

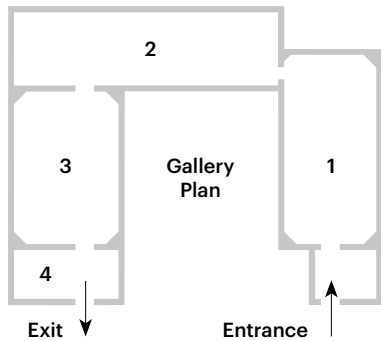
SHADOWS

24 October 2020
- 23 January 2021

AND LIGHT

SOUTHAMPTON
CITY ART GALLERY

INTRODUCTION



This exhibition forms part of Southampton's Mayflower 400 programme, marking the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower* on its now famous journey to the New World. The first pilgrim separatists set sail from West Quay in Southampton on 15 August 1620. They arrived at Cape Cod in November and subsequently founded the first pilgrim colony in New England.

The exhibition's subject matter reflects the words of the colony's leader, William Bradford, who sailed on the *Mayflower* and became the first elected Governor of the colony. He then served in that capacity for more than thirty years. He wrote:

'...as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone to many...'

There are a number of events within the Mayflower 400 programme with light as subject matter, of which this exhibition forms a part.

The title is taken from the Joni Mitchell song, *Shadows and Light* (1971), which declares that 'Every picture has its shadows, And it has some source of light...'. The illuminating properties of colonial settlements cast deep and dark shadows over the world they have helped to forge. The European settlers brought new diseases to the Wampanoag people, whose numbers had been decimated prior to the settlers' arrival with half of the local indigenous population dying, probably from

a smallpox epidemic. At the same time, just under half of the settlers died within the first year from the extremely harsh conditions, scurvy and other diseases. The Wampanoag formed a cautious alliance with the settlers, offering to help to grow and catch food, whilst the settlers offered protection against foes.

The alliance continued until King Philip's war in 1675–78 in which most of the Wampanoag were slaughtered, and their leader, Metacomet, was decapitated and his head put on a spike and left there for many years. This is generally seen as the start of America as an independent new nation. The Separatists lasted until 1692 when they were absorbed into the Puritan colony, known as Boston's Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The exhibition is not about the *Mayflower* voyage specifically, but rather is an analogy for the voyage and arrival of the settlers, using historic and modern works of art. The core of the exhibition is based on works from the City Art Gallery's collection which are accompanied by loans from the Arts Council Collection and a number of contemporary artists.

ENTRANCE

In the entrance Gallery is a work by **Ceal Floyer**, an artist who studied at Goldsmiths' college, graduating in 1994. She now lives and works in Berlin. Her work is playful and often looks at the slippage between illusion and reality, usually in an ironic or humorous way. Regularly combining photographic images and film with real actual objects and installation, she encourages the viewer to stop and double-take, realising the absurdity of what is in front of them. The end result can be beautiful and poetic, as well as ironically humorous.

The work in this exhibition, *Light* (1994), is all of these things. A light bulb, clearly unconnected to an electricity supply is lit up by slide projectors, giving the illusion of the bulb being lit. The act of 'double-taking' the image leads to a sense of absurdity and humour arising.

GALLERY ONE

In Gallery One is the earliest work in the exhibition, by **John Martin** (1789–1854). He is one of the most famous of the British Romantic artists, and this is one of two versions of *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (1812). It is also an example of what is known as the Victorian sublime, whereby human presence becomes almost insignificant in the face of the might and beauty of nature. It was painted while he strived to give up his £2 a week job as a glass painter to become a professional artist. Martin went on to become one of the most successful British artists of his generation.

It tells the story of the fictional Sadak, based on the Victorian writer, James Ridley's 'The Tales of the Genii' which in turn is loosely based on the Arabian Nights stories. In this tale, Sadak has gone in search of the waters of oblivion, which was thought to destroy the memory, because his evil Sultan intends to use the waters to seduce Sadak's wife. Sadak can be seen at the bottom of the picture, clinging on perilously to the cliff adjacent to the waters.

Another Victorian Romantic landscape artist is **Frederick Lee Bridell**, an untrained artist who was born in Southampton. As a result of an early interest in art, he became an apprentice to a picture restorer. His talent was recognised by Edwin Holder, with whom he took up residence. In 1851 he exhibited at the Royal Academy, and within two years he was able to travel to Paris and Italy, returning to England in 1855. His work sold well and within another two years he had a patron, James Wolff. As a result of Wolff's patronage, he bought homes and studios in Southampton and Italy, and became a prolific and successful artist. However, he died tragically young in 1863.

The Coliseum at Rome by Moonlight is a monumental and typically ambitious romantic landscape painting. However, on this occasion, the painting focuses on the haunting image of the ruins of the Colosseum against a wondrously moonlit sky. There is little of the natural landscape in it as the ruins



**Frederick Lee Bridell
(1831–63)**

*The Coliseum at Rome
by Moonlight*, 1851
Southampton City
Art Gallery

of the Colosseum appear to crowd everything else out. Human presence is almost absent except for two figures towards the bottom of the painting. This, in many ways, emphasises the vastness of the ruin behind.

Bridell was a great admirer of J.M.W. Turner, and this viewpoint is one that Bridell must have been familiar with, as his Italian studio was near to where the Colosseum stands. Turner also made a number of paintings of the Colosseum.

Elizabeth Magill is a contemporary artist influenced by the Romantic sublime. She was born in Ontario and brought up in Northern Ireland where she began her art studies, which she completed at the Slade School in London. She began exhibiting in the mid-1980s and has continued to live and work in London. She is best known for her compellingly haunting landscapes, some of which are drawn from her own imagination and, more recently, made by scanning a photograph of a landscape, spraying it on to canvas and then working on it from there.

The paintings vary from remote, idyllic landscapes such as *Forest Edge 1*, which was purchased by the Gallery from her Southampton exhibition in 1998, to apparently desolate landscapes often with abandoned houses and pylons. All are bereft landscapes and they have a deep sense of melancholia.

Christopher Bucklow was an art historian and curator before becoming a practicing artist. He began making highly conceptual art, often consisting of genetically altering

or grafting plant species and on occasion planting them in public places. He then had a period of making pinhole photographs using his purpose-built pinhole camera that had thousands of apertures to make large scale unique cameraless Cibachrome images, usually of people he knew. He has since made paintings using Jungian dream psychology and personal mythology to derive his imagery.

In the exhibition is one of his well-known *Guest* images, made using his home-made giant pinhole camera. One becomes aware of the technique used as the huge number of tiny apertures create thousands of images of the sun's disc and an aura around the subject.

Another artist who uses photography as a means of experimentation is **Susan Duges**, who has worked extensively with cameraless photographic techniques. Perhaps her best-

known works are those where large sheets of unexposed photographic paper are laid at night-time on the bed of a river. She then uses a flashlight and the light of the moon to expose the subsequent image.

The work in this exhibition was commissioned by the National Maritime Museum in 2019, entitled *Mortal Moon: Sun in Virgo*. It was made in her studio, but refers to her earlier work using photographic paper under water. However, here she has superimposed the image of an English ship of the kind used against the Spanish Armada and other ephemera connected with the battle of 1588.

In 2010 the photographic artist **Dan Holdsworth** began a series entitled *Blackout*, which was the first of a series of 'Blackouts' that toured internationally. Inspired by the New York power failures in the 1960s these photographs are enormous images of the snowy wastes of Iceland manipulated to add to the rather surreal and incredible nature of them, often reversing the negative image so that dark becomes light and vice versa.

Blackout 13 was purchased by the City Art Gallery in 2015 and gives an indication of the vastness of the landscape, and its incomprehensibility, recalling the sublime imagery of many Victorian landscape painters, who often used to invent the scene to accentuate the unworldly nature of it.

On the subject of artists being influenced by artists of a previous age, **Peter Joseph** is moved by the art of classical painting and



Christopher Bucklow

Tetrarch GWA 11.26
1st August 2007
Southampton City
Art Gallery © the artist



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Dan Holdsworth
Blackout 13, 2010
 Southampton City
 Art Gallery © the artist

architecture. He was born in London in 1929 and lives and works in Stroud, Gloucestershire. For nearly thirty years he made stripped-down compositions adhering to the simplest basic compositional rules. The paintings consisted of a small rectangle within the larger rectangle of the canvas, with the smaller one being lighter in tone. Both were filled with flat, even colour. However, even within such a restricted compositional format there is the possibility of endless variation, and Joseph worked for several decades to create the perfect combination of colour and proportion.

His work is often compared to Mark Rothko or Barnett Newman, but his brand of minimalism has more to do with the search for perfection through symmetry. Deeply meditative, these works speak of absolute completeness and clarity of purpose. For him, conveying a sense of feeling is the most important aspect to a work of art. The work in the exhibition is a classic example of this period. Since the late 1990s his work has developed quite noticeably, and new compositions now include scraps of shapes and much looser brushwork, using neutral tones. This new technique he still uses today.

Brad Lochore was born in New Zealand but moved to England to undertake his art studies in 1987. He paints shadows, which for him address the illusory nature of painting itself. Recalling Plato's famous work, 'The Cave' the image of a shadow is about such an illusion. Plato imagined a group of prisoners chained up in such a way as to stare at a white

wall with a fire casting shadows on it. The images that were cast on the wall were, for the prisoners, their reality. Lochore relates this to the conundrum of painted images.

The first painting, *False Dawn - After Caspar David Friedrich*, is a reference to the 19th-century German Romantic painter's *Sea Ice or The Loss of Hope* which depicts a ship about to sink under sheets of ice in the arctic waters. Lochore's painting is of a shadow of a window frame with a second light spreading across the middle like a fake sun. Literally a false dawn. The second painting is called *Sofa Vanitas* and includes a dark silhouette ominously cancelling out a cast of light falling on the wall behind. Both paintings include double light sources and double shadows



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Mona Hatoum
Plotting Table, 1998
 Arts Council Collection,
 Southbank Centre,
 London © the artist

GALLERY TWO

Gallery 2 has no ambient light and each work generates its own light. In the first part of the Gallery is a work in three parts, *Cubes* by **Adam Barker-Mill** which is a model for a public work 'GLOWB' to be permanently installed at Kunstmuseum Ahlen in Germany. Barker-Mill originally worked as a film cameraman and began making sculpture in the 1970s, constructing geometric sculptures out of MDF, which were then painted white. They were unlit and used the ambient light falling into them and through them, which changed depending on their situation and the position of the sunlight falling on them. He then began using camera gels, from his earlier experience of making film, which introduced colour and some surprising colour effects. From this he developed movement by using simple coloured lights that alternate slowly from a programmed system. The lighting systems he uses are the simple kind used in shop displays and the backdrop for bars and cafés.

These three works look like large light boxes, and the changing colours are set to change in an extensive combination. Barker-Mill's works are meditative and the act of staring at the seemingly endless combinations becomes mesmerising.

In the centre space of Gallery 2 is a work by **Mona Hatoum**, entitled *Plotting Table* (1998). She was born in Beirut in 1952 and began her studies at Beirut University College. She was visiting London in 1975 when the Lebanese Civil War broke out and she was forced into exile. In London she continued her studies, finishing at the Slade School in 1981. She began making performance art in which the involvement of the audience was essential to complete the work, and which always had a sense of menace or threat attached to it. She then made sculpture and installations, which she felt asked more of the audience in terms of interpretation. Her work is about the body, politics and the individual in a hostile world.

The piece in the exhibition consists of a map of the world upon a table, illuminated by ultraviolet lights. Hatoum has travelled consistently since first becoming stateless, and looking at a map of the world makes one think of travelling from one part of the world to another, as Hatoum has done throughout her career.

The third space in Gallery 2 contains two works by **David Batchelor**, who was born in Dundee in 1955 and lives and works in London. His work is, among other things,



David Batchelor

Pink Pimp Mix, 2006
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London. © the artist. Gift of the artist and Hayward Gallery; commissioned by the Hayward Gallery as the inaugural Christmas Lights project, 2006

about colour, but not the colour of the idyllic landscape, rather the lurid colour one sees in the urban landscape. Cheap plastic, often throwaway objects are combined to make sublime colour combinations. Batchelor then adds them to other found objects such as shelving units, and discarded light-boxes, to create something extraordinary out of the mundane and disposable. He has made a number of public artworks both in Britain and abroad, and has written and edited a number of books about colour.

In the exhibition are two artworks made with found or discarded objects. One is *Pink Pimp Mix* which is based on a found concrete mixer 'decorated' with different pink neon lights. The other, *Festival*, is based on a found wheelie bin which is draped with a number of different types of light. These include fluorescent lights and fairy lights, appearing to overflow from the bin. In both cases, the urban discarded objects have been given new life by combining them with discarded found lighting to create something that is both beautiful and mesmerising.

GALLERY THREE

In Gallery 3 are two paintings by **Bridget Riley**, who is synonymous with Op Art, the movement that she pioneered and has driven her working methods ever since. This has consisted of continually undertaking optical art experiments. She was born in 1931 and first came to international attention in an exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Her early works concentrated exclusively on black and white rhythmic repetitions which had an extraordinary effect on the viewer's retina. She eventually began working in colour, whereby the optical effects were often wider and more subtle in their effect on the viewer. By the millennium she had begun working on coloured panels with extremely subtle colour arrangements that still retained the optical effect, but were now far less repetitive and more rhythmic in their overall intention.



Michael Kidner (1917–2009)

Brown, Blue and Violet No. 2
Southampton City Art Gallery © The Estate of Michael Kidner. Courtesy Flowers Gallery. Photo credit: Southampton City Art Gallery

Red Movement was purchased in 2007 by Southampton City Art Gallery and is accompanied by an early black and white op art painting from 1961 on loan from the Arts Council Collection.

Michael Kidner also made Optical works in a long career that developed over a number of different genres. He was born in 1917 and by the early 1960s he had become interested in the retinal effects of colour and afterimage. By the mid-1960s he was working with two colour stripes painted with flat colour with hard edges. At around this time he included a third colour which intensified the retinal effects. The paintings in this exhibition are from that period.

In the late 1960s he became a co-founder of the systems group (with Jeffrey Steele) with his work developing as he became increasingly influenced by various scientific theories such as both number and chaos theory and the influence they had on making art. He died in 2009.

David Ward was born in Wolverhampton in 1951 and lives in Wiltshire. He works in a range of media including painting, photography, performance, sound and text. He has

collaborated with choreographers, composers and artists, and he also curates and teaches. He often makes complex work using the simplest of means, and the two works here exemplify this simplicity of purpose to convey extremely profound ideas. Both have been configured especially for this exhibition.

The first, called *Umbræ: 1989–2020* was originally made in 1989 for the Mappin Art Gallery where it was titled *Keepers of Light*. It was shown again in 1990 at the Cambridge Darkroom and later re-conceived at the Sackler Gallery at Harvard University in 1994. Here it consists of 104 sheets of photographic paper. On each sheet an ellipse or disc was created by a single pulse of light onto the light-sensitive paper, and each is therefore unique. The field of discs produce after-images on the retina. They are spaced intuitively, by eye, at more or less arms' length. The title 'Umbræ' is the plural for umbra, being the name for the centre of sunspots.



David Ward

Analemma 2015
Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney 2015
In the joint exhibition *wavespeech* by
Edmund de Waal and David Ward

The second work, also relating to the sun, is titled *Analemma Variation: 2020* while the original, larger version, *Analemma*, was specifically made for the Pier Art Centre in Orkney in 2015 for the exhibition *wavespeech – Edmund de Waal and David Ward*. It consists of convex, mirror-finish, stainless steel discs, each 10 cm diameter. An analemma represents the path drawn by the changing position of the sun at midday over the course of a year. The changing positions produce an elongated figure-of-eight trajectory.

GALLERY FOUR

The final gallery is devoted to works by **Roger Ackling**. He was born in 1947 and studied at St Martin's School of Art alongside a number of other well-known Land Artists, such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. They had begun studying sculpture but soon became interested in making art with natural materials, working in the open air. For 40 years, Ackling used the same ritualistic technique to make work by using a hand magnifying glass to focus the sunlight on to a single spot on an object to create a small scorch mark. He would then move methodically on to the next adjacent spot to make the next mark. His work consists of thousands of similar small scorch marks to create intricate designs.

Originally using pieces of found driftwood he went on to make work on sheets of card and wooden objects, including household utensils such as wooden spoons and the worn handles of disused garden implements. Very often the work displayed the passing of time, such as the piece from the Gallery's collection, *And they cast their shadows*. Displayed alongside is a time-based work entitled *One Hour drawing. Kenya 1976* which relates directly to the piece from Southampton's collection. The remainder is a piece consisting of ten images from 2007, which show his artistic development using consistent means throughout his life. He died in 2014.



Roger Ackling (1947–2014)

Switzerland Aug 1990
© The Estate of Roger Ackling, courtesy Annely Juda Fine Art. Photo: Annely Juda Fine Art

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www.southamptoncityartgallery.com
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