

BLANK PAGES



girls and the city by mario sughi

issue seventeen
december 2009

2Tn3T

no3

CONTENTS

GET IN TOUCH	4
WELCOME...	5
COVER ARTIST	7
BLANKVERSE	8
BLANKPICKS	10
THIS MONTH'S MP3	12
FIRE ON THE BACK FIELD	14
FEATURE	18
BLANKVERSE	26
BLANK MEDIA PRESENTS	28
BLANK MEDIA RECOMMENDS	30
[ADVERTISEMENTS]	31
CREDITS	32

click ↑

GET IN TOUCH

Our Websites:

www.blankmediacollective.org

www.myspace.com/blankmediacollective

You can also find us on other social networking websites such as; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Art Review & many more...



blankpages submission guidelines:

www.blankmediacollective.org/blankpages

blankpages email:

editor@blankmediacollective.org

General enquiries

info@blankmediacollective.org

Communications

communications@blankmediacollective.org

Exhibitions

exhibitions@blankmediacollective.org

BlankMarket

market@blankmediacollective.org

Special Projects

projects@blankmediacollective.org

Blank Media Presents...

movingimage@blankmediacollective.org

blankpages copyright 2006–2009 Blank Media Collective unless otherwise noted. Copyright of all artworks, remains with artist. Blank Media Collective logo copyright Ben Rose 2008
www.graphicstateofmind.com.

blankpages logo copyright Eleni Angelou
www.eleniaangelou.com

WELCOME...

...And so we come to the final issue of blankpages for 2009. It's been an interesting journey and I hope you've all found different, new things within our pages this year. As you can see, this month our image has been marvellously overhauled by the excellent Henry Roberts. Even the logo on the front cover looks different! Get in touch and tell us what you think – there will be more visionary re-imaginings in 2010 so look out for them.

At this time of year, between mince pies, it is customary to look back over the last 12 months. Back in May we had our relaunch event, which was a live multimedia performance treat. But I prefer to look to the future. And to those who have been asking when the next blankpages event will be, keep eyes and ears peeled in the next few months for developments in that area – we'll be sculpting another showcase opportunity very soon.

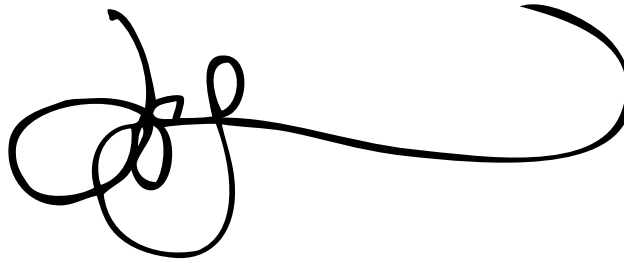
As ever, our publication agenda remains – we will continue to provide a visible platform for new and emerging artists, next to more established practitioners. We have some exclusive features and collaborations on the horizon for next year, to give you, the reader, an insight into how to further your career and be successful in this world of art, whatever your speciality.

2010 will see Blank Media Collective and blankpages shift up a gear, and as such our capacity to get new creative voices heard will increase. So, continue sending us your short fiction and poetry. Get involved – send us reviews of your art experiences, create a portfolio on the new Blank Media Collective website and expose your talent for what it is – unique, vital, challenging and contemporary.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to blankpages in 2009 – you've been part of something to be proud of. And thank you to all you readers, for supporting our publication and helping us to grow.

Over the festive season, why not raise a glass to emerging new artists, continuing success and happiness?

I'll drink to that! Cheers!



John Leyland, blankpages Editor



COVER ARTIST

Mario Sughi

Mario Sughi is an Italian illustrator, cartoonist and historian, living and working in Dublin, he is a member of the Associazione Illustratori and the author of Nerosunero. In Rome, at the end of the Seventies, he worked as an humorist in the last year of IL Male and then for Zut, Italian satirical magazines. He moved to Dublin in the late 80s where he studied Medieval History and in 1995 he was awarded a PhD by Trinity College Dublin.

His illustrations and cartoons, satirical in humor and minimalist in style have been published on international exhibition catalogues (Offf Barcelona 07, Semi permanent Sidney 2008, Ink 01 International Illustration Rally 08, Bilbao); magazines (The Dubliner/ Dublin, Clam Magazine, Paris - New York, IdeaFixa/ Brazil, Fluro Magazine, New Zeland), websites (Juxtapoz, Paintalicious, Yay! Monday! Evilmonito) and art galleries (Sexy Art Gallery, London, The Shiny Squirrel Gallery, NY; Little Paper Airplanes, L.A; Umber Studios, Minneapolis; 180 Gallery Cambridge, Ontario; Wannabee and DOZ Gallery Milan, Italy; Irish Art House, Tullamore and The Loft, Dublin, Ireland, Turn-Berlin, Germany). Lürzer's Archive included Mario Sughi in their compilation "200 best illustrators worldwide 2009".

"My illustrations are meaningless, colourful images. And within those images reality and joke mix freely and happily together. I would like to think that my work has been inspired by the playful novels of Milan Kundera, and the work of two very imaginative figurative painters: Francis Bacon and David Hockney. But possibly this is not the case, only a playful trick of my imagination."

- Mario Sughi for C-Heads Magazine, London Wien, Dec. 08

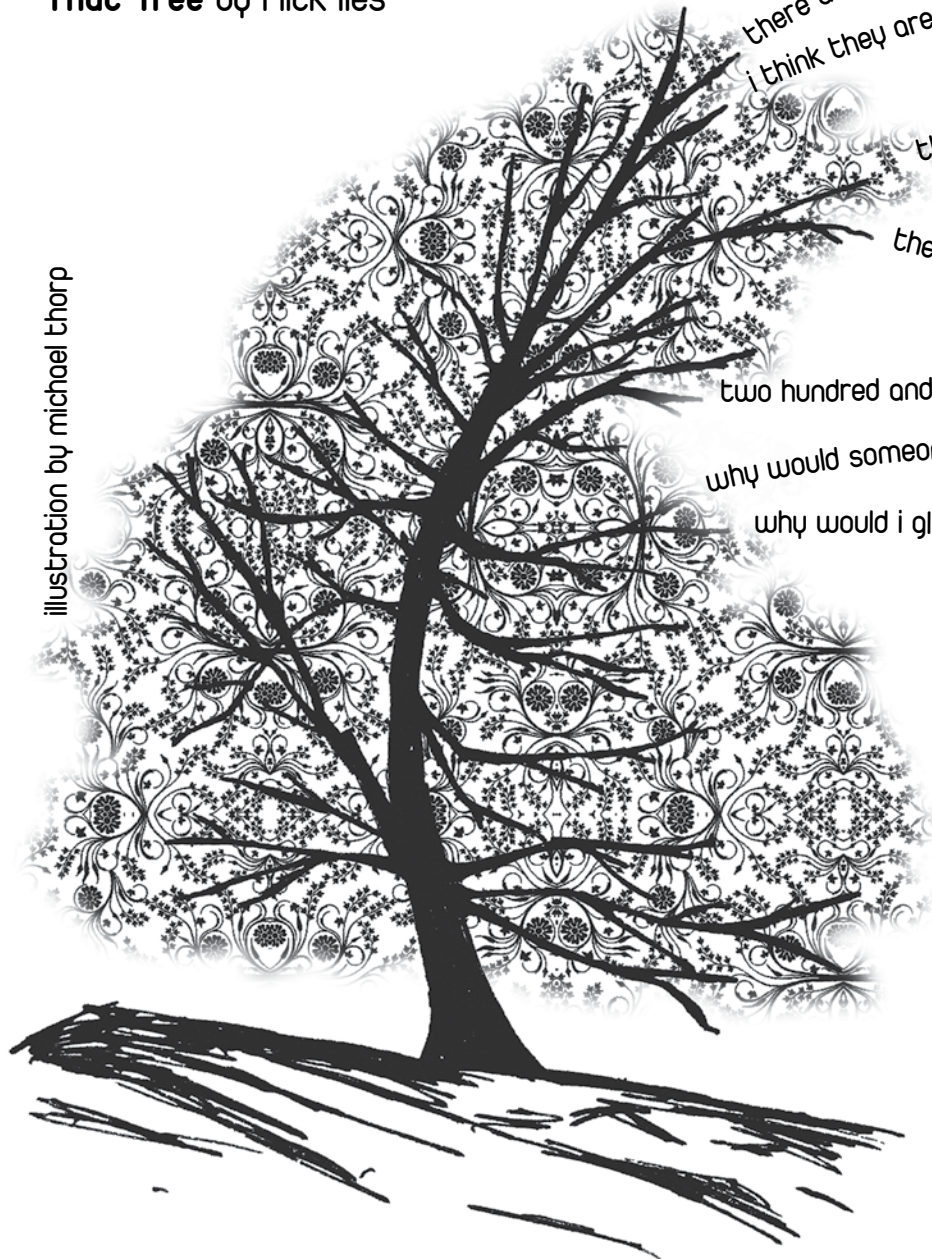
Mario Sughi is a member of IGI (Illustrators Guild of Ireland, www.illustratorsireland.com), AI (Associazione Illustratori, www.associazioneillustratori.it) and also a member of the DonQuichotte's Cartoons Committee (www.donquichotte.at)

Find out more about Mario Sughi at
www.nerosunero.org

BLANKVERSE

That Tree by Nick Iles

illustration by michael thorp



there are two hundred and nine leaves in that tree.
i think they are leaves.

they may not be leaves.

they could be two hundred and nine dead birds

two hundred and nine dead birds glued to a tree.

why would someone glue two hundred and nine dead birds to a tree?

why would i glue two hundred and nine dead birds to a tree?

i suppose i just like birds

Nick Iles recently graduated From Nottingham Trent University where he studied English with Creative Writing. He is about to start training as a teacher and currently teaches creative writing at a school in Berkshire. He says "I don't really know what kind of writing I 'do' yet so I kind of change my style with every piece I write. I Also have a small uninteresting blog with some more of my work on it at <http://allthethingsinmyattic.blogspot.com>"

Sea Song by J.E.A. Wallace

The New Zealand ladies
In their long silver dresses
Watch the ship catch fire from the shore

The orange flags it's flying now
Throw a hot 'hello' their way
(This is what their parasols are for)

Ragged rocks and pointed pebbles shift underneath their feet
They prefer the heat of summer and the orange of the beach
And they wonder why
Anyone would sail away to sea
In anything that catches fire

The lost English sailors
See long silver dresses
Floating like a promise on the shore

They point at their future
Wearing circular wings
(This is what their parasols are for)

Alabaster ash and fluttering flames swirl all around their heads
They peek through at their patient angels perched on the cliff's edge
And in every blackening eye
There's a flicker at the thought
Of their coming ascension into sky

J.E.A. Wallace has had poems and stories published in Volume Magazine, Brand Magazine and Irk Magazine among others. He has also written and produced a film about runaway East German circus clowns, and composed a short album about busting a wolf out of a zoo...

Find all of this at www.myspace.com/jeawallace

BLANKPICKS

December 2009

A reunion of The Stooges should have been as successful as a reunion of The Three Stooges. So much of their legacy rests on the energy of their music, and the famously chaotic live shows (the footage of Iggy Pop walking on the audience and smearing peanut butter on his chest, for example). How could they reform a quarter of a century later and be anything but a pale imitation of their younger selves?

Quite easily, as it happens. Having reformed for four tracks on Iggy's Skull Ring album in 2003, they proceeded to tour around the world for four years before recording an album of new material called The Weirdness. And if Iggy can't walk on crowds anymore, he can still get them up on the stage with him instead, as evidenced by Escaped Maniacs, a DVD of a live show from 2005. Ok, so Iggy's famous chest may not be in the kind of shape that used to make him so lusted over, and Ron Ashton is about twice his previous size, but the songs are classics, played with no less power than in years gone by (and played better for those years).

Iggly still commands the stage, having 'matured' over the years into his current role as rock and roll grotesque, and the encouraged stage invasion is just one part of his repertoire of tricks to keep the show moving. Joined by original sax player Steve McKay for the final few numbers the show hurtles to the kind of climax younger bands could only fantasise about. This show is a fitting tribute to Ron Ashton, who died earlier this year. But this isn't the end of The Stooges – James Williamson who joined the band for their classic Raw Power album will be re-joining to tour that record again. The show at the Fun House goes on and on.

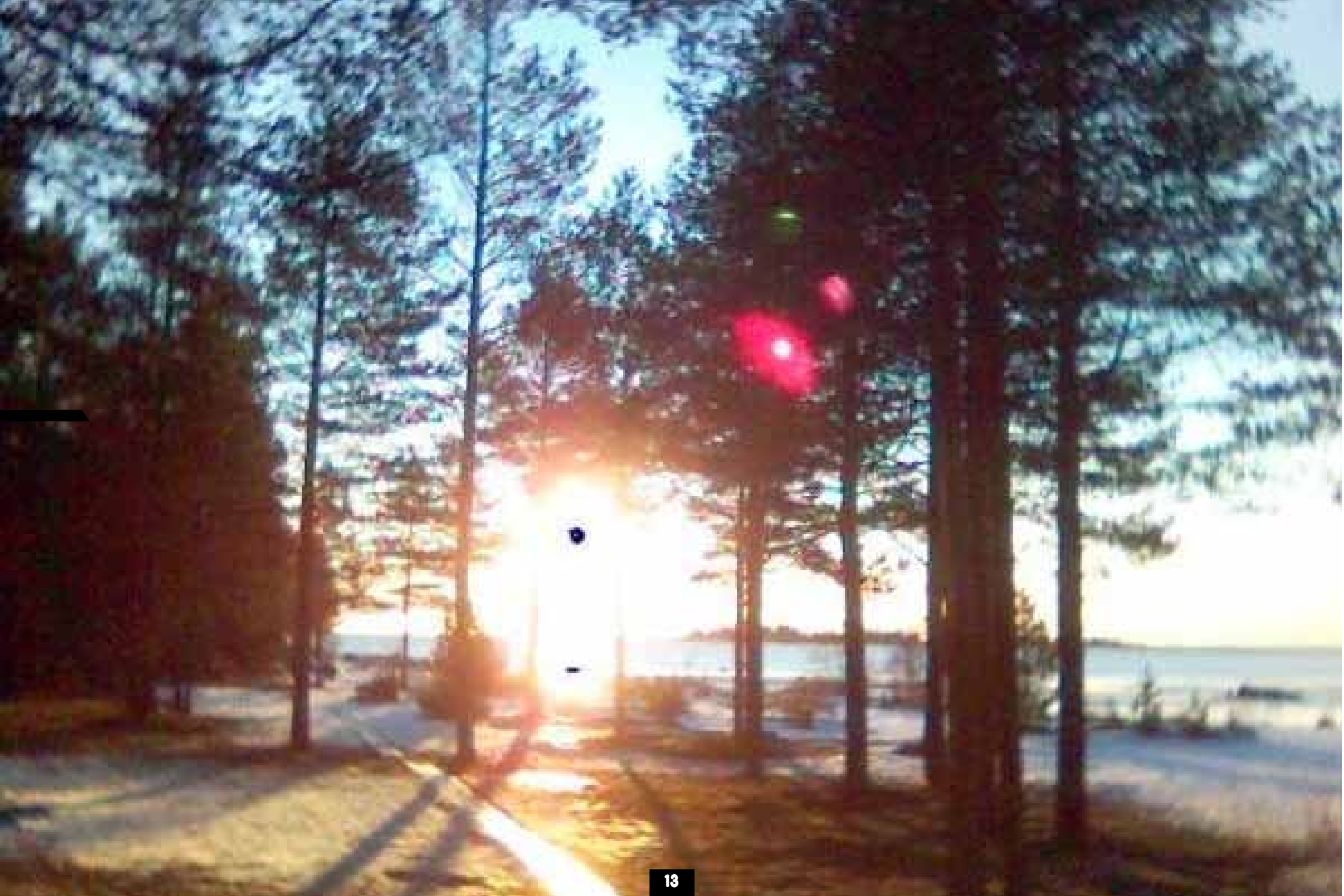
-By Phil Craggs



THIS MONTH'S MP3

Artist: Oskar Hallbert
Track: Still In Late June

Oskar Hallbert is a composer who makes minimal melodic music, released among others on the Zymogen net label and Manchester-based Heat Death Records. He lives deep in the woods in the north of Sweden, cut-off from city life, and has a lot of musical instruments at his disposal, but that doesn't stop him using field recordings and found sound as addition to his arsenal, often as a backdrop to the sweet, slow-motion guitar melodies that typify his style. For more information, free music and a lot of pictures, visit www.myspace.com/oskarhallbert



FIRE ON THE BACK FIELD

by Robert Munroe

Oh, yes, of course. Come in. Sit yourself down. It's good of you to come round here. My legs aren't so good these days, you see. I don't find it easy getting out and about. I'm sorry, what should I call you? Your rank. Oh. Inspector, right. Sorry, it's just with you being plain clothes, and so young. Oh, I didn't mean anything by that – everyone looks young to me now. Would you like a cup of tea? Coffee? Well, get yourself comfortable while I go make a pot. Milk? Sugar? Sorry? Oh, right. Yes, top of the stairs, first door on the right. Perfect view of the back field you get from there. Please do.

Ah, here we are. Milk, no sugar for you, milk and sugar for me. My doctor tells me I shouldn't take sugar in my tea, says I need to watch my health at my age. But I've always said; if I live 'til seventy I'll just do what I like. I mean, what does it matter if I get fat at my age? It's not like I'm still out courting, is it? I've worked hard in my life, if I want sugar in my tea I don't see why I shouldn't have it.

Oh, yes, sorry. I do tend to ramble a bit when I've got company. Don't see that many people to talk to, you see. When I do get sat down with someone I tend to go on. Anyway, about yesterday. I was in my kitchen, making myself a sandwich. About 3.15. I know because there's a clock above the kitchen door and I had to

go past it to get upstairs. Anyway, I was making my sandwich when I noticed the smell of burning. Nothing unusual in that. You see, it's like this every summer. Young kids off the estate – little sods, if you'll pardon my language – who've got nothing better to do than go and start fires on the field. Don't understand it myself, but that's what they do. It happens day after day. Smell of burning, sound of sirens. Get sick of it, you really do. Every time it happens I go upstairs and take a look out my bedroom window, see where it was this time. As summer goes on it's like the field has got measles or something, new spots popping up. Once it was right up near our back fence. Now, it's usually more smoke than actual fire because of the way the dried grass burns, but the back fences are all wood you know, all down the street. Wouldn't have taken much and they could have been alight as well. But normally they're a way out, so it's more annoying than dangerous. Still, I'm sure you've got records of all that. Off the top of my head, I'd say they first started regular about fifteen years ago, but don't take that as gospel.

Why, yes I have. All my life in fact. Not always in this house. No, I grew up half way down the street – number 66. But after me and my Emma wed, we moved in here. Well, her Mum weren't very well you see, and Em – I always called her Em – helped look

after her, so we didn't want to move very far away. Plus I didn't work too far from here. Anyway, we got lucky because this place was available just as we needed it. Old Mr and Mrs Graham lived here before, but he died and she went to live with her son and his wife because she couldn't look after herself that well. Her son decided to keep the place and rent it out, so me and Em got first refusal. I can't say I've ever been the type to go out and get to know everyone on the street, but Em used to do that so I always got to know everyone eventually. But since she died, I've completely lost touch. I've no idea who half the people on the street are now, and most that I do know it's only to say hello to. Oh, that's not to say they're unfriendly, or anything. I always get Christmas cards through my letterbox from quite a few of them, and I'll get a visit every so often from different people. Just checking I'm still alive probably, what with my not getting out too much.

Oh, she passed away a good forty-one years ago now. Hit by a car. She was only thirty-two, poor love. I was always teasing her about being too slow crossing roads. It wasn't like it is now, when you've got to be so careful because of all the traffic, but she was still always so cautious. And because I teased her she ran across without looking properly. I can still hear the sound of the car hitting her. The doctors said she

wouldn't have felt much, but they say that to everyone, don't they? Silly thing is, she was always on about us getting a car, but there was always something else for us to spend the money on, and then we... well, we'd decided, you see. Lots of people got married around the time we did, and they all had kids within a year, two at most. But we'd decided, we were going to wait. We wanted to have a little money in the bank first, work hard for a while so when we decided to have one, it wouldn't want. We were just thinking maybe it was time when...Sorry, you must excuse me. It's silly really. Filling up over something that happened forty years ago. It won't change anything, will it? I'm not like this normally you know. She's on my mind a lot is Em, and I'm fine. It's only when I think about that day and the plans we had...Still gets to me a bit. There, I'm alright now. You'll forgive an old man if he gets caught in his memories, won't you? You're very kind. No, I never re-married. Just didn't occur to me. I worked like everyone else and ended up in the pub with my mates after I clocked off. Came home and fell straight to sleep. By the time I got out of that routine there didn't seem much point in starting again.

Good grief, you're absolutely right. You should have interrupted me sooner. Where was I? That's right. Quarter past three it was, and I smelled burning, so

I went to have a look. Took me a little while because I can't get up those stairs like I used to. Went into the back bedroom, and looked out. Well, there was a lot of smoke but it wasn't easy to see exactly where it was coming from. Then I heard someone laughing, and I saw this lad. He was no older than fourteen, might even have been as young as eleven. I've always been terrible at kids' ages. There's this little row of trees not far from the back-fences, and I could just see him from my window, but he would have been hidden from most houses. Anyway he's stoking the fire up, poking it with a stick he's pulled from one of the smaller trees. And he's laughing. And...Well, this is what I called you about. You see, that spot they were burning...I always check whenever there's a fire back there that it's not in that spot. Have done with every fire since they started. You see, when me and Em first met, we were young and we were mad for each other – well, I know I was mad for her. She was beautiful, really beautiful. Forget all those actresses they have these days that you see in the papers. She had the whitest skin, but really dark hair. Raven hair. And brown eyes, and a smile that made every lad on the street fall for her. We all wanted to ask her, but you see, if one of the lads asked, that meant none of the others could, whatever she said. Sounds daft now, but it was like a code of honour. In the end, the only way to settle it was to fight for her. Only me

and Dave Watkins were willing to actually do it, so we arranged to meet behind the trees, not far from where I saw that lad, because that was the only place we could fight without being seen. I didn't want to hurt him, and he didn't want to hurt me, but it had to be decided. I think in the end he threw it because I didn't hit him that hard or that often, but I think he knew that if the fight went on I would do, and maybe he knew he wouldn't. So I ended up being the one to ask. And I was more nervous when I asked her than I was when I'd squared up to Dave, even though he might have hurt me and all she'd have done is said no. I had no idea what to say. I was fifteen, and I'd spoken to a few girls, but none that I'd wanted like I wanted her. To this day I don't know how she understood a word I said; I stuttered and mumbled and tripped over my words and had to start again. But she understood, and she smiled, and she said she'd have to think about it. And just as I was turning to go she said 'Alright then,' and went home for her tea. Just like that, as though it was nothing. I couldn't wipe the smile off my face all night. I nearly got a clip round my ear for it, because I couldn't stop smiling even when we said Grace before we ate. We were supposed to look like we were concentrating, and my Dad smacked me round the back of the head for not taking it seriously enough.

We did all the usual stuff – trips to the pictures, and the like. We used to sit next to each other in church and hold hands when no-one was looking. We felt so wicked, like the vicar was going to look straight at us any minute and tell us to stop. I suppose it sounds silly to you, what with the church not meaning much these days. I didn't think it meant much to me, but I still felt as though we were doing something daring. I'd spend the day at work thinking about seeing her that night. The thought kept me going more than the lad's banter as we carried the barrels on and off the ships. Of course, by this time everyone knew about it, and you know what men can be like. Always wanting to know all the details; had we, hadn't we? And of course, I was a young man, and I had my pride as well, so I didn't want to tell them that we hadn't even kissed properly. It would have made me look bad. But how could we? Our houses were never empty, and there were always people around who'd have told her Mam and Dad about it – and they were strict about that kind of thing. One night we went to see a film and as we came out a load of lads from work started shouting, making comments – you know what kind. And Em asked me if I had to put up with that all the time, and I said yes. So, right there in front of them all, she kissed me. Not a long kiss, and with her mouth closed, but she kissed me. She told me later that she'd got in trouble from her parents for that, but she was always a tough one, our Em, and she told them straight; we'd been going steady

for a while now, and if we wanted an occasional kiss she didn't see the harm. They didn't like it, but Em wasn't having any nonsense.

What? No, but you see this is important. Just let me finish, you'll see. Problem was, when the lads saw the kiss, they wanted to know if we'd gone further, all the more than they had before. And the more they joked about it, the harder it was to get off my mind. So, I started suggesting it to her. I didn't make a big thing about it, but just mentioned how beautiful she was and how much I wanted her. I wish I could say that she really wanted to do it, or that it was to do with me, but in truth I think it was more to do with her parents. You see, they didn't like us stepping out, and were always on at her to stop seeing me. Anyway, this one night there was a blazing row and she ran out of the house, she was that upset. She got to our place, probably about half past seven – it was still light at that time – and she took me to one side and whispered in my ear; 'Behind the trees out back, two o'clock.' Then she went back home before they could catch her at mine. I'll never forget that you know. I shivered. Honestly. I went to bed early, but I couldn't sleep. I had to share my room with my brother Albert, but he was such a heavy sleeper that it was no problem so sneak out when it got to two. I went down the stairs so slowly, and every step creaked. It was a mild night, but if you'd seen me shaking you'd have thought it was winter, and I

couldn't get the key in the lock of the back door – kept missing and scratching against the sides. I was making hell of a row. Anyway, I got out without anyone hearing, and climbed over the back-fence onto the field. And she wasn't there. I didn't know if she'd decided not to come, or if I'd got the wrong place, or time, or what. And then she arrived. She shushed me when I tried to talk, which was for the best as I was so nervous I could barely finish a word, let alone a sentence. She was wearing an old green jumper so any grass stains wouldn't be noticed, and she held on to the bottom for a moment, before lifting it off in one quick movement. And then she sat down in the grass, and laid back. After we were married she said she'd nearly lost her nerve and not come, but at the time she seemed so calm and in control – much more than I was.

I must admit – and I'm not proud of this, mind – that when we met out there I wasn't really sure that I loved her. Oh, I liked her a lot – more than I'd liked any other girl, certainly – but I was more interested in what we were going to do than who it was going to happen with. I remember her lying in the grass, her skin pale like the actresses in the black and white films we watched, and I remember her crying out in pain because it was her first time. And then I knew that I loved her, because when I heard her crying I just wanted to protect her. And that's what love is, isn't it?

It was over quickly, but it didn't matter. The important thing was that as we held each other afterwards, we both knew that we weren't just kids messing about. It'll sound soppy, but I think we both knew we'd end up married after that. We both sneaked back to our houses, and when we were both eighteen I proposed properly, but really I'd proposed and been accepted that night.

After she died, I had visitor after visitor. They all wanted to know how I was doing, and they all said I should get rid of her things. They said it would torment me to be reminded of her all the time. I didn't really know what I was doing, so I just let them get on with it. By the time I was in any fit state to know my own mind, it was too late – nearly everything of hers was gone. I wish they'd left a few bits, just so I'd have something of her still here. I wish they'd left a dress of hers, so I could look at it and remember her in it. I wish they'd left her make-up things by the mirror in the bedroom so I could remember her getting ready in the morning. We had a couple of photographs, but somehow they didn't quite look like her, they didn't contain any of her life. I wanted something to remind me of the way she moved, the sound of her voice, the smell of her skin, the way she smiled in an instant when someone made a joke. And I had nothing left. All I could do was look out of my window and see that spot, that place where we had gone that night. And through the years, at some point in

every day, I've stood at my window and looked at it, and remembered her. So, yesterday, when I saw that lad stood there, burning the grass, it was like he was burning her as well, like I was losing her again. So, I...

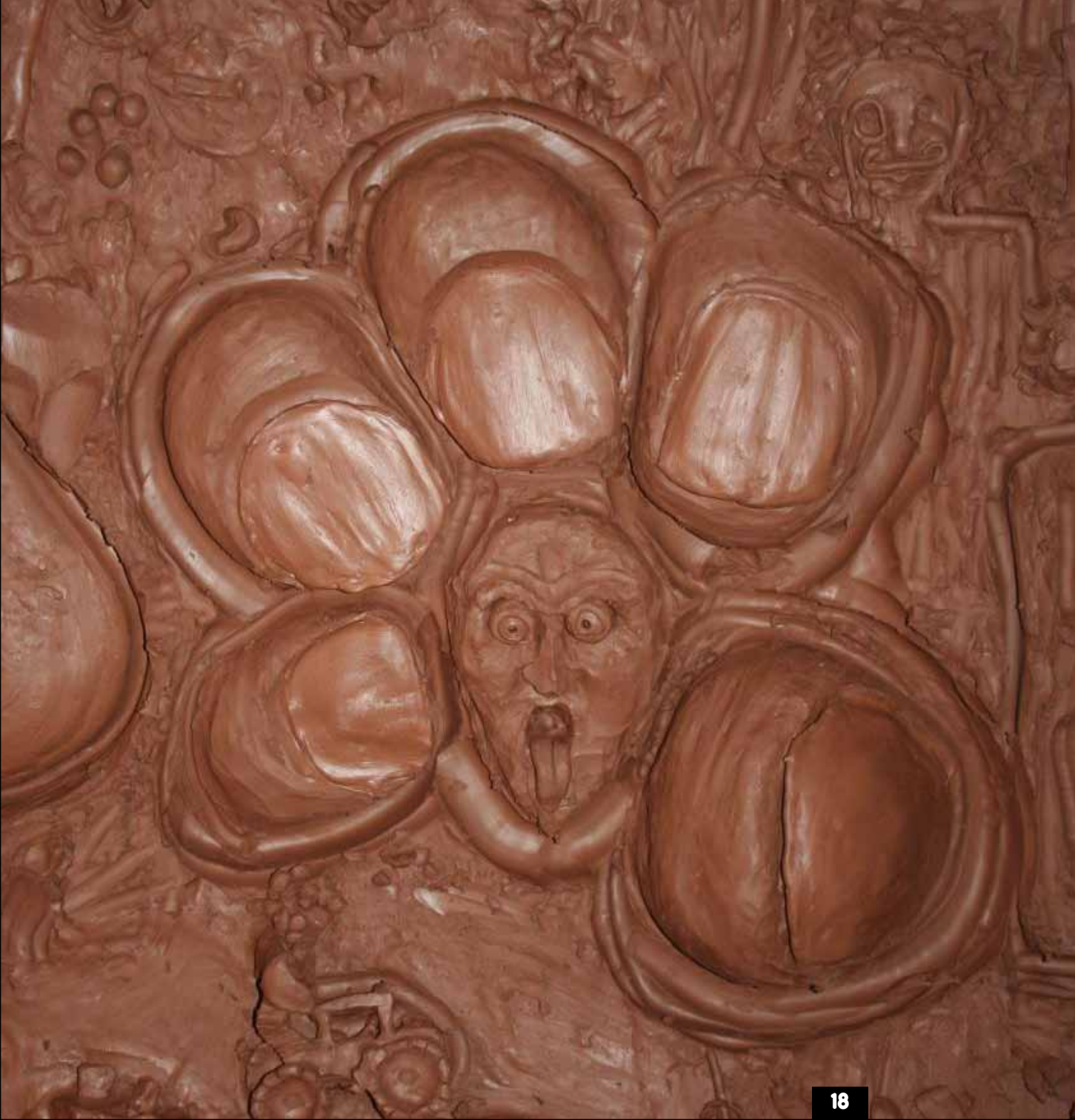
No, I don't want anyone. I just want to finish. I just want to tell you the truth, and I don't care about what happens after that. My Dad had this rifle, said you could never be too careful. He used to clean it every couple of days without fail, making sure not only that it worked but that it sparkled. When he died, I ended up with it. I'd always taken care of it – especially after Em died. I'd nothing of her left, and I didn't want to make the same mistake with my family. I'm too old to be able to make it to their graves much these days, so instead of making sure the grave-stone's clean, I keep the gun sparkling and in working order. I went over to the draw where I keep it, and took it out. My Dad had taught me how to fire it when I was still a boy. I opened my window, and could hear the crackling of the grass as it burned, and the smell drifted into the room. And mixed with that, I could hear Em crying in pain, like she had done all those years before. And there was this lad, poking the fire, keeping it going, killing her again. And I just wanted to stop it, just wanted to save her. I...

I shot him. I shot him in the head. I don't know that I aimed for his head – I can't remember. I suppose I must have done. The shot sounded like when Em

was hit by that car, and my legs gave from under me – I must have fainted. When I woke up I couldn't remember what had happened, until I put the telly on and saw it on the news. I didn't know what to do at first, but this morning I realised there was only one thing to do. So I called you. You'll find the gun on the floor upstairs where I dropped it – I've not touched it since. Anyway, there it is. I'm sorry if this all sounds a bit cold – it's not really sunk in for me yet. I'm sorry I did it – it's not really that lad's fault is it? It's not like he knew what he was doing. It's been lonely, all these years without children, but it must be so much worse to have one and lose them. You will tell his parents how sorry I am, won't you? Not that I expect they'll want to hear it, and I can't say I'd blame them. I don't think there's anything else to say.

Yes Inspector, I understand perfectly.

Robert Monroe has been writing for some time but this is his first piece of published fiction. He lives in North East Lincolnshire where he is constantly depressed by the state of his local football team but cheered up by listening to The Cure. He's funny that way.



FEATURE

Airspace Gallery, Stoke-On-Trent

AirSpace is Stoke-on-Trent's first Contemporary Art Gallery. As a newly formed arts organisation, their initiative is to help develop the contemporary arts culture within the city.

Located in a Victorian building on Broad Street in Hanley, Airspace sits within the Cultural Quarter and is a minute's walk from the main shopping centre. The building itself dates back to the 19th century and was initially set up as a British Gas Lighting Company. It has a great sense of history, apparent by the building's frontage and the Milton tiles that can be found once inside.

The Blank Media Collective Exhibitions Team (Marcelle Holt, Jamie Hyde, Gareth Hacking and myself) were delighted to go down to Stoke-on-Trent to visit AirSpace and meet the gallery's co-founders; David Bethell and Andrew Branscombe. The visit was organised as part of our ongoing research and preparations for opening a new contemporary art space in Manchester.

The idea for the AirSpace Gallery project was developed while the two lead artists were studying for a Fine Art Degree at Staffordshire University, in Stoke-on-Trent. Although enjoying the course and graduating with First class honours, the opportunities for exhibiting and for artists in general was minimal in the area.

Having received funding from Creative Network to research other venues in the UK, it was evident that Stoke-on-Trent was massively under-developed within the contemporary art scene compared to likes of Norwich, Leeds and Edinburgh, as well as neighbouring cities Derby, Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Sheffield. All had established contemporary art movements, and a vibrant community of artists. The research also highlighted that art and artists had contributed considerably towards the regeneration of these cities, often as a result of artists moving into the derelict spaces left by industry.



AirSpace Gallery launched their first Contemporary Art Gallery on 3rd November 2006 in an old pottery factory on the outskirts of Hanley. The space had been formerly owned by J H Weatherby and Sons and was in a transitional period.

The initial challenge of David and Andrew's gallery management lives was to turn this abandoned, run-down building into a space suitable for displaying contemporary art works. The first job was a major tidy up, which included clearing out some of the pots and ceramics that had been abandoned as well as cleaning up a plethora of bird faeces! This was of course not a pretty job but their vision and determination produced a space that was unrecognisable from the time when they first entered.

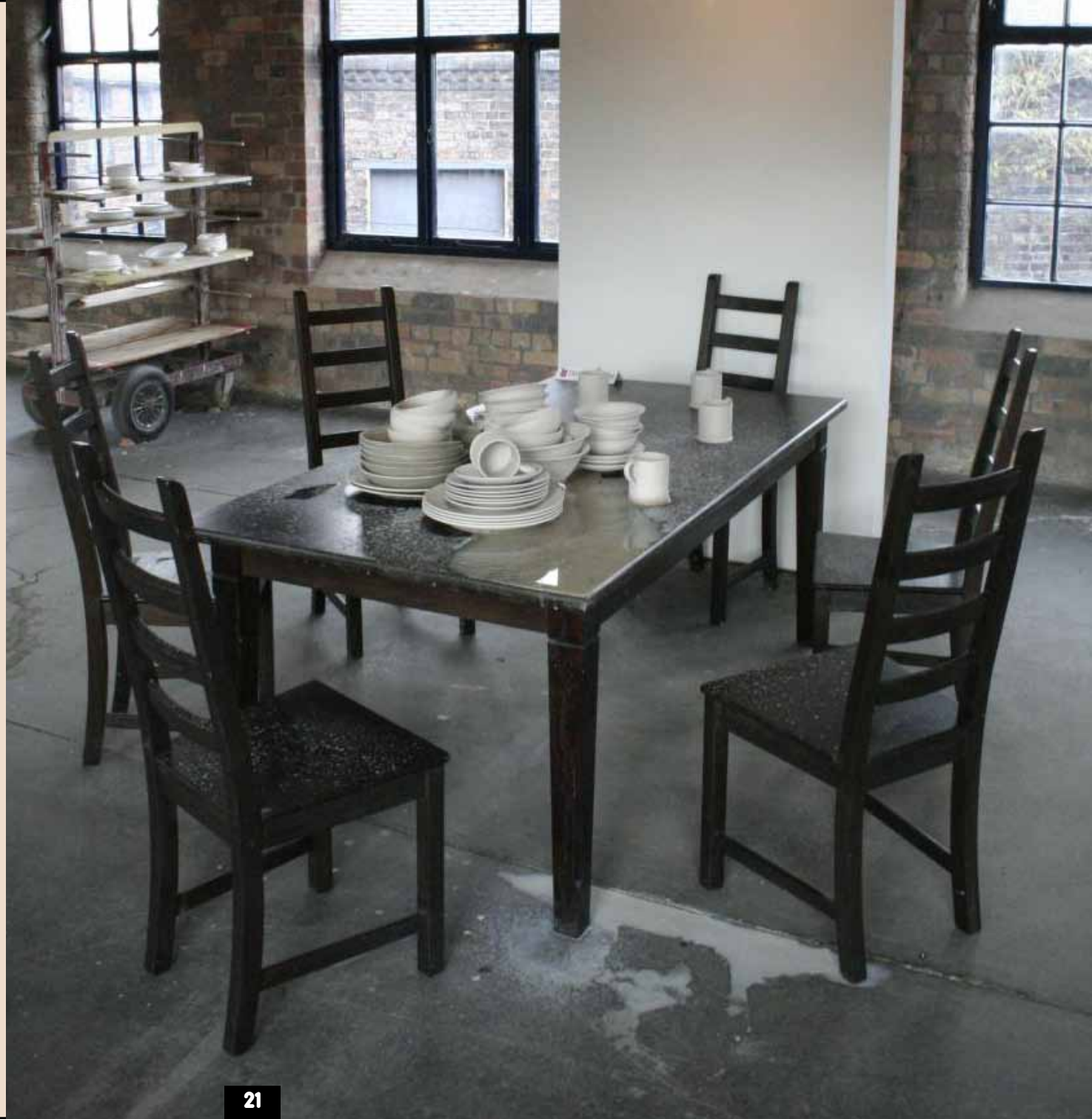
With ongoing exhibitions and series' of music (OnAir), film nights (AirVideo) and a vibrant artists' studio (underneath the gallery space), AirSpace swiftly built an enthusiastic and supportive following of attendees from not only Stoke-on-Trent but around the country. AirSpace Gallery quickly became renowned for showcasing high quality, challenging exhibitions in a unique and historical space.



There were obviously many issues that arose throughout the gallery's journey, one of which was how to heat such an expansive building. Followers soon learned that warm coats, hats and gloves were necessary, but it became an all-inclusive part of the experience and one which I will never forget. Electricity was provided by an external generator (later to be stolen) and a warm, welcoming atmosphere was apparent on every visit.

After numerous problems associated with the deterioration of the building, AirSpace relocated to Number 4, Broad Street in May 2007 with the support and guidance of Stoke-on-Trent Council. Once again, they were blessed with a unique and historic building, this time built in 1878 with a 'Jacobethan' style frontage. The move between spaces appeared seamless, as each exhibition opening and event brought in larger audiences.

Unfortunately due to planning permission and health & safety regulations, AirSpace are only able to use part of the building at present. There are exciting plans in place though to integrate artists' studios (in the rooms upstairs), a residency space and a Fairtrade Café.





Work has continued within the gallery, including creating partition walling, installing laminate flooring and creating a dedicated dark space for video/film projections. Of course there are still plans to move AirSpace on to do bigger and better things (David and Andrew never rest on their laurels).

After getting slightly lost on the M6 and taking the scenic route, we were impressed by our own superb timekeeping as we rocked up to the gallery dot-on 11am (as per our appointment). We were greeted in Stoke-on-Trent by beautiful sunshine (this is a rarity, as I lived in the area for four years and did not see much of that big glowing thing in the sky!)

From outside the gallery, visitors and passers-by are greeted with art through the gallery's ongoing project, dialogue box. This is an opportunity for the gallery to build interactions and conversations as people either enter the gallery or are simply walking into the town centre to do a spot of shopping through a specially designed window box looking out onto the main street. The space is curated as an individual project by Anna Francis, AirSpace Gallery Director and Freelance artist.

After admiring the dialogue box project and posing for the odd photograph, we ventured inside to a warm welcome from David and Andrew, along with the offer of a cup of tea or coffee.

The exhibition that we were treated to was entitled Marl Hole, part of the British Ceramics Biennial 2009. At first glance, you may think, "OK Stoke-on-Trent, another gallery looking at the past and the decline of the ceramics industry..." but you would be wrong.



AirSpace Gallery is a space that is not afraid to challenge the audience. As well as being respectful of what has come before, AirSpace brings new, challenging concepts and exhibitions to the area. Marl Hole did just that as the artists put their own individual twists onto the medium of ceramics.

Highlights of the exhibition included a film installation by Johnny Magee, documenting four international artists' (Alexandre Englefriet [Holland], Pekka Paikkari [Finland] and Torbjorn Kvasbo [Norway]) primordial responses to clay during a five-day residency in a marl pit at Ibstock Brick Ltd. Part of the film showed one





of the artists continually ramming her knee and body into clay on a hillside. Initial responses were anything from shock (wow that must hurt!) to questioning what is happening. Further into the exhibition, these questions started to be answered, as when entering the second room, we were drawn to a heap of clay spread across the gallery floor with identical knee marks. This had earlier been part of a live art piece, as the artist in question performed this ritual act in AirSpace Gallery.

After having the pleasure of a guided tour around the whole of the building, we all agreed that the immense potential of this building will bring even more exciting and innovative projects to Stoke-on-Trent. David and Andrew should be congratulated for their dedication, passion and hard work. They have given Stoke-on-Trent a substantial boost and something to be proud of. We all hope that the support they are currently receiving continues and more investors see the potential for this project to flourish.

If you are ever in Stoke-on-Trent or even passing through, make sure you visit AirSpace Gallery – you will not regret it!

For further information about AirSpace Gallery and to find out what's on please visit the website:
www.airspacegallery.org





Article written by Mark Devereux, Blank Media Collective Director. Photographs courtesy Gareth Hacking.

AirSpace Gallery is a company Limited by Guarantee, with not for profit objectives, registered in England and Wales No. 6530431

AirSpace Gallery is supported by; Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire University, The Big Boost and Arts Council England.

To find out more about how to support AirSpace please email airspaceinfo@btinternet.com

BLANKVERSE

Professor by Bethan Townsend

i.

They can smell my fear,
In the spacious room
designated "staff".
Plastic chairs and hardwood counters,
Populate the social space,
their social space.
Where spectacled professors,
Sip herbal remedies,
I'm not backing into corners,
purposefully.
I wish I'd brought my glasses,
Are they key to convergence?

ii.

And back at home,
They all sit proudly,
With comforting wives, in pastel two-pieces,
Who offer huge fat cigars, single-malts and
Three course feasts.
Do they remove their glasses
When they get back home?
That's when mine come out, private alone.
They must have log fires, reading rooms and games,
Or I'm riddled with illusion.





And I'm back at home,
Hunched at my screen,
Looking across my kitchenette
And peeling pastel wallpaper.
Taking comfort in 20 Benson's,
Tesco gin and micro-waved biryani.
Spindly frames and the thickest of lenses,
Aid my viewing, internet chat room.



They must smell my fear,
It sticks to my neck,
The designated "staff" cupboard.
I make gritty coffee, mumble with intention
And imagine two years back, lighting a fag and
Conversing in cupboards.
There's a chair in the corner,
Bee-line begins.
It's then they start stalling, crossing,
Handshakes and smiles.
I drop my fear,
Take out my glasses,
'Welcome professor'

BLANK MEDIA PRESENTS

October 2009

The Ruby Electric opened the night with 'Over This' – bleeps sparkling over a low bass line before the volume jumps for a dynamic chorus, like The Kills but even more electro. And it isn't just the music that draws the comparison – Gemma Weightman's vocals range from Alison Mosshart sexiness to well-controlled high notes. They travel into funkier territory on the second track, as Kathy McGinty starts to really show what she can do on the bass and the track takes a slightly jazzier tone.

The next track is introduced as 'more mellow' and has a trip-out, almost ambient feel, and the welcome intrusion of the earthy sound of a saxophone in the background mix ensures the song never meanders. At this point the third member of the group is introduced – Dave the DAT machine who provides the sound-scapes that his human colleagues perform in front of. It is also revealed that this is only the group's second-ever gig – much to the surprise of an audience who all seem impressed by their polished performance (Weightman would later explain that they both have experience in different groups). They have an easy charm and confidence as performers – even when things go wrong, courtesy of the mischievous Dave. They recover well, 'Lucid' taking a step towards Hercules and Love Affair pop.

For the final track McGinty lays down her bass and they perform the only complete duet of the set, the welcome return of the sax covering for the other instrument's loss. They go off to genuinely appreciative applause, and rightly so. They are definitely one of the best acts I have seen at ...Presents and are due to go into the studio soon.

Faced with the difficult task of following them was Cyron, a three-piece (all of whom appear human), whose instruments of choice are the drums, bass and decks. They start with a steady beat over a techno background before the seriously electronic side rears up, suggesting what Primal Scream's extreme noise-fest Xtrmntr would have sounded like if it had been recorded for a party rather than for the end of civilisation. Despite all the weird noises, it's a toe-tapper. It's a trap too many bands fall into to forget the necessity of a tune under the bleeps, but this is electro you can dance to.

Gradually the music expands, easily capable of filling a much bigger room than this. There are no separate pieces; the music segues into different movements. The music begins to whirl harder, the bass gets funkier and suddenly we're in a tent somewhere dancing in the middle of a huge crowd. Well...nearly.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink sleeveless dress, is shown from the chest up, playing a dark-colored electric guitar. She is looking down at her hands on the fretboard. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background is dark with a subtle floral pattern.

LIVE MUSIC / FILM / ART / CREATIVITY / CAKE

The music ends suddenly – it sounds so perfect the audience assumes it is deliberate and applauds the end of the set, but it's actually a technical glitch which is luckily sorted out...for a moment, before cutting out again. A gap of several minutes follows (ably plugged by the sound of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid' from the house decks) before they're able to start again. Despite this set-back they have every head nodding – had there been more room it could have turned into a rave. And in many ways the mistakes added to the show and gave it a human factor that it's easy to lose in their brand of music.

The final act is Islands Lost At Sea, who present a much more traditional, down-to-Earth (ironically enough) line up of acoustic and electric guitar, and electric bass with a drum machine backing. The opening number sounds a little busy – the more intricate playing is a little lost in the coming together of all the elements, and the backing vocal/shout is a little sharp on the ears. There's a really good song in their somewhere, but it might work better if it were stripped back a little, with more focus being turned on their melodies, which are the strongest elements of the song.

The second track has the same problem – this time it's the vocal that gets lost in the mix and there are too many competing elements. Individually all the parts are good, but together they clash more than they compliment. This is brought out all the more during their third number which has a choppy guitar part which acts as a hook to hang the rest of the song on. Suddenly it works.

The band have a relaxed rapport with the audience – exchanging comments and even, at one point, comedic ways of saying 'hello'. The acoustic guitar is then swapped for a second electric, and the change suits them. Sparse, drawn-out notes build through the verse before the second guitar joins it for a more obviously rock chorus. It may be a more traditional arrangement but it allows the song to breathe and the improvement is clear. Simpler, but more effective.

For the final number of the evening the singer adopts a not entirely convincing falsetto before slipping back to his usual register. But the simpler playing carries the song, and indeed the set, through. There's no denying the potency of some of the songs played tonight, but their arrangements don't always make the most of their good ideas. Sometimes less really is more.



BLANK MEDIA RECOMMENDS

Baggage Reclaim, David Theobald

Saturday 5th December 2009 – Friday 18th December 2009

Prussian Projekte, Nottingham

Prussian Projekte continues its video orientated programme by proudly presenting David Theobald's first solo show in Nottingham "Baggage Reclaim"

Manipulating the mundane Theobald defines location not by geography but by our position within the complex web of processes that define our day to day lives. Theobald's work delves under the surface of these situations to expose a perpetual state of transit where increased complexity is often presented as the illusion of "progress".

Rebelling against the seemingly endless pursuit of much digital animation and game technology towards evermore spectacular optical effects, the spectator held in thrall of the screen. Theobald's use of a restricted viewpoint, repetition, mundane subject matter and flat narrative seem more likely to generate feelings of futility, frustration and perhaps humour which, in some cases, might give way to a deeper contemplation of the systems in which we live.

Recent Exhibitions Include: Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy, London; Creekside Open 2009, APT Gallery, London; Transition, Bargehouse, OXO Building/Submit2Gravity, London; Art Projects, London Art Fair 2009, London Business Design Centre, London; Figuring Landscapes, British Film and Video Collection, Touring Show, Artsway, FACT, Tate Modern; Visions in the Nunnery, Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts Trust, London.

David Theobald lives and works in Twickenham, London. Prussian Projekte is the first gallery established for moving image and film work in Nottingham. Theobald's show is the second exhibition of an ongoing programme of video and film works by both emerging and international artists. Alongside its exhibition programme Prussian Projekte will be showing new films from independent filmmakers.

Event Contact Information

www.prussianprojekte.com

info@prussianprojekte.com

Unit 3, Block B, OPM House, Haydn Rd, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 2LE

Opening Times: Wed – Sun 11am – 3pm

NOW OPEN!

BlankMarket

Online Art Store

www.blankmediacollective.org/blankmarket



Mario Sughi
Afternoon walk (in Temple Bar, Dublin)
£160



Kyle Saxton
Light Graffiti & Sketch of dog
£280



Andrew Gilmore
Cramp
£500



David Harker
copse
£25

[ADVERTISEMENTS]

Neck of the Woods

Exhibition opportunity - call for proposals

Nexus Art Cafe, Manchester

Friday 12th February - Sunday 11th April 2010

Deadline: Friday 18th December

For further information and submission guidelines please visit:

www.blankmediacollective.org

CREDITS

Blank Media Collective Team:

Director: Mark Devereux

Financial Administrator: Steven Porter

Development: Dwight Clarke

Web Manager: Simon Mills

BlankMarket: Matthew Small

Exhibitions Coordinators: Jamie Hyde, Marcelle Holt
& Claire Curtin

Special Projects Coordinator: Petra Hoschtitsky

Official Photographer: Gareth Hacking

Blank Media Presents... Manager: Iain Goodyear

Blank Media Presents... Steve Goossens

blankpages Team:

Editor: John Leyland

Fiction Editor: Phil Craggs

Poetry Editor: Baiba Auria

Music Editor: Dan Bridgwood-Hill

Guest Visual Designer: Henry Roberts



BLANK MEDIA IS KINDLY SUPPORTED BY FUEL & *Fred Aldous**
ART, CRAFT & DESIGN MATERIALS