

June 2014



Press Release



Current Exchanges: Dovecot and the Australian Tapestry Workshop 5 July to 27 September 2014

Celebrating the continuing connections between the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne, and Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, the exhibition *Current Exchanges* brings together recent work from both institutions.

Although geographically separate, both share a similar philosophy of working closely with contemporary artists to produce tapestries at the cutting edge of artistic practice. The links between the studios date back to the founding of the Australian Tapestry Workshop in 1976: Dovecot's Artistic Director, Archie Brennan, advised on the structure and feasibility of the new antipodean enterprise. Since then the exchanges of weavers and ideas have continued. This year marks the beginning of another cycle of such interchanges between Melbourne and Edinburgh, through an exchange between weavers from the two studios funded by Creative Scotland's Creative Futures Programme. The international exchange programme between Dovecot Studios and the Australian Tapestry Workshop is designed to raise the profile of contemporary tapestry weaving by fostering talent, building relationships and sharing knowledge. By spending an extended period in the host country, weavers engage both with familiar and with new working practices, and immerse themselves in the local arts and cultural community. Junior Weaver, Freya Sewell completed her residency at the Australian Tapestry Workshop in early 2014; a weaver from Melbourne will travel to Dovecot in the autumn.

The tapestries and rugs in this *Current Exchanges* exhibition range in price from approximately £4,000 to £60,000. Most woven and hand-tufted Dovecot textile pieces are created in response to a request from a private collector or public commissioner. The tapestry on the loom throughout the duration of this exhibition is the result of a collaboration between artist Magne Furuholmen and Dovecot. The *Glass Onion* design that the weavers are referring to is a woodblock print created specifically by Furuholmen, inspired by musical terminology and Beatles song lyrics. A print from this series will feature in the exhibition, while visitors are also able to view the weavers working on the tapestry from the Balcony.

Tapestries from Melbourne and Edinburgh are hung together on the walls overlooking the Weaving Floor at Dovecot – a survey of practice from both institutions spanning a decade. Artists include Nusra Latif Queneshi, Alan Davie, Anamarari Brown, William Crozier, Brent Harris, Peter Saville, Adrian Wiszniewski, Sangetta Sandreager and Arlene TextaQueen. In recognition of Dovecot's historic association with the inception of Australian Tapestry Workshop and in this year of the Commonwealth Games, Archie Brennan's *Meadowbank Stadium* tapestry also has pride of place.

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Current Exchanges: Dovecot and the Australian Tapestry Workshop is curated by freelance historic fashion and textile curator, researcher, writer and editor Ben Divall. His field of research includes textile trade and interaction, both intra-Asian and between Europe and Asia; interiors, architecture, decorative arts and authenticity; Asian textiles, particularly South and Southeast Asian; contemporary textiles; and curatorial practices. Divall has curated previous exhibitions at Dovecot including *Heirlooms* in 2011 and *Fleece to Fibre* in 2013.

Events:

On Saturday 2 August from 12.30pm to 1.30pm Dovecot will host an event: **David Weir and Antonia Syme in Conversation**, to which all press are invited. Directors of two contemporary tapestry studios with a longstanding alliance, come together to converse about the history and cultural exchanges between Dovecot Studios and Australian Tapestry Workshop. To reserve a place, please book at www.dovecotstudios.com once advertised.

On Wednesday 13 August from 6.30pm to 7.30pm Dovecot will host an event: **Current Exchanges Curator's Tour**, to which all press are invited. Ben Divall, curator of *Current Exchanges* for Dovecot, will talk about the exhibition and the tapestries. To reserve a place, please book at www.dovecotstudios.com once advertised.

Current Exchanges: Dovecot and the Australian Tapestry Workshop exhibition is part of the Edinburgh Art Festival 2014 programme.

Also showing:

Craigie Aitchison RA Paintings, etching and tapestries

Timothy Taylor Gallery and Dovecot Studios present a selected showcase of paintings and etchings from the estate of Craigie Aitchison CBE RSA RA (1926-2009), alongside tapestries created by the Studios in collaboration with the artist, from 5 July to 27 September 2014.

The Aitchison selection highlights the recurring themes of the artist's work including the Crucifixion and Bedlington terriers. Aitchison depicted the Crucifixion in his artwork from the 1950s, when his tutor at The Slade suggested that the subject was "too serious" for him, thus prompting him to tackle it regularly. Although not pious, Aitchison was drawn to the spirit and glamour of Catholicism. One of the tapestry miniatures featured in this show, is a detail recreated in weave from a large commissioned painting of the same subject. Resolving the design with Dovecot's weavers, Aitchison felt that the detail chosen particularly suited the medium of tapestry. This was one of a number of tapestries made with Aitchison and is the only tapestry design which Aitchison made using this central theme in his work. It is an open edition and he bought one for his own collection.

Aitchison used a distinctive Mediterranean palette. His expressive 'cut-out' iconographic figures and objects set against a bright coloured background are redolent of the simple clarity of the Trecento and Quattrocento which he often referred to. Born in Edinburgh in 1926, Aitchison enrolled at the Slade School of Art in 1952. His work was soon recognised with a solo show at Beaux Arts Gallery in 1956. His reputation grew and this was followed by a solo show at Marlborough Fine Art in 1968, a retrospective at the Serpentine in 1981, a retrospective at GoMA in Glasgow in 1996 and a solo show

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at the Royal Academy in 2003. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1988, was awarded the inaugural Jerwood Prize in 1994 and in 1999 was awarded a CBE for his contribution to British Art. Aitchison died in London in December 2009. Timothy Taylor Gallery is the representative of his estate.

More information and prices for the Craigie Aitchison works and how to commission a tapestry, can be obtained from Dovecot.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Founded in 2004, **Edinburgh Art Festival** is the UK's largest annual celebration of visual art. Uniquely, the festival offers the chance to experience the best contemporary Scottish artists in the context of exhibitions of the most important international artists and movements of the 20th Century and historical periods. Attracting over 250,000 visitors each year, Edinburgh Art Festival brings together the capital's leading galleries, museums and artist-run spaces, alongside new public art commissions by established and emerging artists and an innovative programme of special events. The vast majority of the festival is free to attend. Further details at www.edinburghartfestival.com
2. The *Glass Onion* tapestry will take 4 months to weave and will measure 2 x 1.5 metres. For more information, images and a press release relating to this project please contact lizziecowan@dovecotstudios.com

Press release image:

William Crozier (1930-2011)

Easter Day, 2009

Woven by Douglas Grierson, David Cochrane and Naomi Robertson, Dovecot Studios

Wool and cotton, 244 cm x 183 cm

Image courtesy Dovecot Studios

About Dovecot

Dovecot is a specialist tapestry studios at the heart of a landmark centre for contemporary art, craft and design based in the centre of Edinburgh.

In August 2008 Dovecot moved to new workshops in a renovated Victorian Swimming Baths on Infirmary Street in Edinburgh's Old Town. As well as providing a permanent home for Dovecot's tapestry studio, the building also houses two stunning gallery spaces which deliver an international programme of exhibitions exploring contemporary art, craft and design. Events, gallery and meeting space rental, café and shop all contribute to making Dovecot a dynamic creative centre in the city.

Dovecot Studios was originally established in 1912 by the Marquess of Bute; the two founding weavers from William Morris' renowned tapestry workshops at Merton Abbey passing on their skills to successive generations of weavers through a formal apprenticeship scheme that continues today.

Dovecot's tapestry studios continue to work to commission, producing tapestries and tufted rugs for private and public collectors working in collaboration with leading international artists, designers, curators, architects and specialist interior designers. Recent commissions and projects

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include work with Peter Blake, Peter Saville, Victoria Crowe, Than Clarke, Nicholas Party and Alison Watt.

Although Dovecot has evolved through the decades, the studios remain true to William Morris' ethos of the artist craftsman and unique in its highly creative collaboration between artist, weaver and commissioner: a potent dialogue that is special to each project, where human interaction and the hand-made combine to create outstanding tapestry. The list of artists with whom and for whom the studios worked and continue to work is extraordinarily rich: the British Library, Scottish Opera, National Museums of Scotland, Kings College Cambridge, PepsiCo's HQ in New York, are amongst some of the many collections in which Dovecot tapestry now hangs. The Dovecot Foundation, a not for profit organisation, has been established to continue to support and develop the skills of the studios through apprenticeship and an evolving programme of collaborations with both established and emerging artists and designers.

About Australian Tapestry Workshop

Established in 1976, the Australian Tapestry Workshop is the only tapestry studio of its kind in Australia. Using the same techniques employed in Europe since the 15th century, the Australian Tapestry Workshop's skilled weavers work with artists from Australia and overseas, to produce tapestries that are known for their vibrancy, technical accomplishment and inventive interpretation. Since its inception, the Workshop's philosophy has been to employ weavers trained as artists to enable close collaboration with the artists whose work they are interpreting. Many notable Australian and international artists have collaborated with the Workshop's weavers over the years including Arthur Boyd, Jon Cattapan, John Olsen, Jorn Utzon, David Noonan and Sally Smart. To date, the Workshop has created more than 400 tapestries ranging from palm-size to monumental. They are woven using the finest Australian wool, which is dyed onsite forming a unique palette of 370 colours. These works hang in significant public and private collections around the world.

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Please see Dropbox link here to:

Current Exchanges images and image credits

Magne Furuholmen press release

Summer and Craigie Aitchison private view invites

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/aj0ajo7ouwsxlsj/AADJzLZWQiE8dhsPpj5z-V8Xa>

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