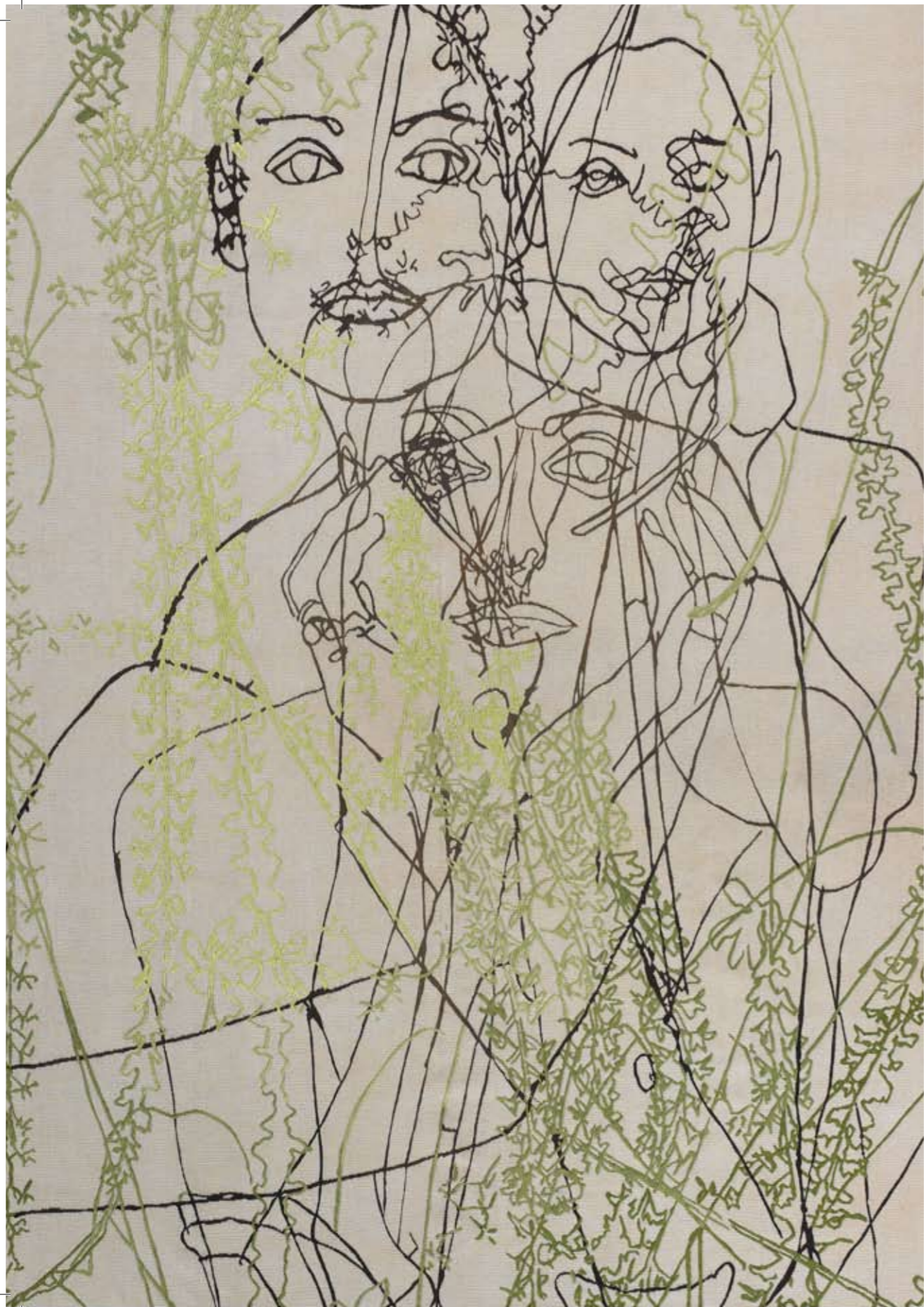


Contemporary Eye: Crossovers Artwise Curators



Contemporary Eye: Crossovers is the second exhibition curated by Artwise Curators (Susie Allen, Laura Culpan, Deana Vanagan) in association with Pallant House Gallery exploring contemporary art through the eyes of the private art collector. Here, Artwise introduce this year's show which focuses on the revival of traditional craft techniques in contemporary art.

Following 2009's 'Contemporary Eye: Material Matters', which examined some of the challenges posed by the different media used by artists in contemporary artworks (such as light, sound and biodegradable material), 'Contemporary Eye: Crossovers' explores the importance of artistic process, with a specific focus on fine artists who incorporate elements of traditional 'craft' approaches in their practice. The works included in the exhibition use what can be termed as traditional materials of craftsmanship such as ceramics, wood, textiles, glass and taxidermy, but what unites the works is a layering of process, material, concept and interpretation.



Barnaby Barford, *Come on you lightweight - down it* (2007),
© the artist Photograph by Noah da Costa

Opposite
Gary Hume, *Georgie and Orchids* (2008), Wool tapestry with raised silk embroidery,
Edition of five © the artist. Image © Banners of Persuasion

The exhibition is not about defining or reinventing the term 'craft', but rather, a way to bring together contemporary artists who have demonstrated a particular interest in the process of making the work and the materials and methods used. In each piece, the 'hand of the artist' or the craftsmanship of the piece is inextricably linked to the success of the work on both a conceptual and aesthetic level.

The selection of works from private contemporary art collections has been influenced by our host space, Pallant House Gallery, whose magnificent collection and architecture has been the inspiration behind the overriding concept. The Gallery is essentially a 'collection of collections', and much of the original exhibition space is a former domestic setting. When

deciding which artists and works to show, we very much took this as a starting point – exploring questions such as how the traditional crafts such as taxidermy and ceramics would have originally have been shown in the eighteenth-century townhouse. We wanted to interact with the old and new spaces of the Gallery and it has led us to turn some of the rooms on their heads.

So, you can expect to find some unexpected changes in the galleries, such as contemporary butterfly wallpaper by Damien Hirst adorning the walls of the new wing thereby domesticating the white cube space and showing the artworks in a new light. Chippendale furniture from the old house will sit along side Susan Hefuna's Arabic carved wooden screen and Grayson Perry's ceramics and tapestries. Equally, you may have to search harder for some contemporary artworks that are 'hidden' amongst the existing displays such as Barnaby Barford's ceramics that delightfully converse with the Geoffrey Freeman Collection of Bow Porcelain. Barford intervenes, mutilates, constructs and reconstructs these familiar porcelain figures into narratives that are dark, humorous and intrinsically contemporary. Also, within the Arthur Miller Collection of 18th century Irish Glass the discerning viewer may find some incongruous items: delicately made glass objects in form of hand grenade by British Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum: strategically placed amongst the eighteenth century Irish glass.

Taxidermy features strongly in the exhibition as there has been a resurgence of the art form in recent years within the contemporary art scene. The artists selected for 'Contemporary Eye: Crossovers', such as Artists Anonymous, Neil Hamon, Kelly McCallum, Polly Morgan and Nina Saunders approach and use the medium in diverse ways. Saunders' trilogy from 'Katy's Convoy' features altered and distorted furniture that has been sculpted and precisely re-upholstered to incorporate the recycled taxidermy animals. The resulting installation is both surreal and funny but with a more serious underpinning reference to the innocent people caught up in natural and manmade catastrophes. Like Hatoum, it references social, geographical, political and environmental displacement and strife.

Polly Morgan takes the craft of taxidermy to another level. Often using typical Victorian glass-domed vitrines as an integral part of her sculpture, she creates intimate and sometimes surreal scenes by juxtaposing domestic objects with taxidermed

creatures. The end result is a narrative that plays on a familiar aesthetic, but arranges the animals peacefully in death rather than apparently bringing them back to life as traditionally done in Victorian taxidermy dioramas. Her choice of using small vermin –rats and mice- also goes against the grain of tradition. Rather than displaying hunting trophies, the larger and more ferocious the animal the better, Morgan's vitrines and installation are delicate yet very thought-provoking, appearing to question what costs our own human intervention are having within the animal world. In the old hallway of the Pallant House we wanted to create a strange new space inhabited by some of these taxidermy works, which recalled the traditional grand entrance hall as a site of artworks and taxidermy. We also wanted to encourage the visitor to enjoy the hallway as a room rather than a transient space.

'Contemporary Eye: Crossovers' is by no means an overview on the topic of 'fine art and craft' as there are many other key artists who incorporate such hands-on methods of making who are not included in this exhibition, rather this exhibition is brought together through the kind collaboration of a number of British-based collectors who have generously allowed us a glimpse into their private collections from which we have identified this topic as an area of focus and interest. It is also our hope that by showing works of this genre that the audience will connect to both the borrowed artworks and also Pallant House Gallery's permanent collection in a different light: perhaps questioning more the process of creating, the methods of making, the attention to detail and of course the multifaceted levels of interpretation through different juxtapositions.

Exhibition

Contemporary Eye: Crossovers
2 October 2010–6 March 2011

Tour

Curator's Tour
Wednesday 9 February, 2pm

There are a number of related talks, please see pages 44–45 for details.

Polly Morgan, Rest a Little on the Lap of Life (2005) © the artist. Image © Tessa Angus 2010

