

Ghosts of the Restless Shore

Space, Place and Memory of the Sefton Coast

22 August – 5 September 2015

ALL WORK IS FOR SALE: PLEASE ASK THE GALLERY ATTENDANTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

This is an exhibition of new contemporary art by five artists integrating visual, aural, historical and written experiences of the natural and social history of the Sefton Coast.

Four of the artists in the exhibition (Jake Campbell, Mike Collier, Tim Collier, and Rob Strachan) walked the Sefton Coastal Footpath together in the company of local natural historian, John Dempsey, from the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership, in the summer of 2014. The work in this show (which also includes the artist Sam Wiehl) is based around the experiences of that walk as well as a sustained period of research in 2014/15.

The Sefton Coast is highly valued for its intrinsic beauty and biodiversity, some of which is rare by European and UK standards. It is alive with special wildlife and its coastal waters are 'home' to famous shipwrecks like the 'Star of Hope'.

1. Tim Collier*From Cabin Hill - Ghosts of the Restless Shore, 2015* Archival digital print on 310gsm Hahnemühle Photo paper 140 x 93 cm Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual

2. Mike Collier

The Birkdale Nightingale, 2015

Digital print on paper

104 x 104 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL

3. Tim Collier*Four Walks along the Sefton Coast (2014), 2015*

Four separate pieces each one 51 x 57.5 cm Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual

These four pieces show the weather maps for each day of the artist's walk along the Sefton Coast in the summer of 2014, as well as pages from Mike Collier's diary and photographs of each walk.

4 & 5. Two Herbarium Sheets

Cladophora glomerata collected by Chris Felton and

Cryptopleura ramose collected by George Russell

From the Botany Collection of the World Museum, Liverpool

Each 58.5 x 43.5 cm

6. Mike Collier

48 Flowers of the Sefton Coast, 2015

Unison pastel and screenprint on glass
48 individual pieces; total size 305 x 305 cm
Produced in collaboration with Tina Webb

In Collier's childhood, he spent many early summer afternoons with his family walking along the Sefton Coast. His mum would have her 'Illustrations of The British Flora' by W. H. Fitch and W. G. Smith in tandem with the 'Handbook of The British Flora' by George Bentham and Sir J. D. Hooker (she would hand colour the illustrations and date them in the book). This piece uses 48 of Fitch's illustrations of some of the key flowers Collier encountered on a walk along the Sefton Coast in 2014. The colours he has used are not representative of the individual plants, rather they are a sensory reminder of the total experience of walking along the coastal footpath; the space, the heat, the dunes, the physical materiality of the land and the intense colours of flowers, butterflies and insects. The book in the display case next to this work is the actual book used by his mum on those forays along the coast over fifty years ago!

7 & 8. Two Herbarium Sheets

Polyides rotundus collected by Chris Felton and
Gracilaria gracilis collected by Chris Felton
From the Botany Collection of the
World Museum, Liverpool
Each 58.5 x 43.5 cm

9. Mike Collier

From John Dempsey's notebook entry dated 9/6/96; Marshside (warm; cloudy sky) (right hand and left hand entries), 2015
Unison pastel and digital print on paper
37 x 49 cm

10. Mike Collier

From John Dempsey's notebook entry dated 28/7/94; Marshside (warm evening; sunny) and 30/7/94; Marshside (hot; sunny), 2015
Unison pastel and digital print on paper
37 x 49 cm

11. Mike Collier

From John Dempsey's notebook entry dated 13/9/03; Ainsdale Beach (sunny; warm) and 14/9/03; Marshside, (sunny; light sky), 2015
Unison pastel and digital print on paper
37 x 49 cm

These pictures are part of an on-going series of images Collier has been working on (for instance the letters and journals by poets and natural historians such as William and Dorothy Wordsworth and George Temperley) which explore the idea developed by writers such as Coleridge who believed that 'words can embody and not just stand for thoughts and things' ... and he 'puts his faith in words as 'living things – as plants, as live bodies'.

'I wonder' says Collier 'if the hand-written texts in these notebooks can, in some way, be an expressive and embodied 'response' to the things they

describe – having a special quality that is, to a greater or lesser extent, related to the environments in which they are written'. In these pictures he has worked directly, intuitively and spontaneously with pastels over a digital copy of pages from the notebooks of local natural historian John Dempsey with whom he walked along the Sefton Coastal Footpath in 2014.

12. Mike Collier

Indicative Flora of the Sefton Coast, 2015

Digital print on paper

20 individual pieces; total size 360 x 94 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL and Emma Tominey

'The Sefton Coast supports a bewildering variety of plants. This outstanding diversity is the result of many factors, including the great variety of habitat types found on the coast, ranging from derelict land to dune-slacks and woodland. Also relevant is the position of the Sefton Coast half-way up the west coast of Britain. This means [there is] a mix of plants with both northern (the rare *Isle of Man Cabbage*) and southern (*Yellow Barstia*) distributions in the country as a whole.'¹ For instance, *Sand Couch* dominates the embryo dunes and *Prickly Saltwort* can be found along the strand line. *Marram Grass* is the dominant plant of the mobile dunes in which can also be found *Sea Holly*. The fixed dune system is the most extensive habitat and typical plants here include *Yellow Wort* and the grass *Sand Cat's-tail* whilst the scarce *Dune Helleborine* can be found in the dune grasslands. During his walk along the Sefton Coast in 2014, Collier recorded many plants in his diary. He has selected a group here that, he hopes, could be considered key indicator species of the Sefton Coast. The colours he has chosen do not relate specifically to the the individual plants named, rather they are a reflection of his total experience of walking through the area; of the light, the sun and the wind - as well as the striking colours of butterflies, dragonflies and flowers. Many people think of landscape colours in a general sense (greens, browns and blues etc). For Collier, however, the colours he 'takes away with him' from a walk may relate to a particular encounter with a flower or an insect; So, for instance, the shiny blue (often with a touch of lavender) of the Common Blue butterfly, the frosted leaves and powder-blue flowers of the Sea Holly; the 'egg-yolk orange and yellow' of Bird's-foot Trefoil; or the warmth of the sun and an airy sense of space.

13. Mike Collier

Everything seen and heard in a walk over two weekends along the Sefton Coast in 2014 (no 2), 2015

Digital print on paper

Four separate pieces each one 30 x 30 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL

This is simply a hand-written list of all the things Collier saw and heard whilst walking along the Sefton Coast over four days in 2014. Have as much 'fun'

¹ Smith, P. H. (2009). *The Sands of Time: An Introduction to the Sand Dunes of the Sefton Coast*. Amberley, Stroud.

discovering the names of the flora and fauna he encountered (and which are 'hidden' in these pictures) as he did finding them himself along the walk!

The Sefton Coast is one of the most important breeding grounds in the UK for its rarest amphibian, the Natterjack Toad. It is the noisiest amphibian in Europe and its ratcheting mating call has brought it two local nicknames: the Birkdale Nightingale and the Bootle Organ. The poet Jean Sprackland talks of 'the cosmic sound of [the toads] clamoring all around me. I knew it was the males calling the females to the mating pools, but it seemed, as I stood alone in that vertiginous darkness, that they were throwing their voices into the sky, a sound as timeless as the stars themselves'.

14. Tim Collier *Ten Species of the Sefton Coast with Quotes*, 2015 Archival digital print on 310 gsm Marrutt fine art textured paper 21 Individual pieces; total size 275 x 160 cm Produced in collaboration with Sleep Visual The Sefton Coast is '...an area with a particularly rich wildlife heritage. A classic example of a west-coast, hindshore dune system, with a relatively high lime content (mainly from shell fragments) in the sand, the Sefton Coast supports a dazzling variety of wild plants and animals, including species with both northern and southern distributions in the British Isles. There are many rarities, some of which are rated as internationally important. This gives the dune bellman extremely high conservation value, both in national terms and in the wider European context.'² The species Collier has chosen to show here are ones he relates to as being quintessentially a part of 'his coast' Some like the Petalwort and Dune Helleborine are new to him, whilst others such as the Pink-footed Geese, Skylark and Red Squirrel will forever be a memory of this part of the English coast; his home. The quotes are from various sources, ancient and modern, and demonstrate the many ways we respond to and interpret the natural world, from the poetic and scientific to the anthropological and curious. Many, though not all, are taken from writers and observers who have or had a special relationship to the Sefton Coast.

15. & 16 Two Herbarium Sheets

Ulva linza collected by Chris Felton and

Ulva prolifera collected by Chris Felton From the Botany Collection of the World Museum, Liverpool

Each 58.5 x 43.5 cm

17. Mike Collier

24 Birds of the Sefton Coast, 2015

Digital print on paper

197 x 44.5 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL and Emma Tominey

24 Birds of the Sefton Coast is based on the memory of a series of four walks made along the Sefton Coast in 2014. The act of walking *through* the environment is central to Collier's work. This work uses twenty-first century technology to explore our understanding of the natural world – reflected in

² Smith, P. H. (1999). *The Sands of Time: An Introduction to the Sand Dunes of the Sefton Coast*. NMGM, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

Collier's use of colloquial names for the birds seen; a relationship based more on our direct experience of the environment than on hierarchies of class and ownership. These names are a poetic reminder that an understanding and feeling for the natural environment was not just the preserve of the wealthy and landed gentry. They are what local people called the birds – and they often reflect more closely than current nomenclature the look, sound or behaviour of the bird in its environment.

Daup (*Carrion Crow*); Sparling (*Common Tern*); Pynot (*Oystercatcher*); Tumbler (*Black-headed Gull*); Corbie (*Raven*); Lerruck (*Skylark*); Smeu (*Willow Warbler*); Calloo (*Curlew*); Bergander (*Shelduck*); Keelie (*Kestrel*); Screamer (*Swift*); Maalin (*Sparrowhawk*); Skirloek (*Mistle Thrush*); Eeckle (*Tree Creeper*); Cheeser (*Yellowhammer*); Whittol (*Wheatear*); Yarwhelp (*Avocet*); Tullet (*Ringed Plover*); Chickstone (*Stonechat*); Boatswain (*Sandwich Tern*); Reeler (*Grasshopper Warbler*); Cutty (*Wren*); Hazeck (*Whitethroat*); Teuk (*Redshank*)

18. Mike and Tim Collier *Five birds of the Sefton Coast, 2015*

170 x 47.5 cm

Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual In this collaboration Mike's use of the colloquial names of birds sits below Tim's photographs of the birds, emphasising a feeling of space and clean colour. The five birds here are ones encountered regularly along the Sefton Coast. *Pitcartnie*; Common Tern: *Screecher*; Sandwich Tern: *Windhover*; Kestrel: *Lintwhite*; Skylark and *Chaldrick*; Oystercatcher.

19. Robert Strachan and Sam Wiehl

In Between Spaces

Film and audio field recording loop

Developed during a series of night walks during 2015 *In Between Spaces* explores the coast as a liminal (in-between) space: a constantly shifting and often indeterminate space that changes over seasonal, tidal and historical cycles. The installation uses digital technologies to manipulate and reimagine the coast through a series of mapping and collection strategies (audio field recordings, video, digital rendering of sea organisms, GPS mapping of the dunes and beach) to create an imaginary landscape based upon the enormous breadth of scale encountered on the Sefton Coast. Blurring the boundaries between the natural and the digital, sea, wind and bird sounds become harmonic drones; the coast's natural phenomena are rendered into highly stylised or abstract geometric forms. The piece deliberately plays with ideas of scale where digital renders of diatoms (single cell algae which are important in the coast's ecosystem) morph into the minutiae of the area's plant life through to the macro geography of its coastal contours

20. Tim Collier *Football and Pink-footed Geese, 2015* Archival digital print on Marrutt 310gsm fine art textured paper 150 x 40 cm Produced in collaboration

with SleepVisualAs a 17 year old, Collier's life revolved around watching Liverpool Football Club, playing for the school team and birdwatching. He still has the written diaries of the bird outings from those early years; the birdwatching trips often taken on his bike at weekends or before and after school. He also possesses the football programmes of the matches he went to see at Anfield, the home of Liverpool FC. These physical artifacts are as strong as any photographs and when on a recent trip to Crosby he passed by his old school playing fields, which border the Lancashire mosses, and saw a sizeable flock of Pink-footed Geese in front of the goal posts he used to stand between, it seemed that all aspects of the important things in his life had coalesced in this single moment.

21. Mike Collier

Everything seen and heard in a walk over two weekends along the Sefton Coastal Footpath in 2014 (no 1), 2015

Digital print on paper

Four separate pieces, each one 126 x 92.5 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL and Emma Tominey

In these four pieces Collier has listed not only everything he saw or heard on the walk along the Sefton Coast in 2014, but he has also made reference to some of the plant folklore, the colloquial names for the birds and flowers (and how those names came into being) as well as interrogated the derivation of many of the area's place names. He is fascinated by the rich history of names we once had for the world around us; a language which has taken years to accumulate and which relates to a more poetic and less scientific interpretation of the world than the one we currently recognise. We are, suggests Collier, losing the wisdom and observations of generations of people about the natural world, its plants, animals, weather and soil, if we thoughtlessly abandon such knowledge.

22. Tim Collier*Black-tailed Godwits Ice Reflection, 2015* Archival digital print on 310gsm Hahnemühle Photo paper

90 x 77 cm

Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual

23, 24 & 25. Tim Collier*Wrecks, Sand Banks and Plant Succession, 2015* Archival digital print on 310gsm Hahnemühle Photo paper

Three Individual pieces total size 130 x 195 cm

Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual Names and lists have always fascinated Collier and the three pieces here combine these two elements, along with the photographic image, which is often mute without further context. On coming across the maritime charts for the waters around the Sefton Coast he was struck by the number of ships that had gone to ground on the sandbanks just off shore. The list of wrecks here are those lost between the years 1863 and 1960 during the age of the steamship. The sandbanks have some beautifully evocative names and were taken from nautical charts. The plant succession list was taken from Phil Smith's 'The Sands of Time'

26. Tim Collier*Return of The Avocet, 2015* Archival digital print on Marrutt 310gsm fine art textured paper Fifteen Individual pieces, total

size 185 x111 cm Produced in collaboration with SleepVisualThe Avocet, emblem of the RSPB, is a bird that symbolises, perhaps more than any other, the successes of conservation over the last seventy or so years. Until the early nineteenth century, although not common, it was a regular breeder on the east coast. The hundred years between 1840 and 1940 saw only one or two breeding records for the whole of England. Since 1940 however, when the public's access to beaches were heavily restricted, they began to breed again, with four pairs at Minsmere in 1947 and similar numbers at Havergate Island. A slow recovery, with the RSPB very instrumental, occurred during the next half century. They first bred at RSPB Marshside, here on northern edge of the Sefton Coast, in 2001 and whilst breeding numbers have fluctuated over the years there remains a healthy breeding population with c17 pairs having bred this year. A new electric fence will be in place next year to keep foxes out which will hopefully see their fortunes improve again next year. Collier's treatment of the Avocet prints here clearly locate them in 'the past' as a bird that was once only a memory of something lost. The text pieces emphasise the rarity of the bird with quotes being taken from, 'A Familiar History of Birds' by Edward Stanley 1865³ and 'The Birds of the Liverpool Area' by Eric Hardy 1941⁴

27. Mike Collier (artwork); Jake Campbell (words)

Elegy for Bert Trautmann, 2014/5

Digital print on paper

112 x 35 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL Creative

German goalkeeper Bert Trautmann was interned as a Prisoner of War for a short time at Fort Crosby during the Second World War. Collier and Campbell 'discovered' the remnants of this site on their walk along the Sefton Coast in 2014. Following his brief spell in Sefton, Trautmann was transferred to PoW Camp 50 in Ashton-in-Makerfield, in Lancashire, where in 1948 he began playing for St Helens Town, before eventually signing for Manchester City. Trautmann entered footballing folklore with his performance in the 1956 FA Cup final, when he played the last 17 minutes of the match with a broken neck. At Campbell's request, the green in this image represents the green of the football pitch!

28. Mike Collier

Six Birds of the Sefton Coast, 2015

Digital print on paper

98 x 98 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL Creative

The colloquial names for flora and fauna are often a poetic reminder of a closer understanding and feeling for the natural environment we once had,

³ STANLEY, E. Lord Bishop of Norwich. (1865) A Familiar History of Birds. London: Longman's Green, and Co

⁴ Hardy, E. (1941) The Birds of the Liverpool Area. Abroath: T. Buncle & Co. Ltd.

and they frequently refer to the look, behaviour or sound of the bird. For instance one of the many colloquial names for a swift is DEVILING - perhaps because of its inaccessibility; its speed in flight. The name WASHTAIL (Pied Wagtail) arises from the similarity between the constant up-and-down movement of the bird's tail and the action of dipping and lifting made by a person washing or scrubbing clothes (or dishes) by the waterside. Avocets utter loud yelping cries when disturbed, hence YARWHELP; SPARLING makes reference to the harsh call of the Common Tern and LAVEROCK (Skylark) is from Middle English *laverok* and Old English *lāwerce* lark

29. Mike Collier (artwork); Jake Campbell (words)

Bootle Organ, 2014/5

Digital print on paper

35 x 112 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL

There are three images here. The first two are drafts of the poem scanned from Campbell's own notebook. The third is the final version of the finished poem, typeset. The reference here to 'Starfished' relates to the so-called Starfish towns, named after initials that stood for 'Special Fire' sites. They were commissioned to avoid the kind of disaster that destroyed Coventry during the Blitz. These dummy towns were sited miles away from communities and cities likely to come under attack. Along their walk in 2014, Collier and Campbell stumbled across the remnants of Operation Starfish at a Second World War bombing decoy site at Formby. The *Bootle Organ* of the title of this poem is a colloquial name for one of the coast's rarest creatures – the Natterjack Toad.

30 & 31. Tim Collier*Ancient Sunken Forest and Pre-historic Red Deer Prints*, 2015
Printed Acrylic Sheet and Archival digital print on 310gsm Marrutt fine art textured paper

Two Individual pieces total size 115 x 145 cm

Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual
Collier has always had a fascination with the visual markers of time within the landscape. Represented here are two remarkable phenomena that can be found along the Sefton Coast; the remains of a sunken forest and preserved footprints held in beds of silt. They are not fossils, but baked-hard prints that have been covered and preserved by shifting sand over millennia. Both are transitory but the red deer footprints more so as once they are uncovered they are at the vagaries of the tide and weather in addition to those who use the shore for all manner of activities. The dots and squares in these pieces each represent one year; 7,000 for the red deer prints and 4,000 for the sunken forest, making a visual illustration of the age of both these markers of time. The separation of the black and red graphics represents the division of time into periods and ages. The five bands in the red deer print being: Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze age, Iron age and the modern age from year zero. The three bands in the sunken forest print representing the bronze, iron and modern age from year zero.

32. Tim Collier and Jake Campbell*Words and Image 1 - The Sefton Coast*
Four individual pieces total size 62 x 41 cm
Produced in collaboration

with SleepVisual

33. Jake Campbell

Slack Tide: William Wouldhave at Formby Lifeboat Station, 2014/5

Digital print on paper

65 x 50 cm

Produced in collaboration with EYELEVEL Creative

William Wouldhave was born in South Shields – where Campbell himself hails from. He is reputed to have ‘invented’ the first lifeboat in 1789 (a claim also made by Henry Greathead), whilst the first Lifeboat Station in the UK was at Formby Point. The coastal waters off the Sefton Coast are notoriously dangerous, and the names *Chrysopolis* and *Ionic Star*, mentioned in this poem, reference just two of over 300 ships that have been wrecked here since 1500.

34. Tim and Mike Collier & Jake Campbell *Jellyfish, Bird Sound and Latin Names (Inspired by Diatoms), 2015*

Archival digital print on 310gsm Hahnemühle Photo paper
Two Individual pieces total size 200 x 130 cm

Produced in collaboration with SleepVisual and Eyelevel
This piece grew organically and was inspired by a visit the Colliers, Campbell and Strachan took to the Botany Department in the World Museum in Liverpool. They hadn't been aware of diatoms before but were struck by both their form and function and the way they were held and presented as specimens, and catalogued using their Latin nomenclature. Whilst on the coast after this visit, Tim found himself walking through a mass of sun dried Moon Jellyfish and began to photograph them, seeing them immediately as the specimen diatom slides he had seen in the museum. On showing the piece to his brother Mike, there was an immediate response to mimic the form of the photographs and produce a mirrored piece that would carry bird sound within the circular forms. Together, the repeated visual form of the two pieces (acknowledging the diatoms), begins to bring elements of natural history together that are found on the Sefton Coast. Campbell further suggested that the following text be lifted from one of his poems and set alongside the artwork. It nicely references the repetition of form and scale from the macro to the micro in the work.

*Make the world look small,
finite, precious.*

*Make the world look huge,
infinite, endless.*

*Make yourself look huge,
infinite, endless.*

*Make yourself look small,
finite, precious.*

This exhibition has been organised and curated by Dr. Mike Collier of WALK (Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge) – a research centre at the University of Sunderland. The aim of WALK is to examine the way we creatively engage with the world as we walk through it.

A copy of Jake Campbell's new Pamphlet *The Coast Will Wait Behind You* with a series of new poems about the Sefton Coast (some of which have been

included in the exhibition) is available from the shop (price £5.00). A full colour copy of the catalogue (with installation shots of the exhibition and a series of informative essays) will be available from the shop in mid September, price £12.99). You can order a copy from the shop now.

Logos (ACE, UoS, SCLP, Sefton, WALK)