

smART CRAFT from Wester Hailes at The Gallery on the Corner



Whilst all artists would say that they express themselves through their work, for the members of **smART CRAFT** art is a special way of communicating. smART Craft, which meets at WHALE Arts Agency in Wester Hailes, is a fully inclusive group for adults with mental health issues, learning disabilities or complex or additional support needs, led by a professional artist – and they are now staging their second exhibition at The Gallery on the Corner in Northumberland Street. Creative Release, says WHALE Arts Project Coordinator **Sarah Walker**, is ‘about expression, enjoyment and freedom. Each artist’s individuality is celebrated’.



Artist: Gavin Hendry

The exhibition unveils new work by the group, and is as diverse and colourful a show as you could wish to see. From **Gary Stewart’s** acrylics with their expressive streams of textured greens, blues, pinks and yellows to **Gavin Hendry’s** stunning clay tiles reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphics, the pieces on show are fascinating. Where else would you see a pom-pom rug?



This one, the creation of **Tommy Hall** and **John Wireko**, is both a work of art and a covetable soft furnishing, complemented by the suspended orbs of *Pom Poms – A Collective*. The purples and greens of **Damien McLean’s** acrylic echo the colours in the pom

poms, but here they are blocks of colour, fans and triangles – the latter mountain-like, with dark pink strokes suggesting the evening sun, or perhaps even the descent of lava.



Artist: Miranda
Pender

Andrew Veitch's contributions are two highly effective pen and acetate drawings of figures; both suggest an inner life and make the viewer wonder, whilst **Miranda Pender's** striking acrylic brings to mind Edvard Munch's iconic *The Scream*, as the figure covers its ears with its hands. **Sarah Maloney's** precise, almost architectural drawing is a complete contrast; it could be the bare bones of a car park – or even one of the futuristic buildings from *The Minority Report*.



Artist: Sarah Maloney

In **Gary Stewart's** pen and perspex work we again see waves of colour, but here there are sharp shapes which, on closer inspection, could be weird distorted faces or perhaps a strange, long-beaked bird. Two mixed media pieces by **Stewart Dalziel** bring to mind the work of Jean Dubuffet or even Jackson Pollock, whilst **Kevin Liston** has used orange, brown and white wools to create a most interesting, tapestry-like picture.



Another face is seen in **Betty Merritt's** acrylic piece, and again the viewer is drawn in, wanting to know more about the subject with its enigmatic, startled blue/black face. The bold primary colours of **Wai Yin Chan's** dazzling pen and pencil work fill equally mysterious shapes – could they be ice creams? Drinks? Or faces? **Debbie Muir's** acrylic features vibrant pinks and oranges that appear almost tactile, like scrunched up

tissue paper.



Artist: Wai Yin Chan

This small exhibition is more thought-provoking than many you might see by established artists; do call in to the gallery to see it. Gallery acting manager Paul Penrice rightly describes smART CRAFT as a 'creative fountain'.



Artist: Michael Dawson

The Gallery on the Corner is also showing some fabulous mixed media work by **Michael Dawson**, who describes his work as 'a universal experience filtered through my life' and neo-expressionist in style; '(it) is often mistaken as 'outsider' but I take that as a compliment'. A stunning landscape *Ardroil Bay, Harris* by celebrated Edinburgh artist and photographer **Erik Petrie**, 'an artist in the true sense of the word' (*Lux Lit*), has also just arrived and is for sale.



Ardroil Bay,
Harris: Erik Petrie

Creative Release is at The Gallery on the Corner until 28th February 2015. The Gallery on the Corner is a commercial art gallery and studio providing a platform to exhibit and sell artwork produced by artists who have a physical or mental health condition: it was the first social firm developed by Autism Ventures Scotland, which was established by Autism Initiatives UK. AVS also runs the lovely **Cafe on the Corner** in Hill Street (which exhibits art too) and **The Hermitage**, a 9-hole golf course and cafe in The Braid Hills.

WHALE Arts Agency is a community arts centre providing

opportunities for the people of Wester Hailes and South West Edinburgh to access and take part in a range of arts activities.

