

Firstsite

Colchester and Ipswich Art Societies: Borders

24 July 2020 –11 October 2020



Colchester's Firstsite gallery is staging an exhibition and art sale of work by local artists with a theme that explores Essex and Suffolk's natural border, the River Stour.

Commissioned by Firstsite gallery, *Borders* brings together Colchester and Ipswich Art Societies for an exhibition and sale of paintings and artworks that are both beautiful and affordable.

As the exhibition title suggests, the two groups of amateur and professional artists, have used their mutual border, the River Stour, as inspiration for their work. Through this exhibition of 123 works, visitors will see how the contributing artists have examined their place in the landscape as they look across to the opposite side of this famous river, considering what exactly are borders? What are they for and what do they mean to people politically and psychologically?

123 members among the two art societies responded to the invitation, and through painting, print, sculpture and textile, the exhibition as a whole reflects the lure of the river as a subject. Where possible the exhibition has been hung geographically, grouping works from similar coordinates together, and mirroring the flow of the river. As you take the trip downstream, you will encounter expressions of the river and the landscape and life that surrounds it, punctuated by wider responses to the meaning of borders.

In the case of many of the contributions, the artists walked in the footsteps of renowned painters, to capture their take on the exhibition's core theme.

From Sudbury in the west, to Felixstowe and Harwich in the east, the River Stour flows not only through the landscape but also English art history. The area spanning south Suffolk and north Essex has been home to a number of truly great painters, including Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), John Constable (1776-1837), as well as Maggie Hambling, Valerie Thornton (1931-1991) and Joan Warburton (1920-1996).

"This exhibition is a celebration of the wonderful landscape that surrounds Firstsite and the creativity that thrives within the region. Following the river downstream you travel across Essex



and into Suffolk and really experience the joyful and therapeutic effect of making and experiencing the world through art. It's a very vibrant and eclectic exhibition which lets you explore our local landscape through the eyes of local artists.," says Firstsite Director, Sally Shaw.

"The majority of the artworks in the exhibition are for sale and proceeds will be split evenly between the artist and Firstsite, supporting the making and showing of future artworks and exhibitions. Should you be interested in making a purchase, members of the Firstsite team will be on hand to help."

Bryan Whiteley, Chair of Colchester Art Society says: *"Looking at the pictures of the work arranged for hanging, it seems that many artists have been lured by the seductive nature of the river; its meandering shape, the light, the colours and the enormous variety of flora and fauna. Other artists have picked up on the abstract qualities of borders through an expression of place and division, using painterly gestural marks in response to feelings about the river; the light and atmosphere. The whole initiative, which began well over a year ago has been a fascinating journey of cooperation and the sharing of ideas. Once Firstsite became involved and supported the idea, it helped to create a real buzz of excitement. I hope that the links between the two societies will continue to grow and prosper, to the mutual benefit of all."*

His counterpart, Stephen Cassidy, Chair of Ipswich Art Society observes: *"Artists have responded very positively to the brief – many have had a long-standing affection for the Stour and its history. Many have also been affected by other borders which are crowding into our modern world. Working on a common project with members of the opposite Art Society has brought particular energy to the collaboration, and all artists have enthused about the imaginative Firstsite team and exhibition location."*

For more information about *Borders*, plus other exhibitions, activities and film screenings follow @firstsite on Twitter, @firstsitecolchester on Instagram, like the Firstsite Colchester Facebook page or visit firstsite.uk

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[Firstsite](#) is a public contemporary art gallery in Colchester, making and showing exceptional art and culture that celebrates the diverse and radical people of East Anglia in order to empower all communities to be creative together and lead healthier and happier lives. The spectacular crescent-shaped building, designed by award-winning Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly, provides a creative and social space like no other. Firstsite's exhibitions are free and open to anyone. Over the last eight years it has gained a strong, critical reputation, presenting ambitious work to be enjoyed by all in a fun and inclusive environment.

Prior to reopening its doors on Friday 24 July, following the relaxation of the lockdown regulations, [Firstsite](#) has implemented safety measures to further help visitors feel secure and enjoy their time at the gallery. Numbers are limited throughout the day to maintain 2-metre physical distancing, along with a one-way path throughout. Hand sanitiser stations can be found at regular intervals throughout the building. For added health, security and peace of mind for staff and visitors, Firstsite has also installed Perspex screens at locations such as the Welcome Desk and shop till. Only cashless payments will now be accepted. The wearing of masks is not compulsory, but visitors are recommended to do so.

Firstsite is a partner of Plus Tate, which uses Tate's resources to contribute to a network of art organisations across the country, and to increase public access.

[IMAGES – High resolution images can be downloaded here](#)

- Vrinda Read, *Stepping over the Stour* (2020) © the artist
- Dan Sceats, *Connected* (2020) © the artist
- Bryan Rowland, *Ice Cream at Mistley Wall* (2020) © the artist

FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES

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