

Joya Reimagined

Thameside Studio Gallery

27th August – 11th September 2022

Phil Barton

Living Landscapes: Damaged Nature (2019 – 2022) Mixed media

Desert land, wetlands, wild lands, urban land, damaged land. Nature in retreat and Gaia violated. From Joya to Cornwall, Lindisfarne to Lindow, trees to insects, pain is in the air. My work responds with grief, science and hope. All is not lost. Poetry is always there, often hiding in plain sight.

Five works made over the past three years and two made for this exhibition. At Joya in June 2019 I painted the cracked mud on the bed of the barranca and made a small work from the same mud mixed with dyes distilled from local vegetation by my fellow resident, Marianna Heilmann. It was an important step for my practice, both painting on the land and with the land which was integral to the local place, its landscape, soils, weather and land management.

The other four works, inspired by that insight, are all made either with the land or plants found in a particular living landscape or in close association with it.

Joya Baranco (2019) 390 x 295 mm

Giclée print of watercolour painted onto dried mud at Joya residency

Lindisfarne Saltmarsh 9 (2020) 435 x 330 mm

Monoprint made with vegetation from a saline lagoon at Lindisfarne causeway. Healthy saltmarshes are major carbon sinks and important ecosystems, but are threatened by sea level rise.

Superseeded: Hostile Environment (Beech Tree) (2021) 480 x 655 mm

One of a major series of monoprints inspired by a residency in 2019 with The UK National Tree Seed Project collecting 95% of the genome of our native woody species, many of which are threatened by pests & diseases and climate change. The prints are made with material from native trees and overprinted to partially obscure their image in recognition of our dysfunctional relationship with our majestic neighbours.

No Waiting, Coverack Promenade, Cornwall (2022) (1/3) 525 x 425 mm

Visits to the extraordinary landscapes of Cornwall last autumn led to a series of screen prints on the theme of Rock, Sea, Sky. This detail of a found fern leaf on a no waiting line above the sea says much about human/ other than human relationships – a beautiful fragment of fern on decaying and artificial tarmac.

Lindow Moss Cross Section (2022) 330 x 415 mm

Lindow Moss in Cheshire has been degraded by peat cutting for decades, but in February this year the restoration of the former raised peat bog began. This is one of 30 experimental prints, collages and paintings made this spring in celebration of the Moss. Based on a 1895 engraving of the layers in the Moss, it represents a living bog growing upwards towards the sun. The print background contains sand from the margins of the bog.

Made for this exhibition:

Joya on Thames (2022) 123 x 22 mm

12 trays of Thames mud have a message to reveal as the intertidal mud gathered below the Anchor and Hope a kilometre upstream dries out and cracks during the course of the exhibition, echoing the dry river beds of the barancos surrounding Joya.

Mudlines (2022) 1000 x 700 mm

Inspired by a small 'mud painting' made at Joya, this work incorporates mud from two estuaries, a barranca and a pond of significance to the artist. Working from the outside to the centre, the panels of mud come from the pond in the artist's garden in Rusholme, Manchester, the Mersey Estuary near Warrington, the Thames Estuary near Woolwich and a barranca close to Joya residency in Spain. Between the mud are dyes from three plants –

- blackberries from the artist's garden ripening a month earlier than they used to when he moved into the house 30 years ago
- buddleia flowers from beside the Mersey, an invasive species beloved by butterflies and thriving on dereliction and
- ash leaves gathered in the lane behind the artist's house where an ash suffering from ash die back has just been removed, whilst others have so far escaped from this ash pandemic.

With thanks to Olga Suchanova who provided the stone from Joya which was ground down to provide the material for the central panel.

At the end of the exhibition the mud from the Thames, the Mersey and my garden pond will be returned to whence it came.

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