

Customs House Gallery

The Resilience of the Wild

Mike Collier



The Customs House, Mill Dam, South Shields, NE33 1ES
 Telephone: 0191 4545450 | www.customshouse.co.uk
 Gallery open 10:00am-8:00pm Monday – Saturday
 and 12noon – 8:00pm Sunday

Exhibition Dates: 7 June 2013 -21 July 2013

Exhibition Reception: Thursday 6 June 6-8pm



Detail Journal: South Shields to Tarsset (May/June 2011) page 3 of 32, Unison Pastel on Digital Print 15 x 11 cm

Mike Collier's artwork ranges from large-scale abstract work using pastel, digital print and text (like a concrete poet) to small scale, delicate 'interventions' into facsimile pages from the diaries and journals of poets and natural historians. Much of his work draws on his 'practice' of walking or, more properly, meandering, often with a group of people and usually led by a natural historian.

For Collier, the relationship between walking and art involves collaboration, participation and conversational exchange. Meandering in a group seems to encourage discussions that 'meander' across natural history, social history, politics and philosophy. Each walk is different; sometimes repeatable, but never replicable - the vagaries of weather, group dynamic, local soundscapes and seasonal patterns ensuring this. His intuitive use of coloured marks

in pastel reflects Collier's memories of these meanders and the range of encounters experienced on them - temperature, space, sound and the feel of things seen and heard.

Before, during and after each meander, Collier explores the history of the place he walks through. He then takes this research into his studio, and assimilates it, making a series of abstract images and integrating various elements of text into these pictures. Text is important in the 'architecture' of his work; a record of flora and fauna seen or heard, the familiar unfamiliarity of vernacular names, dialects of birds and plants once known but fleetingly remembered, hinting back to the specificity of places and their ecological frameworks. Collier hopes that people involved either on his walks or as visitors to the exhibition will gain a greater understanding and

appreciation of their local environment. Surprisingly, he suggests, we don't have to travel long distances to experience a sense of 'wildness'.

This exhibition includes new and recent work, most of which has been made since 2011 and not shown in the North East before. It is based primarily around two large-scale walking projects ('100km Walk up the Tyne and North Tyne' and 'In Temperley's Tread - the Birdlife of Durham's Moor and Vale') which Collier has recently completed as well as work produced in 2012/3 in Cumbria in a 'collaboration' with Dove Cottage (the Wordsworth Trust). This focused mainly around the relationship between creativity and walking that the poetry and journal entries of the Wordsworths highlight.

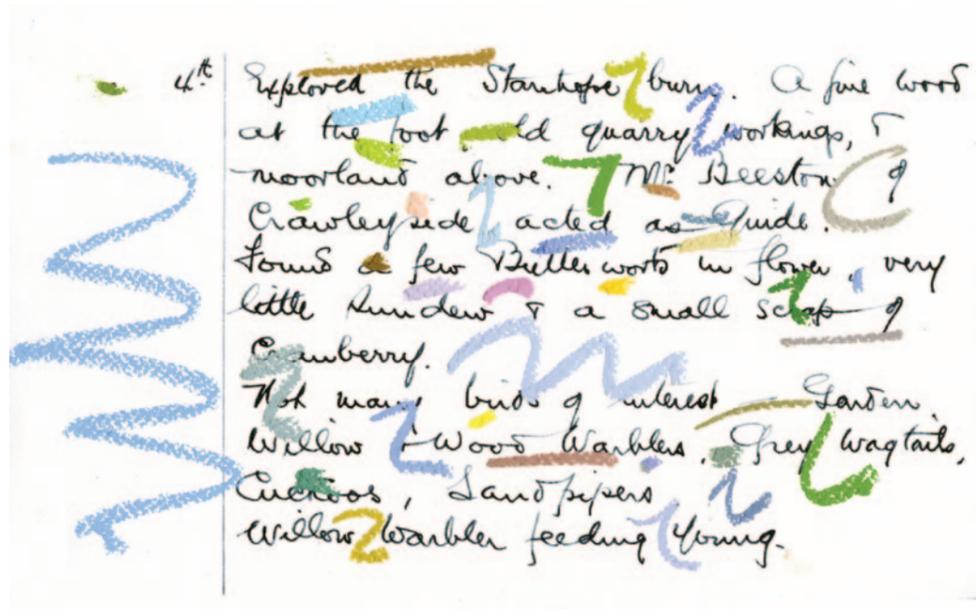
The work in this exhibition has been supported by VARC (Visual Arts in Rural Communities), Glead Ecological & Environmental Services (GEES), The Natural History Society of Northumbria and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Mike Collier is a Lecturer at the University of Sunderland and a co-founder of W.A.L.K. (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge) - a research centre at the University looking at how cultural practitioners engage with the world through walking.

For a full programme of activities and events please visit:
www.customshouse.co.uk

For further information on the Visual Arts Programme please contact:
Esen Kaya, Curator - Visual Arts on
Tel: 0191 4278199 or
Email: esen@customshouse.co.uk

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South Shields, Tyne & Wear. NE33 1ES



In Temperley's Tread (The Stanhope Burn) 2013 From George Temperley's Journal, June 3rd 1933



ANGR (Northumbrian Grassland) Digital Print 90 x 66 cm

