

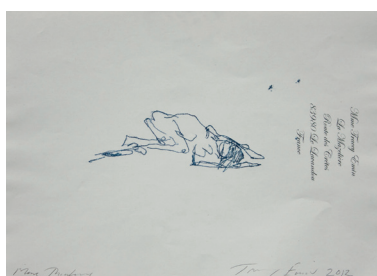
On a recent visit to South Africa to attend the exhibition of South African born, British artist Helen A Pritchard at SMAC Art Gallery in Cape Town, Keith Coventry was impressed by the local art scene and the interest shown towards contemporary British art, in particular the so-called YBA (Young British Artists) generation, amongst whom Coventry was a central figure. Coventry suggested presenting and curating (together with Pritchard) an exhibition of works on paper by some of his artist friends from the UK. The show contains work by many of the important YBAs, as well as younger artists from the current generation, including three Turner Prize winners and many well-publicized and controversial Turner Prize nominees. A spirit of generosity from the curators and the participating artists underpins this exhibition that explores the often overlooked qualities of art produced on paper.



Keith Coventry | *Junk I & II* | 2014 | Oil Stick and Pencil Crayon on Paper | 59.5 x 50 cm

Paper evokes history and the documentation thereof, in this context, the complicated history between South Africa and the UK. Gavin Turk's simple and characteristically piercing work entitled *100 Years* (2014), a century-old piece of paper bearing the handwritten inscription, "100 years", speaks a thousand words; commenting on the transience of things, the relative insignificance of recent history or perhaps its dire consequences which predicts an impending 'cleaning of the slate'.

Paper itself has the unique characteristic of outlasting most other art forms – especially technology based work or seemingly enduring contemporary trends. Paper has for centuries been the principal mode of written communication between people, but in recent times it has come to represent a uniquely personalized form of communication – an idea encapsulated perfectly in Tracey Emin's monoprint on personalized stationary. Paper is also at the heart of the current environmental debate and is an integral part of the concept behind the work of Simon English, who works primarily in this medium to convey his environmental concerns,



Tracey Emin | *More Thinking* | 2012 | Monoprint on Paper | 21 x 29.7 cm

as do the delicate works of mud on paper by acclaimed Land Artist Richard Long. Helen A Pritchard's framing of cardboard cut-outs from commercial packaging hints at similar concerns, whilst referencing important art historical moments ranging from Neo Baroque to Arte Povera, Minimalism, Geometric Abstraction and Pop Art.

In the nineties, the YBAs and 'Britart' catapulted contemporary art into a new realm and broke boundaries, expanding the reach of the previously insular and isolated world of contemporary art. Art and celebrity culture became synonymous.

The radical, alternative and sensationalist quality whereby these artists rose to prominence became a global cultural phenomena and aligned them with pop musicians (such as Jarvis Cocker & Oasis) and fashion designers (Alexander McQueen & Stella McCartney). The free, rebellious spirit of the time is embodied in Keith Coventry's work, *Two Girls Smoking Crack* (2001) and Sophy Rickett's iconic photographs of herself urinating, whilst standing and in a stereotypical male posture, on modern political landmarks such as the M15 building.

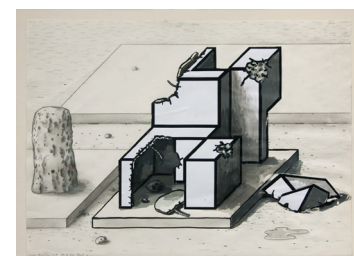


Sophy Rickett | *Pissing Woman Study* | 1994 | Bromide Print | 46 x 36 cm | AP

Despite a historic slant (the show spans more or less two decades), it also includes fresh and exciting new works such as a labyrinth drawing by Turner Prize winner Mark Wallinger, who has just been commissioned to produce 270 monumental public works on this theme to be placed permanently in various locations on the London Underground. Further examples include a large, elaborate and typically colourful mixed media work by Keith Tyson (another Turner Prize winner) and two delicate collage works of autumn leaf shaped cut-outs of pages from pornographic magazines by Jonathan Yeo, who recently presented a major exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London. These and other works make this exhibition very current and as much about the 'now', as about recent history.



Mark Wallinger | *Untitled* | 2014 | Ink on Paper | 29.5 x 20.9 cm



Paul Noble | *Details from Nobson* | c. 2000 | Collage and Ink on Paper | 23 x 33.2 cm

The relative ease with which an exhibition of this stature was organized attests to another characteristic of the medium, namely its portability. Paper is light and easy to transport, it is also easy to work on outside of the studio. Many of the works on show might be interpreted as unfinished, rough or unpolished in contrast to how some of the more well-known and iconic works by these artists have been publicized. These 'sketches' reveal unexpected aspects of the thought process and general process behind these artists and their practice – a type of behind-the-scenes, private view into their world. The personal nature of this exhibition extends beyond the relationships between the curators and the artists, to a broader collective intent to engage with a specific place. There is a sense of goodwill towards the idea of sharing and reaching out to the South African audience.

This exhibition allows Capetonians and art students the unique opportunity to engage with the works (and minds) of these renowned international artists, in an intimate, personal and direct way.

#### PAPER features:

James Birch, Mat Collishaw, Nigel Cooke, Keith Coventry, Gabriella Daris, Tracey Emin, Simon English, Barnaby Hosking, Henry Hudson, Bridget Hugo, Ricca Kawai Kalderon, Michael Landy, Richard Long, Jason Martin, Paul Noble, Tim Noble & Sue Webster, Helen A Pritchard, Simon Popper, Barry Reigate, Sophy Rickett, Liam Ryan, Jemima Stehli, Gavin Turk, Keith Tyson, Mark Wallinger, Greville Worthington and Jonathan Yeo.

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24 . 01 . 14

09 . 03 . 14

An exhibition of works on paper by leading UK artists.  
Curated by Keith Coventry and Helen A Pritchard.

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