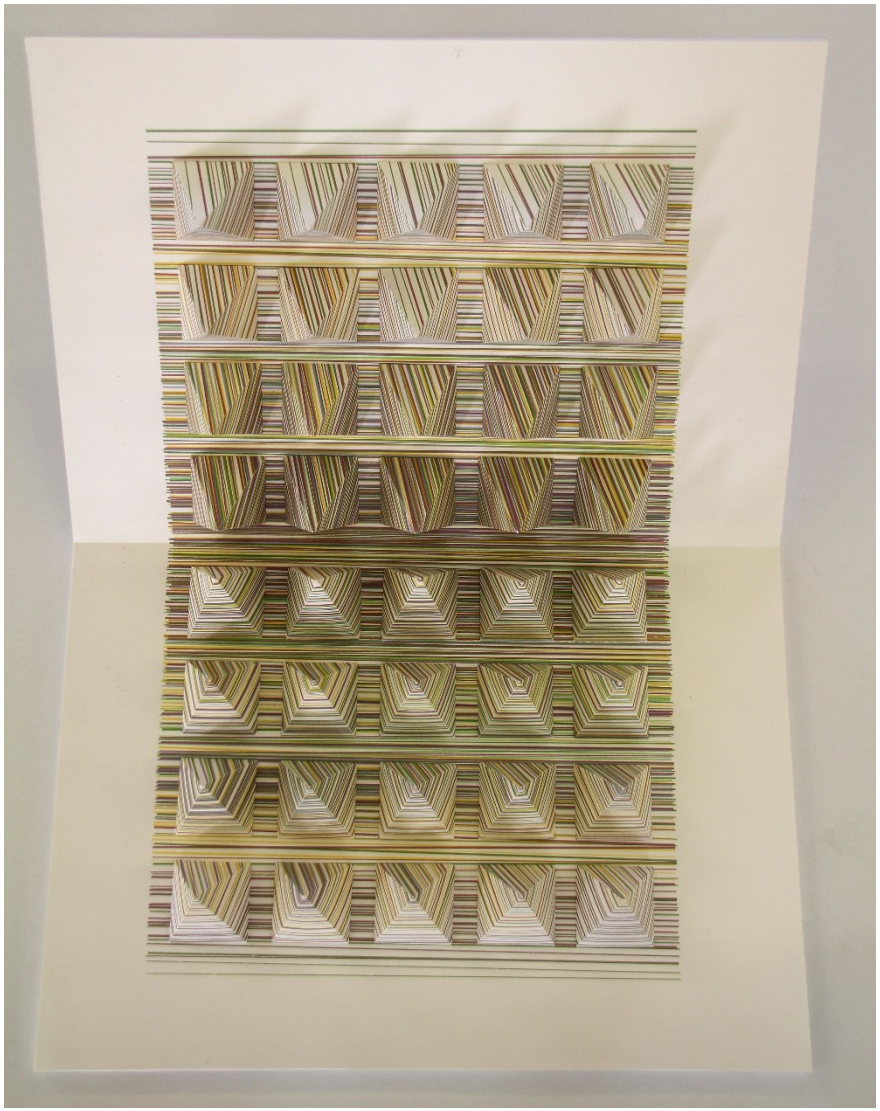
Nigel Morris



Nigel is a visual artist working in North Wales making paintings and prints. His work evolves from the perception of abstraction, symmetry, system, and organisation. While working with these parameters it is a continual challenge to break away from these configurations. The practice and process of making visual art is for Nigel an immersive act prompting questions, conclusions, and development generating more analysis of the same - it's an organic cycle of progression. Working in this way the product is never static, a question or idea is posed, and the practice engages this and work comes out of that equation. This means the practice works with a basic range of "tools" but the formula changes resulting in variables of the art made. In late 2020 the work has returned to the proposition of mark making and his own interpretation of this fundamental act. For Nigel the primary source of the mark is line, using the "tools" perceived in the practice a re-examination of the nucleus of making art is taking place.

We are all influenced by personal experiences and for the past 6 years Nigel's role as facilitator at Regional Print moved the practice toward printmaking, the experience of teaching printmaking allowed for experimentation with many techniques, the work currently is dictated by the relief technique and an examination of the print as a framed artifact.

During the covid lockdowns Nigel has continued to make work, the nature of his method of working can be self-indulgent but research plays an influential part of the practice, using online resources like YouTube, Vimeo and Instagram resulted in the Regional Print Centres own YouTube channel, by studying videos on filming and editing as well as other printmakers channels resulted in a fresh examination of the creative process.

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Theresa Taylor

My usual work focuses on the human experience of time passing and the incessant flux of being alive. Although abstract I take my lead from human experiences and also the natural world which can capture some of these themes.

I have selected pieces for this exhibition from a large body of work that I have made over the past 2 years. I wanted to share the different feelings and experiences at various times, whilst navigating this strange period of time during the pandemic. My usual style of making work has remained (a circular dance of the process leading the materials and the materials leading the process) -although the emotionality and the need to make the work has been significantly heightened.

Some pieces in the exhibition are about wished for experiences and others more about the ambivalence and fear of the reality.

I think also it may be significant that I have been strongly drawn to the process of cutting up prints and reforming them as collages, making something reassuringly new and under my control, at least temporarily!

Theresa Taylor is a contemporary artist whose primary medium is printmaking. She is based in north-west Lancashire and works out of two studios, one at her home on the edge of the fells and a second studio called 'Villages Studios' near the coastline. She is also an artist member of Artlab Contemporary Print Studios, University of Central Lancashire.

Her use of printmaking has an experimental stance, she incorporates other materials at times, working in 3-D and has a national and an international exhibition profile. She has a BA hons and MA in Fine Art and professional trainings in art therapy and also psychotherapy.

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Established in 1984, West Yorkshire Print Workshop is based in an old Victorian School in Mirfield. From the beginning our aim was to nurture artists through the provision of studio space, print facilities, courses, and exhibitions: and we continue to do so. In recognition of the quality of our print provision, WYPW is supported by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation. We are also home to the national Flourish Award for Excellence in Printmaking which showcases work by artists from across the UK.

Our members and course participants engage with a variety of traditional printmaking activities such as lino cut, etching and screen printing. Professionals and amateurs, beginners and accomplished artists can use the equipment, resources and expertise to find their own areas of interest and journey of discovery.

Unit 2 in the Piazza shopping centre in Huddersfield has provided an additional space for us to create new exhibitions and share innovative and creative printmaking with the public. We are grateful to the support of Kirklees Council in this endeavour through its Temporary Contemporary project.

We are grateful to the artists Clare, Kate, Nigel and Theresa for their time, commitment, and patience in bringing this exhibition together.

For more information go to www.wypw.org

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