

News release

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New Backing for Visual Arts Talent in the East of England

With Arts Council England funding, Commissions East is leading a fresh approach to unleashing the potential of the most promising artists based in the East of England.

In consultation with the region's curators, eleven artists have been chosen to take part in Escalator Visual Arts – an initiative that will enable them to benefit from financial investment, bespoke career development support and opportunities to show their work to new audiences.

To gain crucial exposure in London, the selected artists have been commissioned to create temporary site-specific work for a show entitled 'Stay' at the Great Eastern Hotel (1-15 July 2005). The artists will respond to the Hotel's private rooms and public spaces, rich history and proximity to the region (the Hotel is situated next to Liverpool Street Station – a major gateway to the East of England).

One of the selected artists, Robert Sherratt, says of the opportunity:

"Being part of Escalator Visual Arts means I have a credible context for the presentation of new work, along with the resources to make paintings without compromise"

Escalator Visual Arts is part of a wider campaign initiated by Arts Council England, East to find, assist and invest in regional talent across all art forms.

For more information contact:

Charity Green Director of Development
01223 356882 charity@commissionseast.org.uk

Commissions East

St Giles Hall, Pound Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AE
T 01223 356882 F 01223 356883 E info@commissionseast.org.uk W www.commissionseast.org.uk

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Editors notes:

1. About 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 support for artist-led initiatives.

Arts Council England, East charged Commissions East with a leadership role in the development of Escalator Visual Arts and is supporting the initiative with a grant of £206,850.

2. About 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.

3. About the Great Eastern Hotel

Opened in 1884 and extended in 1901, the Great Eastern is one of the grand railway station hotels of the Victorian era. In 1997, it closed for a three-year, £70 million refurbishment, re-opening in March 2000. Since then, the hotel - and its bars, restaurants and event spaces - has brokered new relationships between the City and the East End, particularly in relation to its engagement with contemporary art and artists.

4. About the selected artists

Simon Carter

Simon Carter is a painter with over 20 years' experience, based in Frinton-on-Sea, Essex. For most of his career he has balanced working as a postman with being an artist, and has only recently painted full-time. Carter's semi-abstract large-scale paintings draw their inspiration from the Essex landscape, particularly the coastline near his studio.

Giovanna Maria Casetta

Giovanna Maria Casetta lives in Ipswich and works in film, performance and installation. Her practice is concerned with the fragile relationship between the 'exterior self' and the 'interior self', looking at issues of celebrity, beauty and depression. Casetta is working on a new commission for Kettle's Yard in Cambridge and Home in London, and a show in Zagreb, Croatia. She has recently shown work in 'Rear View Mirror' at Kettle's Yard, at the Brighton Fringe Festival in 2004, the Bluecoat Arts Centre in Liverpool in 2003 and the Transition Gallery in London in 2003.

Emily Cole

Emily Cole creates series of paintings that document journeys she takes, often by public transport. Her work was featured in the Kettle's Yard Open and 'Crossing the Line' at Salthouse Church in 2004, and an exhibition at the Vision Gallery in Tokyo. Cole also had a solo show at the Babylon Gallery in Ely in 2003. Emily lives in Norwich.

Richard Dedomenici

Dedomenici's 'Embracing Failure' lecture at Battersea Arts Centre recently sold out. It focused on his own examples of creative failure, including an effort to scale the walls of Cardiff Prison, an attempt to turn coal into diamonds for the Wellcome Trust and trying to target the guns of HMS Belfast onto his mum's house in Watford (where he also lives). Dedomenici, who describes himself as a 'one-man subversive think-tank', performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the ANTI Festival in Finland and at the Liverpool Biennale in 2004.

Mark Dixon

Mark Dixon lives in Ipswich. His practice is typically experimental and often collaborative, and he works across many media including sculpture, print, film, wireless video, installation, photography and projection. He has worked in the USA, Russia and the Czech Republic. Dixon is currently undertaking a residency with PVA Media Lab exploring interactive technologies. He hopes to take this project to Singapore in 2006.

Tess Glanville

Tess Glanville works in a variety of media including installations, experimental film and photography. Her work explores aspects of navigation and points of reference, challenging notions of space and time. Glanville had a solo show at Triskel Arts Centre, Cork in 2003 and was selected for Perspective 2004 at Ormeau Baths Gallery in Belfast. Her work is currently showing in 'Sequences' which is touring to various galleries around the UK. Glanville lives in Suffolk.

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. Gunn makes large scale gesso paintings that are both 'fragile and resilient', referencing control and chance.

Leo Hillier

Leo Hillier is a freelance illustrator based in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. In 2003, Hillier was selected to participate in Platform 4 (the survey of the region's most promising creative industries graduates) at Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery. His works explore an imaginary dream-world and use a variety of media including acrylic, watercolour and ink drawing. Hillier is interested in pursuing a career in editorial and children's illustration.

Lyndall Phelps

Lyndall Phelps, based in Ely, Cambridgeshire had solo exhibitions at Firstsite in Colchester and at Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham. Phelps was also selected for a group show curated by Danielle Arnaud at the Museum of Garden History in London. Her work has been bought for Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum for 'Medicate', a collection of contemporary art examining medical themes. Phelps works across a range of media depending on her subject matter, and science, needlework, criminology, mathematics, medicine, horticulture and natural history are some of the eclectic source material she explores.

Robert Sherratt

Robert Sherratt, a painter based in Norwich, was recently selected for the Kettle's Yard Open and the Prospects Drawing Prize exhibition in London. He is a member of 'Outpost', an artist led initiative in Norwich. Sherratt works with an index of randomly generated paint marks stored on 35mm slides. His works are created by projecting these marks onto the canvas surface and painting them in to suggest figurative imagery.

Chris Wood

Chris Wood is an artist who works in glass and light, based at a studio at Wying Arts, Cambridgeshire. Wood produces innovative glass installations for gallery exhibition and has shown at Fernynwoods Gallery, Bury St Edmunds Gallery and Babylon Gallery in Ely. In addition, Wood has also produced work for public and private commissions, including a recent large-scale commission for South Cambridgeshire District Council.