

Press Release:
Mount Stuart Contemporary Visual Arts Programme 2012

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Film works by artists Ian Bourn, Gill Clarke and Lucy Skaer, Nina Danino.

Sculpture and works on paper by Kate Davis

Curated by James Mackay, film curator, producer and guardian of seminal works by Derek Jarman and Sophie Crichton Stuart, founding director Mount Stuart Visual Arts

Artists' Talk: 24th June 3pm with James Mackay – booking advisable

Exhibition: 24th June to 31st October 2012

Short films, sculpture and works on paper located within the historic interior and collections at Mount Stuart reference contemplation and exploration through the practice of the individual artists and collectively bring into focus the intrinsic natural refuge of the 'island' space and the complex cultural strands contained in the house.

Ian Bourn - 'Peninsula'

Peninsula is an ongoing topographic investigation by Ian Bourn. The starting point is a section of frayed wallpaper and skirting in a domestic interior, from which the artist has extrapolated the features of a rocky coastline appearing as if seen from a boat at sea. Repeatedly sketching and painting this 'new and unexplored territory', Bourn's 'approach' is an attempt to bring it into sharper focus, trace its precise contours and project a fuller map of this inner region of his imagination.

"In his 'Treatise on Painting' Da Vinci famously discussed this form of 'visual invention', in which a stain on a wall can act as a catalyst and adds: "But, first you must know the components of all those groups of things you wish to represent, such as the members of the animal kingdom, as well as the components of the countryside, such as rocks, plants and similar things..." Which implies one's ability to visualise an imagined world will be improved by observation and understanding of the physically real one."

Having noticed certain similarities between the glimpsed terrain on his kitchen wall and the volcanic rock formations of the southern tip of the Isle of Bute (both of which have lighthouse structures), Ian Bourn will further develop the landscape of 'peninsula' by creating a unique video installation specially designed for Mount Stuart and specific to its island location.

"Peninsula is a metaphysical space, always in the process of becoming yet always just beyond reach."

Gill Clarke and Lucy Skaer - 'A Dance of Ownership, a Song in Hand'

A film commissioned by Siobhan Davies Dance, made in 2011 on St Kilda and in Mount Stuart in collaboration with the late dancer and choreographer Gill Clarke. The work is newly edited by Skaer for the location at Mount Stuart.

"Beginning from an interest in upset gravity and the body's spontaneous adjustment to chance, Gill Clarke and Lucy Skaer travelled by boat, 40 miles from the west coast of the Outer Hebrides, to the uninhabited island of St Kilda. The resulting 16mm film is also an exercise in chance: the film is double exposed. The first exposure was made on St Kilda, and then the film was manually rewound and reshot

in Mount Stuart". The work is inspired by the family's close relationship with St Kilda, which was bought in 1931 (following the 1930 evacuation) by Lord Dumfries, later 5th Marquess of Bute, and subsequently bequeathed in his will of 1956 to National Trust for Scotland.

Nina Danino - 'Communion'

An exquisite portrait of a young girl in the manner of tonal black and white, filmed in 35mm by Billy Williams, BSC Oscar winning cinematographer (who lit such icons as Elizabeth Taylor, Lana Turner and Katherine Hepburn), and reminiscent of the photography of Hollywood stars as well as the faces of Jenny Jones in King's 'The Song of Bernadette' and Dreyer's 'Joan of Arc'.

The film creates a silent translucent image drawing on the paradox between beauty as iconic secular glamour and as religious interiority. The sitter is photographed in soft diffused light. By contrast, the setting of the church is illuminated using hard light to emphasize the distinctive details of a Pugin interior.

Kate Davis – 'What is the work of love today?'

Inspired by striking documentation which records the brief transformation of Mount Stuart to naval hospital (offering care and sanctuary to military patients during the First World War) Davis has created new works on paper and a sculpture. These works, also reference the American artist Robert Indiana's emblematic 'LOVE' series – artworks, which were initially developed in the 1960s and have since taken multiple forms from large-scale public sculptures to postage stamps.

Davis draws together these differing contexts and moments in an effort to restate the feminist questioning of the so-called 'work of love' today. "How can we continue to reconfigure the largely overlooked role of domestic and public labour, and articulate anew our understanding of often invisible, acts of care and compassion. What could a public and political notion of love look like today?"

Editors Notes:

Mount Stuart is an eclectic, extraordinary Victorian Gothic palace with a diverse eighteenth to twenty-first century landscape, and presents a compelling challenge in relation to interventionary contemporary art practice.

Through the Visual Arts Programme, Mount Stuart Trust aims to promote and facilitate interest in the contemporary visual arts and bring exhibitions of international standard to Bute and Argyll. To create potential for a wider audience and new perspective, the trust utilises the context of Mount Stuart and the Island of Bute as an exciting opportunity for public artwork and provides inclusive educational opportunities.

Since its inception in 2001, the programme has invited artists including Kate Whiteford, Thomas Joshua Cooper, Christine Borland, Victoria Clare Bernie, Katy Lynton, Langlands & Bell, Mischa Haller, Anya Gallaccio, Nathan Coley, Moyna Flannigan, Mark Neville, Sarah Staton, Katja Strunz, Lee Mingwei, Enrico David, Eva Berendes, Karen Ruggaber and Simon Bill to make and exhibit new work in response to Mount Stuart and Bute. Commissioned works have included land art, photography, video, film, sculpture, installation and painting. These projects have developed within the context of the landscape, archives, history and architecture of the house, gardens and island. Each exhibition enriches the programme, the artist's practice, and audience participation, while continuing a tradition of commissioning new work at Mount Stuart.

For further press information please contact:

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Opening hours:

Mount Stuart is open from 1st April until 31st October
House 11am-5pm (viewing by guided tour, last tour 4pm*)
Gardens 10am – 6pm
Visitor Centre & Restaurant 10am – 6pm (Wednesday – Sunday, Restaurant open 10am – 10pm)
Courtyard Tea Rooms & Gift Shop 10.30am – 4.30pm
*on occasional Saturdays, last entry to the House is at 1.30pm to allow for special event preparation
Please call +44 (0)1700 503877 for further information or visit www.mountstuart.com



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