

CONTEMPORARY ART | THE COLLECTION & USHER GALLERY

*THE
WORLD IS ALMOST*

6000

YEARS OLD

2nd February – 7th May 2013



← Fire exit

*Contemporary art and archaeology
from the Stone Age to the present,
across five of Lincoln's most historic sites*

Curated by Tom Morton

The Collection

2nd Feb–7th May, 2013

The Usher Gallery

2nd Feb–7th May, 2013

Lincoln Cathedral

2nd Feb–7th May, 2013

Greyfriars Building

21st Feb–16th March, 2013

Greestone Building, Lincoln University

10th April–28th April, 2013



EVERY EARTH IS FIT FOR BURIAL:

A GUIDE TO THE WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Taking its title from a line in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599-1600), in which the playwright's character Rosalind reflects on the age of the Earth, 'The World is Almost Six Thousand Years Old' is an exhibition that brings together objects from the county of Lincolnshire's extraordinary archaeological holdings with new and recent works by a number of established and emerging artists. Sited in venues across the ancient city of Lincoln (which was first settled in the Iron Age, and has been an important urban centre since the Roman period), the show draws on the work of 'post-processualist' archaeologists such as Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, who rejected the notion of archaeology as an objective scientific practice and emphasised its subjective, even poetic aspects. *The World...* seeks to explore archaeology as a set of methodologies that might be applied not only to deposits from the past, but also to those from the present. At its centre is a critical awareness of the mutability of the material record, of how objects may be mobilized to speak of multiple histories, both credible and fabulous. As the exhibition's subtitle suggests, it features things that we now think of as archaeological artifacts, and things that will only be considered archaeological artifacts in a future that is yet to arrive.

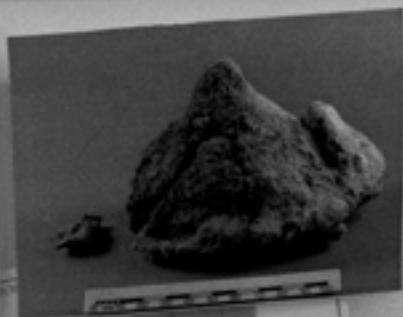
The World... is an exhibition that investigates not only the intersection of relics from different temporal moments, but also how they might be deployed in the museum space. At The Collection, visitors encounter a number of heavy steel shelving units from Lincolnshire's archaeological stores that have been installed, along with their contents, in the main temporary gallery. An example of 'found display', the specific arrangement of the objects they support (which range from medieval gargoyles to brown storage boxes) has been retained in their passage from the private space of the stores

to the public space of the museum, and points to an 'unearthing' of archaeological deposits that usually remain out of site. Another bank of shelving units hold a collection of cremated Anglo-Saxon human remains, preserved by the archaeologists in airtight plastic food containers - a practical, if perhaps surprising, solution to protecting such delicate finds. In the context of an exhibition that is much concerned with remembering and forgetting, with the inevitability of death and the eventual return of all things to dust, these very modern 'coffins' speak of an attempt by people from one era to preserve the last few carbonised specks of people from another, long after the world they inhabited (and with it their particular way of reckoning with mortality) has slipped from view. In a nearby work, Gillian Carnegie's painting *Mono* (2005), a plastic mineral water bottle holds a bouquet of decaying flowers. Plastic, we should remember, is made from crude oil, a substance produced from the remains of pre-historic life forms. Death, here, contains death.

Also on show at The Collection are four specially commissioned 'vitrines' made by artists to house objects that they have selected from the archaeological stores. Nicolas Deshayes has reached back into Lincolnshire's pre-human era, presenting a display case for fossilised plants, while for his work *Ooins* (2013), Dan Coopey has selected two Iron Age coins from the 1st-Century BC – one gold, made in what is now Britain, and one bronze, made in what is now France – which he has presented against large digital prints of textured metal plates. Like the redundant currency, the prints are serial items, and we are encouraged to think about how each of them circulates within a community, or even crosses national borders, whether from one hand to another, or via electronic transfer. Matthew Darbyshire has arranged the rubble of a Romano-British corn dryer in a glass museum display case fabricated around the turn of the 21st-Century. Recalling both Tony Cragg's sculpture *Stack* (1975) and Robert Smithson's 'Non-Site' pieces from the

SALTWOOD (SLT 98C)
GRAVE 5
IRON
(1117)
FN: 827, 867-870, 872, 881-5,
1066, 1425-1427

SALTWOOD (SLT 98C)
GRAVE 5
IRON
(1117)
FN: 880



GRAVE 5



Gillian Carnegie, *Mono* (2005)

Oil on board

Courtesy the artist, Arts Council Collection and Cabinet London

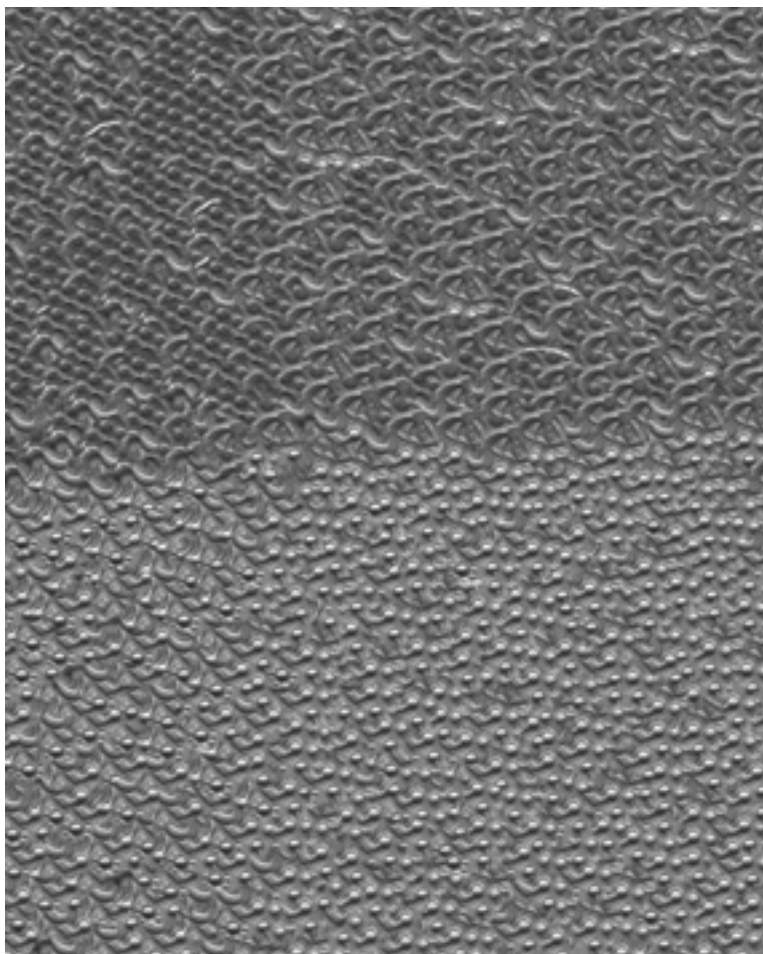
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Nicolas Deshayes, *Public Material* (2011)

Public amenity paneling; vacuum-formed plastic; powder-coated aluminium

Courtesy Bischoff / Weiss



Dan Coopey, *Ooins I & II*(2013)
Framed C type prints, Iron Age coins
Courtesy the artist



Matthew Darbyshire, *Untitled: Accessorised Column No.16* (2012)
Various glass, resin, and plastic components; shelving unit; Perspex case
Courtesy Herald St, London



Rupert Ackroyd, *Untitled* (2012)

Brick infill, cheese dust

(Shown in the exhibition "Inn, Inn, Inn," at Marsden Woo Gallery, London 2012)

Courtesy the artist

1960's (in which stones from specific locations were transposed to the nowhere-land of the gallery space), we might see this work in part as a meditation on the difficulty of choosing, and therefore placing an emphasis on, a specific object from The Collection's holdings. Darbyshire's solution is to display an unremarkable-looking pile of broken masonry, the provenance and former function of which is undetectable to all but the most highly trained eye. Rupert Ackroyd has also employed the vernacular of institutional fixtures and fittings, creating his vitrine from reclaimed museum parquet flooring, Perspex cases, and (in a nod to the ancient Mesopotamian city) a complete run of the sci-fi TV series *Babylon 5* (1994-97) on VHS tape - a 'dead' technology that continues to haunt our attic spaces and charity shops. Here, an enigmatic narrative is suggested from objects including a piece of Iron Age ferrous slag, a 17th Century funerary helmet designed to grace an elaborate grave, and a clot of spider's web. To some degree, this is a work about the use, and colonization, of space. As the artist has said: 'the totally lifeless new island formed by the eruption of the Krakatau volcano, Indonesia, early last century was reported to have a lone wolf spider as its first inhabitant, brought there by the use of long threads blown in the wind. The spider dies, its organic remains mix with the rock debris, eventually soil forms, then plants arrive...' In short, life begins afresh, and a new tale is spun.

Alexander Tovborg's series of five paintings at The Collection were made in response to a medieval baptismal font, also from the archaeological stores. Continuing the Danish artist's investigations into the braided histories of Western and Eastern faith (including the belief that Christ spent his adolescence and early manhood traveling in India, Nepal and Tibet), these works present images of a sitar player, bent in deep communion with his instrument. Looking at the paintings, we are reminded how little of the past survives into the present – archaeologists may recover a lost society's stone



Alexander Tovborg, *Stella A. Olympia* (2012)

Acrylic on linen

Courtesy the artist and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen

artifacts through careful excavations, but how might they recover something as immaterial as a song? Other works at The Collection suggest archaeological objects themselves, from Sarah Lucas' *Nud Cycladic 7* (2010), a sculpture made from tights stuffed with fluff that recalls both antique Aegean art and the Neo-Classical marbles of Pablo Picasso, to Martin Boyce's *Dark Unit and the Mask* (2003), which resembles a memorial to mid-Century Modernism. Keith Coventry's photographs of *Crack Pipes* (2000), and Lucas' cigarette-covered garden gnome *Willy* (2000) both point to addictions (including, perhaps, our inability to prise the monkey of history from our backs), while Anthony Caro's *CCLXIX* (1975) and David Musgrave's *Overlapping figures* (2001) respectively suggest the skeletal remains of an antediluvian monster, and the outline of a prone body, or a corpse. The Finnish artist Jan Ijäs' film *Two Islands* (2012/3) focuses on Hart and Staten Islands, off the Manhattan coast, home to a mass grave for New York's homeless, and a gigantic garbage dump that a voiceover describes as 'the most important archaeological treasure of our civilization, more significant than the Valley of the Kings, the Tical temples, or the ruins of Pompeii'. The final work at The Collection is a composition by Edwin Burdis, commissioned for the museum's sound wall. Heralding our entry into, and exit from, the temporary galleries, it reminds us of that ancient, and for many centuries irrecoverable, instrument of expression: the human voice.

Love, Like a Cough, Cannot Be Concealed (2013), Jess Flood-Paddock's new installation at The Usher Gallery, takes its title from the Roman poet Ovid's Latin axiom '*Amor tussique non celatur*', and draws on the artist's recent research into the archaeological record created by the eruption of the volcanic Mount Vesuvius in AD79, and the 'rediscovery' of the buried Roman city of Pompeii by 18th and 19th century antiquarians. At the entrance of the gallery in which Flood-Paddock's work is housed we see Ella Curtois' *The*



Martin Boyce, *Dark Unit and the Mask* (2003)

Wood, steel, paint, altered Jacobsen Series 7 + Ant chair parts

Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

Collection of The Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London

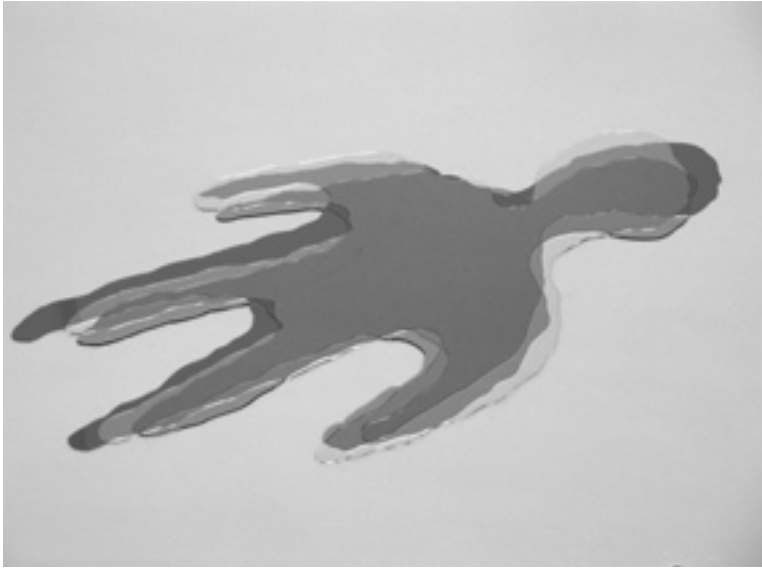
Photo: Guiseppe Schianvinotto



Sarah Lucas, *Wily* (2000)
Plastic gnome, cigarettes
Copyright the artist, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Coventry, Keith, Gold Plated Crack Pipe, 1998
Bronze
© 1998, Keith Coventry, courtesy Pace London



David Musgrave, *Overlapping figures* (2001)
Acrylic
Courtesy the artist, greengrassi, London
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Jan Ijäs, *Two Islands* (production still) (2012)

HD video, with sound, 5:58 mins

Courtesy the artist



Edwin Burdis 2013

A mighty blow for Cleandom

Edwin Burdis, *A Mighty Blow for Cleandom* (2013)

Pencil on paper

Courtesy the artist and Max Wigram Gallery, London

Marble Player (1933), a Neo-Classical sculpture from The Usher's collection of a crouching boy in a loincloth. Ready to throw a marble from his right hand, he recalls a gambler at a gaming table, staking everything on a final roll of the dice. Inside the room, visitors encounter a number of fabric forms that nod to Pliny the Younger's report of Pompeii's downfall, in which he noted that the fleeing citizens tied pillows to their heads in an effort to protect themselves from the red hot rocks raining from the sky. A large photograph of Curtois' sculpture is installed nearby, as pale as the famous cast ash figures left in the wake of Vesuvius' deadly firestorm, as is a plaster tintinnabulum (or wind chime) in the shape of a human clavicle, a bone that operates as a 'shock absorber' of physical blows, sacrificing itself to protect more precious parts of the skeleton from breaking. While Classical tintinnabulums often featured bells in the shape of sculpted phalluses, medieval examples were considerably less Earthly, and were used to alert the people of Rome to the approach of the Pope – a kind of 'early warning system' of encroaching Heavenly ire. In addition to a large book cover featuring stills from Roberto Rossellini's 1954 film *Journey to Italy*, in which a married couple on the verge of divorce rediscover their love for each other following a trip to Pompeii, Flood-Paddock also presents a film, projected on to one of the pillow sculptures. Here, footage of a one armed bandit (an allusion, perhaps, to the 'gamble' of making one's home in the shadow of a volcano), is presented alongside pages from the *Raccolta Pornografica Napoli e Pompei* (1900), a book of photographs of erotic Roman friezes, statues, and *objets d'art* discovered in the ruins of Pompeii in the 18th and 19th Centuries, and collected by the King of Naples in his 'Gabinetto Secreto', or 'Secret Cabinet' – arguably the Western world's first recorded stash of pornographic material. Removed from public view in order to preserve the authority of the Classical past (and, crucially, that of early Modern political leaders who styled themselves as latter-day Caesars), these erotic artifacts speak of a hidden history of



Jess Flood-Paddock

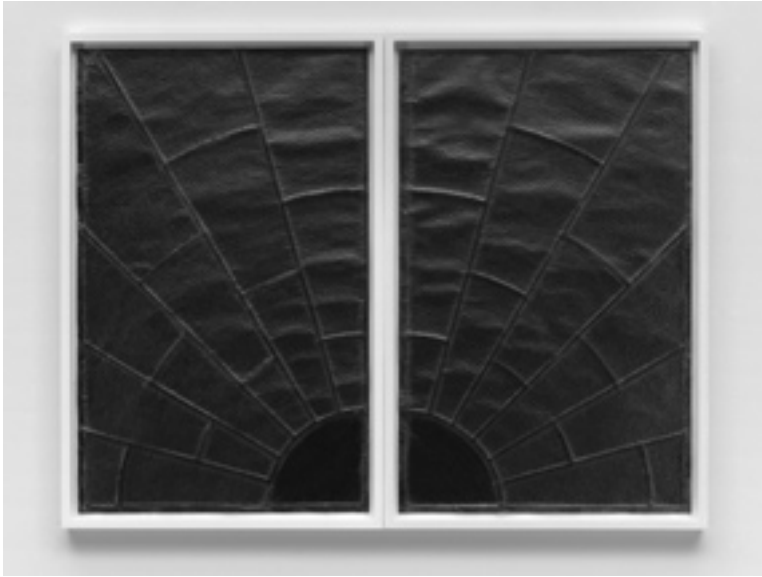
Love, Like a Cough, Cannot Be Concealed (2013)

Research photograph taken by Rupert Ackroyd,
showing Ella Curtois' *The Marble Player* (1933)

Courtesy the artist and Rupert Ackroyd

human intimacy, in which romantic and sexual relationships were a great deal more fluid than Georgian and Victorian accounts of the era would have us believe. Flood-Paddock's installation (to which she will continue to add new elements throughout the run of the show) is a work about disaster as an archaeological 'tool', and selective historical amnesia. The 'return of the repressed' is occasioned, here, not through careful sifting, but through a sudden eruption – a volcanic 'cough' that 'cannot be concealed'.

In the adjoining gallery at The Usher, Jeremy Millar presents *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man (The Willows)* (2011), a life-like silicone effigy of the artist that appears to have been ravaged by an ancient creature of the deep, while Adrien Missika's film *Black Sand Beach* (2011) consists of footage of a petrified tree that has washed up on a Hawaiian beach, calmly contemplated by a couple of ageing surf bums. Charles Avery's drawing *Untitled (Where Rocco Found a Dead Monster)* (2009) depicts a stretch of marshy terrain on The Island, an imaginary landmass that has been the focus of the artist's work since the middle years of the last decade. Avery has described this location as an 'un-navigable wilderness' into which The Island's 'Hunters cast themselves, trusting that Serendipity will bring them to [their prey] the Noumenon, and back alive'. Nearby stands *Untitled (Atomist Conceit)* (2012) a bust of an Islander wearing an elaborate hat that signals his particular philosophical position. Notably, these hats are also popular souvenirs among tourists to The Island, whose ignorance of their meaning makes them targets for roving bands of metaphysically minded toughs. Completing the display, Anna Barriball's *Sunshine / Sunset V* (2008) is a pencil drawing of what seems to be a window, the view from which is obscured by dense blocks of black graphite. Like Avery's hat, it might be interpreted as a model of the rational mind, or else as vision of darkness in which strange beasts stir, and rise. Sited in the transept of Lincoln Cathedral, Roger Hiorns' *Untitled*



Anna Barriball *Sunshine / Sunset V* (2008)
Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London



Jeremy Millar, *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man (The Willows)* (2011)
Silicone; fibre-glass; hair; clothing; mixed media.
Courtesy the artist



Charles Avery, *Untitled (Where Rocco found a dead monster)* 2009

Pencil and gouache on paper, brass plate

Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London, and Grimm, Amsterdam



Charles Avery, *Untitled (Atomist Conceit)* 2012

Cardboard, acrylic paint, acrylic rod, bronze

Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London, and Grimm, Amsterdam

(2013) is comprised of a found aircraft engine, which the artist has suspended from a steel frame. Visitors might interpret this anthropomorphic sculpture in terms of the Biblical crucifixion, or ascension, or (given the Cathedral's status as a place of pilgrimage, and Lincolnshire's historical association with military aviation), as a reference to two very different types of journey – those made in peace, and those with a more violent intent. Significantly, this work is free to view only during Evensong. As is often the case with Hiorns' work, the protocol of *Untitled's* display opens up new possible readings. What might it mean for this sculpture to become embroiled in the temporal rhythms of a sacred space?

At the Greyfriars Building, Karen Russo presents a film that focuses on the Externsteine rock formations in North West Germany, sacred to early Christians, Nazi occultists, and contemporary Neo-Pagans alike. Housed in an ancient Franciscan Friary, the work reflects on how a particular site accrues different, and sometimes contradictory, meanings over time. In *The World is Almost Six Thousand Years Old*, Russo's film functions as a kind of pendant piece to Jacob Dwyer's *The Camaguey Hustle* (2012), which explores the maze-like 16th Century Cuban city of Camaguey through lost footage and unreliable memories, and is screened in Lincoln University's Greestone Building, a sprawling labyrinth of art students' studios that is due to be closed in 2014. It feels appropriate that the last of the exhibition's venues to open during its long run is a place where artworks are (for now) produced. The archaeological record keeps on growing, and keeps on winking out of sight.

Tom Morton



Roger Hiorns, *Untitled* (2012)
Jet engine; flame; youth
Courtesy the artist and Corvi-Mora, London.



Karen Russo, *Externsteine (production still)* (2012)
HD video, with sound, 43:41 mins
Courtesy the artist and Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv.



Jacob Dwyer, *The Camaguey Hustle* (film still) (2012)
HD video, with sound, 12:47 mins
Courtesy the artist

THE COLLECTION WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

The Artists: Rupert Ackroyd, Charles Avery, Anna Barriball, Martin Boyce, Edwin Burdis, Anthony Caro, Gillian Carnegie, Dan Coopey, Keith Coventry, Matthew Darbyshire, Nicolas Deshayes, Jacob Dwyer, Jess Flood-Paddock, Roger Hiorns, Jan Ijäs, Sarah Lucas, Jeremy Millar, Adrien Missika, David Musgrave, Karen Russo, Alexander Tovborg and the curator Tom Morton.

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