

THE
STRATFORD
GALLERY

NORMAN ACKROYD
KINGDOM

29.04.2023-12.05.2023





ARTIST STATEMENT

“The distance between the lighthouse of Muckle Flugga at the extreme north of Shetland and the Bishops Rock at the extreme east of the Scilly Isles is just over 1000 miles as the crow flies and is the longest measurement of the Kingdom.

Muckle Flugga is nearer to the North Pole than the southern tip of Greenland, while Bishops Rock is roughly the same latitude as Paris. This west coast marks not only the Atlantic edge of the British archipelago but also of Europe and Asia.

Human migrations and invasions over millennia have all left their mark on the landscape, no more so than in the last 1000 years when mass deforestation has bequeathed us the landscape that we're now familiar with.

Evidence of our predecessors permeates the entire Kingdom and underpins our true understanding of our landscape.”

Norman Ackroyd, April 2023



KINGDOM, EXHIBITION STATEMENT

This solo exhibition of Norman Ackroyd RA CBE offers an extensive and intimate look at our Kingdom through the eyes of a contemporary printmaking virtuoso. From prints of Balmoral Castle and Tower Bridge in London, to prints of the Shetland Isles and Bishops Rock in the Scilly Isles, this varied show of Ackroyd's work is a celebration of the UK and its far-reaching landscape. In this collection of over thirty prints, landscapes of well known historic and tourist sites as well as some of the lesser known and furthest parts of our kingdom are brought sharply and beautifully into focus. Aching with atmosphere, emotion and patriotism, for some, these landscapes transport us back in time to memories of these particular places, for others, they awaken a desire to see them and visit them. Working in the upper limits of what can be produced using ink, paper and acid, Ackroyd's prints serve as important historical documents of our kingdom; they are profound statements in black and white. Yet, they are also a powerful reminder of the oft forgotten beauty still to be found readily throughout our increasingly industrialised and urbanised kingdom.

Born in Leeds in 1938, Norman Ackroyd belongs to a rare category of artists, that most British of British artists, along with the likes of John Constable and J. M. W. Turner; landscape artists with a patriotic devotion to transmuting the beauty of the UK. Ackroyd's knowledge of our kingdom is encyclopaedic, his name synonymous with it. Whilst talking with him in his studio about his work, the exact location of each print and relevant excursion is easily recalled, so too is a witty anecdote or story about the trip. Yet his monochromatic vistas of

the UK that are so well known today weren't always his principal subject, although a love of landscape has accompanied him from an early age, inspired by boyhood bicycle rides in the Yorkshire Dales.

Ackroyd came to art at a young age. Despite early ideas that he would continue working in his family's locally owned butchers, his mother and art teacher were passionate about him pursuing a career in art. After his initial training at the Leeds College of Art from 1956-61, he went on to attend the Royal College of Art in London. Whilst here, he decided to follow artistic trends of the time and specialised mostly in making pop collages from printed materials, incorporated into larger urban landscapes. Although printmaking was certainly popular, artists at the time prized colour and screen printing techniques over the more traditional printmaking methods. However, with encouragement from his tutors Cecil Collins and Julian Trevelyan, who had rightly recognised that his heart wasn't in it, he soon developed his own unique artistic path.

After completing his training, Ackroyd rose to fame and prominence quickly and with hindsight, it is unequivocally clear that he has made what was, in his youth, a rather unfashionable artistic pursuit, extremely fashionable and not to mention, much admired. Today, his list of professional accolades is extensive, a Royal Academician, a Senior Fellow at the Royal College of Art and in possession of a C.B.E for services to printmaking and engraving. His work has been exhibited and commissioned internationally and is collected on an equally impressive and large scale.



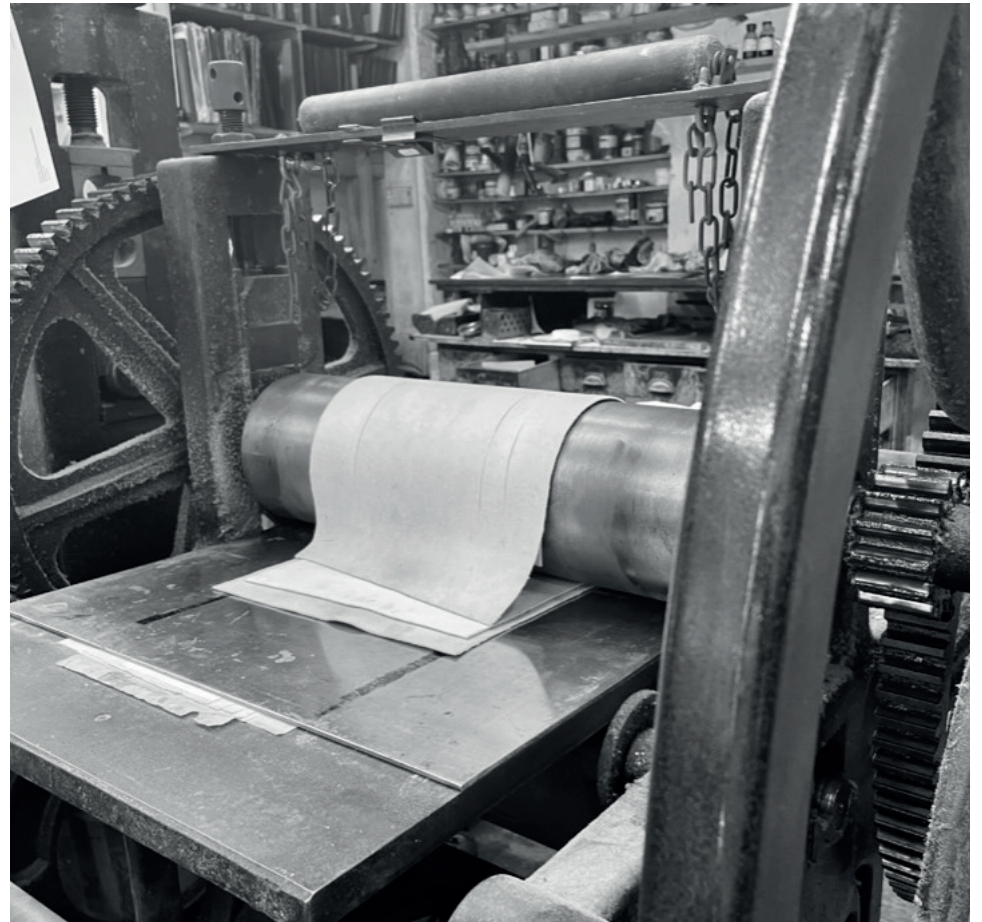
ARTISTIC PROCESS

One of Britain's most celebrated contemporary printmakers, Norman Ackroyd works mostly in etching and aquatint, although he does also often experiment with watercolour when working directly onto paper. The processes of etching and aquatint can be likened to engraving using acid, and similar to engraving, they are both intaglio printmaking techniques. Intaglio refers to printmaking techniques in which the image is incised into a surface, and the incised line or sunken area holds the ink. Different to etching however, aquatint produces tones rather than simply lines, and often, as is the case of Ackroyd, the two techniques are combined to achieve a greater definition of form and atmosphere. Invented in France in the 1760s, the aquatint technique was invented much later than etching, which developed from decorating armour in the early 1500s.

Aquatint consists of exposing a metal plate, usually copper, to acid through a layer of heated, granulated acid-proof resin. Once immersed in an acid bath, the acid bites away at the copperplate but only in the interstices between the resin grains, leaving an evenly pitted surface that yields broad areas of tone when the grains are removed and the plate is inked and printed. An unlimited number of tones can be achieved by exposing different parts of the plate to acid baths of different strengths and for different periods of time. For instance, longer periods produce more deeply-bitten rings, which prints darker areas of tone. Tones can also be adjusted by scraping and burnishing before the plate is inked, for example to help increase areas of white.

His final landscapes aren't sentimental or idealised, they rely on first hand observation and personal experience. His preferred subjects are typically old, long-standing or abandoned sites of human habitation. Although he rarely includes the human form itself, Ackroyd sees a clear divide between these two things; the human figure and the landscape they inhabit. However, what he seeks is to capture the resonance of humanity in a place.

A modern day explorer of sorts, Ackroyd heads out on excursions, but often without an idea of what they will yield and what he will find. Whilst out on these expeditions, he makes fleeting sketch after sketch; he prefers not to rely on cameras. He smudges, smears and scribbles, in pencil, ink, charcoal and watercolour. Transitory things like the time of day, play of light and the weather are crucial. Once back in his studio, he turns the rough and slightly weathered drawings into freeing and arresting prints. During the creative process, although he might physically be in his studio in Bermondsey, Ackroyd recalls the feeling of place, and emotionally returns to it. The copperplate is then dutifully worked and adjusted until the desired result is achieved. Each etching hangs on a piece of geology, reminiscent of a place that truly exists, but at the same time, each will possess a degree of abstraction or invention, making them far more relatable and accessible for the viewer.



AILSA CRAIG, 1996
Copperplate etching
15 x 20 cm (image size)
25.5 x 33 cm (paper size)



Meaning 'Fairy Rock' or 'Elizabeth's Rock', Ailsa Craig is an island in the outer Firth of Clyde, to the west of mainland Scotland. Positioned halfway between Belfast and Glasgow, it is also colloquially known as 'Paddy's milestone'.



CASTLE DUART, 2006

Copperplate etching

19 x 32 cm (image size)

26 x 37 cm (paper size)

Situated on the Island of Mull, off the west coast of Scotland, Castle Duart is a 13th century castle and is the seat of Clan McLean.



DITCHLEY LAKE,
2006

Copperplate etching

21.5 x 32 cm (image size)
28 x 38 cm (paper size)

Ditchley lake is part of an 18th century landscaped park in Oxfordshire, a few miles north of Woodstock. The park features a large house, farm buildings and mature trees.



ST KILDA IN SUNLIGHT,
STAC LEE, 2009

Copperplate etching

49 x 76 cm

A sea stack in the St Kilda island group, off the west coast of Scotland in the Outer Hebrides. Standing at 165 metres high, Stac Lee is the second tallest sea stac in Britain and is home to the world's largest colony of northern gannet. This work first appeared in the Royal Academy's 2010 Summer Exhibition.

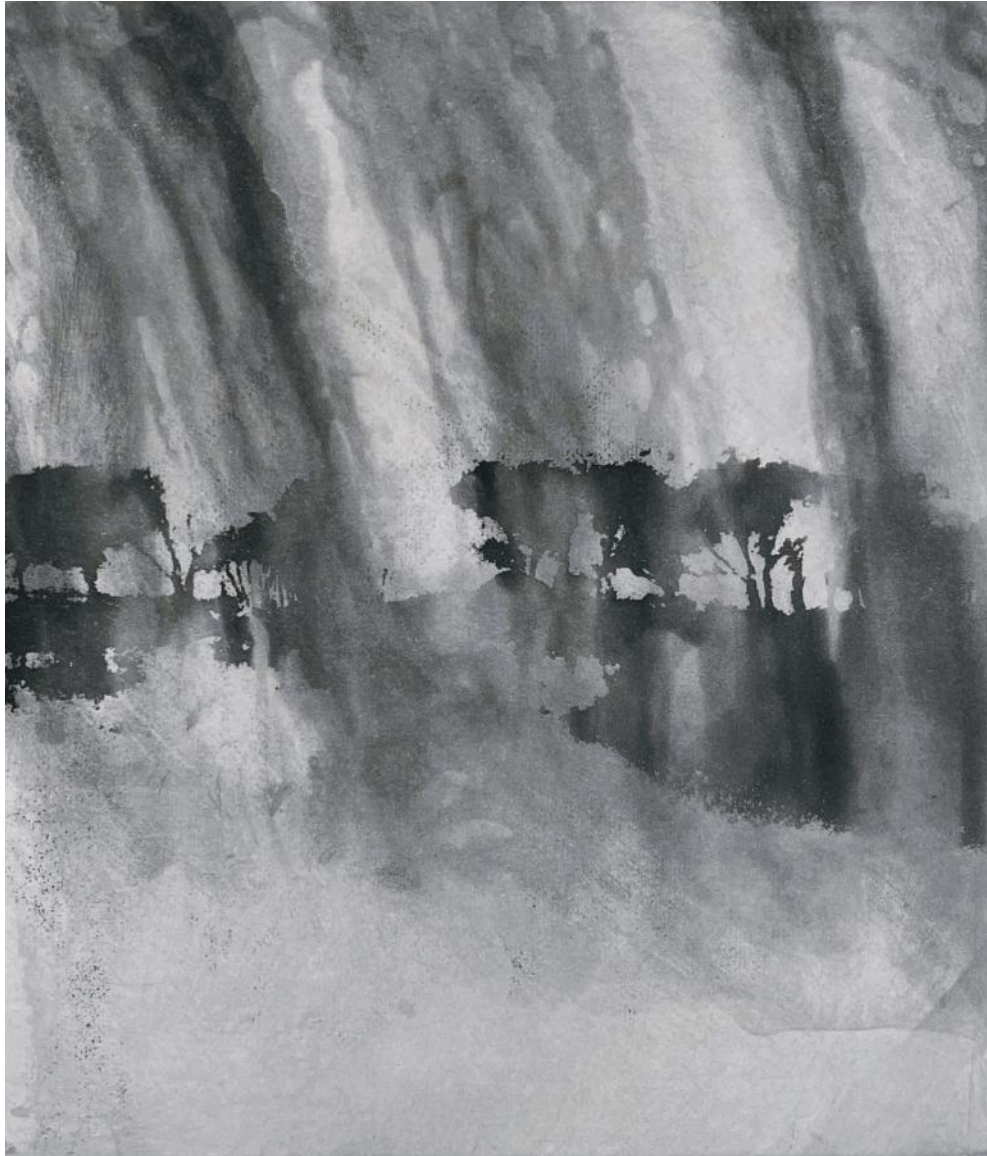
ROAREIM FLANNAN,
2012

Copperplate etching

15 x 33 cm (image size)
22 x 38 cm (paper size)



Located in the Outer Hebrides, Roareim is one of the most westerly of the Flannan Isles. It is also home to a large population of gannet.



A WILTSHIRE SKYLINE,
2016

Copperplate etching

22 x 19.5 cm (image size)
33.5 x 27.5 cm (paper size)

ST KILDA MORNING,
2019

Copperplate etching

48 x 76 cm



St Kilda is an isolated and uninhabited archipelago, made up of the westernmost islands of the Outer Hebrides.



JANUARY SUNRISE,
DINHAM WEIR, LUDLOW,
2004

Copperplate etching

38 x 60 cm (image size)
54 x 77.5 cm (paper size)

Dinham Weir House is a private home on the River Teme that lies a short walk from the medieval market town of Ludlow.



THE STOUR IN
WINTER, 2017

Copperplate etching

48 x 77 cm

A wintery view across the River Stour in Kent, which flows into the North Sea via Pegwell Bay.



MORNING SUNLIGHT
BEMPTON CLIFFS, 2014

Copperplate etching

48 x 77 cm

Captured here bathed in morning sunlight and amid a feeding frenzy of gannet, the Bempton Cliffs are situated on the Yorkshire coast.

FLANNAN ISLANDS, 2012

Copperplate etching

49,5 x 78 cm



A view of The Flannan Islands, an island group in the Outer Hebrides, which lie to the upper northwest of Scotland. A flock of seabirds fly under an expanse of stormy sky.



EVENING ON BURRA
FIRTH, 2022

Copperplate etching

49 x 77 cm

A small strip of populated land on the island of Unst, part of the Shetland Islands. According to legend, it was once inhabited by a giant called Saxi.

CHARLESTON GARDEN,
1989

Copperplate etching

50 x 45 cm (image size)
67 x 56 cm (paper size)



Charleston Garden is part of the now public Charleston property situated in Lewes and nestled in the Sussex South Downs.



CARTMEL IN FEBRUARY,
WINDERMERE, 2012

Copperplate etching

49.5 x 78 cm

Cartmel is a small yet beautiful village in Windermere, West Cumbria, located on the southern edge of the Lake District.



SHIANT GARBH
EILEAN, 2010

Copperplate etching

49.5 x 78 cm

Garbh Eilean is one of the Shiant Islands on the upper west coast of Scotland. The cliffs themselves are formed from volcanic rock.



LOCH AWE IN WINTER,
2006

Copperplate etching

56 x 77.5 cm

A large body of fresh water in Argyll & Bute, the Scottish Highlands, which is surrounded by 15th century castle ruins.

INNER HEISKER, 2016

Copperplate etching

16.5 x 29 cm (image size)
26 x 37.5 cm (paper size)



Inner Heisker is a line of three sea stacks lying off the southwest promontory of Pabbay, a part of the Barra Isles.



DECEMBER DAYBREAK
WORMS HEAD GOWER, 2005

Copperplate etching

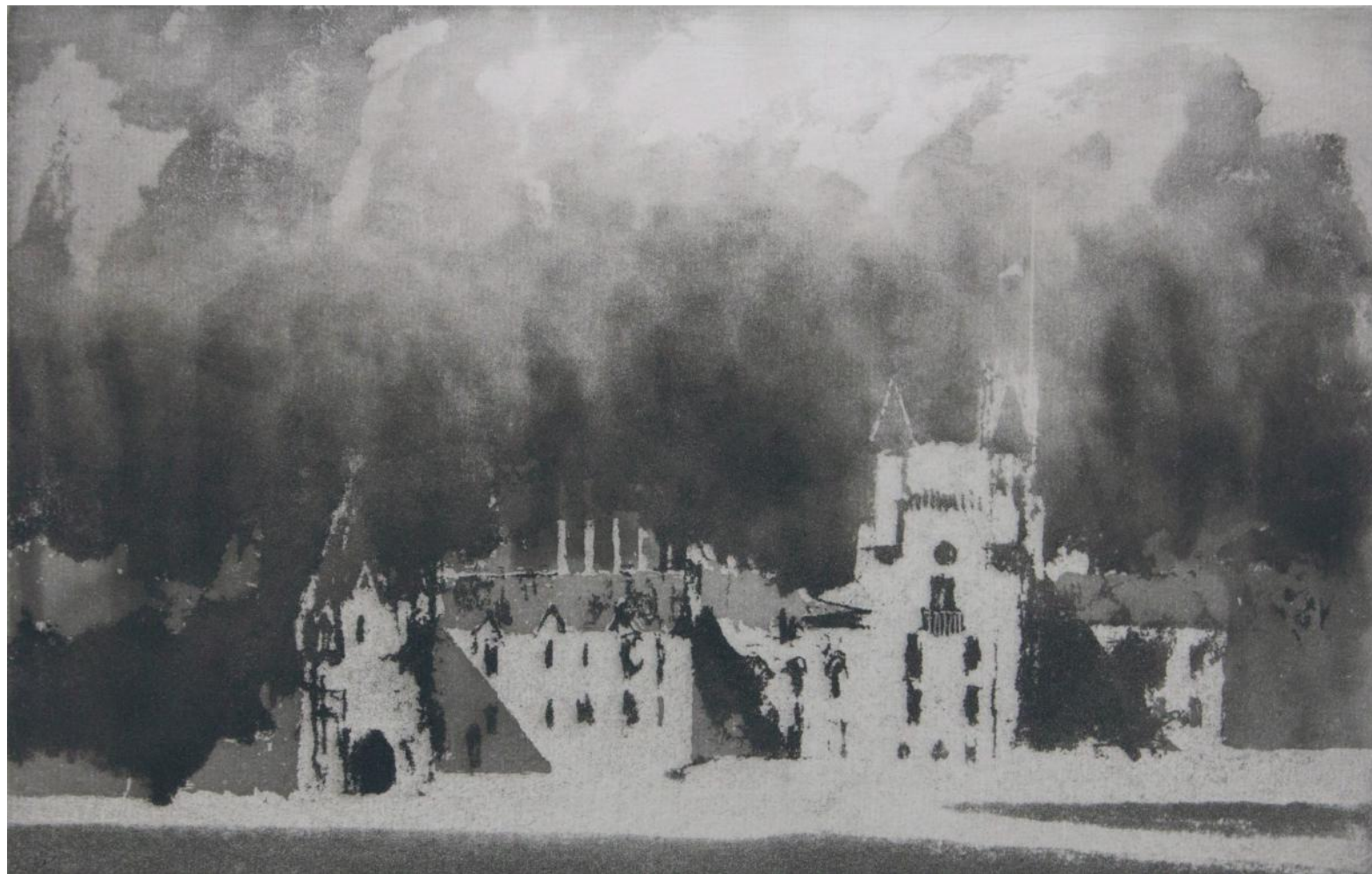
21 x 32 cm (image size)
28 x 38 cm (paper size)

The furthest Westerly point of the Gower Peninsula, not far from Swansea. The name 'Worms Head' is derived from the old English for sea serpent.

BALMORAL CASTLE,
2002

Copperplate etching

15 x 23 cm (image size)
26 x 33 cm (paper size)





BREA HILL, 1995

Copperplate etching

17 x 25 cm (image size)
26 x 32.5 cm (paper size)

Brea Hill is a round hill beside the River Camel estuary in north Cornwall. This particular perspective of the hill includes the top of St. Enodoc's church spire.

BARRETT'S ZAWN, 1995

Copperplate etching

16.5 x 23 cm (image size)
25.5 x 33 cm (paper size)



A cliff side view out to the sea in north Cornwall.



WINTER MORNING
WHARFEDALE, 2011

Copperplate etching

17.5 x 25 cm (image size)
26 x 33 cm (paper size)

Wharfedale is the upper valley of the River Wharfe in north Yorkshire. It lies within the districts of Craven and Harrogate.

THE CORK OAK AT
ANTONY, 2009

Copperplate etching

16 x 26 cm (image size)
26 x 34.5 cm (paper size)



Antony House is an 18th century property in Cornwall, now owned and operated by the National Trust. This majestic oak tree is set within the magnificent landscape garden.



DINHAM BRIDGE, 2009

Copperplate etching

17 x 25 cm (image size)
26 x 34 cm (paper size)

Near Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, this beautiful stone bridge at Dinham crosses the River Teme.

GLEN MUICK, 2002

Copperplate etching

10 x 22 cm (image size)
17.5 x 30.5 cm (paper size)



A glen and a former parish in Scotland, which lies to the west of Aberdeen city. This view shows Loch Muick, which lies within the boundary of the Balmoral Estate.



WHITBY, 2015

Copperplate etching

13 x 20 cm (image size)
19 x 27.5 cm (paper size)

This view shows the Abbey and Church at Whitby in north Yorkshire.

BRESSAY DAYBREAK,
2005

Copperplate etching

19.5 x 32 cm (image size)
26 x 37 cm (paper size)



A populated island on the east side of the Shetland archipelago of Scotland.



OLD WARDOUR, 2020

Copperplate etching

16.5 x 28.5 cm (image size)
22.5 x 35 cm (paper size)

Old Wardour is a ruined 14th century castle near Tisbury in the Wiltshire countryside.



RUTHVEN, 1999

Copperplate etching

19 x 28 cm (image size)
28 x 39 cm (paper size)

Open to the public as a nature reserve, Loch Ruthven is a large loch to the South west of Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands.



FLOODTIDE AT
BLAKENEY, 2004

Copperplate etching

19 x 32 cm (image size)
26 x 37.5 cm (paper size)

Blakeney is a coastal village and civil parish in Norfolk. Blakeney lies within the Norfolk Coast 'Area Of Natural Beauty', featuring a National Nature Reserve and uninterrupted views of the coastline.

BURNHAM OVERY
STAITHE, 2004

Copperplate etching

19 x 32 cm (image size)
25.5 x 39 cm (paper size)



Burnham Overy Staithe lies near Brancaster in Norfolk and sports stunning views of the North Norfolk coast and its wildlife.



HOLKHAM PARK
FROM SCOLT HEAD, 2005

Copperplate etching

19 x 32 cm (image size)
26 x 37 cm (paper size)

Holkham Hall & Estate is based in north Norfolk and boasts sweeping landscape views. This view looks out from Scolt Head Island, an offshore barrier island, to Holkham Park.

BISHOPS ROCK,
2005

Copperplate etching

19.5 x 33 cm (image size)
26 x 37.5 cm (paper size)



A skerry off the British coast known for its lighthouse which was built in 1858. It is the westernmost part of the Isles of Scilly and is listed as the world's smallest island to feature a building.



SUNSET FROM TOWER
BRIDGE, 2004

Copperplate etching

25 x 37 cm (image size)
32 x 44.5 cm (paper size)

THE RUMBLINGS, MUCKLE
FLUGGA, SHETLAND, 2018

Copperplate etching

50 x 80 cm



A small rocky island north of Unst in the Shetland Islands, it is the one of the northernmost points of the British Isles, second only to the small islet of Out Stack. The name muckle Flugga comes from Old Norse meaning 'large steep-sided island'.

ARTIST'S CV

- 1938 Born in Leeds, Yorkshire
- 1956-61 Attended Leeds College of Art
- 1961-64 Attended Royal College of Art, London
- 1991 Elected Royal Academician
- 1994 Appointed Professor of Etching,
University of Arts
- 2000 Made Senior Fellow, Royal College
of Art, London
- 2007 Awarded CBE for Services to Print
making and Engraving
- 2013 BBC Documentary - What Do Artists
Do All Day?



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