

Merge Visible:

an action in Photoshop which flattens separate layers together to make a unified image.

Join us for the Private View on:

Tuesday 6 September 2016, 6pm to 8pm

Mall Galleries is pleased to present Merge Visible, its first ever exhibition of digital collage in contemporary fine art photography, featuring examples by six eminent practitioners, all of whom utilise computer software to create imaginative compositions, part reality, part fantasy, which offer a window onto the world around us.

Artists include Emily Allchurch, Deborah Baker, Lisa Creagh, Ellie Davies, Suzanne Moxhay, and Barbara Nati.

Although these artists have swapped easel and canvas for computer screen and software, they are without doubt heavily influenced by the more traditional practice of fine art painting. Emily Allchurch, perhaps the most, as her works are contemporary reconstructions of particular Old Master paintings by the likes of Bruegel and Piranesi. Meanwhile Deborah Baker admits that the abstract nature of her images is indebted to abstract expressionism and its practitioners, from Willem de Kooning to Jackson Pollock. While according to Lisa Creagh, her works owe much to Dutch Flower paintings and Byzantine ecclesiastical art, as well as Islamic geometrical designs. Whereas Barbara Nati acknowledges the influence of nineteenth century painting to her work, and Suzanne Moxhay, the early film-making technique of matte painting, where backdrops were painted on sheets of glass and integrated by the camera with the live-action on set.

Common to them all, though, is the use of photography as their medium and computer technology as their tool to create meticulously choreographed compositions, seamlessly integrated, which provoke intense visual resonances, alive to the digital age.

All the works are for sale.

The Works

Deborah Baker explores the cycles of life and seasonal change through the techniques of montage and layering, which she applies to photographs of plants as they grow and develop in her woodland garden. The aim is the representation of the subject “... in a recognisable and arresting form, emphasised by the methods of process and production unique to digital photographic imagery.” Exemplifying this effect especially well is Baker’s

Betulanimbusi (2013), in which crisp, chiaroscuroed leaves, frozen in free fall, exude theatricality well beyond traditional botanical art.

Lisa Creagh is likewise inspired by plant life, however Creagh prefers mainly generic, shop bought, hothouse bred varieties. These, she photographs in her studio - under controlled lighting, using photographic techniques such as soft focus and hard edges - from all sides and in all states of budding to drooping. Next, Creagh assembles, manipulates and repeats individual images until a random but decorative pattern emerges, in the style of Islamic floral carpets which were thrown down in the Persian desert by nomadic tribes to create an 'instant garden' in the sand. One can see this inspiration most clearly in Creagh's largest exhibit, *Floriculture 2* (2015).

Ellie Davies' exhibits explore the essential character of forests, in particular as "potent symbols in folklore, fairy tale and myth, places of enchantment and magic as well as danger and mystery." Davies achieves this by 'interposing' pictures of mature and ancient forests with images of constellations taken by the Hubble telescope, thus creating pictures that convey with bewildering beauty the fundamental otherness of the forest landscape, as captured so well in *Stars 15* (2015).

Barbara Nati focuses on the dangers of environmental degradation. Using digital montage techniques, Nati creates dystopian visions of the future - none more discordant than *The House of this Evening, All Mine #1* (2013), in which a ramshackle tenement occupies a treetop, with dark clouds overhead. These premonitions, which Nati has described as 'postcards from the future' deliver social and ethical messages about the environment we are living in today.

Emily Allchurch's oeuvre addresses the environment too, although with a focus on urban locations. Her practice creates a dialogue with historical artworks, using photographs that she takes on site, to reconstruct the original in a contemporary idiom. Each artwork is a journey around a city or place, compressed into a single scene, to reveal a modern social narrative. In the example of *Babel London (after Bruegel)* (2015), hundreds of photographic fragments reimagine London as a modern-day Babel - a chaotic construction site, a "celebration, as well as a warning about architectural hubris."

Suzanne Moxhay merges elements to create fictional worlds which nevertheless possess a reality of their own. Moxhay accomplishes this by creating crude stage sets on glass panels from cut-out fragments of books, magazines and paintings, which she photographs and manipulates. She "work[s] intuitively with the material, finding points of connection between parts of images - either through shared subject matter or formal considerations such as following the path of light from one image through another ... play[ing] with anomalies of various kinds - of texture, surface depth, space, scale, movement and architecture." In so doing, Moxhay

conceives images of surreal spaces, reminiscent of empty film sets – staged scenes pregnant with narrative potential.

Exhibition runs

6 to 10 September, 10am to 5pm
Mall Galleries
The Mall, London SW1
Admission Free

Artist Talk

Saturday 10 September, 11am to 1pm
Under Construction
Meet the artists exhibiting in Merge Visible and learn about the processes behind their work and their place within the emergent practice of digital collage in contemporary fine art photography.

Tickets £5, Students £3, Free to Friends of Mall Galleries

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Mall Galleries

The national focal point for contemporary representational art.
Mall Galleries is one of central London's largest, friendliest and most accessible exhibition spaces. Our aim is to promote, inspire and educate audiences about the contemporary visual arts.

Mall Galleries Art Consultancy specialises in commissioning and curating fine art for both private collectors and corporate clients.

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