

Far Away, But From Where...

This opening exhibition has been much inspired by the work *The Rings of Saturn* by W.G. Sebald (Max) 1944-2001 the writer, academic and philosopher who lived in Suffolk and worked for the University of East Anglia.

Sebald was German and moved to Britain in 1966 living firstly in Manchester and then moving to Suffolk in 1970. He wrote in German (his mother tongue) and his books were subsequently translated into English. However, the translation of *The Rings of Saturn* did not include the subtitle of the original work, that being “An English Pilgrimage”.

This exhibition has been curated as somewhat a pilgrimage of works around our native East Anglia. We have used Sebald’s book as an inspiration with threads running through which bind each of our featured artists.



Geoffrey Chatten RBA (b.1938) began painting with oils in the 1960s when he made an emotional connection to the landscapes surrounding him whilst working as a forester.

G. Chatten, “Waverley Mill”
(Left)

Lars Swane (1913-2002) also initially chose nature in preference to art taking a forester's degree, but soon his love of the interpretations of the reality of nature engulfed him. As the son of artists Sigurd Swane and Christine Swane, it was predictable that his upbringing was marked by art and an interest in nature. In Swane’s first works from the 1930s, there is a strict simplification of the motifs with an emphasis on composition and well-defined areas of colour. In the 1940s, a more coloristic emphasis on style emerged, with free compositions and broader brushwork.



Lars Swane, “Landscape”

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Lillias August RI (b.1955) began her career as a landscape artist but developed her passion for still -lives which she paints with the utmost precision and observation. Her works convey the intense and pleasing nature of the seemingly ordinary object, often displaying objects in rows which are reminiscent of tree lines on a far distant horizon in the landscape.

August works her paints rather ponderously, laying wash upon wash and building up the work slowly. The effect is often very still and sculptural unlike looser, more instant techniques. In the same way, Sebald's text tells of a seemingly aimless wandering which easily captures the feel of the landscape when in actuality his works are deceptively structured underneath.

Ed Cooper (b.1976) is influenced by the works of Edward Seago and his works are a narration of the East Anglian landscape in the same way as Sebald narrates the landscape in his book.

The Rings of Saturn has been described as a still-life painting in prose. He takes infinite care in the recording of tiny details. His historical facts are presented as memories as if remembering long since forgotten events, peoples and landscapes, not nostalgia but rather a capture in the same way that a landscape painting captures a memory and a moment in time, making events stop in space and time. Those who have read Sebald often respond with immense depth and passion to his prose which can be likened to the visual response, the intensity of gaze when one's eyes come to rest upon a painting which is arresting to us. An emotional connection is made between writer and reader, painter and viewer, as if one says to the other, "I feel this, do you share these emotional bonds with me?".



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Our exhibition is a narration of the English landscape in the geographical area surrounding our new home and gallery space. Having travelled extensively and been lucky enough to work with some of the worlds best works of art, I decided to come “home” to East Anglia. It was while I was engaged in the chaos unpacking my books in their new home that I was reminded of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) philosopher and cultural critic who wrote about his brooding whilst unpacking his library and “the disorder of crates that have been wrenched open, the air saturated with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper... volumes that are seeing daylight again after two years of darkness” and a mood which was “one of anticipation which these books arouse in a genuine collector.”

Benjamin like Sebald was a student at the University of Freiburg and Sebald was very much influenced by Benjamin’s style of documentary writing infused with melancholia. Our Contemporary artists have a passion for that which they are trying to share with the world and have a timeless quality...alongside these we present Modern pieces which may have gone unnoticed such as our wonderful watercolours by Webster, Penn, Orchard and Morre. We thrive on presenting works which have been “unfortunately forgotten by the market and which we think value reappraisal with contemporary eyes.



Mary Potter, “Figure By a Cottage”

The Mary Potter “Figure By a Cottage” described by her son Julian as “hovering, ghost-like, in shadow” evokes a wistful afternoon in a Suffolk garden. Potter moved to Aldeburgh in 1951 to The Red House and became close friends of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. Six years later, after the break-up of her marriage, Mary swapped houses with Britten and Pears, moving to Crag House on the sea-front but remaining close to both men.

Britten’s seminal work *Peter Grimes* is the retelling of a story (originally a poem by George Crabbe) of a fishing village filled with gossip and suspicion of outsiders. Perhaps, as a German, Sebald felt some of that otherness too in East Anglia even though he became of but not from the county.

As human beings, living on an island, we are never far from anywhere or each other. Our histories and communities are bound together seamlessly and artists respond to those silver unseen threads that bind rural communities and gently pull on pilgrims to return. We invite you to look with renewed interest and vigour as we present a visual pastoral philosophy.