

Tracing Nature

Kent has a fascinating landscape owing to its land formations, soils and coastal scenery, to which our ancestors have added their footprints of towns and villages, route-ways and land use. Our countryside, coastlines and heritage make up the unique character of the county.

The immense pressure of development in Kent means that it is essential to be vigilant to ensure our past is not forgotten in our journey to the future.

'**Tracing Nature**' – a county-wide exhibition across four venues – presents work created in our landscape by five artists who have harnessed nature's power as both inspiration and source material. Through their work, these artists highlight the diversity of Kent and the essence of particular places within the county, thus raising important contemporary issues and questions concerning our environment and our future within it:

- What impact will the current generation and their lifestyle have on the countryside?
- How can we look after the landscape for the benefit of the present and future generations?
- How best can we conserve our heritage and ensure that development is sustainable and sympathetic?

The '**Tracing Nature**' exhibition is simultaneously a comment on history and how physical locations change, and an exploration of identity - of people and place and of the relationship between place and character.

In his new body of work entitled '**Vanishing Shore**', Marcus Haydock presents a photographic interpretation of the North Kent marine landscape and communities. A celebration of the area's historical and contemporary connections to the water, this project captures a moment in time from the artist's perspective and becomes an archival record of North Kent in 2006.

Poet Ben Barton and photographer Jennifer Harris present '**Prospect**' - a dramatic fusion of words and images drawn from the unique, indomitable landscapes of Dungeness.

John Kelly produces detailed or 'forensic' mixed media studies of remote locations, analysing moments experienced in these places. '**Forensic Shoreline**', shown in this exhibition, was produced during the severe time of the foot and mouth outbreak, when large areas of the British countryside were closed in order to contain the disease. Kelly, who has a background in geography and geology, turned to the coast of Southern England and began a year's work on the changing coast, recording the impact of storm and rockfall.

Stephen Turner's '**Tree Rings**' incorporate bark, roots, seeds, fruit and leaves which have been ground, steeped and boiled to an essence. Turner creates extraordinary paintings from these rich concoctions, thus revealing something of the anima of nature. 'Tree Rings' was originally commissioned by Stour Valley Arts in 2002. This exhibition presents an exciting opportunity to view the latest, as yet unseen work in this series and demonstrates the evolution of the original project and process.

Emily Robinson, Cultural Projects Officer: Visual Arts

