

EARLY SPRING 11 FREE ISSUE NO 10

ARTicle

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EUROPEAN CULTURE OF CITIES

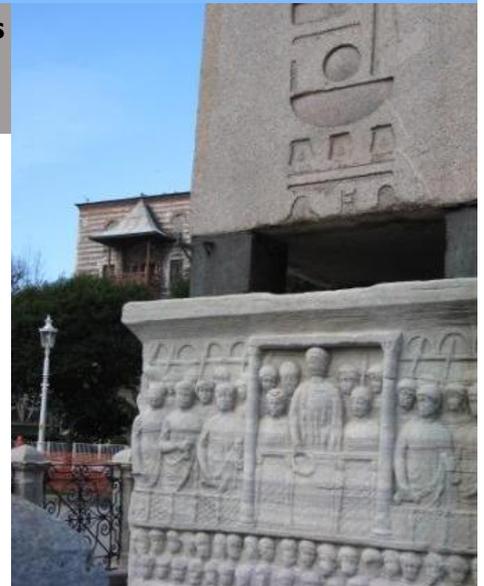
*Sojoch, by Tim Davies, seen here at the Glynn Vivian Art gallery, Swansea
Image © Graham Matthews*

EUROPEAN CULTURE of CITIES on the EDGE of a CONTINENT?

'I believe a country can build its own future through its culture and art' Nevzat Beyhan, general manager Kültür A.Ş. (co-organisers of Istanbul 2010)

Despite much of its eastern and northern history remaining unknown in the UK, Continental Europe's greatest achievement must be replacing the export of conflict with export of the arts – exemplified by the cultural output of its regions or cities. The Venice Biennale, to which two of our featured artists contributed, is one example – as is the annual accolade, Capital of Culture.

Few of us realise, for instance, that in its 15th-century heyday, staunchly Catholic Poland (in an unlikely alliance with then-pagan Lithuania) ruled a vast territory stretching 'from the Baltic to the Black Sea'. This January, City of Culture switches from the Black Sea to the Baltic as headline city Istanbul passes the cultural torch to Turku in Finland and Tallinn in Estonia.



Constantinople got the works: Egyptian obelisk, Roman plinth and typical Ottoman balcony in the Byzantine Hippodrome, Istanbul Image © Ian McDonald

Turkey, despite having – rather like Wales – a perceived dearth of visual culture (the Ottomans were said to excel only at mosque-building and calligraphy), has had a good stint with its cultural capital. Istanbul now boasts a new museum dedicated to the Fall of Constantinople; public artworks such as the world's largest ceramic panel depicting the city's architectural landmarks; and, well into 2011, the Pera Museum, in the 'European quarter' Beyoğlu is showing a major Rivera and Kahlo retrospective.

Poland and Ottoman Turkey in fact once enjoyed an unlikely reciprocal relationship, dependent on their common enemy, Tsarist Russia. Historian Norman Davies states: 'War clouds over Constantinople spelt fair weather for reform in Warsaw ... Peace on the Bosphorus spelt war on the Vistula'¹. To this day a district of Istanbul, named 'Polonezköy', is populated by Polish exiles. In 2010, it was the subject of a lavish photography book, *The Eagle Beneath the Crescent & Star*, by Turkish artist Akgün Akova.

Even as conquerors, the Ottomans were not averse to western culture. Süleyman the Magnificent admired Hungarian architecture so much that he had Magyar masons brought to his capital to build the distinctly un-Islamic Gate of Salutations at the Topkapi Palace. In this case, the favour was not returned: despite several centuries under Ottoman rule, Hungary is said to contain only two Turkish buildings – both mosques (one defiantly converted into a church, in a reverse of the fate of Istanbul's Hagia Sophia), and both in the southern town of Pécs – remarkably, also a City of Culture in 2010 – which boasts a plethora of galleries dedicated to local boy Victor Vasarely, surrealist Endre Nemes and visionary painter Csontváry, all housed ingeniously in the town's Baroque mansions and stable blocks.

As for Turku and Tallinn (both European cities 'On the Edge', both formerly colonised by neighbours – Turku as Swedish Åbo and by Tsarist Russia, Tallinn by the Soviet Union), 2011 will tell...

STOP PRESS

ROLF HARRIS *on the ROAD to* PORTHCLAIS

It is 11 February 2011, and Oriel y Parc Landscape Gallery in St Davids is buzzing: today sees the opening of Rolf Harris's exhibition, which will remain there for the next six months. Richard Howells, Chairman of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Simon Hancock, ex-chairman of National Parks and now Chair of the Oriel-y-Parc Committee, spoke briefly about how the works came into being. Veteran broadcaster and artist Rolf is central to a series of BBC programmes starting on 16 February, which will explore Welsh Art and its history and relevance to the world art scene. He stayed in St Davids in 2010 whilst creating his version of the Graham Sutherland painting *Road at Porthclais*.

As part of St David's community, the mayor, Mr John Lloyd, opened the exhibition. There is currently a project running at Oriel y Parc linking local schoolchildren with elders of the parish.

Both groups are working together in the arts centre and, as Richard Howells emphasised, it feels particularly important that they are there on such occasions, for they are the future of art.

Rod Williams gave a brief but informative taster talk on Sutherland, in particular outlining the background to the image of which Rolf painted his own version. He explained that the 1678 sketch of Tenby, also exhibited in the gallery, was one of the first known images created *in situ*, and was the forerunner of sketchbooks like those of Sutherland, which contain the original un-worked picture of Porthclais, drawn in 1935. The painting was made in 1975, and Sutherland was able to recall 'the whole of Pembrokeshire, which he held within his head'. The artist could see Porthclais set in all of Pembrokeshire's hedgerows and lanes. His works were about the character of the county and its history: there is, for instance, a square building in this painting which was the original gas house for St Davids city!

Sutherland's original sketch shows standing stones in the field lit by sunlight at the top of the image – in actuality they have never been there, and Mr Williams said, 'the work is a statement about the things Sutherland loved. He uses artistic license when placing the things he loved about Pembrokeshire where he wanted them to be to illustrate this'. The artist used elements like 'the sun with its strands symbolising the rays blessing the land with warmth and an ability to grow'.

Sutherland became personally involved in creating the Picton Gallery, which initially housed his bequest; in particular, he chose features like the marble floors. He came to think that the sketchbooks were of insufficient size for the gallery, and so worked on and created 15 new works on Pembrokeshire which he donated to the collection. Several of these are on display at Oriel y Parc. Sutherland's paintings were a vote of thanks to Pembrokeshire.



Paintings as part of Rolf's Exhibition at Oriel y Parc Image © Raul Speek

For details, see www.orielyparc.co.uk email julier@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or call 00 44 (0)1437 720392. 'Rolf on Welsh Art' starts on BBC One Wales on Wednesday 16 February at 7.30 p.m.; the Sutherland appears in the last show, on Wednesday 9 March.

BURNT *into* CONSCIOUSNESS

TIM DAVIES



Tim Davies in his studio Image © Raul Speek

With his roots in Pembrokeshire but a European outlook, Tim Davies took time off from preparing to exhibit at Venice's world-renowned Biennale this summer to speak to ARTicle about Culture, Politics and the question of being a 'Welsh artist'.

His 1992 work *Solfach*, the Welsh name for the north-Pembrokeshire harbour village of Solva, appears on our front cover.

Tim Davies' studio sheltered in a quiet Swansea backwater brings alive the basic dichotomy of his life as an artist. It affords peace and undisturbed space to think deeply and create ways in which to connect, in a mix of medias, balanced against the need for outside stimulation which helps crystallise the powerful political statements underlying this artist's work.

Tim is to represent Wales at the 2011 Venice Biennale: his studio reflects his working process, with a centrally placed architectural drawing of the physical space his entry will inhabit. This is a deconsecrated ecclesiastical space. Part of his early training encompassed architecture, and it is immediately recognisable that much of his work is site specific. If created for one space and moved to another, it is re-formed so that it 'belongs' each time – a recent exhibition at Chapter in Cardiff, '50th Year to Heaven', will form part of this genre.

Tintoretto is the Biennale's chosen link artist. Asked how he saw his work in respect to the Venetian Renaissance master, Tim emphasised that it was not so much the universally acknowledged use of light obvious in his masterpieces but more the fact that Tintoretto chooses to explore the familiar and gives importance to a sense of community. This theme also informs much of Tim's work. He went on to talk passionately about the early-Renaissance pioneering painter Masaccio, who has been more of an influence in his work.

Asked whether he is a Welsh artist and will represent Wales specifically at the Biennale, Tim quickly, whilst acknowledging his debt to his roots, claims a

- Figures on a London catwalk
- Mug shot of a figure on trial for drug smuggling
- Young figures arriving at university
- Libyan figure in a mask
- Two figures dancing for the cameras
- Figure – the young Muslim of Devon
- Young figure moving a giant chess piece
- Figure in an interior
- Two young figures waving flags in a Middle Eastern landscape
- Figures eating in a Tokyo park
- Large group of figures holding banners in Washington
- Figures on a train
- Figure in a gallery
- Two figures – mother and daughter
- Figure running for charity
- Figure of the silver screen
- Figures, wearing green, in Tehran shouting, "Death to the dictator"
- Sad figures outside remembering their hero
- Female figures
- Iconic figure of fashion who says, "I think when somebody finds their style, they keep it"

Extract from *Figures*

© Chapter (Cardiff) Ltd and Tim Davies

PROFILE

by HEATHER BENNETT *photographer*

European and global connection. In thinking thus, he validates his right to comment on how humankind exists within this world, and creates or desecrates it by turns. A discussion on the importance of different perspectives, and the need for them to be empathically heard, reflects the considered depth of this complex man. For him it is unifying and connecting to share dialogue inclusively that is vital – not ignoring but accepting differences.

This inner spring of the need to connect reaches out to use whatever media is required to make it happen. Words are fragmented throughout many of Tim's works. Part of the '50th Year to Heaven' exhibition was a work called *Figures*. For 365 days, Tim studied photojournalistic images from one single newspaper, writing truncated descriptions of them interrupted by blood-red bullet points. He emphasises the importance of these marks in splitting up the stac-

cato black texts and spattering them across the mind of the observer. He ex-

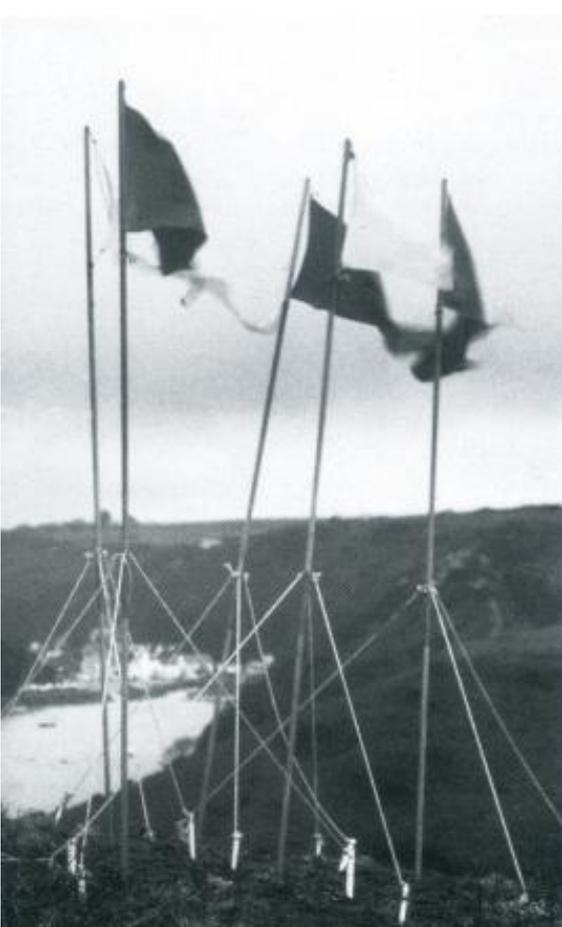
plains passionately how images can actually make us distant and emotionally disengaged, if we are seduced by them. Photographs stop time and are not necessarily put into context – what has caused the events glimpsed in them, or what will happen next? Each short phrase held against another shocks in its contrast – one moment an expensive catwalk scene, the next a war-torn body left lying in the streets of Afghanistan. It is an invitation to see the stark differences in a world where some think nothing about having everything, and some live with, somehow, less than nothing. We cannot comment from inside our own experience of the world, but an overview can let us learn to recognise the difference and be less proscriptive.

Burning and fire have featured frequently in Tim's work, leaving the observer aware of the transmuting power of heat and searing the multi-layered meaning of the pieces



Nage (detail)

© Tim Davies

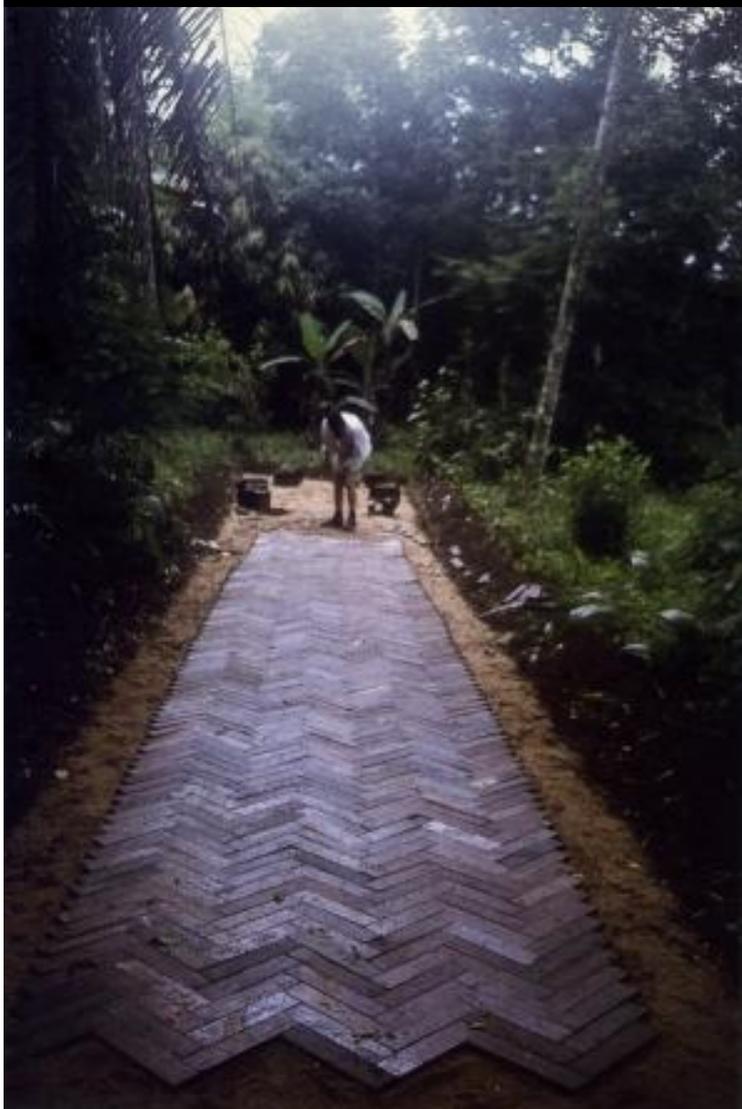


Flags over Solva, VHS still, 3-minute loop

© Tim Davies

BURNT *into* CONSCIOUSNESS

TIM DAVIES



Tim Davies assembling *Llawr Fforestfach/Returned Parquet* in the forests of Belize
Image © Luis Ruiz

into the mind. In *Nage*, Tim burns the word repeatedly and emphatically into old Welsh woollen blankets, produced originally from Welsh hill-farmed sheep and an item of comfort but more recently discarded into the embrace of charity shops. The use of recycled or inexpensive materials often gets labelled *Arte Povera* or becomes part of Minimalism, but here it is not only that. It holds political and national symbolism. 'Nage' is one of the Welsh words for 'No', and it attaches directly to the loss of Tim's grandfather: it cries from deep within the soul the protest Mr Davies made about the loss of homes in his native Solva being purchased by wealthy incomers and then being left empty for most of the year. Local people could no longer afford to buy a home in his Solfach. Here is a strong plea for the world to realise what happens when some are affluent and some are not: dispossession occurs.

Tim, born in Haverfordwest, spent much of his childhood in Solva with his grandfather. His site-specific work *Flags over Solva* attempted to reset the boundaries of the village, and his 1992 installation *Solfach* at

Swansea's Glynn Vivian Art Gallery explores his relationship with this early life and the historic relevance of the village as a microcosm of what is happening to the world outside.

Roots, community and a recognition of their importance thread through all of Tim's works, alongside an acknowledgement that we are not only all connected but in that become responsible to one another for speaking out against injustice.

Searching reclamation yards, Tim came across a pile of wooden flooring blocks: he saw in them the horrific contrast of a parquet floor laid for wealthy British Victorians to dance on, and the slaves who had felled and prepared the wood in their native Belize – once a colony known as British Honduras. Again: the haves and have-nots. In a carefully orchestrated gesture, Tim transported the parquet back to Belize and relayed the blocks in the forests from which they came. They will eventually rot and

PROFILE

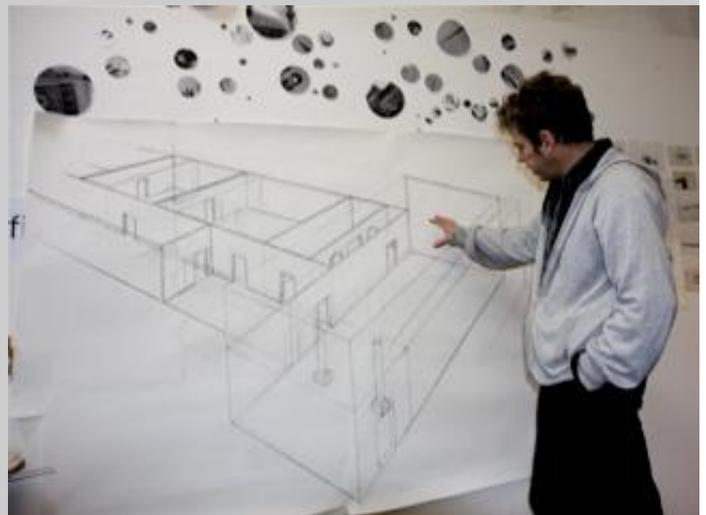
by HEATHER BENNETT *photographer*

return to be a part of the natural cycle of their world – no longer displaced. Layered beneath this, the observer is tempted to see an apology for the slavery that we in the West were all part of, encouraging it by our use of products involving the labour of those who had no choices.

Asked about influences on his work, he cites not only art-world figures like Joseph Beuys and Richard Long but also hears clearly the words of Dylan Thomas. As Tim rages in *Nage*, so did the poet in his 'Do not go gentle into that good night'. The spare, carefully composed music of minimalist composers such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass are also discernible – particularly in his untitled 'Screwdriver drawings', which hold the semblance of a musical score. The marks are burnt through four sheets of paper placed one on top of another becoming fainter both in colour and in texture both as the screwdriver cools and as the 'canvas' lies further from the initial contact. Line after line of exactly placed notes singing their way into consciousness repeating their message in fainter tones yet leaving an impression of studied cadences which will the viewer to remember. As in *NAGE* it is the repetition which increases the power of the connection.

Tim Davies is an excellent communicator; he listens thoroughly, and there is a sense of his emotional being fully present as he thinks and then responds to the world and to questions asked. His Welshness does not define him, but he is a major Welsh artist and is placing Wales further onto the world art stage with every piece he creates.

Works like his always leave themselves open to interpretation. As Tim writes in *Process* (a book of essays on his work): 'some of the essays in this book demonstrate how far other people's interpretations differ from my own intent'. What does rise constantly to the surface looking across his considerable body of work is the idea of the artist as our conscience, and how honestly



Tim Davies in his studio with a perspective of his Venice Biennale space
Image © Raul Speek

they seek to expose issues in contrast to our politicians. A final dichotomy seems to be that politicians receive relatively large salaries and yet an artist who is driven to work in this way may struggle to be commercial. Maybe society needs to rethink its values?

This can only be a short essay but to see more of Tim's work search the Internet, for he is well represented there. His axis site is: <http://www.axisweb.org/seCVPG.aspxARTISTID=4192>

The 54th International Art Exhibition at the Biennale will take place in Venice from 4 June to 27 November 2011 at the *Giardini* and at the *Arsenale* (preview: 1 – 3 June), as well as in various venues throughout the city. For details, go to www.labiennale.org/en/art/index.html

powder power

ANISH KAPOOR *in* NEW DELHI



Anish Kapoor, *To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red*, 1981. Mixed media and pigment
Image © Andrew Penketh, London

Courtesy the artist

On the back of its recent hosting of the Commonwealth Games, Delhi – joint venue for the first exhibition of British-based Anish Kapoor's work in the artist's native India – is marketing itself as 'A Dream Destination' for art enthusiasts. Indeed, the number of galleries in the Indian capital has grown apace in recent years.

However, Kapoor (a past Biennale exhibitor and now one of the world's most famous artists) is on record as finding the spaces for the Delhi portion of the exhibition 'horrid', much preferring the former film lots of the Mehboob Studios in Mumbai (the other venue). One can see what he means for the opening section of the show, which is housed in the former resi-

dence of the Maharajah of Jaipur, an impressive but dowdy confection conforming to Edwin Lutyens' vast, Beaux-Arts New Delhi masterplan from 1914. Now part of India's National Gallery of Modern Art, these narrow, poorly-lit spaces resemble the corridors of a minor technical school. However, this does seem partly appropriate as these rooms are home to a display of Kapoor's bravura architectural and landscape interventions. The effect of so many small-scale models and computer mock-ups is of an unexpectedly spectacular end-of-year show at a provincial architecture school.

By contrast the main space, hosting Kapoor's 'actual' works, is housed in the spacious, recent gallery extension. Here the setting is more White Cube than E. M. Forster, and Kapoor's brilliantly coloured powder works and mirror pieces are shown to much greater effect. There is nothing here to compare with the jaw-dropping 'flayed-skin' trumpet of *Marsyas*, shoehorned into Tate Modern's vast turbine hall in the summer of 2002, but some pieces are given a new twist by the not-quite-pure 'box' space. The bulky, messy thrown-wax hemisphere of *Past, Present, Future* looks more edgy and threatening than in previous incarnations for being positioned here on an internal corner within the gallery.

Mirror pieces, such as *Iris* and *S-Curve* distort the very space around them in a strictly contemporary way. Inevitably the 3-dimensional pigment works, the production of which followed Kapoor's 1979 return trip to the subcontinent, seem the most



Anish Kapoor, *Untitled*, 1992. Sandstone & pigment, Image © Attilio Maranzano
Courtesy the artist

REVIEW

MARIA JONES *architect*

'Indian', with their pungent acid-yellow and red pigments encasing seemingly partially submerged forms and spilling onto the gallery floor. However, it is the later single-object works that carry an Indian connotation most strongly. A piece like *Untitled* of 1992 – with its crisp, minimal, human-height slot cut into a stela of rich, rugged sandstone – is redolent of the dark, mysterious doorways into the inner sanctums of medieval Hindu temples. The fact that the sides and rear of the slot are coated with a deep blue pigment only intensifies the darkness and makes this tiny space (in the context of the light, bright gallery room) positively hum with contained power – an effect, again, not unlike a Hindu temple in full use at a time of festival or large-scale *puja* (worship). By contrast, the impenetrable tumulus of *Past, Present, Future* is reminiscent of the solid domed Buddhist *stupas* of central India's Madhya Pradesh and the ancient cities of Sri Lanka.

Although Kapoor has downplayed descriptions of the brightly coloured pigments employed in these works as quintessentially 'Indian', it is difficult not to make this mental leap in the context of the subcontinent, where the use of such pungent colours – often in raw powder form – is such an integral part of the visual culture. The ubiquitous forehead mark, the *bindi* or *tilak* – worn by devout women and men respectively – is formed of coloured powder. All over India, women daily decorate the thresholds of their houses with elaborate patterns traced in coloured rice paste which are known as *rangoli*, or *kolam* in the Tamil southeast.



Warli painting using coal & earth pigments
Image © Maria Jones

Powders also form a component of more 'conscious' Indian art: the paintings of the tribal Warli people from the western state of Maharashtra are enjoying a recent popularity rather like that of Aboriginal art in Australia. Warli canvases incorporate a variety of earthy backgrounds; some, from the coal-producing regions of the state, even use the Black Stuff as a background for their designs. Despite references to this vital substance in an often politicised context, Welsh art has rarely embraced coal in such a vital and literal way.



Dyeing kite strings, Ahmedabad
Images

© Maria Jones

In northwestern India's other cultural metropolis, the Gujarati city of Ahmedabad, preparations were under way in early New Year for the annual *Uttarayan* kite festival. The city's narrow streets teemed with men dyeing long stretches of kite string with brilliant powders: chiefly blue and the ubiquitous Indian pink.

The use of bold, semi-mythical forms and heady colouring is everywhere in Indian art and culture, and finds a fertile contemporary expression in that country's most famous artistic 'export': the world-renowned work of Anish Kapoor.

HIGHLIGHTS

ARTicle RECOMMENDS for the EARLY SPRING

- Tenby Museum and Art Gallery's exhibition of Doug Perry's work runs until 11 March. For more details call 00 44 (0) 1834 842809 or email info@tenbymuseum.co.uk
- Art Matters' White Lion Street Gallery in Tenby has re-opened after their January break and their first exhibition of the year is 'Art Matters 10th Anniversary Celebration Exhibition'. Selected artists from their past and present have been invited to contribute new work on the theme of TEN to this celebratory exhibition which occupies the entire gallery until 28 March. More details are on 00 44 (0)1834 843375 or email info@artmatters.org.uk
- Oriel Q, at the Queen's Hall, Narberth, has 3 exhibitions on. In the Main Gallery is 'The Last Transhumance', photographs by Dragos Lumpan; in Oriel Fach is 'Dr J Beau and Mr H Haut', divergent artwork by Patrick Boothman; and on the stairs, 'Windows' by Martin White. Running until 12 March, call 44 (0)1834 869 454 or email lynne-orielq@tiscali.co.uk for more information.
- Until 27 March, Oriel Joanna Field Gallery, Torch Theatre, Milford Haven offers the chance to see the production of *Mundo Paralelo* by Nofit State Circus develop. Until the show opens on 3 March, visitors can interact with the production and see design-development drawings and costume, rigging or small set elements being made. Once the show opens, this unique exhibition will revert to an installation. Call 00 44 (0)1646 695267 for more details.
- PureART Gallery on Milford's Marina is hosting a mixed Spring show featuring new work by much missed Pembrokeshire exile Stan Rosenthal as well as gallery artists which runs until 26 March. Call 00 44 (0)1646 694591 or email gallery@artpure.co.uk for more details.
- The new exhibition at the Waterfront Gallery in Milford Marina is of new work by resident artists. It is on until 26 March. Contact them on 44 (0)1646 695 699 or email david.randell@btconnect.com.

CONGRATULATIONS

- to Naomi Tydeman, who will represent the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours at the 50 year celebrations at the Mall Galleries, Westminster, London. She will be on the front cover of this year's catalogue for the RI exhibition, which opens on 29 March at the Mall. See her work closer to home when her Tenby gallery opens again at Easter.
- to Carmarthen's Oriel Myrddin Gallery for landing the prestigious Jerwood Drawing prize show which is on from 5 March until 16 April. For details, call 00 44 (0)1267 222 775 or visit: www.orielmyrddingallery.co.uk

LOOKING FORWARD

EVENTS

- Oriel Q has the opening of 'The Wit, Wisdom and corrugated irony of...', a selection of unusual work by John Addyman on 19 March. The exhibition is in the main gallery and runs until 30 April, see above for contact details.
- The Cloister Gallery in the Refectory at St Davids Cathedral is showing the work of St Davids artist Deborah Withey. The exhibition runs from 15 - 28 March with more details available on www.stdavidscathedral.org.uk
- Tenby Museum and Art Gallery's next exhibition is the work of Geoff Yeomans and runs from 18 March to 17 April. See above for contact details.

LISTINGS

- ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE's website is now live, and includes a constantly updated listings page as well as back issues of ARTicle and a directory of artists and galleries in the county. Visit www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk
- Information on Oriel y Parc's events can be found on www.orielyparc.co.uk or by calling 00 44 (0)1437 720392.
- *Western Telegraph*, weekly local newspaper, out on Wednesdays, also *County Echo*, based in Fishguard, the *Tenby Observer* and the *West Wales Mercury* covering the Milford Haven area.
- *Pembrokeshire Life*, published monthly and *Pembrokeshire Country Living*, six editions published each year.
- Arts events can also be found in the listings of www.artswales.org.uk, www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest, www.eventsinpembrokeshire.co.uk, www.visitpembrokeshire.com or www.pembrokeshire-online.co.uk
- And if you want to track down the artists yourselves, see Pembrokeshire County Council's Art and Craft Guide available to pick up throughout the county and to download on www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk (type 'Pembrokeshire Art and Craft Guide' into the search box).

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