

## Citizen

There's a popular idea that art lives in a state of continuous revolution, with each new generation eschewing the past and its traditions in a headlong chase for novelty. It's an approach that leads to the predictable, cyclical cries that painting is dead. In this eclectic and wide-ranging collection of work a disparate group of 24 artists show that it's alive and well and that there are new approaches to the fundamental skills of drawing and painting emerging all the time.

Here's a show where artists working in a contemporary vein are not only happy to embrace traditional materials but instinctively draw on the traditions of the past. For instance, Freya Dooley's monumental life-sized charcoal drawings of figures are impressive and energetic. In places her solid rendering of the figure resembles Picasso, whilst the energy of her spidery lines harks back to Schiele. The subjects feel classical, mythological and epic and the drawing is gutsy and impassioned. Elys John, a printmaker, works with a repeated organic motif. It could be a leaf or petals. His images – whether moving or still – are made up of layers of the plant like forms clustered into basic shapes. In a video piece they grow and spread ominously like digital ivy feeding on some artificially generated fractal maths to form ordered, solid geometry.

Matt Skelley draws using small light sources in a darkened room over a long exposure photograph. The resulting birds' nests of fluid, light lines are the traces of time and movement. Paul Klee talked of "taking a line for a walk" but Skelley has taken his for a swirling, spinning dance. Mi-Young Choi, a recent graduate of Goldsmiths college, shows a series of glowering, almost Turner-esque skies. Each is largely empty apart from something man made, some containing the malevolent presence of a missile whilst some have the tiny, graceful canopy of a swooping paraglider. Empty skies on their own would be tricky to sustain but it's the comparative scale of the vast sky with the careful placement of the rocket or missile that animates the frame.

Geraint Evans seems fascinated with the landscape of destruction. His small monoprints and large paintings show swathes of cities reduced to rubble. Evans' work is trickier than it looks, asking us to disregard the politics and suffering connected with these events and to simply view the twisted buildings and charred rubble as sublime, eerie landscapes. It may be a step too far from some and sensitivities about such events, especially recent ones, will always bubble through to the surface. For me, the stars of the show were John Abell's staggering large-scale wood cut prints. These hark back unavoidably to the work of people like Emil Nolde or Hermann Scherer, German expressionists in the early 20th century. Abell's twisted, lithe and tortured figures make reference to biblical or literary themes. They're a real surprise. I haven't noticed many other crucifixion scenes in recent contemporary art. In his intricate and bold pieces he mixes motifs from sources as diverse as Hamlet or Pan's Labyrinth whilst in others he makes saintly icons of great masters St Vincent (Van Gogh) The Prophet and – almost unavoidably for a show that references so many modernist classics – Saint Pablo Picasso.

*Daryl Corner  
Western Mail*

tactileBOSCH (tB) rolled out the red carpet for the 1st May preview night of their drawing, painting and print show Citizen on the first bank holiday weekend of this month. The sprawling, artist-led space in Llandaff has become renowned for openings full of provocative performance art and installations where literally anything could happen. Once a year they decide to drop a dimension and put a call out for artists working in two dimensions to submit work for a show. Citizen is their annual painting, print and drawing showcase, and the naturally lit space they offer is not the traditional white-wall gallery venue many of the artists would have imagined when developing their work. Instead, the curators have explored how they can 'create a new and unique way to view each piece.'

tB explain why they chose to curate a show in these three mediums: 'Painting, Printmaking and Drawing has developed dramatically over the last century as artists continually redefine and reinterpret the three mediums, exercising new approaches to form and subject matter that in turn breeds fresh stylistic interpretation. This continued evolution has meant that these three age-old mediums are as relevant as ever, with there now existing almost as many aesthetic styles and conceptual approaches as there are practitioners.' The result of the call out is a neat, sparsely populated show of 23 artists who take a range of different styles and approaches to these three forms, and exhibits established international artists alongside emerging local talent. I'll pick out a few favourites for you:

Richard Monahan: the Swansea-based artist was the recipient of the Sir Leslie Joseph Young Artist Award in 2005 for his works combining drawing and painting. Now a PhD student at Swansea Metropolitan, he has submitted the large scale Wallpaper composition in pink, part of a wider body of work concerned with the nature of repetition, to the show. The piece continues earlier themes in the artist's work concerned with humanity and existential angst. Images of a variety of characters involved in a series of courtships repeat through the piece. Linking these scenes are lines from the final chapter of an 18th Century romantic novel. The artist explains that this work was made 'firstly to question our claims to a notion of civilisation. Secondly, to present the idea that nothing is guaranteed not to change.'

John Abell: This Cardiff young artist first came to my attention with his recent prolific solo show at Elysium Gallery (Take 1) at the tail-end of last year. Here he shows some of his dark and quirky prints exploring love, lust and 'the human condition' charged with 'a sense of ... fear, and death, in a sense of pessimism or even nihilism' along with a large pinch of gallows humour.

Jonathan Powell: A director of Swansea's Elysium Gallery, Jonathan is also currently studying towards and MA at Swansea Met. Also showing work as part of the grid57 show in Pontardawe, here he also offers a series of Heads, this time paintings in thick slicks of bright brush strokes. A comment on the dysfunctional species he feels humans have become. A definite One To Watch.

Freya Dooley: The Wales-based artist Freya Dooley's expressive life-size charcoal nudes, based in the same gallery room as Monahan's piece, impress. Dooley concerns herself with the physicality of the mark – the relationship between artist and object and the 'trace' of human touch.

Chris Evans: Currently studying Fine Art, through Performance, the artist grumps out at the news that the MAP (time-based/performance) is to be discontinued at UWIC from the end of this academic year by turning himself into a human paintbrush for the night's only art performance Jackson Bollocks. Suspended from the ceiling his hair made green paint spread across the floor.

*Suzie Wild*  
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It seems that drawing, painting and print are back on the agenda again. Artists' collective tactileBosch put out a call for artists working in two dimensions and the selection that forms Citizen certainly proves that there's plenty of mileage left in the traditional media.

Curated by Sam Aldridge, Andrew Cooper, Kim Fielding and Neil Jeffries, there's the usual eclectic mix of stuff, but the venue's nooks and crannies lend themselves to a range of work and nothing seems overcrowded, nor are there any jarring juxtapositions. True to form, tactileBOSCH made the opening on 01 May memorable and really did roll out the red carpet. And there was live music from the likes of techno duo Barry Hole's Hit List, offering up terrific renderings of 80s classics like Kraftwerk's Das Model on a multitude of synths and gizmos. Made me almost nostalgic for my youth.

As with any open call, new voices emerge and Citizen offers a chance to see the unfamiliar alongside those who have embedded themselves on the Welsh art scene. Jonathan Powell's bathetic heads and Richard Monahan's dysmorphic characters require a longer look. While Elys John's monochrome flowers, painstakingly rendered, bloom and grow to fill the screen: Computer rendering, but without the usual showing off. He also offers a slightly harder-to-see projection that's part dandelion seeds, part jellyfish, part heavenly bodies. Tucked under the roof, it's easy to miss it but worth looking up. Both films are hypnotic and, despite their hidden techno credentials, are beautiful in their organic simplicity. There's the full gamut of approaches here. Matt Skelley's Three Chairs, uses light to create an afterburn image that transforms the mundane into something magical. Martinez de Lecea's series of digitally tinkered with images are extremely powerful in their restrained use of technology, while Mi-Young Choi offers hyper-real skies with lone missiles cutting across the canvas, in sharp contrast to the dark canvasses of Steph Goodger's hellish painting's, based on Dante's Inferno. Similarly Sonja Benskin Mesher's jewel-like abstract landscapes contrast with Geraint Evan's apocalyptic urban scenes.

Of course it wouldn't be a tactileBosch exhibition without a performance. As he and his fellow students deal with the news that the MAP (time-based/performance) at UWIC will be no more from the end of this academic year (snuffed out with barely a murmur), Chris Evans decided to rebrand himself as a painter – literally. In his performance Jackson Bollocks, he suspended himself from the ceiling and used his head as a paintbrush.

There are 23 artists in this show and a blog can't do them justice, although the foursome of curators certainly seem to have done so.

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