

# ARTicle

CULTURAL LIFE ON THE EDGE



## ARTists

PEMBROKESHIRE



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Pembrokeshire has been inspiring artists for generations. Renowned artists such as Graham Sutherland, John Piper and Ceri Richards were drawn to this corner of Southwest Wales by the landscape and light.

Welcome, then, to ARTists Pembrokeshire's virtual arts centre, where you are invited to discover cultural life on the edge.

You can find out more about the initiative; read and download the group's critically-acclaimed arts e-magazine, ARTicle; find out about the latest and future arts events; and, most importantly, discover the many talented people working right now in this amazing part of the world, and where you can view their work.

ARTICLE  
goes VIRTUAL!

LANDSCAPE  
JOHN ROGERS *artist*

PROFILE  
GRAHAME HURD-WOOD *artist*

Above left: Oriely Parc © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales  
Above right: Graham Sutherland Pembrokeshire Landscape © Baer Karrer, Zurich

# THE RADICAL CENTRE a SUSTAINABLE POSITION?

This month, ARTicle launches a sister-project: ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE, a website for local artists and independent galleries. Established with the help of Sustainable Development Funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE – like ARTicle itself – hopes to achieve its aims electronically without the need for a myriad of print-outs or leaflets, making a small contribution to the aims of sustainability. Once up and running, we urge our readers to log on and avail themselves of the wealth of artistic talent to be found here ‘On the Edge’ of our own corner of the globe.

In a year in which our host, St Davids’ Oriel y Parc Landscape Gallery scooped a national prize for its environmental credentials (see back page), it is now surely recognised that ‘sustainability’ is an issue for artists and architects as much as the general population. Last month, the British Council launched *Long Horizons*, a collection of essays on art and climate change. In his contribution, sculptor Antony Gormley noted: ‘Culture in the developed western world has always positioned itself in distinction to nature: now we have to discover our nature within nature’. His conclusion for a commodified art world was that it needs to reconnect with its central subject – the human being.



*Glacier, Iceland*

© John Rogers

In this edition of ARTicle, St Davids-based artist John Rogers – whose travels in the cause of art have taken him to North Africa, Iceland and, lately, China – poses an even more radical challenge. He argues that the centrality of the human form to Western art, from the ancient Greeks onwards, can be seen as part of our disregard for the natural world, and that our true subject should be Landscape!



*View of St Davids*

© Grahame Hurd-Wood

Striking a middle ground, Solva-based Cuban artist Raul Speek presents a personal appreciation of the work of another St Davids artist, Grahame Hurd-Wood, writing of the timeless appeal of painting that takes inspiration direct from nature, filtered through the human senses.

Finally, we profile the fourth Artes Mundi prize – just opened in Cardiff – which uses its Welsh base to show an impressively global range of artistic responses to crucial aspects of our common humanity.

# WEBSITE LAUNCH

*ARTicle goes VIRTual*



## Hung, drawn ... and quarterly

From April 2010, Pembrokeshire's only magazine  
dedicated to the visual arts

### **ART***icle*

CULTURAL LIFE ON THE EDGE

will be available to download from its new home at  
[www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk](http://www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk)

Pembrokeshire's new virtual arts centre

### **ART***ists*

P E M B R O K E S H I R E

is run by the county's artists with the aim of raising the profile  
of the artistic community and providing an indispensable resource for  
cultural tourists to Pembrokeshire.

The **ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE** website features over 60 of the County's artists and 40 of its independent galleries and art venues. Its aim is to act as a 'virtual arts centre' for a demographically dispersed region, which nonetheless boasts a lively and high-quality visual culture. Set up with Sustainable Development Funding, **ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE** seeks to promote the work of artists in Pembrokeshire to buyers and galleries further afield. Our aims are to:

**Allow artists to make a sustainable living in the County, and therefore keep talented artists within Pembrokeshire.**

**Enable independent galleries to become destinations in themselves, thus contributing to the regeneration of communities and keeping villages alive.**

**Increase cultural tourism, which in turn enhances the economy in a sustainable way.**

**Give employment prospects to arts graduates, in order that they don't have to leave the County to find work in their chosen field – thereby strengthening communities.**

# LANDSCAPE

## JOHN ROGERS *artist*



*Sheehan's Mountain, Hog's head,*

© John Rogers

When Turner was 16 years old the population of London was 950,000, by the time of his death it had escalated to 2,362,000. The Industrial Revolution had urbanised 70% of the people of Britain. During a recent visit to China it came as a surprise to discover that approximately 65% of the population live in the countryside by working the land on beautifully kept small-holdings.

By contrast, cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing (pop. 30 million) are building at speed massive constructions; often in pairs, tripled or larger groups, which may reasonably be described as brutal and of which the people are very proud, boasting how a short while ago there was merely farm land where they now stand. These giant cities blaze with artificial light beneath a pall of pollution that covers most of the country, rendering many people unable to speak properly without choking.

Landscape is our planet, which in western visual culture has been almost completely ignored in favour of human form as a vehicle for expressing ideas and emotions; from the early Greeks to the present. Contemporary art being almost entirely urban is no exception, much of which reveals the misapprehension that human beings are the hub of planet earth.

Equally contemporary are the many artists who find sanctuary and inspiration in wild places and the countryside. As very few of these artists are celebrated nationally or internationally, and at a time when ecological matters are a major concern, it proffers the challenge for artists and particularly the younger ones to break the suffocating misconception that landscape is, somehow not as important as other things in art.

Avoiding a list which might include Constable, Monet or O'Keeffe, it remains a fact that pure nature painting has not been developed and its potential is not only one of art but of huge cultural and socio-logical significance at a time when it is much needed.

# ONE WORLD, ALL HUMANITY

## ARTES MUNDI 2010

Artes Mundi is the UK's biggest art prize – with twice the prize money of the far better-known Turner Prize – and it's based in Wales! The latest contest – 'Artes Mundi 4' – opened in Cardiff on 9 March, and ARTicle was there to see it. In his opening address, Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, expressed the desire that the impact of the exhibition be felt within Wales beyond the capital and its home in the National Museum Cardiff. With this in mind, ARTicle urges all Pembrokeshire artists (and indeed residents) to visit the show before its close on 6 June 2010, to catch a glimpse of the truly global response to this year's theme: 'One World, All Humanity'. The Minister even picked up an ARTicle promotional postcard from ARTists Pembrokeshire.



Maria Jones of ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE hands Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones an ARTicle card Image © Raul Speek

Artes Mundi is certainly involved in public and educational projects in south Wales. It trains up 'Live Guides', who meet the exhibiting artists during installation and thus have a personal knowledge of the artworks and their content. It also works with charity Fairbridge De Cymru to give creative opportunities to disadvantaged young people aged 13–25 who are not in education, employment or training (known as 'NEET'). Artwork displayed around central Cardiff throughout the Artes Mundi exhibition has been produced by young people on the Fairbridge programme. For more information, visit [www.artesmundi.org](http://www.artesmundi.org) or [www.fairbridge.org.uk/wales](http://www.fairbridge.org.uk/wales)

Outgoing Artistic Director, Tessa Jackson, who helped establish Artes Mundi in 2004, commented at the time that the prize should work 'for both a knowing artworld and a wide and perhaps less experienced audience'. Nor, despite complaints to the contrary, is the prize a stranger to local talent: this year's shortlist is actually the first to contain no UK participants, and its inaugural line-up back in 2004 featured Pembrokeshire-born artist Tim Davies. Davies' work constantly references ideas of locality and identity, many of his earlier works – such as *Flags over Solva* – being highly site-specific.

Perhaps in response to current straitened circumstances, video work dominates at 'Artes Mundi 4', which presents a more political face than previous shows. Some of this seems more straight reportage than 'art', but surprises lurk beneath the surface: within the most 'factual'-seeming films in the entire show – those of Bulgarian-born Turkish artist Ergin Çavuşoğlu – up crops the pure surrealist motif of a group or individual forlornly pushing an upright piano through a landscape. Beneath the calm, monochrome surface of Chen Chieh-jen's film *Empire's Borders I*, young Taiwanese women recount the shocking treatment they received at the hands of the country's authorities merely for applying for US visas in a far more compelling fashion than any overtly angry documentary.

'Artes Mundi 4' runs from 11 March to 6 June 2010;  
see back-page listings for details.

# DIRECT FROM NATURE

## GRAHAME FERGUS HURD-WOOD

Solva-based Cuban artist Raul Speek presents an appreciation of the work of Grahame Hurd-Wood, and talks us through two of his favourite images.



Grahame at home in St Davids

© Raul Speek

In January 1991, I landed at Heathrow Airport from Havana, at the very beginning of what I call my 'second life'. London was the only thing I knew here – and for me, it WAS England. I did not speak any English, and I could not hold a decent conversation by any measure. For the first year, while walking to my English school I always passed a small, but very smart, art gallery.

One day, I remember seeing a young artist there; his oil paintings caught my attention. I didn't meet him properly, only to speak with him once or twice as far as my English allowed me. The way in which his paintings were created was the only thing I remember from that particular encounter. He worked out of doors in the manner of the French Impressionists – not only sketching,

but painting large canvasses – and his paintings showed the immediacy of this way of working. (There is a Spanish word, *vivencia*, which captures this level of spontaneity.) In fact, his work reminded me of Impressionism crossed with Expressionism. There was something akin to poetry in the way the stroke of his brush moved on the surface of the canvas; a profound sensitivity and fragility – deeply human – in his use of coloration.

In 1995, I came with my wife on holiday to Pembrokeshire and happened to be in the Old Pharmacy in Solva when I saw an oil painter whom I recognised. I enquired with the owner of the Pharmacy, and found it to be Grahame Hurd-Wood, the same artist I had met a few years ago in London! I have now known Grahame for more than ten years, and have had the opportunity to get to know his work. For me, the standard of his work has remained constant all these years despite changing fashions in the art world. I believe Grahame to be underrated by some members of the artistic community in Pembrokeshire; personally, I am convinced that his work is amongst the finest art seen in Pembrokeshire to this day. Why? I will explain:



St Davids View

© Grahame Hurd-Wood

# PROFILE

by RAUL SPEEK *artist*

## ARTSPEEK



*Ford, St. Davids © Grahame Hurd-Wood*

A 'live' painting, executed outdoors, of the ford outside the west front of St Davids Cathedral.

The painting is in oil on canvas, 228.6 x 384.8 cm. Looking at the canvas from top left to right, we see the temperature and the moisture in the air. A very fresh Summer day. We notice around five figures in contemplation, almost as if they are willing to be a part of the surrounding landscape.

The focal point for the view is difficult to locate. I am familiar with that space but I cannot imagine how the angle of view could be physically possible – unless, of course, you have the eyes of an artist to 'stop time' for a series of brief moments in eternity, bringing together several viewpoints for our pleasure and delight.

It seems that, for all the efforts of the artistic avant-garde, people (and artists themselves) always return to the direct experience of painting on canvas. We all know that one of the most promoted painters in the UK today is David Hockney. Over the years, Hockney has shown that he well understands the very important role of a painter in society where we are bombarded with technology. Part of Hockney's career was associated with manipulating images through the medium of photography; he embraced the full range of technologies available to artists at the end of the 20th century. But in recent years, even he has returned to painting – and to the most basic method of painting outdoors!

A few months ago, whilst writing an article about the conceptual interpretation of a landscape, I thought of a friend of mine in Cuba whose name is Tomás Sánchez. Sánchez is one of the greatest Cuban landscape painters alive today. Unlike Grahame Hurd-Wood, he paints in a studio, but always originally 'from life' – and he has a visual memory which is a match for any digital camera. I believe that human life and the mind of an individual are closely interrelated, and tied to the landscape and our experience of it. Regardless of how an art critic or a philosopher expresses their concept of what 'a landscape' is, I believe that human existence cannot be separated from our direct experience of the universe.

# DIRECT FROM NATURE

## GRAHAME FERGUS HURD-WOOD

*View from St. Non's Chapel*

© Grahame Hurd-Wood

Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 90 cm

In this oil painting Grahame goes back in time, choosing a palette which describes an almost dreamlike fantasy with an inner spiritual longing – perhaps the same spirit that brought David/Dewi the Saint to this coast. The brushstrokes are loose and carefree, yet remain masterful throughout. The foreground of the picture is somewhat impressionistic, but the far horizon is most definitely



the coast of the St Davids Peninsula in Pembrokeshire – glimpsed on a quiet afternoon, with the anticipation of an almost religious, devotional hint of past memories.

**ARTSPEEK**

Take, for example, the human senses: touch, smell, hearing, seeing – all are strictly tied to the way in which the brain configures an impression on the mind. Today, with new technology we have discovered that there are further ranges to the limited visual spectrum by which we see the universe: X-ray, ultraviolet, ultrasound and probably other ranges that right now we cannot imagine. Even philosophers, mathematicians and scientists are often at a loss to express the shape of what we call the 'known universe'. At the boundaries of their knowledge, the terminology they use is not far off from historical, or even religious, terminology from past ages – meaning that we have been coming around in a circle! It doesn't matter how modern or avant-garde art may be in pushing the boundaries, it all will come back to the historical situation of humans, and human experience, being at the centre.

That is where I return to the subject of why the work of Grahame Hurd-Wood is so linked to the moment we are living through in society today. No matter how futuristic our situation becomes, we still bring with us the dreams and fears of past centuries. Nor is this a bad thing – it means that we are still human! Despite the avant-garde movements on the periphery of the art world, there will always be a need for art to satisfy what is important and basic for us as human beings. Probably the oil paintings of Grahame and the feelings he is compelled to express in his paintings will stay with us as long as we remain humans.

**Raul Speek** [www.raulspeek.co.uk](http://www.raulspeek.co.uk)

Our thanks to Grahame Hurd-Wood and to David Lewis for their assistance in supplying the images for this article. David's 2008 book *Pembrokeshire Art*, showcasing the work of Grahame and 11 other prominent Pembrokeshire artists, is available in local stores and from [www.artpublications.co.uk](http://www.artpublications.co.uk) For details of David's latest book – a profile of photographer Jacki Sime – see the back page.

# CLODDFA TO CHWAREL

## RUTH JONES

In the Autumn edition of *ARTicle*, we asked for volunteers to participate in public-art project *Cloddfa*, in which artist Ruth Jones was seeking to recreate a 1908 photograph of the workers in Porthgain's now-defunct granite quarry.

In all, nearly 70 people took part in filming over the weekend of 5 – 6 September 2009, Ruth tells us, and they truly entered into the spirit of the event. Not only did they look amazing standing against the quarry walls, but while they walked the half-mile journey round the coast path to the quarry from Porthgain, it was easy to imagine the daily experiences of the quarry workers as they walked to work all those years ago. A number of unsuspecting walkers who encountered them probably thought they had slipped back in time. One woman who got in touch was in Pembrokeshire on holiday from Leicestershire; she was the granddaughter of Mr Crone, who was the manager of the quarry for over 30 years!



*Cloddfa* small group

© Chris Powell



*Cloddfa* quayside

© Chris Powell

*The sepia images above were taken by photographer Chris Powell. There are around 50 digital images altogether. If you would like to have a CD with all 50 images on (£5), or a professional print of the group photo from the medium format film shot 10 x 8 inch (£10) or a 16 x 12 inch (£15) please contact Chris on 00 44 (0)1646 682919.*

This, however, was only part of a larger film venture, *Chwarel*, which is a collaborative project between Ruth Jones and Andrea Williams. Shot in 16mm from a fixed position in the quarry, *Chwarel* uses sound as a primary means to evoke an infusion of historical, cultural and geographical resonances of the place. The camera slowly rotates in a continual 360 degree panorama, within which a number of simple actions take place that evoke both the present uses of the quarry, and recall its past. The final installation was exhibited in Howard Garden's Gallery in Cardiff from 16 – 21 February and made use of both 5:1 surround sound and directional speakers. Jones and Williams hope to exhibit *Chwarel* in Pembrokeshire in 2010 or 2011.

**For more information go to  
[www.ruthjonesart.co.uk](http://www.ruthjonesart.co.uk)**

## NEWSPLASH

### NEW JACKI SIME BOOK

St Davids-based artist Jacki Sime's new book of photographs was launched, under the Pembrokeshire Art umbrella established by David Lewis, at a packed event in the Cathedral Cloister Gallery on 1 April. For details on the book, and the previous volume profiling 12 of Pembrokeshire's most prominent artists, visit [www.artpublications.co.uk](http://www.artpublications.co.uk)



Path to the Past

© Jacki Sime

## HIGHLIGHTS

### ARTicle RECOMMENDS *for the* SPRING

- St. Davids Studio Gallery will be showing the exhibition 'City People', photographs by Richard Hellon: 26 May – 13 June. Richard moved to Pembrokeshire in 1986 after a career in medical research, and soon became passionate about photographing the beauty of the county. His choice of subjects is diverse: from portraits of local people to panoramic views of the coast; FORM St Davids Cathedral, within and without, to flower studies in extreme close-up.
- From 24 April to 23 May, Tenby Museum and Art Gallery will be showing the work of glass-artist Steve Robinson; for details, see [www.tenbymuseum.org.uk](http://www.tenbymuseum.org.uk) or call 44 (0) 1834 842 809.
- 'Havana Pontcanna', an exhibition of recent work from Solva's Raul Speek, is at Galerie Galles, Cardiff until 12 June: email [info@maisongalles.co.uk](mailto:info@maisongalles.co.uk) or call 00 44 (0)2920 257075.
- 'Artes Mundi 4', Wales' International Visual Art Exhibition and Prize, runs at the National Museum Cardiff, 11 March – 6 June 2010. The winner will be announced on 19 May. For full details, including tours of the exhibition by 'Live Guides', go to [www.artesmundi.org](http://www.artesmundi.org) or [www.museumwales.ac.uk](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk) or call 00 44 (0)2920 397951.



George, from the 'City people' series  
© Richard Hellon (St Davids Studio Gallery)

## CONGRATULATIONS

to Oriol y Parc Landscape Gallery in St Davids (ARTicle's current host), which has won the Award for Rural Areas and the Natural Environment at this year's Royal Town Planning Institute's Awards. At the RTPI's ceremony, held in London in February, the gallery was praised by judges as 'one of the most eco-friendly buildings in Wales'.

## LOOKING FORWARD

### EVENTS

Pembrokeshire Fish Week is on from 26 June – 4 July and details can be found on [www.pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk)

### NEXT ISSUE of ARTicle

The next issue of ARTicle will showcase all things piscatorial (surrealists take note...).

### LISTINGS

- ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE's website goes live this month and will include a constantly updated listings page, as well as giving visitors the opportunity to pass on their 'hot tips' for events in the county. Visit [www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk](http://www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk)
- Information on Oriol y Parc's events can be found on [www.orielyparc.co.uk](http://www.orielyparc.co.uk) or by calling 00 44 (0)1437 720392.
- *Western Telegraph*, weekly local newspaper, out on Wednesdays, also [www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/leisure](http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/leisure)
- *Pembrokeshire Life*, published monthly.
- *Pembrokeshire Country Living*, six editions published each year, also [www.pembrokeshirecountyliving.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshirecountyliving.co.uk)
- Arts Council Wales lists events happening in Pembrokeshire at [www.acw-ccc.org.uk](http://www.acw-ccc.org.uk)
- Arts events can also be found in the listings of [www.visitpembrokeshire.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshire.com) and [www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest)
- And if you want to track down the artists yourselves, see Pembrokeshire County Council's Art and Craft Guide 2009 available to pick up throughout the county and to download on [www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk) (type 'Pembrokeshire Art and Craft Guide' into the search box).

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