

NINA ROYLE  
IN THE PICTURE ROOM  
22 JUN – 17 AUG

NEWLYN  
ART GALLERY  
& THE  
EXCHANGE

ARTISTS' NOTES

A relationship between water, sight and the nature of images.  
A drip feed of notes that might one day become an essay.

• The painter Philip Guston once wrote: "We are image-makers and we are image ridden."  
I think about this often and I think about how images slip from words and how via osmosis or absorption they enter our bodies then leave.

• Saint Ila - came on a cabbage leaf.

Floating between borders of definition

(identity is harder to define when sea has been involved)

A princess > an immigrant > a saint > a woman > a heathen > a foreigner a presence  
disturbing the realm of the visible.

From the perspective of those on dry land, her crossing of water was seen as a miracle.

Thirsty for proof and with a desire to testify what magic was at work in this miracle of  
survival - she was martyred at the mouth of the river Hayle.

In death her sainthood was confirmed.

With her life flow terminated, she was reified to the currency of images.

What was gained and what was lost?

I think about this question in relation to pinning images down with words.

What service is this serving?

Clarity, generosity, trade flow?

• In our kitchen there is a mirror positioned behind the sink. Whilst washing-up I monitor  
a red vein in it, that threads across part of my left eye white. Its small but it bothers me,  
particularly when I'm stressed. I see it as a sign that sight is fallible.

Vein the sign of vain.

It's a reminder that time and images now, are flushing down the slimy plughole of our sink.

• Thoughts dwell on instigating a routine ritual of bathing my eyes in eyebright and taking  
cod liver oil.

Maybe this will preserve my future sight

Maybe it will permit me to catch images now as they swim sea-bound through drainpipes.

Maybe it will encourage an eye white to stay white.

The ritual is tedious. Dental floss cries out.

- Saint Lucy had her eyes gauged out. Her image now serves them to you on a plate. I wonder if this is because she saw too much. The image is a warning. It seems connected to that of Medusa, who turned those that looked at her to stone. These are parables of mortality that mutate through time.

- The surface I work on is made from gesso – rabbit skin glue and chalk. Chalk is calcium carbonate and calcium carbonate is made from the sedimentation of small sea creatures – coccoliths, plankton and small molluscs. Jacquetta Hawkes in 'A Land' writes about the formation of England's chalk beds during the Cretaceous age. Layer by layer they formed over 30 million years in 'a marine snowstorm...the falling of flakes, (which are bodies) through one of the clearest seas ever known.' I love this book because she understands land as a layered body, describing the passage through it as a passage through memory itself. Her writing makes me think about erosion as composition. It makes me think about how hard ground is sculpted by the stronger and softer fingers of water and time. It makes me think about St la buried between layers of coccoliths. And it makes me aware of my chipped front teeth – click, click, crack. Set on life cycle in the wash of my mouth - a snow storm of calcium carbonate is raining down an oesophagus, to land elsewhere, to become something else.

- Historically, genuine ultramarine was the most expensive and prized pigment that could be brought by painters. It was used to colour heaven and its name means 'from across the sea.' Ironically, Lazurite the mineral that gives ultramarine its intense blue colour, contains nothing blue. The only colour present in the mineral particles, are yellow balls of sulphur encased in a colourless lattice.

I've written about this in more detail in a work called 'Glaucous'. You can find a recorded version of it on my Soundcloud account.

Nina Royle, 2019

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