



[With Love From Gilbert and George](#)

*A Review of Scapegoating by Gilbert & George Exhibition at The Mac in Belfast
26 January – 22 April 2018.*

I confess I was unsure as to what to make of the controversialist artists Gilbert & George before visiting the Exhibition. Over the years I had seen half a dozen of their works individually in different galleries and I found them interesting and challenging, but I don't think I really *got* them.

What hits you first is the sheer scale of many of the artworks. Their size is quite overwhelming and they use a stark colour palette of blacks, reds and whites, echoing the De Stijl movement of the Netherlands in the last century. The effect is confrontational, deliberately so in fact. Then the text, some scrawled as graffiti, in that virulent red, contains words, phrases and epithets which are often aggressive, challenging, rude and in some cases, offensive.

Gilbert & George are offended by religion; they are ardent secularists and committed humanists who, because of their homosexuality, were cast in the role of outsiders and excluded. Instead of simply accepting the straitjacket of narrow-minded judgmentalism they used it as they used themselves – as the basis of their art, to provoke, to challenge, to question the very nature of what opposed them. Religion tried – and today still tries – to paint them as *scapegoats* for all the ills of the society that we endure. In this exhibition they have turned that on its head and have responded by challenging religious dogma.

They have taken the things they find on their doorstep in the East End of London; from the images of women in Whitechapel clad in the traditionalist black burka to the disposed-of metal cartridges of nitrous oxide (known as *laughing gas* or *hippy crack*) scattered in the gutters or littering back gardens. These look like bullet-casings, or eerily like the German bombs that used to fall on London during the Blitz.

The figures of the burka-clad women seem anachronistic, alien and even demonic – for instance in *Vallance Road*. They are castigated by the political Right as being *foreign* and *un-British* because they hold onto their religious and cultural identity in such a visible way, that threatens this ideological group, because of the assertive demonstration of their *otherness* while on the Left they are seen as *victims* of an illiberal, misogynistic and backward-

looking patriarchal culture; yet many devout Muslim women appear to reject any emancipatory aspiration. To both groups the burka-clad women are an all-too-convenient scapegoat and are targeted as such, cast as the contemporary *bogeymen*.

Gilbert & George show they feel an empathy towards them and the often ugly situation they find themselves in.

The compositions also include their own self-images, a *leitmotif* running through all their art, standing square-on, be-suited and in sentry formation; sometimes no more than a transfer – a ghost-image, or dissected into ribbons and strips, or even disarticulated into their component parts.

Experiencing these images in such a visceral way, in huge cathedral chambers, where they bear down on the awestruck viewer from the white-washed walls, I found myself tremendously moved.

This is how Gilbert & George would wish it. They are contemptuous of what they see as the cold, sterile *art for art's sake* of the work of many of their peers, produced with a sneer at the ordinary man and woman in the street. They are fully engaged with the world on their doorstep: their love of London, Britain, and the people – comes blazing through their images.

In particular, there is a film from 1980 entitled *The World of Gilbert & George* which is shown on a loop. You can join it at any time because it is a series of images, commentaries, observations, poetry and dialogues. Highlights for me were the middle-aged drunk, ruminating on his life; a naked, semi-erect, young man, defiantly smoking a cigarette, thoughts and emotions playing across his face, as if it was a movie on a cinema screen; and the artists themselves dancing to *Bend It* by Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich.

I think what struck me in particular, was that when you entered the lift to the Galleries, there was a transfer-printed message from the artists – *With Love from Gilbert & George*; and this was what this Exhibition was for me – a secular humanist love-letter to humanity itself from the artists; and it was beautiful.

John Llewellyn James

Featured Image: Belfast Telegraph [January 22nd](#)



Painting with a Camera

Richard Pierce has always been a painter. Born into an old Enniskillen family of builders, he was encouraged in the Arts throughout his childhood. He first took up photography when he was 16, recording family and friends, buildings and landscapes. It was his father's wish that he become an architect, being a more secure profession than that of an artist, but he continued to paint throughout his long and successful practice. His paintings are naturalistic, mainly landscapes, but with a confident, at times Fauvist use of colour and unusual composition, and his photographs soon became equally adventurous. When he lived in New York during the 1960s and 1970s he visited many galleries and museums and became fascinated by Abstract Expressionism, yet never adopted it as his personal style of painting, fearing that it might be seen simply as an affectation.

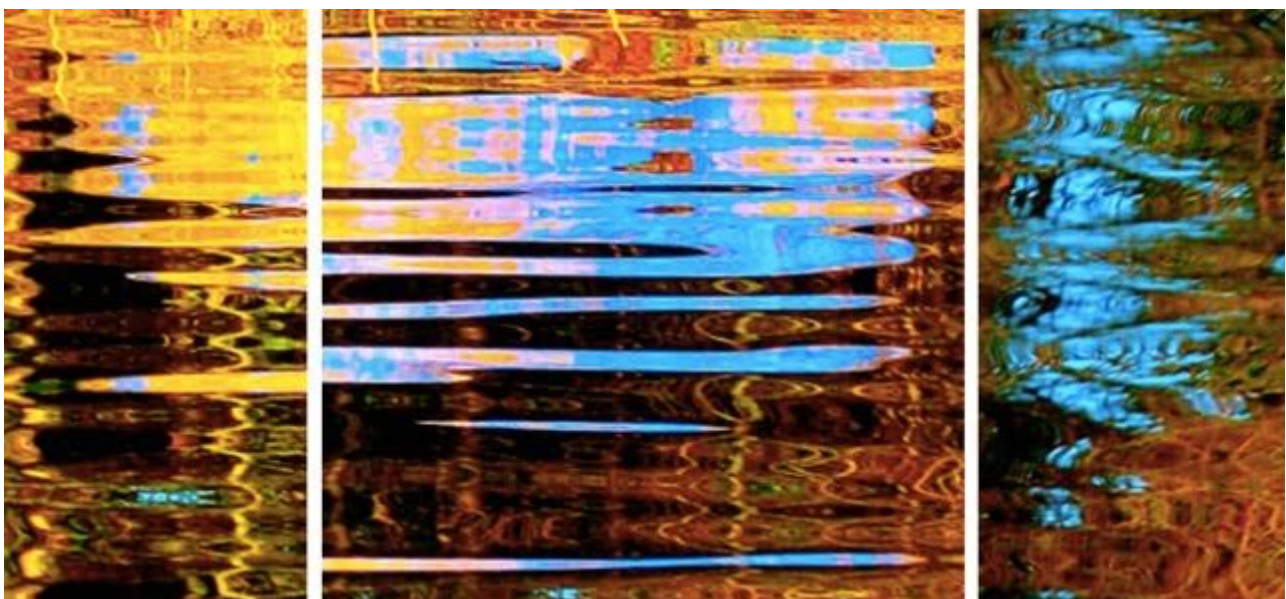
But his taste in paintings continued to influence his photography (he was never consciously influenced by the work of other photographers) and aroused the admiration of friends such as Hellen Lanigan Wood, then curator of the County Museum. Now, nearing 75, he finds himself with a second career that *seems much more natural and makes me happier than I have ever been in my life.*

His current exhibition in the [Hambly and Hambly](#) gallery at Dunbar House runs to the 21st of April features three distinct styles:

In the passageway of this Georgian basement (still featuring the bells once used to summon servants) are what he calls his *woodcuts with a camera*. These are views of a busy square in Helsinki in rain and darkness and under security lights, taken with a long exposure. The richly blurred and strongly monochrome result was enhanced by the creamy art paper and velvety ink.



One room is dedicated to surreptitious portraits of people who caught his eye, taken with a telephoto lens. They include beggars, drug dealers, and devotees of Art. He has an instinct for the bizarre and slightly grotesque. In 2016 he sent some to Noordbrabants Museum in Den Bosch which was celebrating the [500th](#) anniversary of Hieronymus Bosch, and was delighted to learn that they had been hung in the staff room.



see the world through a camera, he says, but with a painter's eye. This is seen most clearly in the abstract triptychs that make up the bulk of the exhibition, where colours and shapes defy ready interpretation. The effect

comes not from any darkroom trickery, but simply from knowing where to look; at the detail of a rusty tin roof in the featured image or, above, not directly at a blue boat but at its reflection in the water. The triptych form came about by accident when one client ordered a print to large to be carried into his house in one piece, but it has developed into a format of its own, where three different parts of the same original are in conversation with each other.

The results are all the work of one discerning and well-educated eye directing the camera at what is otherwise disregarded, yet they are reminiscent of a wide range of artists: from Miro, to Jack Yeats, to Hopper, to Bacon, to Richter.

You don't believe me? Go and see.

Jenny Brien

[Illustrating and Writing](#)



I grew up on the east coast of Scotland, born to Irish parents. My earliest memories all revolve around drawing, encouraged by a mother who was also an artist. For me, drawing and painting are critical forms of communication – and meditation.

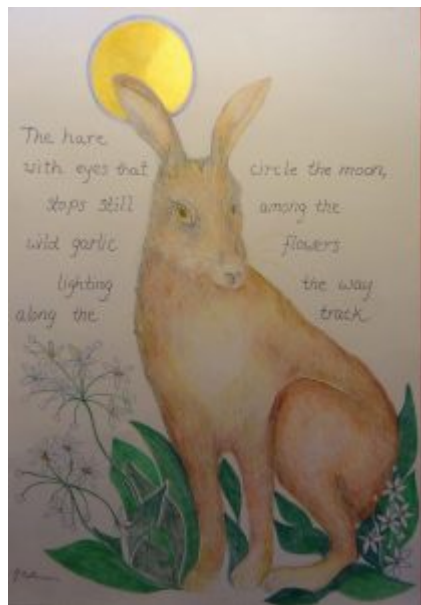
I trained in Design at Cardiff Art College in the early seventies and then went on to train as a teacher for primary age children, with art as my specialist subject. My creativity – when the pressure of work allowed – has evolved in many different ways since that time through different stimuli, professions and occupations: teaching art to children and young people of primary and secondary age, adults with severe and profound learning disabilities; teaching gardening to children; working in community and domestic gardens and working around twenty years as a Social Worker. In

addition, I worked as a library assistant for four years in the early eighties.

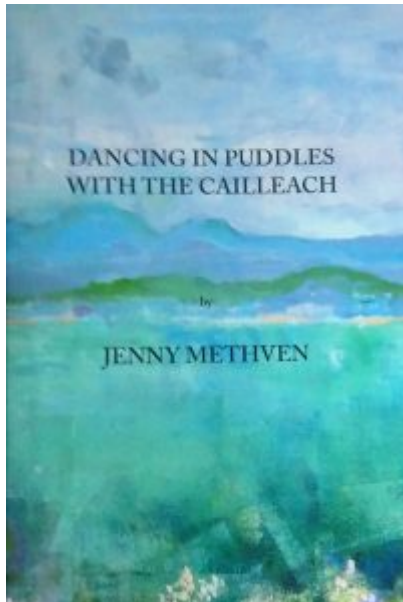
Now retired, I have returned to my first love – drawing and painting. I am now a full-time artist who also writes.

Much of my artwork and writing is based on themes relating to nature, my connection to it and to the animal world. In the past, I used words purely in note form to guide me in painting, but it was just shorthand for my eyes only. Over the years I have let the words expand into poems. Other work has begun purely as a series of visual images without words; the words come later.

It can be difficult to explain why some ideas become poems or other pieces of writing, while others are so visual they become paintings or drawings. I just know what is right for me: I see some experiences as strong visual images suited to artwork only and others demand the written word.



The *Moon Hare* poem was one of my poems accepted for Poetry NI's *Panning for Poems*, issue 4, Jan 2016. I initially created it as a poem on its own but later the image of the hare came to me and the two were combined.



My book – the collection of poems, *Dancing in Puddles with the Cailleach* – is illustrated with my own paintings and drawings.

I have created 'glyphs' (small black images – above) for chapter headings and illustrated maps for my husband's historical novel, *The Hare's Vision*. The glyphs are a means of adding interest and highlighting a general theme of the chapter; the maps provided detail of the journeys in the story.

I love books. I spent a year working in a bookshop and four years in a library. It was close to being a chocoholic in a chocolate factory. I have grown interested in the book as an art form in itself, much like the early books created by Medieval scribes.

At the moment I have several projects underway. One is creating illustrations for a children's book I am writing. I began this when I was still teaching. I am also using linocuts mixed with other media to create small books to illustrate particular poems I have written.



Jenny Methven

Fermanagh Film Club

In January 2018 Fermanagh Film Club celebrated its 10th anniversary with a programme of Fun, Film and Music in the Ardhoven Theatre, Enniskillen.

Short Films by Moving Image students from Erne Integrated, Enniskillen Royal Grammar and the South West College were screened in competition during the afternoon, followed by Irish Award Winning Shorts. The 'Big Film' was the Oscar-nominated *The Florida Project* which would go on to great acclaim. You saw it first in Fermanagh Film Club!

It was a long way from that first meeting in 2008. A small announcement in the local press invited anyone interested in forming a Film Club to a meeting in the Railway Hotel. Five people attended. Who could have imagined then the thriving club it would become?

The club is affiliated with Access Cinema and is supported by BFI, Film Hub NI and the Arts Council. The declared aim of Fermanagh Film Club is to bring a varied programme of art house films to as wide an audience as possible. With that in mind, this year's films included the Palestinian/Israeli film *In Between*, which looked at the challenges faced by young Arab-Israeli women living an independent life in Tel-Aviv who must negotiate being 'in between' cultures and traditions; and an Irish film *The Drummer & the Keeper* which explored the unlikely friendship between a chaotic young rock drummer and a young man with Asperger's Syndrome.

All films are shown in their original language with English subtitles. This year's languages included: Arabic, Danish, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Swedish and Russian. The Club has participated in the FLive festival and local community celebrations by showing films of special interest in addition to their seasonal programme. Vintage Hammer Horror films in the old Regal Cinema last Halloween, with the audience encouraged to come along in fancy dress, proved a big hit!

The club runs two seasons; from September to December and from January to April, with six films per season, but with funding from BFI on the theme of Diversity, we screened an additional film on Tuesday 10th April, the Oscar-nominated *Call Me by My Name*.

Fermanagh Film Club is open to everyone, and while new members are always welcome, you don't have to be a member to come to a film. You can buy a ticket at the door on the night.

Venue: Fermanagh House.

Time 8:00pm

Membership £24 (Student Membership £10).

Non-members £5 on the night. (Students £3 on the night).

The programme for 2018/19 will be on the website:
www.fermanaghfilmclub.com

Christina Campbell



[Paddy O'Killus](#)

I would not be surprised if you did not believe there is a connection with fireplaces in Enniskillen's Castle Coole, and the largest naked statue in London. Yet, in truth, I have informed knowledge of the aforementioned artefacts. Forgive this shameless plug: I wrote a tour of Castle Coole in verse, some copies of which may still be bought in *Collage Collective* in the Buttermarket or in *The Stables* at Castle Coole. As a House Guide in the years 1997-2000 I often described the tiny detailed artistic features exquisitely carved by Richard Westmacott in the four marble fireplaces positioned in each of the House's ground floor rooms. I would conclude: *Ladies & Gentleman, make sure if you are visiting London to view his remarkable statue at the Wellington Memorial in Park Lane. Westmacott was truly a master of the monumental as well as the miniature.*

This was London's first public nude sculpture since antiquity, based on an original on the Quirinal Hill in Rome thought to have been by the Greek sculptor Phidias. The Monument is dedicated to Duke of Wellington and is sited near Hyde Park Corner. It depicts the Greek hero Achilles in blackened bronze. The statue itself is 18 feet tall and stands on a granite plinth of equal height. The inscription reads:

To Arthur Duke of Wellington
and his brave companions in arms
this statue of Achilles
cast from cannon taken in the victories
of Salamanca, Vittoria, Toulouse, and Waterloo
is inscribed
by their country-women

The 'country-women,' many of whom had lost brothers, sons and lovers in the Napoleonic Wars, had subscribed a total of £10,000, a massive sum in those days. The subscribers had been asked to decide whether the colossal figure 'should preserve its antique nudity or be garnished with a fig-leaf' (a

majority voted for the leaf).

The statue weighed well over thirty tons, according to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the time. It used the metal of twelve large cannons, and half as much again besides, covering a core of plaster and cow dung. Brought to the site on the seventh anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo it proved too massive for the gate, and so a wall had to be broken down to admit *this trophy of a Victor more glorious than ever threw lustre on the resplendent annals of immortal Greece*.

The Monument did not receive unanimous approval. Quickly dubbed 'the Ladies' Statue', it was the subject of a famous cartoon by George Cruikshank, reproduced below, in which it wears a pair of the Duke's famous boots. The *Paddy O'Killus* title is a jibe at his Irish birthplace, something about which he was particularly sensitive. *Being born in a stable, he once said, does not make you a donkey*.



While training as a bus borne commentator/guide with London's Big Bus Company in 1995, the principal instructor, over a drink in *The Tipperary Pub*, related to me another version of the unveiling. (For those who don't know, when English WW1 soldiers sang 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' they were not singing of the Irish County but the famous pub in London's Fleet Street) According to him, the statue was anatomically correct, and the fig leaf affixed later in the offending part of the monument's anatomy. This proved to be an attraction to the students of Oxford and Cambridge who regularly ran contests to remove the fig leaf and carry it off to whatever college as a

trophy until, eventually, a large scallop shell was welded in place and preserves Achilles' modesty to this day.

Tony Brady



Hunters in the Snow – A Perspective

Three hunters trudge wearily homewards through the snow: it is by far the most popular non-religious Christmas card image scene, and with good reason. Pieter Breugel the Elder painted it in 1565, yet we feel it is a world we can understand. Not long ago, men very like these hunted on Boxing Day, and wood was gathered for the fire, and the winter was cold enough to safely play on frozen ponds. You could easily imagine a local artist fifty or so years ago, painting such a scene from life or memory.

Despite the bitter cold and the hunters' evident lack of success, it seems a place well cared for and worth living in. No wonder the painting features as a symbol of Earth in the Science Fiction movie [Solaris](#)

But appearances can be deceiving. Breugel was no provincial; he was a famous and well-travelled artist. This is not some rural backwater, but the outskirts of Antwerp, then the richest city in Europe. The painting was one of six depicting the changing year, painted for Nicolaes Jongelinck, a wealthy merchant banker of that city. It is a traditional theme, once common in illuminated manuscripts, but done painted for a new market, to be displayed in a suburban villa. In many ways, this picture marks the start of an era that we are now leaving. Phillip II of Spain was the new ruler of Antwerp, more profitable to him than all his possessions in the Americas. In England, his wife Mary Tudor was burning Cramer at the stake and preparing the first Plantation of Ireland.

The strong diagonal lines of trees and houses draw your eye over the busy village below to the fantastical mountains in the distance. There are no such mountains near Antwerp; they are a memory of the Swiss Alps through which Breugel passed on his way to Rome twelve years before. There Michaelangelo and Raphael were painting, but his work is very different from theirs. Some parts seem still medieval in their uniformity of scale for houses and trees, but he has succeeded better than them in conjuring up the overall shape of the landscape and its space. The winter of 1556 was the harshest in living

memory, near the start of what is now called the Little Ice Age. You can almost feel the cold.

Look again. In perspective, the horizon is always at the observer's eye level, so we are looking down on the hunters as if from the upstairs window of a house across the way from the inn they have just passed. The family outside has lit a fire to take the bristles of a pig they have just killed or are about to kill. The man who is carrying out the table on which it will be scraped is the only person in the whole painting whose face we can clearly see. He looks across at the hunters, but plainly no greeting has passed between them. Your eye is drawn to the mountains, and then back to the left. Behind the black trees, on a frozen yellow river, lies Antwerp.

The hunters are not going there, or to the mountains; otherwise, they would have taken the road on the other side of the inn. They can only be going one place; zigzagging down the steep slope in front of them, perhaps to the house across the bridge from the mill, where no fire is lit. Is the old woman carrying a bundle of sticks across the bridge going to prepare a fire for them? Perhaps. The pollarded trees show the importance of firewood, and on the road a full cart of wood is headed away, probably to light the fires of Antwerp. Yet the family up at the inn are burning straw, and what is the little man at the bottom right of the picture doing?

Look closer. All is not well in this seeming idyll. Axe marks on the tree next to the lead hunter and a bird trap set at the last house in the ridge show how well Breugel knows that every bit of this land is exploited. The nearest hunter bends to examine a track in the snow, but it is only that of a hopping crow. The pig-killers have built their fire very close to the inn. If you did not know what was happening, you would almost think they were looting it. The broken sign shows that it is dedicated to Saint Hubert – the patron saint of hunters. Strangest of all – look at the house in the middle distance, between the church and the bridge. Its chimney is clearly on fire. Someone has climbed on the roof and thrown a bucket of water to try to douse it.

What does it all mean? We can only guess how much of that detail was painted expressly for Jongelinck. As to what it meant to Breugel – that is another matter.

There is only one thing more to say: the year after Breugel finished this painting, religious riots broke out in Antwerp, the prelude to a general revolt which led to Dutch independence and the sacking of the city by the Spanish, in 1576. Not so very different from the first Christmas after all.

Jenny Brien

For a more detailed image of the painting, see [Google Arts and Culture](#).

Collage Collective

If you wish to see a veritable cornucopia of creative art in all its variety locally, just take a dander to the *Collage Collective* at The Buttermarket in Enniskillen. Actually, don't wish – just will yourself to go and look. On sale there most days of the week is the work of a range of local artists and artisans.

The project began in May 2015 and was situated initially in Nugent's Entry, just off Church Street, in the town centre. The steering group that led to its foundation included Genevieve Murphy, her husband Jon, Jill Stronge, Tailie Maur, Wayne Hardman, his wife Louise, Jill Mullen and others... They worked together under the auspices of *The Hub* based in The Clinton Centre, from where they obtained the seeding money to hire exhibition, office and meeting venue premises.

Within six months an opportunity presented itself for more suitable premises in the Buttermarket, and Collage Collective has grafted smoothly onto a traditional range of studios, ateliers and an adjoining coffee house. Merchandise on sale embraces textiles, photography, jewellery, pottery, papier-mâché figures, designer clothes and decorative pieces where taste originality and refinement is the appeal to customers.

From the outset of Collage Collective I have participated as an active supporter, participant and purchaser of items suitable for wedding presents and gifts for specific occasions. From time to time I have staffed the payment point and dealt directly with customer's enquiries. Nowadays few people ask directions from a policeman, but many passers-by call in to ask guidance to local touristic points of interest. There is no 'hard sell' business approach; the continuous emphasis is on attractive display and projecting a welcoming, comfortable retail environment.



For a monthly stipend of £50.00 to the Collective I maintain a niche for the display of books by local writers. I call it *Tobias-books*. By calling myself a promoter, rather than a seller, I avoid the

attentions of the Inland Revenue. Once a month, I am informed of what titles have been sold and the income is passed to the author. There is no charge to the exhibitor. Shall I reveal a personal secret? I fancy myself as a kind of modest Guggenheim/Saatchi. Scratch me and you will find inscribed skin deep: 'Aspiring Art Patron'.

I appeal to all who read this contribution to Corncrake, please do seriously consider offering some – once a month – dedicated time in Collage Collective as a sales assistant, meet and greeter.

Go On... You can do it...

I do: despite all the pressures that daily crowd in on me. If you (or a young person you know of) are looking to gain retail experience you will find highly satisfactory – though unpaid – employment.

Tony Brady

Fox Power!



The she-fox

*Walking in the nearly full moonlight
This evening
A shooting star falls
Into my mouth*

*A vixen screams
across the navy blue of the
night*

Venus slow dances with Orion

*And in an instant
the world is put to right*

Recently when Theresa May informed us that she would look again at the Fox Hunting Ban in England with a view to lifting it, I found this indicative of the entire Tory project: the cruelty involved in tearing apart a beautiful innocent defenceless wild animal, a beautiful wild creature which speaks of wildness and wilderness – is symbolic of the cold-heartedness and callousness at the core of Toryism, and Theresa Mayism. This painting I hope conveys some of that wildness and wilderness and fighting spirit too which is so essential for us to maintain our wholeness and sanity in this increasingly mad Alt-Right world. This fox will not give in easily. He and or She will be a force to be reckoned with!

The accompanying poem says it all for me.

Kathy May



[A Star Wars Story](#)

A long time ago – not in a galaxy far, far away, but right here on Earth – a little boy stared up in wonder at the big screen at the incredible story that George Lucas put up there: *Star Wars*. In hindsight, one can perhaps see some of the cracks in that original story, but for that little boy it offered the belief that there is something greater than the individual self – something that even death cannot defeat – and that anyone, no matter how low and base their origins, can aspire to greatness. That was a powerful message that he could not yet articulate, but it inspired him nonetheless.

This belief strengthened with the second and third films released, despite the Ewoks – one of Lucas' commercial indulgences. It survived the introduction of Jar Jar Binks in the second trilogy, the most risible of all creations, because the films started to explore more of the background of that original political philosophy and to pose important moral questions.

I was sceptical when a third trilogy was launched with the portentous title, *The Force Awakens*. That film did tend to trip itself up with the amount of self-referencing that went on. It was trying to appeal to two separate generations and I felt it suffered because of that. Maybe it was time for my

generation of original Star Wars fans to step aside, our battle done, to leave Star Wars for the younger generation.

I did go to see the spin-off *Rogue One* purely out of curiosity; how did the Rebels get those vital blueprints? The film brought in an entirely new set of characters that fitted seamlessly into the Lucas universe and – more importantly – it brought back the unifying political philosophy and placed it centre stage.

It was also a character-led story; despite the explosions, laser-fire and other special effects. Its characters were not born to greatness – far from it – but they became great. The awesome personal sacrifices they made displayed their importance; yet in the original Star Wars film they were only referenced, namelessly, in a single line. The story was beautifully and artfully told, the tension was maintained, even though you knew they would succeed in the end. History is littered with such ‘hidden figures.’

My enthusiasm for the franchise lifted by *Rogue One*, I eagerly awaited the release of *The Last Jedi*.

I could talk about the amazing set-pieces, the balletic fight-sequences, both human and machine, the nice moments of humour and some more of those self-references. However, what was most exciting was the development of the key characters introduced in the previous film. Through their individual journeys of self-discovery, in the context of some truly momentous challenges, they face difficult choices, on which, perhaps, the fate of the universe rests. It is not so much what they get right, but what they get wrong and yet, their failures are crucial in their own personal development and in the fates of others. (It is hard here to avoid slipping into Yoda-speech. Try I must.)

I came away from the film, my head whirling with the ideas presented before me – the moral conundrums that got my synapses spinning. What choices would I have made? I don't have the answers to many of the questions, but that is what makes it even more exciting. I look forward to the next instalment with bated breath.

Such stories have the power to move one emotionally and to fill an eager mind with inspiring ideas. Of course, not everyone will be so touched by one single story, they need other stories, told in a different fashion, to effect change in them. Through our literature, our art, our human endeavour and through the silver screen, these stories will continue to be told.

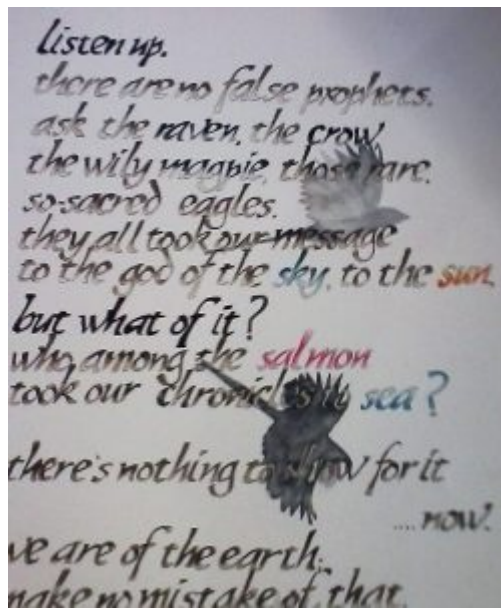
The little boy who looked up at the screen with wonder, all those years ago, became the man who still looks up at the screen with wonder and probably, always will.

May the Force be with you.

John Llewellyn James

Image: Time Inc. U.K.

Cirque des Oiseaux: Artists & Augurs



Are Artists Augurs? asks the exhibition which opened in the *Higher Bridges Gallery* on the 7th of April and runs to the 29th. *Cirque des Oiseaux* is French for *Circus of Birds* or rather the circling of birds in flight, something we notice particularly at this time of year as new migrants begin to arrive.

Just as we look for signs of Spring, the Augurs of Ancient Rome used to interpret the will of the Gods through observing the flight and the calls of birds. The association of birds and poets is even older than that; it goes right back to the origins of writing itself. According to legend, Palamedes invented eleven letters of the Greek alphabet from the shapes that migrating cranes make in flight.

The exhibition is based around the closely-observed bird poems of Enniskillen-born poet Maria McManus, two of which – [Peregrinations](#) and [Corncrakes](#) are reproduced with permission elsewhere in this issue. They are re-interpreted and complemented through the work of eight other artists in photographs, paintings, sound, video, and sculpture. This gives the whole a pleasing unity, and a diversity that is not normally seen in one-person shows. The works speak to each other, sometimes using the same words and images, but none dominates. There is no predetermined path through, an effect heightened by excellent exhibition notes which, though they number each piece sequentially and map them clearly, do not list them in numerical order but by artist.

The connection with augury is perhaps most plainly seen in the work of Helen Sharp. What at first sight appeared to be silhouettes of birds in flight *The Jackdaws of the Newtown Butler Spar* are seen on closer inspection as shapes pierced in white cloth – literal rendings of the veil. The same image is used on a set of 'Oracle Cards' laid out like a Tarot reading on a table in the middle of the room.

Others are more oblique. Catherine Gaston's mysterious oil paintings contain no birds at all (one is even titled *No Birds Here, Winter, Lough Erne*) except for the one titled *Murmuration for Maria*. Bernarde Lynn's photographs *Caged Birds of Hong Kong 1-6* and *People of Hong Kong* invite comparisons between the brightly coloured soft-focus close-up of the birds and the invisible people – represented by several floors of the facade of a massive block of flats – as neat and regular as a repeating pattern, yet no two exactly alike.

Some of the poems are presented in handwritten form. *Emigrés* is written in a tiny book perched on a swallow's nest and protected by a bell jar, *Corncrakes* on an accordion-fold set upright so that only a few lines are visible from any one position. It is accompanied by Simon Walters sound installation in which two recordings of the poem weave together in a sort of fugue, reflecting the tenuous lives of the birds themselves.

Others are meant to be handled (white gloves are provided) most notably Irene Uhlemann's massive handmade book *In Principio Erat Verbum* (In the Beginning was the Word) which with its illustrated excerpts stands somewhat in the tradition of the *Book of Kells* and evokes some of its reverence. *Home* is a collage of handwritten letters and poems contained within a folded map, as if remembering the journeys for which it was consulted, and *Peregrinations* is typewritten on luggage labels, one per line – a device that McManus also uses in her [Label Lit](#) project.

It is strange and somewhat delightful to experience poetry in such an indirect fashion, but does that mean that poets and artists are akin to augurs? Perhaps. As with all forms of divination, augurs relied on observations that were somewhat predictable (with a good knowledge of natural history you know what to expect expect from birds)

but never entirely so. They wove a story out of commonplace and overlooked details, always keeping a eye open for the extraordinary moments that give them special significance.

And so do these artists: go see for yourselves.

The Artists:

[Maria McManus](#) [Tom Hughes](#) [Pearl Kinnear](#)

[Helen Sharp](#) [Simon Waters](#) [Irene Uhlemann](#)

[Bernarde Lynn](#) [Catherine Gaston](#) [Rosie McGurran](#)