

## News release

**To be released:** Immediately  
**Date:** 24 January 2006

### **East of England talent scheme proves a winning formula as Norfolk artist gains international art prize**

Susan Gunn, a painter based in Norwich, won the Sovereign European Art Prize with two paintings commissioned as part of Escalator Visual Arts – a scheme that finds and supports the most promising artists from the East of England.

Gunn was selected to be part of the programme in 2004, and was commissioned to create site-specific work for an exhibition at the Great Eastern Hotel, London in July 2005. These paintings, Specto Specus I and II, were nominated for the prize which was announced on 13 January 2006.

Since then, a new group of emerging artists from the East of England has been selected by a panel of judges and the region's curators to be part of the pioneering Escalator Visual Arts initiative, which is led by Commissions East and funded by Arts Council England, East. Gunn's success is inspiration for these artists, who are all at a pivotal stage in their careers - needing the crucial investment, professional development support and showcasing opportunities that Escalator Visual Arts offers.

Gunn says of the scheme:

"The professional and artistic support that I received from Escalator Visual Arts helped me to concentrate on building a sustainable professional practice. The Arts Council's Grants for the Arts application process enabled me to identify key aims and objectives, and the funding I received was instrumental in providing the resources and opportunity for me to focus single-mindedly on making unique and high quality work."

Cont/...

#### **Commissions East**

St Giles Hall, Pound Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AE

**T** 01223 356882 **F** 01223 356883 **E** [info@commissionseast.org.uk](mailto:info@commissionseast.org.uk) **W** [www.commissionseast.org.uk](http://www.commissionseast.org.uk)

Registered charity number 1045657. Company registration number 2802661. VAT registration number 636778589.

The artists selected for Escalator Visual Arts in 2005/06 are:

Matt Cook (performance, installation) - Essex  
Tom Cox-Bisham (sculpture) – Essex  
Lorraine Douglas (performance, installation) – Hertfordshire  
Sandra Flower (installation) – Essex  
David Kefford (sculpture) – Hertfordshire  
Simon Liddiment (sculpture, installation) - Suffolk  
Nicola Naismith (mixed media) – Norfolk  
Alex Pearl (film) - Suffolk  
Emily Russell & Kristian De La Riva (digital) - Cambridgeshire  
Sarah Sabin (mixed media) – Essex  
Rob Smith (mixed media) – Essex  
Townley and Bradby (installation) – Norfolk  
Zory (installation, video and photography) - Hertfordshire

**For more information contact:**

**Charity Green** Director of Development  
01223 356882 [charity@commissionseast.org.uk](mailto:charity@commissionseast.org.uk)

**Editors notes:**

**1. Susan Gunn**

Susan Gunn lives and works in Norwich. Gunn exhibited in 'Norwich Fringe at the Factory' and in 'Crossing the Line' at Salthouse Church in 2004. She has exhibited at the Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery and was the winner of the prestigious Bishops Prize in 2003 and the Sovereign European Art Prize in 2006. Gunn makes large scale gesso paintings that are both 'fragile and resilient', referencing control and chance. Gunn is married to former Norwich City goalkeeper, Bryan Gunn and is on the Council of Arts Council England, East.

**2. Escalator**

Escalator is a pioneering Arts Council England, East initiative to support individuals, groups and organisations across the artistic fields of performing arts, visual arts and literature. Escalator opens up professional development opportunities for artists and art organisations in the region. It also attracts national and international artists to the East of England to help foster a rich and creative cultural landscape. Visit [www.artscouncil.org.uk/escalator](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/escalator) for further information.

Cont/...

### 3. Escalator Visual Arts 2006/07 artists

#### **Matt Cook**

Based in Essex, Matt Cook graduated from Cardiff School of Art & Design in 2002 with a BA in Fine Art (Time-based Practice). His degree show work 'The Pendulum Electronica' has been presented in Nottingham, Glasgow and Paris, and his ongoing series of drawing events have been presented in France, China and Belarus. In 2003 he worked with performance group Good Cop Bad Cop, and a partnership with André Stitt formed the beginnings of a project that they will be taking on a tour of the United States in April 2006. In late 2004 and 2005 he took part in a residency at BCA Gallery, Bedford leading to his first solo exhibition 'Stereography: stereophonic geography'. His next commissioned performance 'Mumbling Trains: An exaggerated anthology' will take place in February 2006 at the Swansea Waterfront Museum.

#### **Tom Cox-Bisham**

Tom Cox-Bisham lives in Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex and studied Fine Art at Reading University and the Slade. He works primarily with sculpture and installation and has exhibited at the Aspex Gallery in Portsmouth and at the Liverpool Biennial. Previous works include 'Rotating Door', a full-scale replica of a modern office facade made entirely from corrugated cardboard and shown at the 11th Mostyn Open. He recently completed a public art commission for the new BBC buildings at White City in London. Cox-Bisham also works collaboratively with artist Jon Lockhart on site-specific installations such as 'Together in Electric Dreams' (The Museum of Installation, 2002) and 'Not Fade Away' (Firstsite in Colchester, 2004).

#### **Lorraine Douglas**

Lorraine Douglas comes from Hertfordshire. Her practice is multi-faceted and predominantly research based, and her works are often collaborative and socially informed. Douglas is currently researching early 20th century swing dance and vaudeville performance and is developing collaborations with international dancers and specialists in the field. As part of her training she lived in Amsterdam, participating in dance workshops in Sweden, Russia, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands and Britain. Douglas received an Artsadmin Artists' Bursary in 2004-2005 and a Grants for the Arts award from the Arts Council England, East to further her research in 2005-2006.

#### **Sandra Flower**

Sandra Flower works in photography and sculpture and is based in Gestingthorpe, Essex. Flower graduated with an MA from Goldsmiths College, London in 2005. Her work subverts commonplace domestic objects in order to question the English obsession with keeping up the appearance of an ideal home. Flower graduated from Goldsmiths, London in 2005. She has recently had a solo show 'The Art of Good housekeeping' at Christchurch Mansion in Suffolk, and exhibited in 'incontext' at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2003. Her work will be showcased at the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre, Goldsmiths, London in July 2006.

#### **David Kefford**

David Kefford is a sculptor working in a variety of media, who graduated from the MA Fine Art course at University of Brighton in 1999. He currently works from a studio at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridgeshire where he recently completed a residency, 'Born Again', in the summer of 2005. David has had solo exhibitions in art galleries and museums throughout the UK and in 2005-06 a national touring exhibition of his work was organised by University of Hertfordshire Galleries and Rugby Art Gallery and Museum. He has also participated in several juried group exhibitions including the Jerwood Drawing Prize, Mostyn Open 12 and Kettle's Yard Open 2002.

#### **Simon Liddiment**

Simon Liddiment's work is diverse in form, material and means; his 2005 solo show at the OUTPOST gallery in Norwich included works that used drawing, photography, carved wood, the Royal Mail and a highways road marking contractor. Typically, but not exclusively, the work takes familiar identities and formats as the starting point for discreet manipulations; the results often seeming more found than searched for. Liddiment is based in Lowestoft.

#### **Alex Pearl**

Alex Pearl makes things and then videos them before they fall apart. His work deals with chance and the things in life he doesn't do very well - singing, dancing and telling jokes all feature. He is currently attempting to tour the country with an automatic filmmaking unit comprising a number of camera operators and a remote controlled airship. He is appearing soon in Nottingham for 'Sideshow' 2006. Pearl is especially proud of having shown work simultaneously in California and Siberia. He lives in Suffolk.

#### **Nicola Naismith**

Nicola Naismith's work is subject-led and crosses boundaries of practice and media. Hand and digital skills complement each other and she works with drawing, video, installation and objects. Her work was exhibited at The Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Australia as part of 'The Space Between' conference in 2003. An ongoing collaboration with Jan Miller resulted in a site-specific installation for Salthouse 05. 'White Collar Worker' was recently on show at Inkpen Downie Architecture and Design Gallery in Colchester. Nicola's current work explores the relationship between technology and the body, both in contemporary art practice and everyday life. Naismith is based in Norwich and is participating in the Commissions East mentoring scheme, mentored by artist Richard Layzell.

Cont/...

#### **Emily Russell & Kristian De La Riva**

Emily Russell and Kristian De La Riva met in 1994 and are both artistic and domestic partners. They worked collaboratively throughout their degree courses at Nottingham Trent University and are now based in Cambridge. Russell and De La Riva work in moving image, predominantly using a hand drawn animation technique called 'Rotoscoping' where live footage of their choreographed performances is used as the primary source for the animated image. Their lives together provide the inspiration for their work, and they have exhibited at Q Arts Future Focus in Derby, the Kettle's Yard Open (2004), at the Oxo Tower in London, the Oriel Mostyn Open and on Londonart.com (2005).

#### **Sarah Sabin.**

Sarah Sabin lives and works in Colchester. She works in a variety of media, including photography, painting, printing and sculpture. Sabin is inspired by real and imagined locations, history, artefacts and archaeology. She creates her own 'histories', making and adapting images and objects that may be exhibited in ways suggestive of museum displays. She had a solo show entitled 'Underground' at Firstsite, Colchester in 2002 and has just completed a residency in Firstsite's artist's space. Sabin has also worked in collaboration with other artists and organisations to make artworks for public places and has been commissioned to create works for hospitals in Essex.

#### **Rob Smith**

Rob Smith's works use digital media, installation and video. Through the deployment of apparatus and the testing of systems, he engages with ideas of chance, measurement, time, process and inevitable failure. Smith graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2002 and has exhibited at Keith Talent Gallery, The Kiosk Project and in 'Trackers' at Pitshanger Manor Gallery. He has a forthcoming show at The Royal Academy Schools Gallery, Hornsey and is exhibiting in the national touring exhibition 'The Invention of Solitude' later this year.

#### **Townley and Bradby**

Based in Norwich, Townley and Bradby have been collaborating for four years making installations in public places. Their most recent piece, a commission for Norwich City Council during CAN.05, was a site-specific drawing in a busy city centre square comprising a network of white lines painted on the ground, leading shoppers on winding deviations from their usual routes. One aim of their installations is to provide a framework which people can use to reflect on their surroundings, often in a participative or playful way. Previous works include a trail of altered books in The Forum, Norwich and a study of pedestrian navigation and cognitive maps throughout the city's marketplaces.

#### **Zory**

Zory is a visual artist based in Hertfordshire. Her practice is concerned with the universal issues around contemporary human conditions, specifically exploring alienation and the oppression of women. She works with a broad range of media including of time-based imagery, installation and photography. Her work has been shown widely including a solo exhibition at 198 Gallery in London (2005) and 'Sanctuary' - a group show at the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow (2003). Her next solo exhibition will be at Watermans Arts Centre, Brentford in February 2006. Zory is participating in the Commissions East mentoring scheme, mentored by artist Richard Layzell.

#### **4. Commissions East**

Commissions East is the visual arts development agency for the East of England, providing an advisory and management service for commissioners, a programme of special projects addressing new areas of visual arts practice and a range of services for artists.

#### **5. Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts. Between 2003-06 it will invest £2bn of public funds in the arts in England, including funding from the National Lottery. Contact Alex Taylor on 01223 454415 or [alex.taylor@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:alex.taylor@artscouncil.org.uk)