

Critical Study

‘Graphic Design is the most universal of all the art. It is all around us explaining, decorating, identifying.’

Quentin Newark

(2007, p.6)

I am primarily an image maker; I have known this since a young age as I have always revelled in the process of arts and crafts. However, over the past few years I believe I have managed to mould my skills into a more defined style of illustration. I work on a wide variety of different techniques and subject matters within image making therefore I have more than one style flowing through my work. I especially enjoy printmaking; working within linoleum (fig.1) and dry point prints. Furthermore, I like to experiment with the likes of photography and collage.



Fig.1

My work has always revolved around the drawn line, however it became apparent to me earlier in the year that I was inclined to put my full focus on the production side of things, overlooking the importance of the content that supports it. Therefore this year I have been intent on creating work based on subject matter, rather than simply making things that look attractive; this has led to the inspiration for all my briefs and intentions. Nonetheless I still think it is equally important that the finished product keeps to a certain level of quality, whilst being backed up by this essential content. For this reason I have also been trying to broaden my skills and techniques within printmaking and illustration (fig.2-6) throughout this year, in order for my practice to be at its highest potential.

In addition it has been crucial that I have been working on a wide variety of different projects at once. This has helped me push my ideas and develop my ability to work on numerous tasks simultaneously in preparation for working within the industry. In doing this some briefs have been more time consuming and fruitful than others, over this past year three projects in particular have been at the forefront of my attention.



fig. 2-6

Rumer Godden book jackets - In the first semester of this year, whilst on a day trip in York, I came across a large stuffed peacock in the centre of the main exhibition room in The York Art Gallery. This piece inspired me to create some work centred around peacocks. I had some initial ideas that I experimented with however I decided that the best option was to create a book jacket for *'The Peacock Spring'* by Rumer Godden. I then decided to push the project further and create a series of jackets for another four of Godden's books, using the same style and media (fig.7) for each in order to create a purchasable series.



fig. 7

FJ Designs - I have also been working on a series of collaboration projects throughout the year for 'FJ Designs' with an architectural design student, Jack Dooley. Jack has designed three buildings each with a theme-circles, lines and triangles; in which I have created a range of relevant illustrations and prints (fig.8) based around his designs, some of which have then been incorporated into the architectural designs as interior surface patterns.



fig.8

Chicikitas - Finally, I have spent a large portion of this last semester creating a book based on chickens named 'Chickitas'. This book was inspired by Nandos, and is part of a collaboration project with Fay Allbright. The book consists of two stories by myself, and two of Fay's stories, along with a range of chicken recipes taken from Nandos. We created a large collection of dry point prints for the illustrations (fig.9), which encouraged us to each create our own original print books with our individual stories, as well as the collaborated digital version.



fig.9

Toothbrush campaign - In addition to these three projects, in order for me to really appreciate the importance of concepts, I decided to spend the majority of my time last semester working on a promotional project. This began as a toothbrush commemoration, but became more of a campaign for respecting your toothbrush. It involved a large quantity of research and experimentation (fig.10), and the production of an assortment of diverse poster ideas.



fig.10

I have also been working on -

Lost and Found - A series of lino prints (fig.11) raising awareness for endangered animals, in which the 'lost' posters represent extinct animals, and the 'found' posters represent newly discovered species (which are already on the endangered list). These prints have also been turned into fliers to push the campaign.



fig.11

Nandos - This was a live brief set by Nandos restaurant, to create a piece of artwork (fig.12) for the new cover of the menu.



fig.12

In loving Memory of... - A book commemorating the streets and houses of the North East (fig.13) that are going through the stages of demolition.



fig.13

The Art of Tradition - A publication about season/festival traditions with some painted pumpkin illustrations (fig.14).



fig.14

The Birds and the Bees - A series of collages/cut outs (fig.15), produced daily (Monday – Friday) over the Christmas period, in response to articles for the 'Country Diary' column in 'The Guardian' newspaper. Furthermore, I have produced a range of 'one off' pieces responding to editorial articles/quotes in order to practise for possible future commissioned briefs.



fig.15

This study will discuss my entire practice, concentrating on the major projects and some reflection on the minor projects I have been working on this year. I feel this is important as these projects sum up what my work is about. I have tried to keep my projects quite varied in order for me to be able to demonstrate the range of different attributes and interests I have been working on.

Throughout the three years on this course I have been determined to discover where my practice lies. I have gone through a lot of experimentation, mistakes and revelations. It has been a long journey, in which I have been discovering myself and now I finally feel like I have the capability to push forward within the Graphic Design industry, although I know my journey is only just beginning and I have a long way to go. I have learnt to work at a much quicker pace, both within the ideas and production. My process however is virtually the same; I always begin in my sketchbook and journals (fig.16 & 17), whether it simply be scribbled notes or initial drawings. This then leads to experimentation and development.



fig. 16 & 17

I took great inspiration from UK based illustrator Martin O'Neill's visiting lecture (examples of his work fig. 18-20), in which he discussed the importance of sketchbooks. He spoke about how he collects found materials for his collages and how treasured these collections along with his sketchbooks are. I felt a connection with this, as I too have always cherished my sketchbooks, they are very personal to me, and may look very confused and messy to an overlooking spectator, but they are the basis of my designs and I couldn't work without them.



fig. 18 Inches - Fury London



fig. 19 & 20 The Big Issue London

Subsequent to second year I soon realised that I had a tendency to adhere to clichés (example of this second year work fig. 21). When discussing the ‘curse of the cliché’ renowned design writer Steven Heller (2002 p.81) stated that ‘a visual cliché is something seen so often, and therefore so immediately understandable, that it does not require translation or interpretation. The problem with a cliché, however, is that something so familiar is easy to ignore’. This is something I have been trying to avoid in my more recent work. I want my imagery to be able to draw in the audience, creating intrigue and excitement rather than simply blending in with familiarity. I understand that this can be difficult, as Tristan Manco (2010, p.9) suggested that ‘True originality is hard to achieve in the art world since some elements will always remind the viewer of something else’. I think the fact that people will always be reminded of something else is not always a bad thing, as they need some guidance as to the subject matter they should be focusing on, however I still think it is possible to have some element of originality whilst doing so.



fig.21

I feel that this year my work has taken a great leap forward due to this ‘conceptual’ realisation, which I mentioned earlier; I have begun to let the concepts lead me to the work, rather than simply trying to produce something attractive. Nonetheless I am still continuing to produce quite detailed prints and illustrations, although I am now aware that they cannot start from nothing. The work of many motivating practitioners has helped me come to this essential notion.

‘Illustration has withdrawn from the big debates of our society to focus on the chit-chat and tittle-tattle of inner-sanctum nothingness.’

Lawrence Zeegan

(on the work of David Shrigley fig.22)



fig.22

I think that this statement is especially relevant at this present time within the art industry. As much as I love striking illustrations, I sense that designers are getting distracted by shapes colours and patterns and overlooking the significance of stimulating concepts. This is something I have been guilty of in the past, so I am trying to recall this theory throughout my practice. I don't necessarily believe that every piece of artwork has to establish a 'big debate' of our society. However I do think it is a major benefit to initiate design work based around a particular problem, subject matter or topic of discussion.

I think my 'lost and found' posters are the perfect example of this. They are quite striking to look at, due to the bold lines and blocks of colour drawing in the viewer, yet they then back up this attractiveness with a matter of importance that relies on awareness (fig.23 & 24). In this case the fact that newly discovered animal species (found posters) are close to joining those that are extinct (lost posters), and the importance of protecting endangered animals.



fig.23



fig.24

I felt privileged to attend established graphic designer Ken Garland's visiting lecture this year in which he spent the majority of his time explaining the importance of ideas, titling his lecture 'visual metaphors'. He even communicated the idea that he believes sometimes the best concepts/metaphors are in the not so great visual contexts (to which he showed a clip from the film *Top Gun* fig. 25). My work is rather unlike Garland's, however I took great inspiration from this lecture in the fact that he pointed out that an idea can bring the strength of an image/piece of work to a higher level.



fig.25

My toothbrush campaign stands out from all my other projects in that it is the only time I relied solely on the concept. I think this is significant, as a campaign is all about getting the idea across to the audience therefore in this case it was necessary. I spent a lot of time researching and developing my ideas before I began creating work. This helped me get into the right frame of mind, focusing on my thoughts and how to present them to an audience. It took me quite some time to do this, as I am so used to concentrating on the visual outcome. In the beginning stages I tried to incorporate my illustrations into the poster work, however I soon realised that I needed to take a leaf out of David Shrigley's book and concentrate entirely on the concept with no distractions.

Once I had come up with the two slogans 'Hardworking, reliable and not afraid to get dirty' and 'Don't let the plaque attack' I found it a lot easier to come up with the final designs. For the main poster, due to the strong slogan I decided to have the type as the image (painted with a toothbrush), in order to truly focus on the idea (fig.26). However for the street proposals I decided to use a more illustrated image, due to the large scale of the area that would be covered, and the incorporation of an interactive aspect to the campaign- moss as plaque gradually covering the teeth and type to represent the plaque attacking (fig.27).

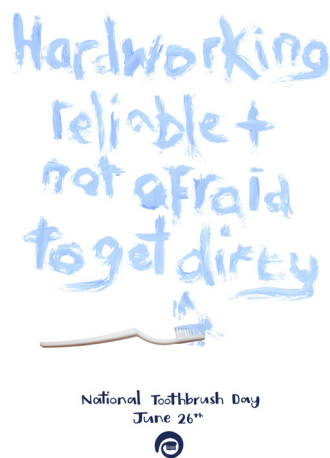


fig.26



fig.27

I was fortunate enough to visit Shrigley's recent exhibition '*How are you feeling?*' in the Cornerhouse (Manchester) earlier this year, which was a significant source of inspiration to me (fig.28). I have always found his work to be appealing in a very quirky and tongue in cheek way. Personally, I believe that his success derives from the fact that he encourages people to have an emotional connection with his images; they laugh, argue, question and debate his thoughts and ideas. He acknowledges that his talent is theory based and therefore doesn't overshadow these ideas with elaborate production techniques. In order for the emphasis to be on the message it is all about simplicity, every aspect of his work is created solely to portray his idea. I think this is a very bold and refreshing approach. I have attempted to follow in his footsteps and take the initiative this year by fighting 'The Nothingness', giving my designs the contextual support that they deserve. For this reason this epigraph, and the work of David Shrigley has been a great source of encouragement for me throughout this semester. However, since I have always excelled in the decorative techniques I think it is important that I take Shrigley's attitude and apply it to my more detailed illustrations; again in the hope to attain the correct balance between conceptual ideas and attractiveness.



fig.28

I have begun to acknowledge that this has been an obstacle many designers and artists have been trying to overcome for a long period of time. Ellen Lupton (2011, p.12-13) wrote in '*The Designer as Producer*', 'Benjamin argued that artists and photographers must not view their task as solely visual, lest they become mere suppliers of form to the existing apparatus of bourgeois publishing'. Lupton was referring to German critic Walter Benjamin (1934). This piece of writing has proven to me that throughout history people have been questioning the line between concepts and production. It communicates the idea that we should not mindlessly create aesthetically pleasing work without exploring the theory behind it. Lupton's article mainly discusses the work and ideas of Walter Benjamin with a few additional thoughts of her own. In 1934 Benjamin discussed the idea of '*The Author as Producer*', I believe he was trying to explain that the artistic processes we go through are merely tools, or 'existing apparatus', and it is the idea that makes it unique and holds it together. This brings me back to the idea of 'the curse of the cliché', something that is simply attractive but has no substance can so easily fall into this trap, therefore it is crucial to have the reasoning behind it. However, Benjamin's attention was primarily directed towards the idea of bookwork and creative writing, Lupton enhances this philosophy and describes how this concept can be applied to the entire creative industries, hence '*Designer as Producer*' rather than 'Author'. She explains (2011, p.13) that the issue designers face today is to 'become the masters, not the slaves, of technology.' It is almost as if the creative processes and technologies we work with have no emotional connection, a robot could create the image, but could not come up with the idea. Therefore we should endeavor to push through the boundaries and have an emotional connection with our designs. These feelings can then be passed on and appreciated by the audience.

I recognise that this topic of discussion could be thought of as quite controversial, due to the fact a vast amount of designers pride themselves exclusively on their ability to produce beautiful imagery. However I think that everyone can appreciate the success of a striking illustration with a rousing story to reinforce it.

I feel that my concern in my lack of ideas is something I have begun to resolve this year, I may not be facing huge issues nonetheless each piece of work has a reason behind it. Whether it simply be my illustration work for Rumer Godden's book jackets or my toothbrush campaign (toothbrush bracelets fig.29). I also think it's important that I don't go too far in the opposite direction. I don't want to have to completely transform myself and my practice by producing purely theory-based work, but simply to enhance my illustrations by establishing initial concepts to work from.



fig.29

For my 'FJ Designs' collaboration with architectural student Jack Dooley I decided again to create work for a purpose. In this case it involved interior design; Dooley designed the architectural spaces whilst I worked on the interior fabrics, wall coverings and decorative art. This partnership started as a small project, but soon turned into a major addition to my practice due to the time consumption and attention to detail. I found it quite stimulating working within an area of art and design I haven't tackled before; although it was a bit of a challenge trying to work in a much more simplistic and expressive style than I am used to. Initially I tried to produce elaborate patterned prints however it became clear to me that this situation needed a 'less is more' mentality. The collaboration consisted of three projects, each based around a colour and a shape - red circles (fig.30), blue triangles (fig.31), and green lines. This added further complications as the uniqueness of each shape brought forward a new obstacle. However I believe that some of these prints could work on a commercial level, and I am pleased with the final outcomes. In addition to this, in order to push the project further I screen-printed onto tiles (fig.32) and printed full-scale wallpaper strips to help potential clients see how they would work in real interior circumstances. In addition to the print work for this collaboration, I attempted to use my design skills within the documentation of these projects. I worked within 'InDesign' to create my first ever publications; to me this was a project within itself as I was learning as I went.



fig.30



fig.31



fig.32

In the last few weeks I have spent a vast amount of time documenting previous work into various different publications. One in particular that has really stood out to me is that of 'The Art of Tradition' (fig.33). This piece started with some pumpkins I painted for Halloween. Originally I had planned to paint all the pumpkins in a detailed and most importantly traditional style, but as I was painting I began thinking about traditions and how they change. I decided that I wanted to paint a pumpkin in a way that was not expected- like a Christmas pudding. This distorts the idea of Halloween, incorporating alternative and unexpected traditions, to shock the audience. I felt that this unique concept needed to be documented appropriately in order to truly get the idea across. I then began to think about image essays, in which the images tell a story. This inspired me to use found articles in a similar fashion, centring mainly on the headlines, in order to tell a story throughout the document, all in a newspaper type set up. I think this works well in that you can see the thought process from traditional pumpkins, all the way through to altering, blending and developing new pumpkin traditions. Despite the fact that this was only a minor project this year I believe it is one of my most successful. It has the perfect balance between motivating visuals and a stimulating context.



fig.33

On a trip to Manchester earlier this year I had the opportunity to look around a range of diverse exhibitions, however Manchester Art Gallery's exhibition *'The First Cut'* really caught my attention (fig.34). Curated by Fiona Corridan and Natasha Howes, the vast room showcased a wide variety of pieces, all based around the manipulation of paper. Previous to this visit I had been completely absorbed with the idea of concepts within my work, however at this exhibition I was able to rejuvenate my passion for handmade crafts. I realised that I had gone from one extreme to another, from obsessing over tiny details within a drawing that had no meaning, to spending all my time thinking up ideas and not following through. This was when I first came to the understanding that I need a balance; I can approach interesting concepts whilst still producing something visually appealing (much like my 'Tradition' publication).

When I first entered the main exhibition room it was difficult to know where to begin, as there was such an array of work occupying the entire capacity, from the miniature to the massive. The gallery was much busier than any of the other spaces within the building, with a great buzz in the atmosphere as the audience tried to take in every detail. I loved the fact that it was so full and bursting with excitement, this was much more appealing to me than an empty room with one tiny painting. However it was a bit daunting as I worried that I would miss something or wouldn't have enough time to give every piece the appreciation it deserved. I think if I were to recommend this exhibition to someone I would have advised a full afternoon rather than an hour.

As I ventured around the room I was totally in awe of the attention to detail; the elaborate shapes and patterns made with such precision. It was remarkable to see that each artist had taken the same simple idea of paper and taken it in numerous different directions. I found this particularly inspirational, as not only were they stunning, but also thought provoking. It encouraged me to push forward with my own work, with the understanding that there can be more to a beautiful piece of work than meets the eye. Each piece was unique using a variety of different paper, scales, complexities and concepts. Yet as a collection they all worked together successfully. Nevertheless it became clear to me that it was not all about the finished work, but rather the thought behind them and the extensive processes that had gone into making them. I marvelled at the patience and skill that had gone into the production of each piece. It had all been assembled so meticulously that there was not one example I didn't admire.



fig.34

However, even before I spotted Rob Ryan's piece I knew it would be there, and I knew it would be a favourite of mine (fig. 35). Ryan has always been an illustrator of great inspiration to me. He is well known for his intricate paper cut out silhouettes and has a beautifully precise and instantly recognisable style. Once I had spotted the piece I immediately fell in love with it, he normally works quite small so this was an immense project for him. I thought he tackled this challenge tremendously. The composition was very effective with a clever use of space; the area was so large if it had been covered in tiny details you wouldn't have known where to focus. This piece was also a major source of inspiration for my collaged book 'The Birds and the Bees'. I was so in awe of the lines and shapes created within Ryan's cut out technique; I have briefly experimented with collage before but not with such precision. Therefore I wanted to experiment further and attempt to enhance my method of using a scalpel.

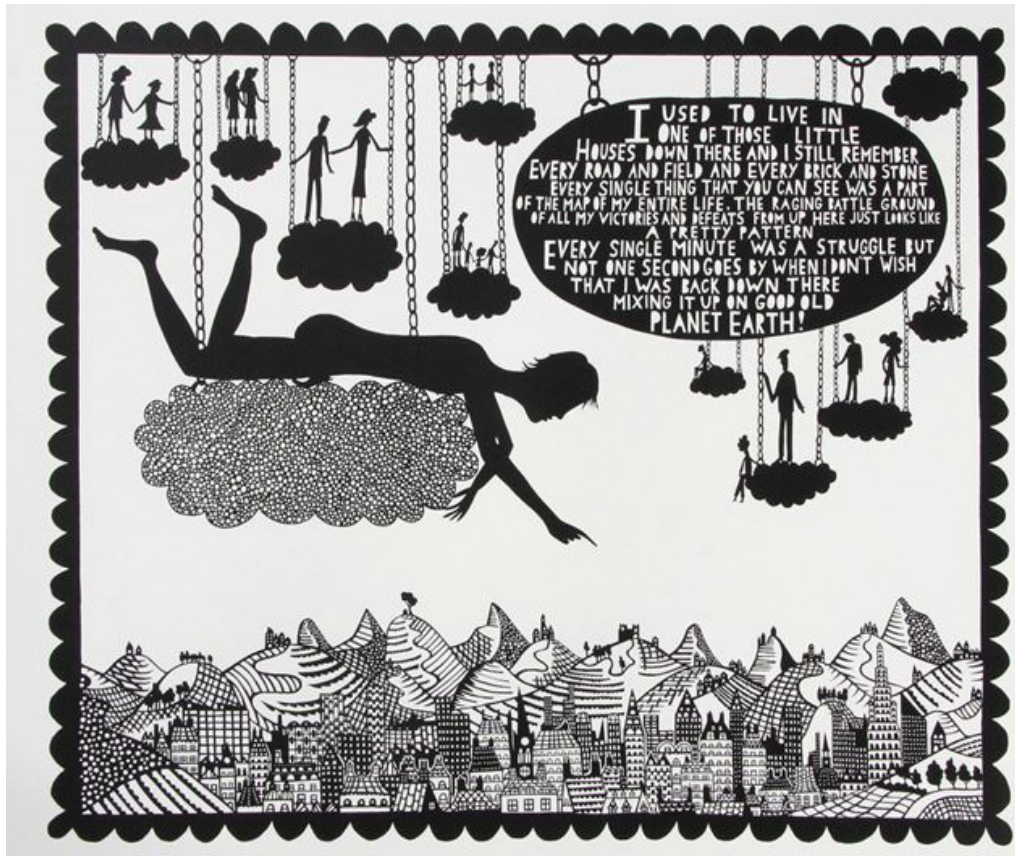


fig.35

In spite of all this, there was a part of the exhibition which I felt didn't flow with the rest. The main room led to a smaller room, which was dedicated solely to the work of Kara Walker (previous work fig.36). Unlike the previous room the atmosphere was much more subdued, and it almost felt like an afterthought. The walls displayed a range of black paper silhouettes, which seemed to be less focused on the detail in the cut out technique and distracted by the strange concepts. The main thing that caught my attention was that a lot of the silhouettes were very crude and sinister. This did not sit well with the much more uplifting and exquisitely worked pieces based around life and nature in the previous room.



fig.36

I have always been more comfortable working handmade rather than digitally so this exhibition was very influential to me. It was refreshing to see so many examples of handmade crafts. After watching Rob Ryan's interview about his piece I understood that concepts are as important to his work as they have been to my designs. He mentioned that his creations are always narrative, they have to be telling some kind of story (in this case the words are incorporated into the image) rather than just concentrating on the exterior. I also take inspiration from the accuracy of his lines, something that I have been trying to work on in my lino prints (for my Rumer Godden book jackets fig.37, and the 'lost and found' posters). I found that pretty much every artist at the exhibition had an intriguing concept. Again, this has been one of the biggest turning points I have had in my own work – appreciating the balance of concepts and final outcomes.

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to Manchester Art Gallery and afterwards I felt encouraged to produce work. Not only did it make me want to experiment with paper creating collages and cut outs, but also to simply spend more time and effort on the processes in order to come out with something someone could admire.



fig.37

In order to push even further and get a better understanding of the Graphic design world, as well as looking at other art, I knew it was important to speak to some practitioners about how they approached the industry and what steps I should take in order to be successful. Although I have spent a lot of time researching and taking inspiration the more prominent names within the industry such as Rob Ryan, I decided that I would like to interview designers who are slightly less recognised. This is due to the fact that I think the likes of Rob Ryan have been interviewed and talked about so often that they run the risk of becoming too commercialised. There are so many interviews with designers like Ryan, which are easily attainable and so many questions have been asked that it would be difficult to get new information. So I decided to look at the other end of the spectrum and try to get in touch with successful artists who are slightly less familiar yet just as talented. This also meant that I could talk to more approachable individuals with a better understanding of the situation I am currently in.

I managed to conduct two interviews with practitioners within the industry, both with very different styles, yet both equally inspirational to me, the first being Kelly Stewart- an Australian Illustrator, and secondly Penny Bhadresa, a Suffolk-based printmaker. I chose to approach Stewart due to her beautifully expressive style and interest in animals. However Penny Bhadresa caught my attention for her remarkable technique in linoleum printing.

When I came across Kelly Stewart's work I was particularly drawn to her animal pieces (fig.38), her use of colour and expressive line work is stunning. She has a way of making her drawings come to life with the movement in her lines. I have always taken an interest in animals myself, taking great pleasure in illustrating the shapes and textures within their forms. I think this has always been my strong point, and regularly crops up in my work without me even realising. Therefore Stewart's illustrations really caught my attention. I would have loved to conduct a face-to-face interview with her, however unfortunately that was not feasible as she travels a lot. Despite this she was happy to answer my questions via email.



fig.38

The following are the questions I presented to her, along with the responses Stewart gave me:

Firstly I'd like to ask, how you first got involved in the creative industries?

I got involved in the creative industries because I was very interested in art, and went along to study a degree in design/illustration. I have built up my own body of work and style ever since.

Has your work always been focused around printmaking? And if so why?

No it hasn't always revolved around printmaking but as soon as I was introduced to screenprinting at university I knew it was the medium for me. Everything I like to experiment with image making is enhanced by the screenprint technique. I have tried all other types of printmaking but they don't suit my style the way screenprinting does.

What has been the highlight of your career so far and why?

One of the highlights of my career was a double solo exhibition, all of Paris work, held in Edinburgh. I spent a month in Paris to get all the reference material, and draw up sketches etc, and then produced huge original drawings as well as a set of screenprint editions, all of Paris cityscapes. My Mum and sister came over from Australia for the opening, so that was a definite highlight.

I love your animal pieces, what is it about animals that inspire you?

I love animals, and particularly to draw them because they have so much character. Also I think after drawing architectural pieces it's refreshing to draw the organic line.

What and/or who inspires you and your work as a whole?

I have many inspirations, and they change as I evolve. I used to like Jeffrey Smart's work because it was quite often architectural and neat, but now I like John Olsen, Barbara Rae, Brett Whiteley, and Fred Williams to name a few.

What aspirations and plans have you set yourself for the future?

The aspirations I have for the future are to continue art making, to keep developing my style and to continue loving it as I do now.

What advice would you offer to someone (such as myself) who would be looking to get into the design industry in a similar role to yourself?

My advice for yourself is that if you love what you do, have a passion for it and dedication then you have what it takes so just work hard and stay focused to what it is you love.

And finally, Which 5 objects could you not bear to live without and why?

I wouldn't bear to live without my wonderful book and magazine collection, filled with masses of inspiration, for obvious reasons. I also couldn't live without something to draw with, otherwise I might go a little crazy. To be honest possessions are not that important to me, I know I can learn to live without 'things', but hot water, good wine and great food is a must!

12/12/12



fig.39

Kelly Stewart gave some really stimulating responses to my questions. It's great to hear that she loves animals too, and her passion for drawing the organic line in contrast with her more architectural pieces (fig 39). She particularly inspired my more expressive chicken dry point prints (Chickitas project fig.40), as I wanted to be able to achieve a similarly playful and lighthearted finish. It's also intriguing to know what inspires her, and to realise the fact that every artist is inspired by other artists in one way or another. I think I have a lot of common ground with the likes of Stewart, as I too aspire to develop my own style and continue art making, however for me, I aspire to get to her level, and be able to produce my artwork for a living. In the future I would love to be able to talk to someone about the highlight of my career, and have a similar example to Stewart's- holding a solo exhibition in a renowned city, having travelled to collect material. That sounds so thrilling, it really would be a dream come true for me. She sounds like a fascinating woman, and I thoroughly enjoyed communicating with her.



fig.40

My second interview was with Penny Bhadresa. I recently came across her work online whilst researching to develop my lino printing skills, and instantly fell in love with her playful yet beautifully detailed linocut technique (fig.41-43). She uses the perfect balance of expressive shapes and lines to give her characters that animated and exciting appeal, all executed with incredible precision. For this reason I messaged Bhadresa in the hope that she would be kind enough to respond to some interview questions for me, in order for me to get a better insight into her and her work. Unfortunately I had the same issue that I had with Stewart, in that she is based in Suffolk, so was too much of a distance away to do a face-to-face interview. However, Bhadresa was extremely encouraging and messaged me back straightaway, happy to conduct our interview via email. She even offered to send me some cards with her designs on via post. I am so grateful and touched that she took such an interest, helping me in any way possible. There is something much more exciting about having the finished products in your hand to truly be able to appreciate every detail. It is also significant to me that not only does she produce beautiful prints but she also creates her work for a purpose (greeting cards). This is something I have been trying to focus on in my own illustrations; to always have a concept or a purpose.



fig.41

The following are the questions I presented to her, and the responses Penny Bhadresa gave me:

Firstly I'd like to ask, how you first got involved in the creative industries?

I wanted to become an artist to create my own work and earn my living by doing that. I made a career change to enable this and was accepted onto an art and design degree course (my first degree is in history and I had a job in a museum for many years).

Has your work always been focused around linocuts/printmaking? And if so why?

No. Initially I painted but I was interested in printmaking. I tried etching but wanted a medium I could work with in my own studio without too much equipment and chemicals. I borrowed some linocutting tools and started trying some simple designs with lino; immediately I loved the strong graphic quality you could achieve. That suited my approach, which has always been influenced by bold illustrative styles. I liked the idea of being able to create limited editions. I also create work using collage and mixed media which can incorporate elements of my linoprinting as well.

What has been the highlight of your career so far and why?

It is always uplifting when your work is sought after by others, so selling to appreciative buyers is a great spur to creativity. Knowing that your work brings so much pleasure to people is wonderful. Having some of my designs reproduced as cards by Art Angels Publishing and knowing that potentially thousands of people will see them, has been very rewarding as well as being a fantastic way of having my work publicised.

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Do you mainly produce work for exhibitions or do you ever work on commissioned pieces?

I create my work mainly for exhibitions and to sell through galleries or online and I prefer to do that. As I said in answer to the last question, I have done commissions and they can be nice to do but they can also tie up your creative time, especially if they are 'ongoing' and this can be detrimental to producing new work. As an artist it is important to me that I have enough free time to work through my ideas so fresh work can be produced. So I prefer to earn my living like that.

What and/or who inspires you and your work as a whole?

I am inspired by many British artists of the 20th century who responded to landscape and sought to evoke a sense of place in their work. Often these artists worked in different media – painting, printmaking, collage, design, graphic arts and illustration. I am thinking of artists like Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden, John Piper, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Lucienne Day.

What aspirations and plans have you set yourself for the future?

To always be seeking to experiment and try out new ideas in my work. I like to concentrate on a particular place and try to evoke it in different ways in my work. Often this will be to do with my response to landscape or nature.

What advice would you offer to someone (such as myself) who would be looking to get into the design industry in a similar role to yourself?

Be prepared to work hard! Be determined. Have confidence in your 'voice' as an artist but always be prepared to develop yourself and learn new things. Be visually and critically aware. Strive for excellence in all you do. Be organised with your time and working environment – artists have to be 'businesssavvy'.

And finally, which 5 objects could you not bear to live without and why?

Too difficult to provide a meaningful answer. Objects could be indispensable on so many levels – aesthetic, practical, sensory, workbased.....I wouldn't like to be without a lot of things in my studio, in my house or my garden! If I owned a John Piper print I dare say I couldn't bear to be without it, but I don't!

17 February 2013



fig.42



fig.43

As you can see Penny Bhadresa was incredibly accommodating with this interview, she answered every question in such detail that I feel like I have really got to know her. She has definitely helped me in achieving my goal of understanding her and her work more clearly. I think Bhadresa has had a very different career path to Kelly Stewart, as she used to work in a museum and didn't pursue her passion for the arts until later in life. I think this means that it was a big gamble for Penny, so I appreciate her advice of being determined and working hard, as you get nowhere in life being lazy. It is all about putting yourself forward, and pushing yourself to do things, particularly in the graphic design industry as there is so much competition. Again it is interesting to find out who inspires her, I have also been inspired by Henry Moore's sculptures, particularly for my collaboration project with Architect student Jack Dooley. Furthermore I love Edward Bawden's prints, I have tried to use a similar style in my lino prints with large blocks of colour and expressive lines.

I think it is interesting to note that I have been drawn to female illustrators, when in actual fact females are the minority in illustration. This gives me hope, as it was a complete coincidence but it shows to me that even though women are the minority it is still possible to succeed and even inspire others. Overall this whole experience of speaking to practitioners has been a completely new one for me. It has been very exciting getting in contact with such amazingly inspirational people with similar interests to myself, and has definitely given me hope for the future. I believe that both interviews were very successful in different ways; I liked hearing about Kelly Stewart's solo exhibition and her attraction to the organic line. However I think I felt most inspired by Penny Bhadresa, she taught me that no matter what age you are or what level you are at, with some determination, success within the industry is achievable. Furthermore, I really treasure the cards she sent me, and all the thought she put into her responses. She sounds like a remarkable woman and I would love to be able to meet her in person one day in order to truly hear her story. In regards to my own work, I have taken a lot of inspiration from the techniques and styles used by these women, however I still want emphasis on the concepts. Therefore I am trying to use similar expressive lines and bold colours etc. yet apply them to the contexts of the projects I have been working on. In particular this work has inspired my lino print work, such as my 'lost and found' posters, and also my Rumer Godden book jackets.

This year I discovered a passion for Linoleum prints (fig.44); I believe that the style is extremely suited to me and my work. I fleetingly experimented with lino prints in second year but didn't properly develop my style and technique until this final year, starting with my prints for Rumer Godden's book jackets. I chose to create each print only using one layer of ink therefore I was relying solely on the detail within the lines. This meant that the focus was the technique, and helped me develop and perfect my skills. This project has been ongoing for some time due to the fact I kept putting it to the side, then reworking the designs as my skills and knowledge for graphics improved.



fig.44



fig.45

Initially my idea for this brief came from a trip to the York Art Gallery. I found myself majorly inspired by a grand stuffed peacock in the centre of one of the exhibition rooms. I knew I wanted to do some kind of Peacock work, but I recognised my mistakes from last year, and had to try and come up with a starting point. At first I made some prints based on the idea that peahens get lost in the shadow of peacocks, and the importance of sexual equality. In spite of this I still found it difficult to determine what direction it was going in and what my intentions were, so I decided to look at it from an alternative perspective. I apprehended that I was heading towards work that was all about the final outcome with no definitive reasoning, and I knew I didn't want to fall in that trap. So I went back to the research and thought about the Indian background, this led me to Rumer Godden's books, in particular *'The Peacock Spring'*. Godden spent a period of her life in India; consequently there is a running theme of India within her novels. She has written over sixty books, so I felt that five covers would be suitable as a collection (fig.46-51). Any more than this and it would become too expensive, any less and it wouldn't seem like a finished collection. These books are titled *'The Peacock Spring'*, *'Coromandel Sea Change'*, *'Kingfishers Catch Fire'*, *'The River'* and *'The Greengage Summer'*. They all have a theme of nature, which is an aspect of my illustration work I have always taken great pleasure in. Having read part of *'The Greengage Summer'* I also became aware of the importance of nature within her writing. The extensive descriptions of the natural surroundings make you almost feel as if you were there. I could envisage exactly how the greengages tasted, even though I have never sampled one myself.

Having held one of Godden's books in my hand, and been able to see what her current covers are like (fig.45) I decided I was quite proud with my finished outcome. It was the first time throughout this course that I felt my work actually had a real objective and could even be purchasable whilst keeping with my style and passion. I think that the current cover is too dated and doesn't stand out from the crowd, whereas my jackets are a lot more contemporary with one colour each in order to keep the audience from being distracted from the striking images.



fig.46

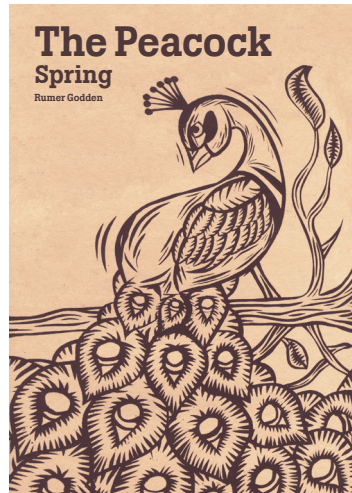
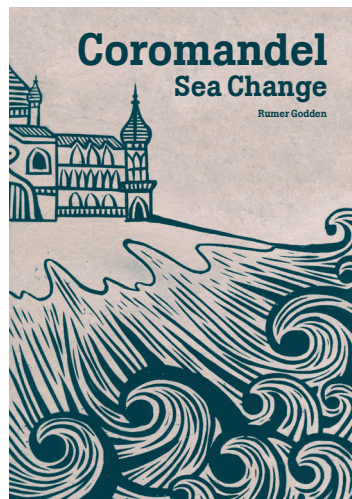
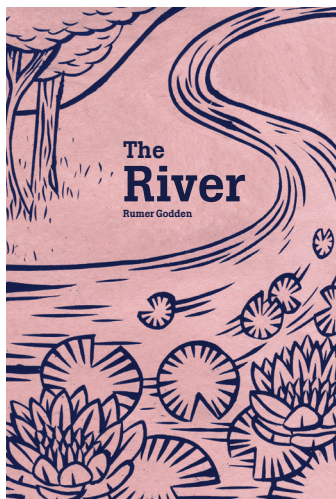


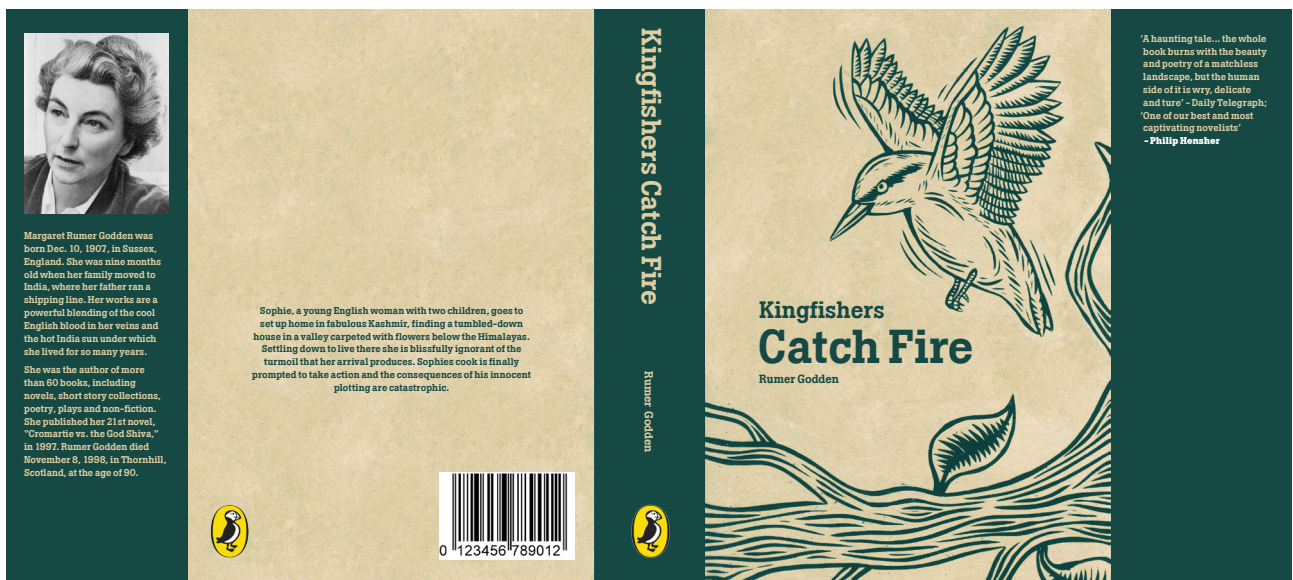
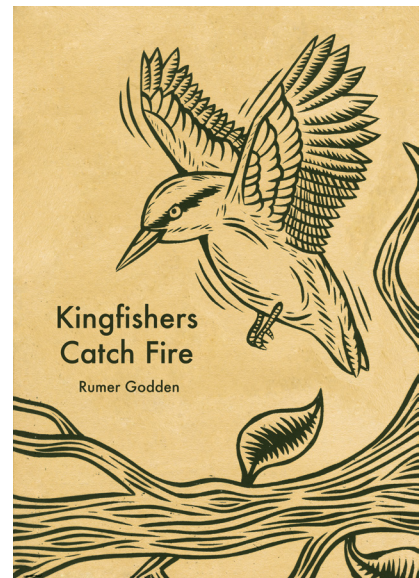
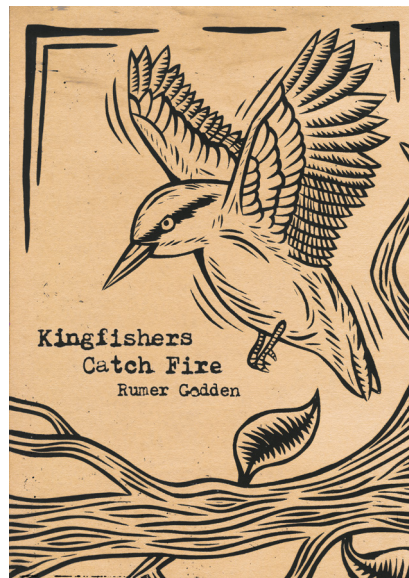
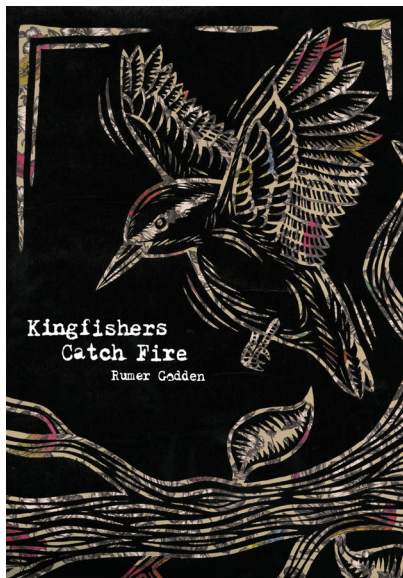
fig.47-51

I think my strength lies within the intricate details in the line work of these prints (fig.52). I took great inspiration from *'The First Cut'* exhibition in Manchester for this aspect of the images, as I attempted to achieve a level of complexity that would catch the attention of others, just as the work in Manchester Art Gallery did for myself. The peacock is my favourite print as it is so striking due to the elaborate details in the feathers and the focused layout directing the viewers eye flow from top to bottom. However as the original print wasn't intended as a book cover, compositionally I didn't leave enough space for the title, meaning once the title was added it looked slightly overcrowded. Therefore this image had to be altered digitally and I have tried to improve on the compositions in my other covers.

As mentioned previously it took me quite some time to finalise these covers (examples fig.53-56). Initially I had wanted all the covers to be the same colour combination. I was going to use either gold and black, or black with subject/colour appropriate patterned backgrounds. I loved the distinctive and original style of the patterned backgrounds, however with the addition of the title the compositions became too complicated, with no direct eye flow. Furthermore the extremeness of the black gave a more sinister look to the book, which, even though it has some dark aspects in the storyline, is overall quite light hearted. I also thought that the gold enhanced the Indian theme which runs throughout each novel, nonetheless I soon noticed that I had become too fixated with the intention of a collection; they are much more eye-catching and stand out as individuals when they each have their own colour. The colours I selected for the final designs are subtle to heighten that feeling of nature, and have an almost 1950s quality giving them a much more sophisticated finish. Additionally I experimented with using a typewriter for the text, which I then scanned in and developed on Photoshop in order for each title to be unique. I wanted to have that handmade look to compliment the images, although it looked a bit too cliché and untidy so I decided to use a bold 'Beton' font instead, to give it a more professional looking outcome. Personally I consider the kingfisher to be the most effective composition, due to the relationship between image and text, it is much more balanced than *'The River'* for example.



fig.52



figs.53-56

I carried on with this lino printing technique for the Nandos menu cover competition. I spent a lot of time working on the basic compositions of my prints; due to the vast commercialisation of the Nandos brand and style I knew it would be difficult to create something suitable yet exciting and original. I soon decided that I wanted to represent the feel and the passion in the atmosphere in Nandos restaurants within my design. After some research I realised that this ambience was due to the family friendly approach, with conversations flowing and a feeling of contentment throughout. For this reason I decided to try and represent these different flowing conversations accompanied with uplifting music beats with a bold bright and expressive print. I think that the final illustration has achieved this goal, therefore due to my confidence in the print I also decided to display its versatility by presenting the same design as a full wall piece (fig.57).



figs.57

When it came to my 'Lost and Found' posters I used the same approach, with a detailed linocut technique. Although as I had become so comfortable with printing I decided that I wanted to push it a step further, and add different layers of colour. I think the use of colour is a key aspect of these posters as they are meant to be individual pieces that would most likely be seen separately, so they needed to be eye-catching. I also wanted to use these colours to emphasise the contrast between the black and white text/outline and the main image. This was a very time consuming process but it was worth it in the end, as the prints stand out on their own as well as being part of a collection (fig.58).



figs.58

Taking inspiration from 'The First Cut' exhibition, as well as Nandos, I decided to create a book made solely out of dry point prints (a new process I discovered this year). This book is part of a collaboration with Fay Allbright, consisting of two illustrated stories each; all based around chickens (four stories in total), and a range of Nandos chicken recipes again with our illustrations. Due to the relaxed and lighthearted nature of the book combined with the textured style of dry point prints, I decided to create quite simplistic illustrations (fig.59). I used an almost child like approach, with imperfect lines and imaginative shapes. I think these prints have been quite successful as they still have that level of maturity in the overall compositions due to the use of lines and space.

Originally I had planned to only produce a digital copy of the book, however I decided due to the quality of the original prints and the contrast to the digitally enhanced versions, that this was the perfect opportunity to indicate the differentiations between the two (fig.60-63). Therefore I have a digital book, which includes all of the collaborated work, whilst the original printed book contains only my two stories. It is intriguing to see that there is such a huge contrast between the two, both with their own attributes. The original book has imperfections, which enhances the illustration style giving it a quirky charm. This combined with the Somerset paper adds texture and interest, making you want to physically pick it up. However the digital version is much more commercially saleable, with the bold colours and precision in the details. The digital version could also be mass-produced, whereas the original version could only be available in a certain amount of editions. Again both of these possibilities have their assets, as mass production raises awareness as well as being more profitable, nonetheless hand printed editions mean each would be unique and therefore more valuable.

In addition to this we combined both digital and handmade qualities to the text (the same type is used for both versions of the book), using a scalpel to cut out all the letters, which were then scanned in to be digitally enhanced and placed into appropriate compositions.



figs.59



figs.60-61



figs.62-63

Prior to university I worked solely within handmade crafts, and never dared to venture into the digital domain. I think this was both a blessing and a curse, it pushed my hand drawn illustration skills to a level of maturity, yet at the same time neglecting computers instantly put my work behind those who worked digitally (which is the majority of graphic designers). This was something that hit me instantly as I began the course. Quentin Newton (2007, p.116) remarked that 'What the computer does is to unify processes, vastly increasing the designer's power.' I think this stands out to me, as I know I wouldn't have agreed with this statement a few years ago. I understand the beauty of handmade crafts, and I think there is something particularly special about an original print. Furthermore to some extent I do think it is sad that the old traditions are getting pushed out due to technology. However I now know that in a lot of circumstances computers can enhance your work and vastly improve your time and efficiency in a wide variety of different ways. I have tried to utilize both methods throughout my practice. As well as my 'Chickitas' book, this is also made clear within my 'Lost and Found' posters. As mentioned previously the posters are lino prints created in layers of at least three different colours each; therefore I thought it was important to keep the original prints as the finished posters. However in addition to this I also scanned them in to digitally create a range of fliers, which again is more commercially appropriate as it would effortlessly enable mass production, something which is virtually impossible otherwise.

In my project 'In loving memory of' I wanted to directly combine the two fields of digital and handmade in an incredibly obvious way. Although the entire book was printed digitally each page consists of a photograph to represent the digital side, and some kind of street rubbing (fig.64) to represent the handmade. I think this contrast is almost metaphoric, in that the photographs of the streets are practical yet empty, with the rubbings adding a more personal touch; just as I like to use the digital necessities as a tool or basis to enhance my handmade work.

When it comes to the digital tools I have predominantly been working with InDesign and Photoshop. Photoshop has been an essential tool principally for neatening and organising my images- brightening colours, fixing mistakes and general tidying. Michael Perry (2007, p.12) stated that 'the computer makes it incredibly easy for designers to be totally process-driven when working by hand, knowing that they can use the computer to edit and assemble'. This is the exact thought I have had with my work, for example if I marked a print I knew it wouldn't have to be reprinted I just had to fix it on Photoshop. It has also been a useful tool for reworking compositions, now I can easily move things around to see where things sit most effectively without having to recreate the image each time.

I have dabbled with Photoshop in the past so I had a basic knowledge at the beginning of this year, which I have now developed further. In spite of this I have had to work from scratch with InDesign, which has been problematic, nonetheless a major breakthrough. Understanding InDesign has in turn supported my grasp of typography, layouts and compositions. I have begun to acknowledge the importance of space within a page, and how it can give the audience an eye flow leading on to a focal point. In addition to this I now have a clearer understanding of how type works- which typefaces work best in which situations and also the importance of hierarchies within type (fig.65). I can now also appreciate the fact that type can become an image within itself, and has a wide range of possibilities in which you can express your creativeness. I am far from perfect when it comes to these aspects of graphic design, however I think I am headed in the right direction, with my basic knowledge and my skills in illustration I may be able to produce some exciting work in the future.



fig.65

I believe I have learnt far more this year than I had in the previous two years, not because of the course itself but simply due to the fact that it took the first two years or so to find my feet and figure out exactly where I wanted to go with my work. Once I had started to understand where my practice lies it was then a lot easier for me to take the initiative and begin to focus on how to improve. This led me to work on the concepts, as well as my printing skills and those all-important digital tools this year. I believe these three factors are now the core of my practise- concepts, handmade work, and digital additions. I have also learnt about collaborating this year, I now know that it can be difficult to agree in certain situations; consequently things tend to move at a slightly slower pace. However incorporating someone else skills and ideas with your own work can result in something much more fruitful and rewarding when it comes to the final product (fig 66 & 67). I enjoy working both individually and collaboratively; I think this is important, as I may have to do both in the future.



fig.66 & 67



fig.68

Overall I think my portfolio shows a wide array of work, hopefully this opens the door to more possibilities in the future as I can show a range of skills and styles. This is also why I thought it was important to show how I would work if I were commissioned to do one off illustrations (which is probably the most likely possibility) for *The Financial Times* (top left illustration fig.68). I am not particularly drawn to the subject matter within *The Financial Times*, which is why I chose to represent that newspaper; I wanted to show that I would work on whatever subject matter is necessary. Personally I believe I still have a long way to go in preparation for working within the industry, however I feel I have improved a great deal in the last few months. I am enjoying creating the work and I have a much clearer view of what my practise is about and where it is headed. I look forward to what the future brings, whatever that may be.

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Henry Moore Institute

Hyde Park Picture House

Manchester Art Gallery

O'Neill, M. visiting lecture

York Art Gallery

Yorkshire Sculpture Park

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