

*If a*  
picture's  
WORTH A  
*thousand*  
*words...*

‘Painting right,  
I’d like to paint David Essex

*[points off into the distance] with a star’*

John Croft, artist

John Croft

Albert Geere

Neville Jermyn

Michelle Roberts

Jonathan Rogers

Charlotte Stephens

*If a*  
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projectart works

*If a picture's worth a thousand words...*

14 May - 25 May 2010

11am - 5pm

**Galleries 1 and 2**

**Hastings Arts Forum**

36 Marina

St Leonards On Sea

East Sussex TN38 0BU



Albert Geere *Concentric Circles*  
Acrylic on board  
76x76cms

# If a picture's worth a thousand words...

## About Project Art Works

Through responsive and collaborative practice, Project Art Works conducts a wide range of visual art based projects with people who have complex and high support needs. The organization is artist led and its programmes of work embrace and address the social, cultural and political forces that impact upon the lives of children and adults affected by neurological impairment.

## About this exhibition

This exhibition is the culmination of 18 months of studio practice at Project Art Works by six people who have complex needs and/or learning disabilities supported by an artist mentor.

Artist mentoring methodology is well established in contemporary art practice and at Project Art Works we have instigated and explored a specific model of professional development called 'mentoring studios'. We are recording what happens through the project and this exhibition is an opportunity to review and celebrate with the artists what they have achieved to date and to disseminate the work to a wider audience.

**Kate Adams**

*Director, Project Art Works*

# Reflections of a Mentor

**Mentor** / n. an experienced and trusted adviser. [French, via Latin from Greek *Mentor*, the name of the adviser of the young *Telemachus* in Homer's *Odyssey*] *Oxford English Dictionary*

Towards the end of 2008, I was invited by the Project Art Works team in Hastings to participate in a pilot project that was called, for want of a better term, 'Mentoring Studios'. This was to consist of thirty-four sessions of a day a week in a painting studio, with a small group of adults with learning difficulties with me as their mentor. My initial response was one of caution, I wasn't sure I was qualified or suitable for what I saw as such a responsible role. However, after much discussion I agreed and the project began in January 2009.

From the outset certain aims and conditions were established; that each individual would be encouraged to develop their own 'voice', their own artistic vocabulary and secondly, that the vehicle for trying to achieve this would be via painting and drawing. This reflects my own deeply held belief in the primacy of painting and drawing as fundamental human activities and the principal means by which we have expressed our irrepressible need to make images since our ancestors created the great cave paintings some 20,000 years ago.

After several weeks it became apparent to me that I had to overhaul many of my preconceptions and expectations,

“Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.”

*Paul Klee, 'Creative Credo' 1920*

particularly with regard to time and how long or how slow something may take to get done. I also had to find out what being a mentor meant in these circumstances. For example, offering advice, guidance, assistance, technical instruction or demonstration can very easily morph into, or be perceived as, intervention or interference, something I was desperate to try to avoid. Somewhere inside me was an observer of me the mentor so that an internal dialogue developed whereby all my presumptions and methods had to be questioned and examined.

At the same time, being a mentor meant keeping a distance, metaphorically, in order to observe and learn about each participant's natural inclinations and preferences about subject-matter, procedures and ability (artistic and physical). Maintaining a delicate balance between adviser and observer wasn't and isn't easy.

Central to the conceptual framework of this project was the idea that each individual would be encouraged to exercise as much choice as possible. Choice is something that most of us take for granted but which we don't always extend to others. To choose a canvas of a certain size and proportion, to choose the colours one uses and to make

an image of personal significance may not sound very important but to do it is to be free. To exercise freedom is a step towards individuation, the liberation of the spirit and the development (in this instance) of an artistic 'voice'. To facilitate the making of these choices has meant trying to provide the conditions and opportunities whereby they can be exercised as much as possible, otherwise the freedom that results from choice will atrophy and individual potential remain unrealized.

An aspect of mentoring that I hadn't anticipated was the element of surprise. After nearly fifty years of involvement in the visual arts, as practitioner and teacher, one can be forgiven for thinking that one has 'seen it all'. However, I have been delighted by the number of times that I have been taken completely by surprise by some of the works and at how they have been visualized and realized.

The other half of mentoring, the element of trust, is something that's impossible to put a time-frame around; it has to be allowed as much time as it takes for it to take root and to flourish. It's an ongoing process but once a basis for it is established then the studio workshop days become much more relaxed,

interaction becomes easier, and humour can take its rightful place alongside the more serious stuff.

Now that the project is well into its second year, all of my initial apprehensions have pretty well evaporated and I'd like to think that the conditions in which each individual can flourish have been established and that a suitable platform for future development is in place.

The project's success is due in no small measure to the generous resources that Project Art Works have provided. I would like to extend my thanks to them and Sarah Broome the Project Manager, for making this opportunity available to me and for their patience in enduring my endless demands. I would also like to thank Paul Lucas, the supporting artist for his enormous contribution to the studio days and for making my job that much easier and enjoyable. Finally, I would like to thank the participants for all the things they have taught me.

**Tony Colley**

# ‘The most important part of education – to teach the meaning of to know (*in the scientific sense*)’.

Simone Weil – her last notebook entry, 1943

It’s all here before our eyes, no pretension, wonderful and self evident. The paintings are all intriguing – they make me look into my own mind in a clear way as if looking into a crystal ball. A door, window, ducks on a pond, perpetual dawns and sunsets, I am given them magnified and powered. Project Art Works is throughout a ‘mentor’ (and we all need mentors, good coaches, tutors etc.). But the mentors behind this exhibition have realised in totality Simone Weil’s ‘in the scientific sense’. It is both research and experiment – nothing is imposed – the art is made by the artists and witnessed by the mentors. To this effect workshop/studio conditions of the highest order, uninterrupted time, best materials for their sole use – only the most judicious intervention (safe guarded by timelapse photographic records). In these conditions individual approaches can be methodically practiced.

The artists are watched over. There is another great instance of mentoring in Art. Pissarro and Cezanne were painting alongside each other in the open. Cezanne was in a sort of darkness – an overpowering grip caused by his personal psychology – he was turbid with the masters of the Louvre – his love of nature and art kept retreating into a barn storming of paint. We are all in the grip of our psychology – left to our own devices we tend to go full circle, bury and or obliterate back to where perhaps the idea originated. Someone has to intervene. Pissarro witnessed Cezanne’s initial purity – his *astounding* approach to nature and by taking the paintings away Cezanne could later *see* what he had done – their radiance. By this art itself consequently changed.

Looking at this work before our eyes it is just as it is before the eyes of the artists – pure. I feel education is being examined – I can always put my eye on the paintings, but its hard to put my finger on why – but I feel it is the ‘to teach the meaning of to KNOW’. The precious powers of the mind don’t run like clockwork, thought, flesh and spirit relish.

The group ‘still life’ project was a proof positive revelation. The mind can be like a mirror; we can work back to front and in so doing look BACK into ourselves. No wonder Cezanne said ‘as for old Pissarro, he was a father to me, someone to turn to for advice, not unlike the good Lord himself.’

These artists and their paintings do the same for me. I think of how much I don’t know, I think of miracles, they make me happy and I feel MENTORED.

**Rod Harman**

# John Croft

Although nearly 50, John is enthusiastic about all things “pop”. He takes much of his inspiration from 70’s and 80’s music and television stars, ‘reviving’ them through a palette of bright colours. Originally working with Project Art Works in 2006, when he made *Elvis*, a large and extraordinary painting inspired by an original vinyl LP sleeve, he has continued to develop his painting and artistic language through mentoring studios.

An avid music lover, John often brings CDs in to the studio, keen to share his passion for particular songs with the rest of the group. He is a sensitive and positive person and gets on particularly well with the project mentor, Tony, who he calls “Dave”.

John takes well known images and photographs of pop and film characters and transforms them into highly personalized readings of each character. The faces he

paints often focus a powerful gaze on the viewer such as in Bob Marley, Boy George and *David Bowie/Ziggy Stardust* – in this painting the face is oddly lit as if under a stage light but radiates beatitude and an air of serene benevolence.

John says of his painting:  
‘I like Batman and Robin. Boy Wonder wears red and black. I liked the red. I loved it. Liked making it.’

‘That one, Batman, I like the mask.  
His name is Bruce Wayne. I liked the bat.  
I love it’.



*Ziggy Stardust*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Boy George*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Batman and Robin*  
Acrylic on canvas  
100x70cms



*Adam Ant*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Self Portrait*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms

# Albert Geere

In 1937, when he was 2 years old, Albert was placed in the Fountain Children's Hospital in Tooting. Since then he has lived in long stay institutions and more recently supported independent, care environments. Albert has made pictures all his life; early on with whatever materials came to hand. Working with Project Art Works on a lively collaborative programme in 2008, he then joined the mentoring studios group in 2009.

Currently living in his own flat within a residential care home, Albert's weekly studio work has enabled him to continue to explore painting with great focus and intensity. He is meticulous in his approach and works quietly and steadily for long periods without breaks except at appointed times such as for lunch or when he is expecting a lift home.

At home, Albert has a range of objects that he's passionate about, most notably, a collection of clocks and watches. These, alongside other favoured items, have at times entered his work as subject matter. His work is a bold investigation of colour, shape and geometry that he applies to things both seen and imagined.

Albert has a strong and trusting relationship with his support worker, Sian Duly, who often works closely with him to articulate thoughts and feelings. Sian has written the following words that provide an insight into Albert's world:

'It has taken over 70 years for Albert to be given a label that he is proud of. When people are asked to describe Albert, the first thing they say is "He is an Artist". Taking part in mentoring studios has enabled Albert to have autonomy with his art that he has been unable to achieve in any other venue or area of his life. The resources, experiences and support that have been available to him through this scheme have meant that he is free and encouraged to express himself with the media of his choosing in the direction and pace that suits him'.

Albert will give a short presentation about his life and art supported by Sian on 25 May 2010 at the gallery.



*Objects with Clock*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Boat*  
Acrylic on board  
84x59cms



*Yellow Square*  
Acrylic on canvas  
84x59cms



*House*  
Acrylic on canvas  
102x71cms



*Orange Wave*  
Acrylic on board  
84x59cms

# Neville Jermyn

Neville is 39 and has a wide variety of interests, including reading, trampolining and the cinema. His interest in producing drawings brought him to Project Art Works in 2008.

Initially working more collaboratively with other participants and artists, Neville joined mentoring studios in the autumn of 2009. His paintings and drawings are executed with great delicacy and technical accuracy. He pursues each work with a fastidious attention to detail, working methodically to create marks that have precise uniformity and consistency. Most recently, Neville has chosen to draw rather than paint, preferring the tighter control pencil affords over each mark. Following a recent conversation about the birds on display at Booth Museum of Natural History, Neville began drawing from a stuffed owl brought in by his Mentor.

Drawing and painting are not easy for Neville. He finds making work most engaging when it relates to a subject matter that is of interest to him like animals and they are often chosen as a starting point.

His large monochrome painting, *Dog at Night-time* (not in the exhibition), depicts a lone dog standing in a black landscape outside a city, lit by stars and a passing comet. It was selected and shown in *Myscape*, an exhibition with Project Ability, Glasgow, and Collins Gallery at Strathclyde University in January 2010. He took a trip to see the exhibition with his support worker and commented: 'The best part about going to Glasgow was seeing my painting. It was the biggest one there'.

A great part of Neville's interest in participating in the studio project is that he 'likes the people'.

Neville says:  
'I find it [drawing] easier than painting because it's less messy. I think I liked drawing the hippo best'.

'I like it on Wednesdays. I think because it's quiet'.



*A German Shepherd*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Still Life*  
Drawing on canvas  
50x40cms



*Hippopotamus*  
Drawing on paper  
60x42cms



*Owl*  
Drawing on paper  
59x42cms

# Michelle Roberts

Now 39, Michelle has drawn and painted throughout her life. As a young girl, she accompanied her grandfather, a watercolour painter who often worked outdoors. She has maintained this drive to draw and paint, spending much of her free time drawing small intricately worked images in her sketch books as well as ideas for the canvases she produces in the studio sometimes over many days and weeks.

Michelle began working with Project Art Works in 2005. Since joining mentoring studios, she has refined a dense and highly personalized approach to making images. Working methodically across each canvas, section by section, she creates colourful and complex worlds; each with a distinct logic and meaning that connect to her own life. Volunteering in a charity shop and assisting in a nursery, many of the people and experiences she encounters are directly translated into her work.

Michelle takes an active role in the studio project and supports others in their work through attention and encouragement. The evolution of her work can take weeks. Her focus is unwavering and she steadily works each canvas through to its conclusion without ever wavering from the path she sets out in the base drawings – although she introduces ever more dense and detailed areas of colour as she goes along.

In addition to her time spent in the studio and working as a volunteer, Michelle attends a local day care provision, where she has the role of an “enabler”, assisting and supporting others in their activities. She independently pursues her art through other means and recently took part in a printmaking workshop at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery run by Pallant House Gallery, Chichester.

Michelle’s mother says:  
‘It makes her feel very happy when she is painting and she has lots of ideas in her head trying to come out, she enjoys using lots of colours and pattern’.



*Hastings*  
Acrylic on canvas  
122x122cms



*Sea Life* work in progress  
Felt pens on canvas  
153x122cms



*Town Life*  
Acrylic on canvas  
153x122cms



*Dinosaur World*  
Acrylic on canvas  
153x122cms

# Jonathan Rogers

Jonathan lives locally in a house he shares with family and friends. He is 46 years old, a prolific painter and began working with Project Art Works in 2005, participating on a collaboratively focussed project before joining mentoring studios.

Jonathan creates paintings with vibrant washes of colours of varying density. Composed largely of vertical and horizontal sweeps worked and reworked across the canvas, his artworks develop gradually by building up layers of translucent marks. As part of the structure of his work, Jonathan frequently intersperses painting with a separate drawing activity, either on paper or in his sketchbook. These compositions in pencil depict characters and lettering revealing Jonathan's personality and humour, sometimes referring to specific people or favourite food and drink.

Having found his personal direction and pattern of working, Jonathan's confidence seems to have grown extensively. He makes regular trips 'upstairs' to show other members of staff and visitors to the building his work and progress and collects biscuits in the top pocket of his overalls as a gift to others in the studio. He is keen to be photographed with his work.

Previously known as quiet and reserved he now reveals his wit and humour through gesturing, smiling and raising his eyebrows – and most notably in his books of drawings that he fills between applying layers of paint to evolving canvases. Increasingly, he uses a word or a few words to communicate interest in his own and other's artworks, such as commenting, "that's a nice painting" about a fellow participant's piece. He recently started speaking through a long cardboard tube, enjoying interactions where his sounds and words are easily amplified.

Jonathan's sister, Penny says: 'He is so proud of his pictures, and beyond all expectations, [they] have been chosen for exhibition. . . and published . . . and sold, achievements that his family would never have expected'.

Jonathan's picture 'Penny' was exhibited as part of Outside In, a 'groundbreaking exhibition' curated by Pallant House Gallery, Chichester and to be shown at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery between June and September 2010.



*Painting No. 13*  
Acrylic on canvas  
100x100cms



*Painting No. 3*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76.5x122cms

*Frank*  
Acrylic on canvas  
102x71cms



*Painting No. 7*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms



*Painting No. 14*  
Acrylic on canvas  
76x76cms

# Charlotte Stephens

Charlie as she likes to be called, began working with Project Art Works in 2005 on an intensive foundation programme. In January 2009, she joined the mentoring studios project.

Generally figurative, Charlie's paintings are inspired by her affection for wildlife and the natural environment. Her compositions often have a dynamic power – of movement or light – but also a fragile balance and resolution that reveals something of the struggle and determination involved in their making. Having four fingers on each hand and no thumbs, Charlie can find it difficult to control pencils and brushes but is working with the mentoring team to develop new tools that support and enhance her dexterity. She explains: "sometimes it's a bit hard work, but I get through it".

As an associate member of the Project Art Works board, Charlie takes on the role, of advocate, speaking up for the organization and her peers. In March 2009, she joined Sync South East, a Cultural Olympiad leadership programme, aimed at supporting Deaf and disabled artists in the South East of England.

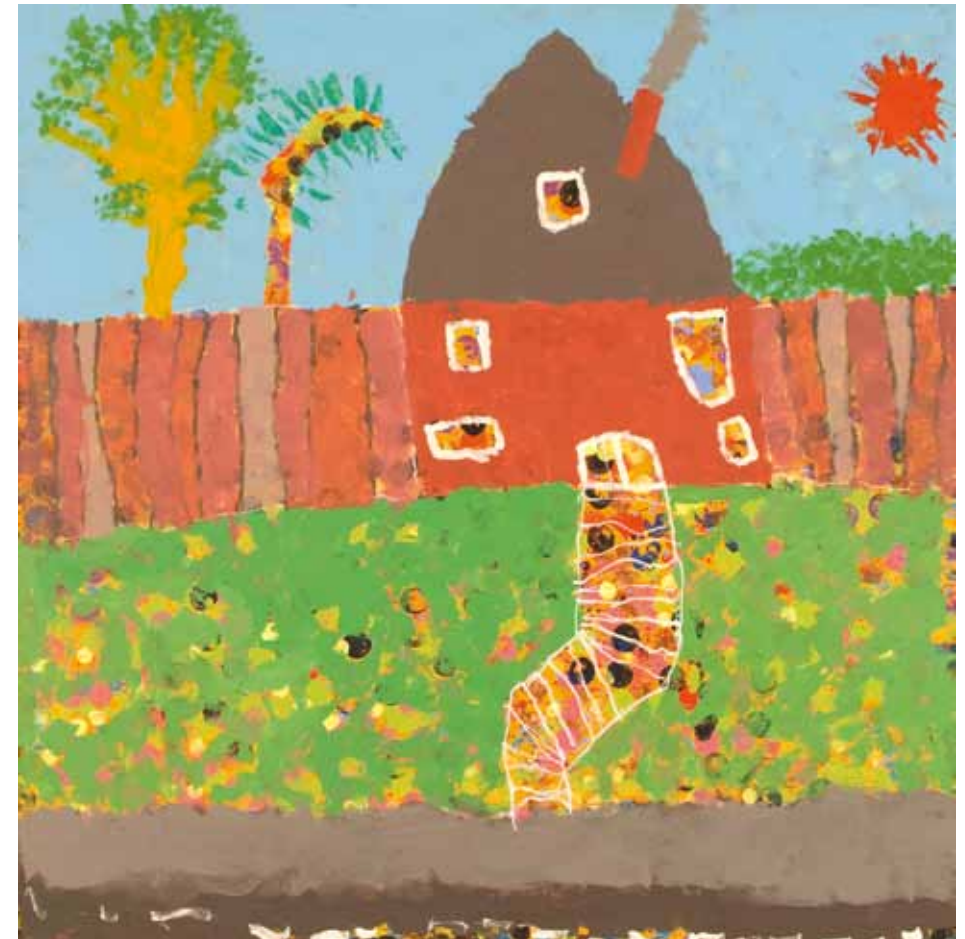
Charlie also attends a day service provision for people who have learning disability in Hastings where she supports others to create their own artwork.

Charlie says of her involvement in the mentoring project:  
'I think it has gone very, very well. It was quite hard to start with, but as it progressed, it got easier'.

'I love being in the studio there. It's a place where I don't have to try and please or impress people. I can be myself. It helps me out and relaxes me. Making my artwork makes me feel happy'.

'It has changed me'.

Charlie is 26 years old and lives locally with her family.



*House*  
Acrylic on canvas  
122x122cms



*Owl in Flight*  
Acrylic on canvas  
100x70cms



*An Eagle Owl*  
Acrylic on canvas  
60x80cms



*Park*  
Acrylic on canvas  
100x100cms



*Windy Day*  
Acrylic on canvas  
122x122cms

This exhibition and the mentoring studios project, has been made possible by the consideration, skill and generosity of many individuals and organizations. Firstly, it is with gratitude that we thank all the artists, their families and support workers, who have so enthusiastically embraced the ethos of the project and associated collaborations.

Particular thanks are due to East Sussex County Council and their Learning Disability Partnership Board for resourcing the project through the Learning Disability Development Fund and Philip Pragnell, Strategic Commissioning Manager (Learning Disability) for his advocacy of the project and work of our organization.

Other invaluable contributors towards the realization of the project, exhibition and catalogue include Sarah Broome the Project Art Works' In House Programme Manager, Dean Pavitt, Designer, George Adams, Rod Harman, artist and the team at Hastings Arts Forum.

We extend our very special thanks to Tony Colley for the sensitivity and intelligence he has brought to the role of mentor and Paul Lucas for his steady, considered commitment to the artists and smooth running of the studio.

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ISBN 0-9541014-4-8

Photography by Peter Greenhalf



Supported by  
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