

# The Force and Form of Memory

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**Small Gallery, Inverness Museum & Art Gallery, until 23 June 2012**

**TOURING to Stirling, Wick, Thurso, Inverness, Greenock and Aberdeenshire, *The Force and Form of Memory* highlights the importance of Art to act as a trigger or point of recognition.**

MAKING a human or associative connection with an image or three dimensional object and the way that our memories define who we are are brought beautifully into focus by the quality and extraordinary range of work in the exhibition. Working in partnership with the charity Alzheimer Scotland, the Compass Gallery, Glasgow, have curated the exhibition from a carefully selected group of artists who were invited to explore the theme of Memory (the work was created specifically for this exhibition).



Joyce W Cairns - Remember Dovecot Grove

*The Force and Form of Memory* features drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture and installation work in response to the theme of human memory and its importance in “recording our experience and forming our identity.” Experience of a piece of music or image, even momentarily, has the capacity to connect us to memories of our own lives but also in a collective sense, to the universality of human experience. The exhibition

illuminates the experience of those affected by dementia and memory loss related illnesses, raising awareness through multilayered investigation of its central themes. The approach of each artist varies enormously, collectively a powerful affirmation of the value of art as a touchstone of both individual and cultural memory.

Lys Hansen's oil and pastel drawing *If Only I Could Remember* reflects the human condition in its image of three heads; one darkly defined central presence and the outline of two profiles either side, oscillating in smears of confusion and loss. A pink tear-like mark of residual pastel on the cheek reflects the emotional resonance of this drawing on an intimate scale, while the trinity of heads acknowledges human suffering beyond the experience of the individual. The image is powerfully distilled in its simplicity and abstraction while initiating a complex series of associative thoughts. It is a poignant image of isolation from self and society through the loss of memory.

*Remember Dovecot Grove* (Oil on paper) by Joyce. W. Cairns explores the link between memory and self in the artist's evocation of childhood memories. A master of large scale figurative composition, Cairns skillfully creates a compressed psychological space in which relationships between adult, child and home are explored with Expressionistic potency. The reduced palette of deep greys, accented with acidic yellow and intense blue, together with brush marks allowing the luminosity of the ground to shine through give the work a dream-like quality.

The progression of figures from the adult self, home worn on the head, to the seated child tightly enclosed in this idea of place, then to the younger Alice-like self in miniature draws the eye of the viewer compellingly into the work through time and space. Cairns reveals the complexity of memory through narrative association in her juxtaposition of place, object and human figure. While the work is inspired by memories deeply personal to the artist, their power lies in the universality of conflict and unease at the heart of the human condition; the fundamental need to belong and identify with place, the need to remember and understand formative experiences which continue to define us in the present.

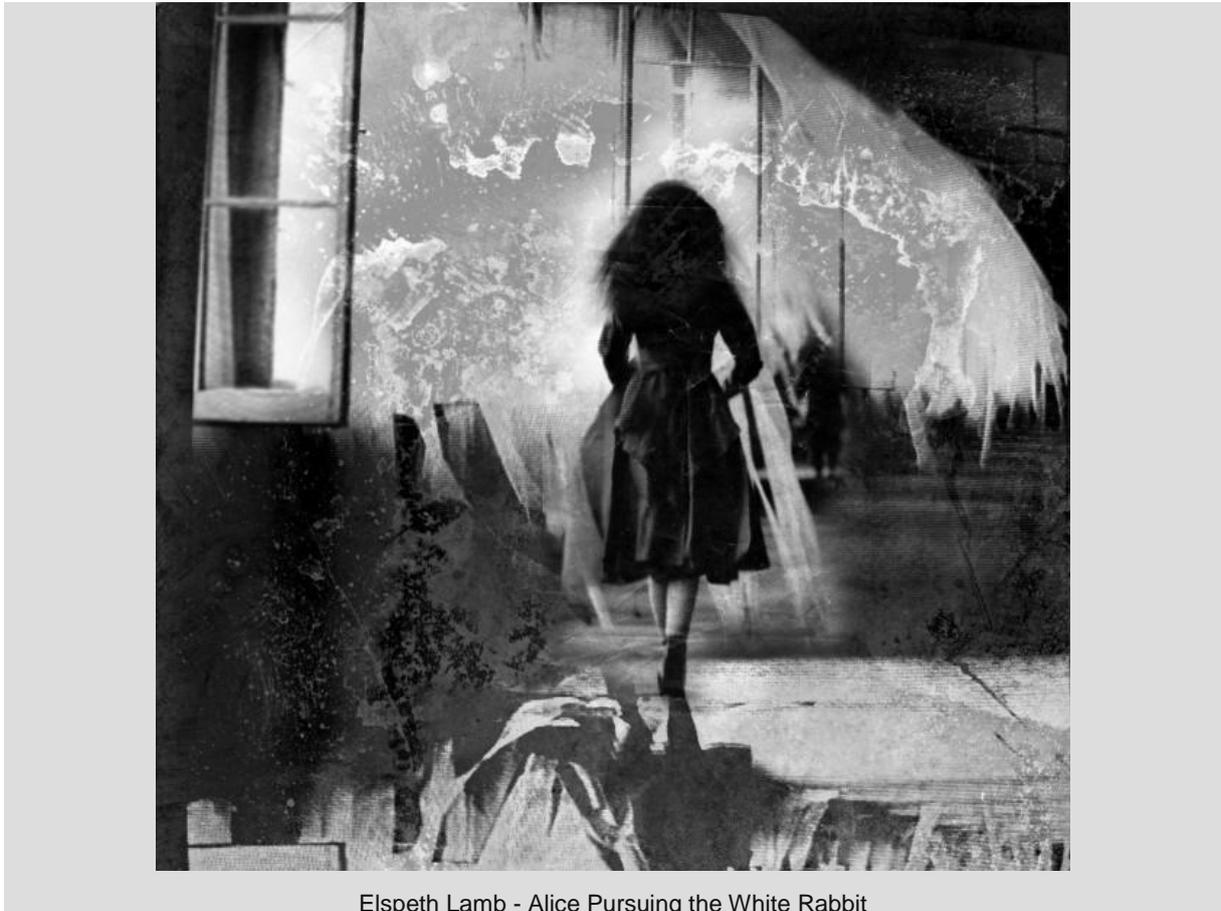


Doug Cocker 'Landsongs Wind'

*No 1 Wind* from Doug Cocker's *Landsong Series* visualises memories of "landscape, weather and seasons" from the artist's childhood in rural Perthshire in his three-dimensional box construction. The joyous and dynamic arrangement of form combine the forces of nature with a model-like design of childhood imaginings; lines and contours of force contained in the artist's frame of memory. Cocker communicates the immediacy and "authenticity" of physical, "visceral" engagement with the landscape, which seems lost in a contemporary world of information delivered not through the senses but through computer monitors or television screens.

The artist's use of materials reminiscent of lightweight wooden construction kits, together with the intricacy and impetus of the design, feel very much a celebration of carefree discovery and exploration in childhood, but also an acknowledgement of collective loss. Cocker's remembrance in sculptural form is however resoundingly affirmative, infused with youthful energy and elation that bridges a gap of over 50 year's life experience and an era of rapid technological, social and cultural change.

Designed to create "a mean narrative of human experience", Ewan Ogilvie's intriguing *Mean Memory Generator* encourages current visitors to the exhibition to respond to memories written down by previous visitors. This wonderful functional and conceptual object relies on chance encounter with the memories of another individual to trigger one's own, leaving an accumulation of human responses, both as a documentary record and as an evolving work of Art. The construction and labeling of the device reads much like 19th century carnival entertainment, giving the form of the installation a memory or history of its own.



Elspeth Lamb - Alice Pursuing the White Rabbit

Inspired by Jonathan Miller's 1966 film, Elspeth Lamb's limited edition digital print *Alice Pursuing the White Rabbit* is a haunting and beautifully composed image, capturing the ethereal, phantom-like figure in silhouette as she moves along a corridor of the collective mind, billowing curtains texturally degrading like aged silver gelatin. Our relationship with the camera and the Art of photography in capturing memories in time, together with the transitory nature of human memory are reflected in Lamb's opaque world of light and shadow. The wonder of early film and photography and the fantastical tale of Alice come face to face with human mortality and the fleeting nature of our memories and dreams.



Andrew Lennie - In the Folds

Andrew Lennie's fascinating work *In The Folds* (Pastel and pencil on found mirror) also communicates a fluid and ambiguous relationship between self, humanity and memory. The title of the work implies a repository of human memory in drawn marks; an ocean like scene of waves, the hint of a shadow perhaps standing on the shore, human presence in absence. The scene feels eroded by the texture of weathered backing board, held in place by rusty nails, drawn onto the back of an aged mirror whose surface of truth is turned away from the viewer's gaze. Immediately tactile and imaginatively fertile in its inspired use of a found object and drawn marks Lennie's work is both moving and profound.

It is a pleasure to see the work of some of the Scotland's most eminent artists on display in the Highland capital and there are many more works in the show which inspire contemplation beyond the gallery walls. The

imaginative scope of the exhibition defies the confines of the small gallery space and is a shame that a more comprehensive showcase curated by the Compass Gallery could not have been exhibited in IMAG's main gallery. This is a thoughtful and stimulating show in relation to the sheer quality of work on display and the varied creative responses to a challenging theme.

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