

FIDRA FINE ART

Matthew Draper

“Small Works”

20 May to 18 June

Opening with refreshments on Saturday 20 May 12-5pm

The volcanic plug that is Bass Rock, sits a few miles off the coast at North Berwick. Its presence to people who live in East Lothian has provided a timeless, reassuring permanence. To artists such as Matthew Draper the rock is the perfect stage that plays host to the perpetual drama of the ever-changing Scottish weather. The haar, so familiar to residents of this coastline, is one of the star performers. Descending in layers of varying depth, diffusing the light onto the rock creating an heir of romance and mystery - it is as much the subject of Matthew's work as the landscape itself.

The current show featuring new and recent, smaller works explores not only Bass Rock and the East Lothian coastline but also Edinburgh, where Matthew has his studio as well as the dramatic Scottish landscape from the Trossachs to Rannoch Moor and beyond.

In his Edinburgh cityscapes, the weather is again a key player. It provides infinite possibilities for the artist to change the mood of a landscape. Blizzards closing in over Arthur's Seat or the passing of squalls swept in from the Firth of Forth have been studied at length from his top floor flat, overlooking the city. The haar, again a natural filter on the landscape, rolls in over the Old Town, softening the light source whether that be the sun or moon, streetlights or lights from events at the Castle esplanade.

His Highland pieces follow in the tradition of the Romantic landscape painting of Caspar David Friedrich, De Breanski and the Scottish artists Alexander Nasmyth and Horatio McCulloch. Clouds creeping in across a glen, light chasing along a hillside or dark, ominous fronts closing in, all perfectly evoked through the manual build up of numerous layers of pastel, his chosen medium.

We are extremely proud to be exhibiting in North Berwick, the work of one of Scotland's most accomplished landscape artists. Matthew has won many awards including, most recently, the prestigious Charles Pears Award at the Royal Society of Marine Artists at the Mall Galleries in London. He has had numerous solo shows across the UK including; Open Eye Gallery in Edinburgh, Lemon Street in Truro, Beaux Arts in Bath and last year, at the Scottish Gallery in Edinburgh.

Artist Statement

'I identify myself principally as a draughtsman; drawing being the most unencumbered and immediate form of image-making. My work is made with an intense and energetic immediacy, working instinctively rather than methodically, keeping me physically and emotionally involved in the process. I crush soft pastel in my hands rubbing the dust into the paper in wide sweeps of colour gradually manipulating the material to build up a thick layered surface using the ball of my thumb or the heel of my hand.'

'I am interested in and influenced by the dramatic imagery of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century painting. I admire the idea of the contemplation of landscape in the Romantic spirit, found in the work of the German Romantics like Caspar David Friedrich and the notion of the grandeur of the landscape as expressed in the work of the American Subliminal Painters like Sanford Robinson Gifford and Frederic Edwin Church. These artists adopted the term 'Luminism', defined as light in the landscape and the effect that light has on the landscape and objects within it.'

'As a contemporary artist choosing to adopt this approach to light in the landscape, my interest is not to make straight-forward topographical images that are illustrations of place. Instead I am attempting to make imagery that is descriptive of the circumstances under which the subject is viewed; images which convey a sense of place. The drawings are emotional reactions to events and experiences evolving in front of me; events happening or about to happen. The images become like fading memories or captured moments in time. The making of the work is in itself as set of actions and events which creates a harmony between my process and my interpretation of the subject.'



Notes to Editors:

Fidra Fine Art

Covering over 200 years of the best in Scottish fine art, watercolour and oil paintings, drawings and prints, Fidra Fine Art is an art gallery based in North Berwick, East Lothian and currently displays work from a range of leading Traditional, Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary Scottish artists. Current artists include Matthew Draper, Simon Laurie, Davy Brown, George Birrell, Neil Macdonald, Alice McMurrough, Lesley Banks, Jock MacInnes, Angela Repping, Jayne Stokes and many more.