

SAMUEL PALMER

VISIONARY LANDSCAPES

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An exhibition exploring the life and work of Samuel
Palmer and his portrayal of the Darent Valley

with responses from artists living near Shoreham or
influenced by Palmer's work

DARENT
VALLEY

Cover:

Drawing for *The Bright Cloud (detail)*, c. 1831-2

Indian ink and wash on card

© Tate London

*Created by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme,
part of Kent Downs National Landscape*

Foreword

Just as John Constable is closely associated with the landscape of the Stour Valley, so the name of Samuel Palmer is indelibly linked to the Darent Valley, and in particular the village of Shoreham. For a period of ten years, from about 1824 onwards, he found inspiration in this remarkably unspoilt corner of the English countryside, where he made his most intensely visionary work. In the intervening years, the valley has obviously changed; but it is still recognisably Palmer's. To preserve it and to share it with a wider public was the main impetus for the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme, with which I have been involved from the outset.

Making the Samuel Palmer Trail, it was heartening to rediscover the sites he knew, from the great trees in Lullingstone Park to the surviving barns in the fields round Shoreham. It was also enormously encouraging that so many contemporary artists responded to the call to produce work in the Darent Valley which showed, however loosely, affinities with Palmer. They have responded magnificently to the challenge of looking afresh at the landscapes immortalised almost 200 years ago by Samuel Palmer.

Colin Harrison - Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Introduction

Samuel Palmer visited, lived and worked in Shoreham, Kent from 1824 to c.1835. Such was the beauty of the valley that it motivated Palmer to produce what are widely considered to be his most creative and greatest works. He was a visionary artist, producing art inspired by poetry and his imagination, capturing the essence of the Darent Valley landscape. Although not very well-known at the time, Palmer's work went on to inspire generations of artists, including Graham Sutherland (who lived for a time in Eynsford and Farningham), John and Paul Nash, F.L. Griggs, Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden, John Minton, Paul Drury and many other influential British artists. We are lucky enough to have been entrusted with works from a few of these artists for this exhibition.

The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme (DVLPS) invited artists within the Sevenoaks and Dartford areas to submit works for an exhibition, in response to Palmer's body of work created during his time in Shoreham, Kent. The DVLPS team selected a range of works to reflect specific aspects of Palmer's creative methods and to support the stories told within the Samuel Palmer Trail, also commissioned by DVLPS. We invited those submitting works to use these Shoreham works as a point of inspiration, exploring the varied artistic techniques Palmer used - ink, watercolour, oil, gum arabic, pencil - or perhaps his fascination with shadows, moonlight or tree

details, or it might be the visionary element of his work which appealed. Or, of course, the beauty of the Darent Valley landscape surrounding the village.

The exhibition features facsimiles of a selection of Palmer's most important Shoreham works, together with responses from a variety of artists as well as collaborators from earlier DVLPS projects.

A panel made a selection from the work submitted. Among those on the panel were Colin Harrison, Senior Curator of European Art at the Ashmolean Museum (and a Palmer specialist), Victoria Threlfall, artist and writer of the Samuel Palmer Trail (free to download as part of Darent Valley Trails on the DVLPS website or relevant app stores), Kit Boyd, a neo-romantic (and Palmer-influenced) artist who created the Darent Valley Line posters, and representatives from the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme and the Sir Peter Blake Gallery in Dartford.

The exhibition is being held at both the Kaleidoscope Gallery in Sevenoaks from January to March 2024 and at the Sir Peter Blake Gallery in Dartford from March to May 2024, with other options on offer.

Sarah Newman - Curator, DVLPS

Advisers and partners

DVLPS projects and this exhibition

Colin Harrison - Colin Harrison has worked in the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, since 1993, and is now the Senior Curator of European Art. Although his interests are very wide, covering British and French art until 1945, he has always given special attention to the work of Samuel Palmer. He was one of the curators of the great bicentennial retrospective at the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 2005-6. He represents the Ashmolean on the Board of the DVLPS.

Victoria Threlfall was introduced to the work of Samuel Palmer when she was studying painting at Camberwell School of Art. Later she began to pursue her interest in the artist through extensive research, which included exploring the countryside around Shoreham and within the Darent Valley. This is where Palmer visited (but not yet living in) Shoreham from 1824 up to 1835 and it was here he painted his most experimental and visionary works. In 2013 she led the first of many guided Samuel Palmer walks from Shoreham, and in 2018, was invited by the DVLPS (in collaboration with Sarah Newman) to devise and write the Samuel Palmer audio-visual trail (free to download as part of Darent Valley Trails, on the DVLPS website or via relevant app stores). In her capacity as an artist she has led a series of linked drawing and painting workshops for the DVLPS all inspired by the work of Samuel Palmer.

Paul Cheese is a musician, producer and cyclist from Kent, UK. He is a forerunner in creating music from found sound and recording in unusual places, usually discovered on cycling missions carrying recording equipment and instruments. Whilst on the hunt for inspirational sounds and locations, Paul has written and recorded music in locations around the world and in every region of the UK. Paul Cheese's latest audio project 'The Big Record: Darent Valley' is a movement of music inspired by the Darent Valley - the sounds of communities, individuals, industry, artistic works, landscapes, nature, history and present, and inspiration from Samuel Palmer's paintings. Paul has been exploring the Darent Valley from its source near Westerham to its mouth at Dartford Creek collecting sounds, travelling on foot and by bicycle. To find out more about Paul's project visit The Big Record: Darent Valley (www.thebigrecord.com). The project is funded through a Landscape Heritage Grant Scheme through DVLPS.

Feral Practice Shoreham based artist Fiona MacDonald works with human and nonhuman beings as Feral Practice to create art projects that develop ethical and imaginative connection across species boundaries. *Stream of Consciousness* is a 360 VR film experience that celebrates the Darent Valley's rich cultural landscapes and biodiversity. The film begins before sunrise, amid a Spring dawn chorus recorded at the source of the River Darent in the

hills above Westerham. It visits different habitats along the valley, including bluebell woods, ancient trees, wildflower meadow, water meadow, lakes, and the chalk stream itself. Along the way the artist introduces us to a diversity of creaturely characters and reveals some surprising facts about the local wildlife. The story concludes at sunset in the Dartford Marshes, where the Darent flows out into the Thames. In 2023 *Stream of Consciousness* was toured at events across the Darent Valley. Viewers at the galleries are invited to wear VR headsets to immerse themselves in this unique experience.

Kit Boyd - Kit Boyd worked for many years for the Campaign to Protect Rural England, a role which chimed with his artistic concerns of our relationship with the landscape and our place in nature. Kit then moved for a few years to mid Wales to concentrate on his creative work, and now, working from his studio in Greenwich, frequently visits the Darent Valley to keep in touch with Palmer's visionary period in Shoreham, Kent. He works within the British romantic tradition and his recent commissions with the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership (six artworks relating to stops along the Darent Valley Line, for rail posters promoting the area) draw heavily on Kit's fascination with Palmer and all those he influenced.

Sarah Newman lives in Shoreham and her interest in Palmer began when an art-collector family friend remarked that she had moved not just to Shoreham but to 'Palmer's Shoreham' some 20 years ago. She recently worked with Victoria Threlfall to create the Samuel Palmer Trail - part of the DVLPS Darent Valley Trails app - and has led several walks around the village, telling stories about quirky, creative or influential people who chose to live in the Valley. She worked as a director on BBC's CountryFile and produced an environmental history series for the BBC/CNN, exploring how humans have shaped the landscape over millennia, and her love of nature and walking combine in this exhibition!

Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme



Samuel Palmer's Earthly Paradise

The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme is an exciting large-scale partnership, working to conserve and enhance the distinctive heritage landscapes of the Darent Valley and to connect people to the Valley to help us conserve it for the future.

The scheme focuses around the work of influential landscape artist Samuel Palmer who, 200 years ago, described the Darent Valley as an 'earthly paradise'. Today, he would still recognise the special qualities conveyed through his visionary paintings. It remains a landscape of surprising beauty, rich in diverse habitats and with an impressive cultural heritage. But this is a landscape on the edge. London has expanded to the brink of the valley, bringing multiple and dramatically increasing pressures that are dissolving its natural character. Many people who live within reach of the valley lack awareness of the amazing potential of this captivating landscape which is on their doorstep, further threatening the future of the valley.

The scheme brings together a unique mix of organisations that will work with and empower local communities to ensure the survival of this exceptional area. Through them, we will achieve genuinely sustainable conservation of its natural and cultural heritage with communities that feel emotionally and physically reconnected with their landscape.

darent-valley.org.uk



SAMUEL PALMER

THE SHOREHAM YEARS



Self-portrait, c.1826

Black chalk, heightened with white, on buff paper

© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



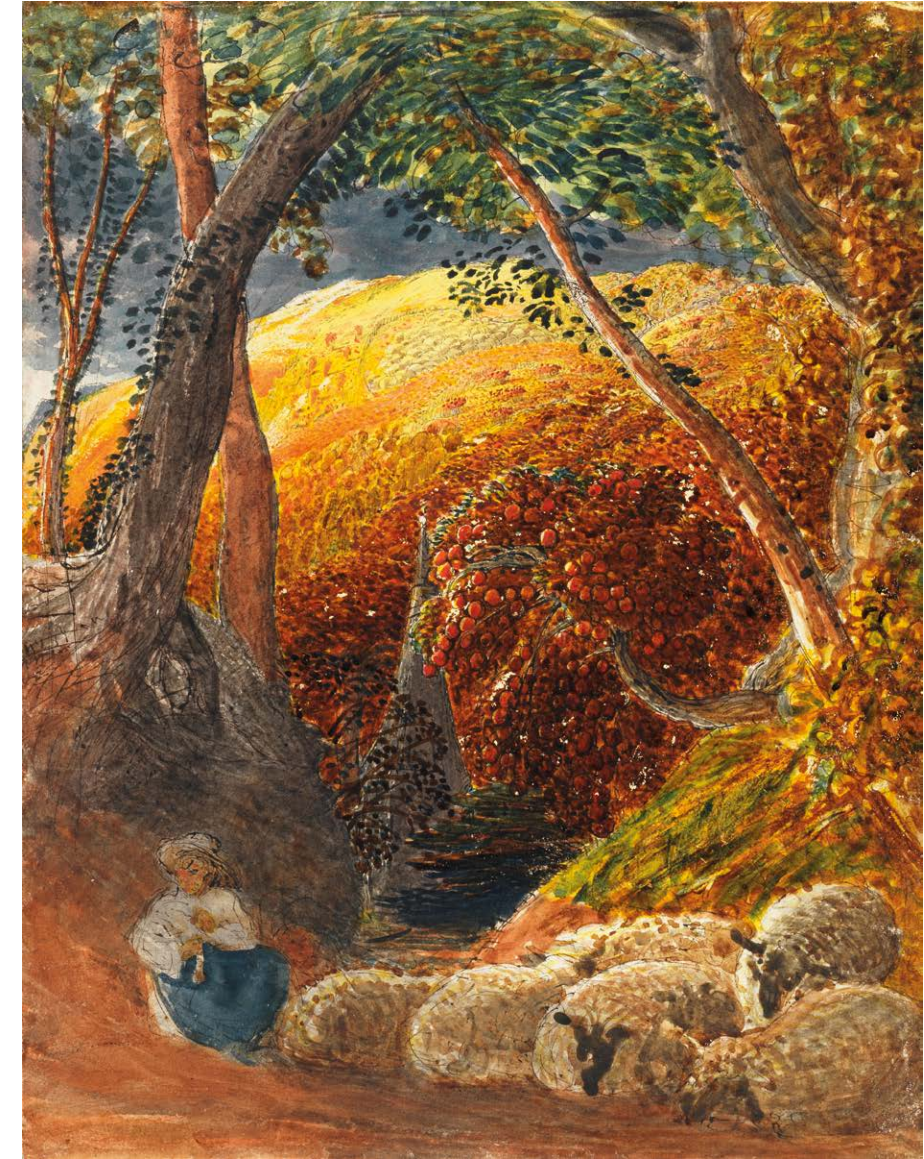
Drawing for The Bright Cloud, c. 1831-2
Indian ink and wash on card
© Tate London



The Valley Thick with Corn, 1825
Dark brown ink and sepia mixed with gum arabic
© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



In a Shoreham Garden, c.1829
Indian ink with watercolour and gouache on prepared board
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



The Magic Apple Tree, c. 1830
Brown ink, watercolour with gouache with gum arabic
© Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, Cambridge



Early Morning, 1825
Brown ink and sepia mixed with gum arabic
© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Shepherds Under a Full Moon, 1826-30
Pen and brown ink, brush and Indian ink, mixed with gum,
heightened with gouache on card
© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



***Oak Trees and Beech*, 1828**
Brown ink, watercolour and gouache, over graphite, on grey paper
© The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



***View of Shoreham*, c. 1820s**
Pen and ink on grey paper
© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

INSPIRED ARTISTS

SELECTED WORKS



Pastoral with a Horse Chestnut Tree, c.1832

Water and body colours with gum arabic,
white highlights in pencil

© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University



Ivy Cottage, Shoreham, c.1832

Water and body colours with gum arabic over
pencil and pen and brown ink

© Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University



COLIN ANDERSON

Magpie Bottom

Oil on board
50 x 60 cm



SONIA GRIFFIN

Mystic Valley
Watercolour and ink
40 x 50 cm



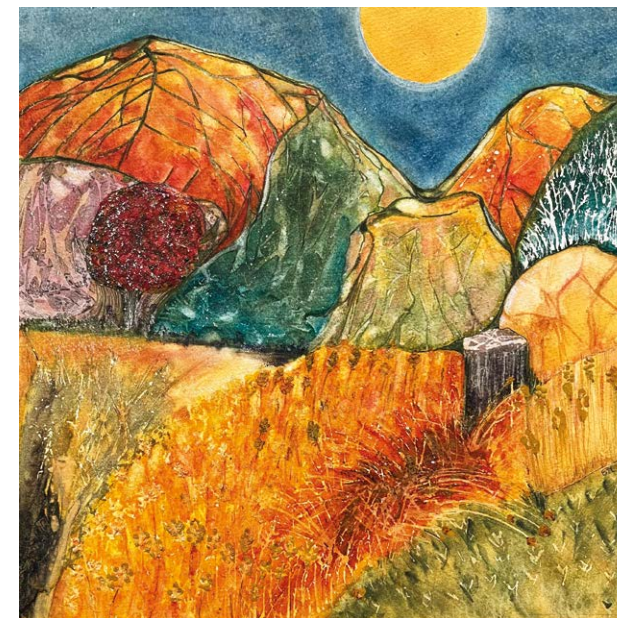
GILL BAKER

Oak Tree II, Lullingstone Park
Charcoal and pastel on paper



CHERIE LUBBOCK

Flying High
Acrylic, oil, charcoal, graphite,
oil bar on panel board
53 x 53 cm



SUE TAYLOR-LOWEN

Joy
Mixed media
50 x 50 cm



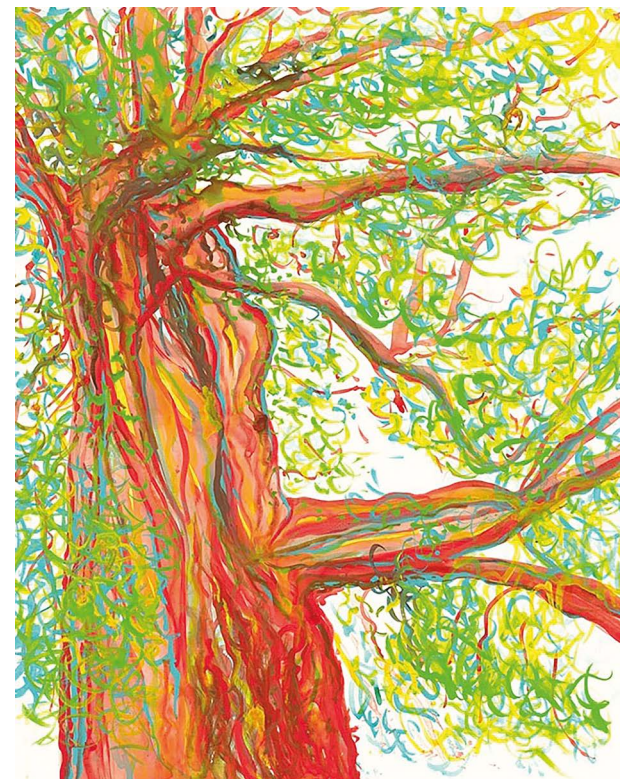
NICOLE MOLLETT

Samuel Palmer Tree at Lullingstone
Collaborative workshop drawing
154 x 145 cm



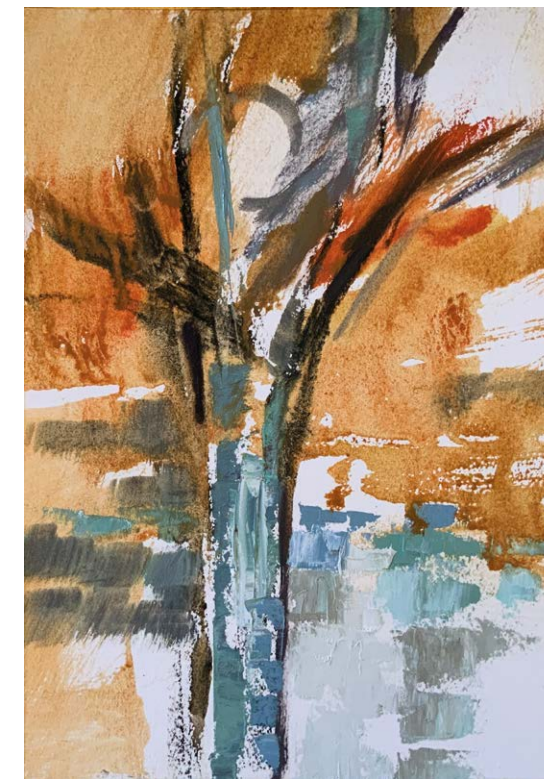
NICK JOHNSON

On Toys Hill
Acrylic on Canvas
76 x 61 cm



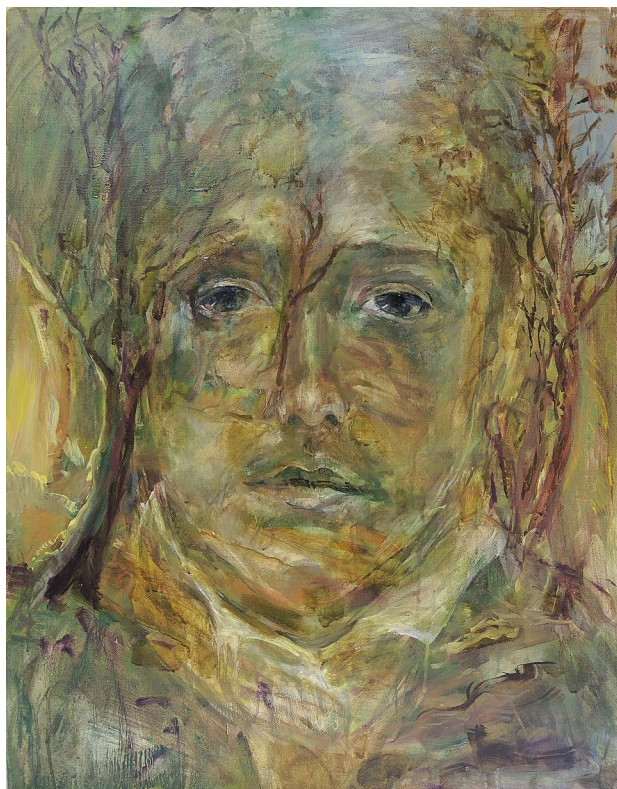
LUCY HOMER JONES

Lullingstone Park
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 40 cm



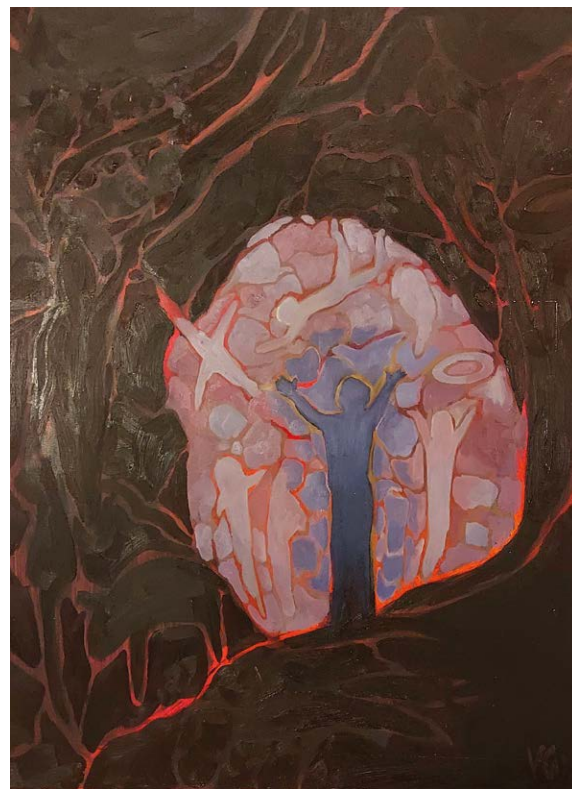
MARGARET DEVITT

Tree in Sunlight
Oil on paper
30 x 21 cm



JANE SANDOE

Samuel Palmer
Acrylic & oil on linen
92 x 72 cm



VICTORIA GRANVILLE

Night Mind



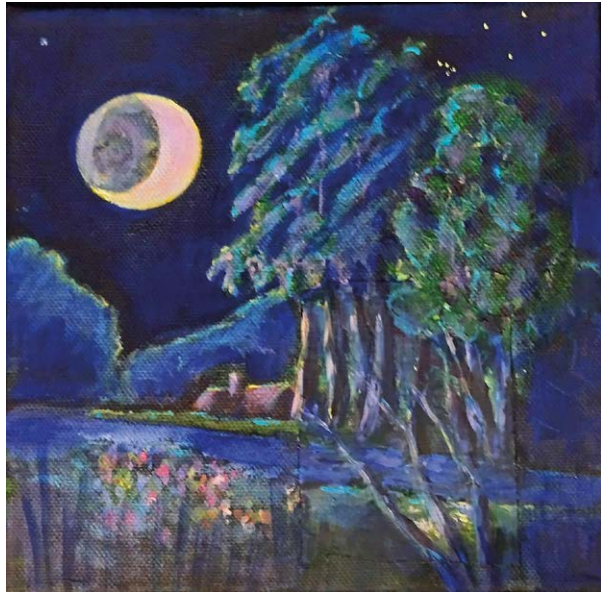
ROBYN PAYNE

Untitled II
Linocut
40 x 30 cm



ANN BRIDGES

Early One Morning, Just as the Day is Dawning
Pencil
55 x 55 cm



EIJA BURRELL

Moon

Acrylic on box canvas
20 x 20 cm



JOCELYN BAILEY

Stars as they appear

Watercolour on laid printmaking paper
30 x 30 cm

NICK HEBDITCH

***Lavender Field, Looking Back
Towards Shoreham***

Oil on board
21 x 30 cm



LESLEY HALL

Ivy Cottage

Watercolour, pen and ink on paper
28 x 40.5 cm





ANGELA STOCKER

2020 Vision

Oil paint, resin plaster on canvas with fishing wire and black fabric
90 x 57 x 10 cm



AMANDA HOPKINS

October Residue

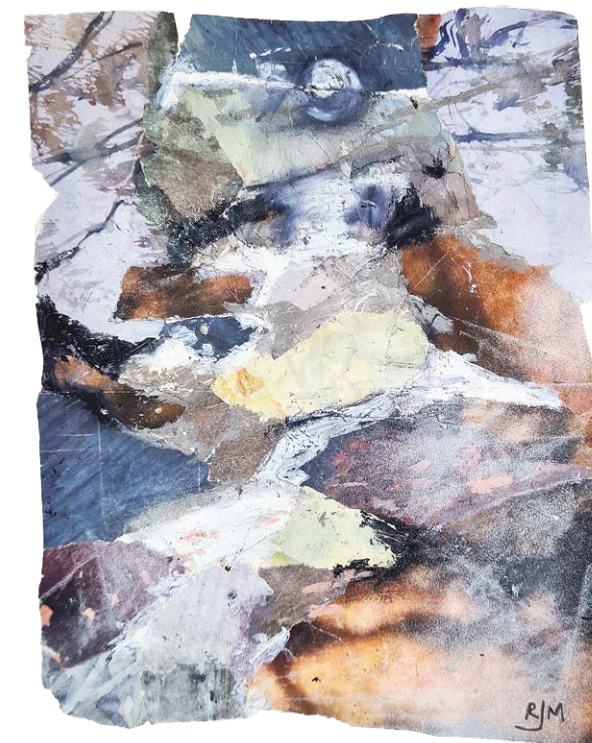
Digital print, charcoal, wire, cotton
170 x 60 x 90 cm



KATE GRIMES

Lord of the Forest

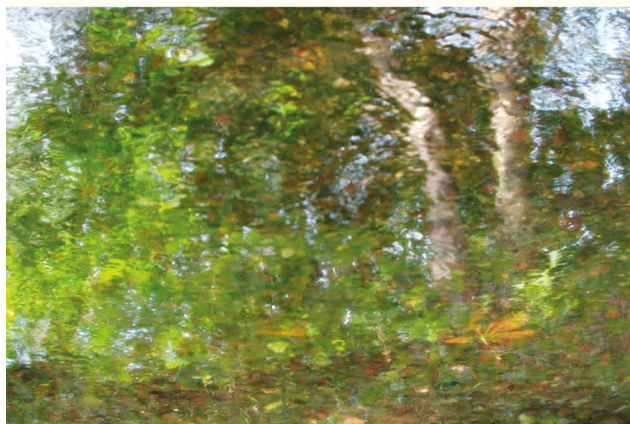
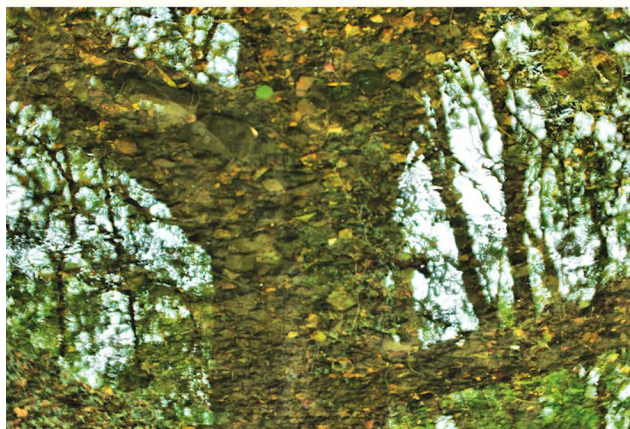
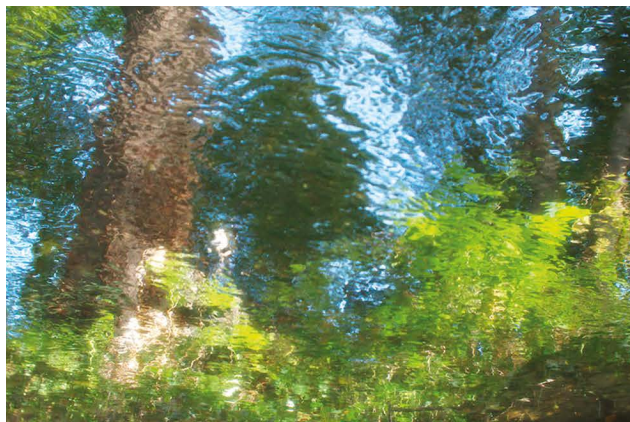
Paper-based materials, acrylic, sand,
paste, charcoal and moorlaughe
42 x 30 cm



ROWENA MCWILLIAMS

Moonlight

Mixed media collage
45 x 35 cm



DEREK MEDHURST

River Darent Trees
 Photograph
 52 x 42 cm

ROGER LEE

Darent Valley Tree
North of Shoreham
 Photograph
 33 x 60 cm



DUNCAN DWINELL

Oak Tree
 Photograph
 20 x 32 cm



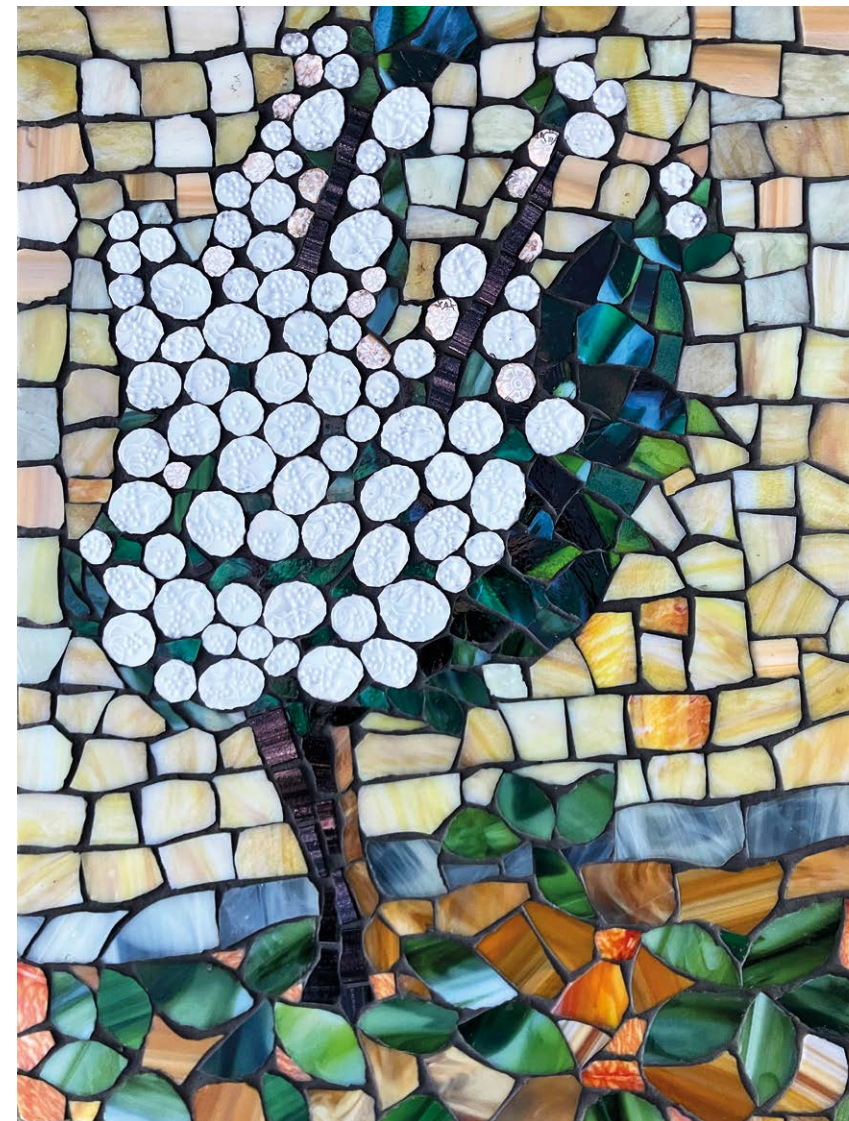


DONALD SMITH

Colour/Space

Oil on linen

40 x 30 cm

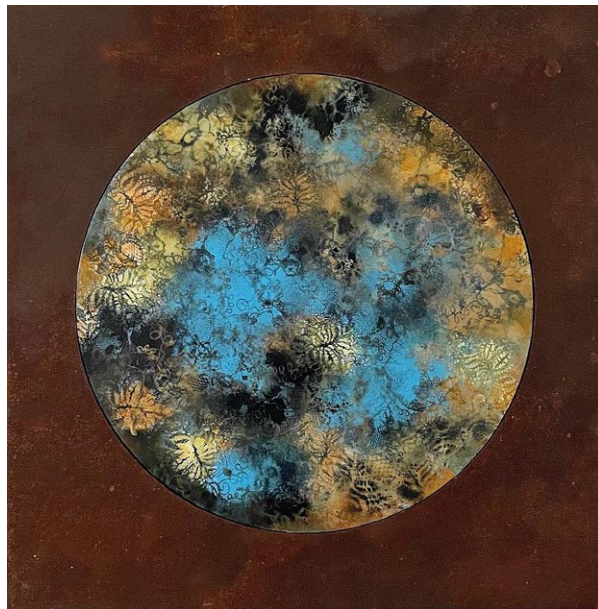


SARAH BOURNE

Pear Tree

Mosaic using vintage ceramic and glass

40 x 30 cm



VICTORIA THRELFALL

Treasury

Acrylic and oil on steel
60 x 60 cm



FRANNY SWANN

A frightful kind of Paradise: Mist in the Darenth Valley from the Shoreham Road

Crayon and white/black gel pen on black card
31 x 76 cm

FERAL PRACTICE

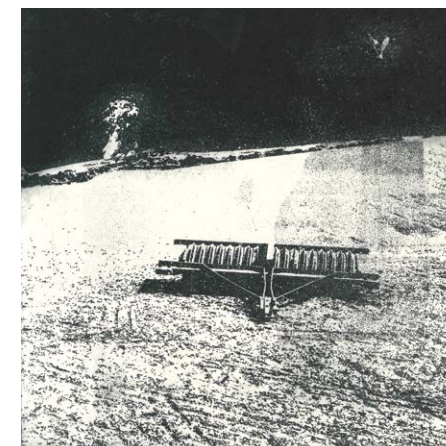
Stream of Consciousness, 2023
360 VR film (18 mins 20 secs)



SARAH CLIFF

The Darkened Valley I

Copperplate on Hahnemuhle paper
20 x 20 cm



The Darkened Valley III

Copperplate on Hahnemuhle paper
20 x 20 cm

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Back cover:
Kit Boyd, **Shoreham**
Ink on board
63 x 41 cm



Kent Downs
National
Landscape



CROSS-CHANNEL
GEOPARK
TRANSMANCHE



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ASHMOLEAN
MUSEUM
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Kent
County
Council



Dan
DARTFORD ARTS NETWORK