

Patricia Fleming Gallery Announce

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Christine Borland

Michele Fletcher

Wendy McMurdo

1 - 21 Dec 2024

'If Not Now, When?' Is an invitation to explore the work of three established women artists, Christine Borland, Michele Fletcher and Wendy McMurdo. Together they remind us of the urgency to implement alternative strategies for thinking about and shaping the world around us.

'If Not Now, When?' foregrounds the power of art to communicate the unseen. Perhaps things we choose to ignore because we feel they are not for us, or presented in a way that makes them too complex to engage with. The exhibition is a window into the research of each artist and provides a space to reflect on the natural world, new digital tech and the use of AI. The works remind us of the importance of beauty, care, community and love. The exhibition prompts the question 'Do we have time to wait on the consequences of not changing course?'

In the Photographic series *The Radical Road*, Wendy McMurdo presents a documentation of the wild plants that grow by the side of the Radical Road (a hard rock path) winding around Salisbury Crags in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Radical Road sits approximately halfway up the side of the 151ft Salisbury Crags. It winds its way across the series of cliffs which make up the extinct volcano 'Arthur's Seat'. Historically and to this day Arthur's Seat it is a significant political symbol located in the center of Edinburgh. 'This is the path' writes Alan Riach, Professor of Scottish Literature at University of Glasgow 'that takes its name from the Radical Rising of 1820, built by weavers from the West of Scotland at writer Walter Scott's suggestion. Apparently, Scott's idea was that these political insurrectionists would be better employed creating the path out of the hard volcanic Dolerite stone than developing revolutionary ideas, but the legacy of the path is ambiguous.

'It has always seemed to me that the Radical Road runs alongside the rock itself as if they're both permanent reminders of the struggle for social justice and the assertion of the earth itself.'

Wendy McMurdo

Christine Borland's series of 3 films *The Distaff Dialogues - Flax Grower, Flax Spinner and Flax Weaver* 2023, evokes both historical and future-facing lore embedded in the land within the act of growing and the hand-working of textiles; they capture the physical movements of the artist (re)enacting these archaic processes, accompanied by the soundtrack of dialogue between the artist and her daughter, Grace Borland Sinclair. The films collective title, *The Distaff Dialogues*

refers both to the iconic, usual cone-shaped tool used by flax-spinners to secure fibers, the term comes from their mother's line of familial descent – 'the distaff side' as opposed to the male 'spear side' A personal, political, and imaginative exchange exploring knowledge inheritance emerges, drawn from the captured motions of a female body undertaking textile - related labour at the edge of her limitations.

Artwork title: The Distaff Dialogues 2024

Subtitle (for each film) Flax Grower, Flax Spinner, Flax Weaver

Artist: Christine Borland

Narrated Dialogue written and performed by Christine Borland & Grace Borland Sinclair

Details: 3 x 12 minute films, total 36 min, looped.

Motion-captured, 3D visualization, CGI and editing by John Butler

In gallery two Michele Fletcher presents a large four paneled polyptych painting. *Improv; Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter* is a group of paintings inspired by Corot's polyptych which hangs in The National Gallery, London. Also a four panel work, similarly each measuring 140 x 70 cm. Recorded as being painted as a reaction to the changing light of a single day. Fletcher describes moving studios during a cold and dismal February to a damp and dark space that echoed the season. Moving from her small, light and warm garden studio to this new larger building resulted in the making of *Improv*, it is both a reaction to the move and a lament as the seasons shift and change the way we think about time and how we read and respond to our surroundings during moments of change.

'There is a rich history of artists exploring the motif of the four seasons. I was particularly drawn to Cy Twombly and Joan Mitchell's abstract interpretations. The paintings have their own rhythm in time, both in the making and movement from panel to panel'

Michele Fletcher

Improv, Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter

oil on panel

140 x 70 cm each panel

Christine Borland was born in 1965 in Darvel, Ayrshire, Scotland and lives and works in Kilcreggan on the west coast of Scotland. She studied Environmental Art at Glasgow School of Art from 1983 - 1987 and Master of Fine Art at the University of Ulster in 1988. She was a part of the artist committee of Transmission Gallery, Glasgow from 1989 to 1991. Borland works part-time as a Professor of Fine Art at Northumbria University. Borland's work can be found in significant public and private collections in the UK and internationally, including The National Galleries of Scotland collection and Tate. She was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1997.

Michele Fletcher (originally from Canada) now lives and works in London. She studied at Goldsmiths (BA Hons Fine Art and Critical Theory) and Chelsea, graduating with an MA in 2007. Fletcher received The Neville Burston Award for Painting (Goldsmiths College) and won the inaugural Marmite Prize for Painting. She was also a Royal Overseas League Scholar at

Hospitalfield, via the Patrick Alan Fraser Trust, Scotland. Fletcher was a prize winner in the 2020 John Moores Painting Prize.

Wendy McMurdo was born in Edinburgh where she studied fine art painting. She left the UK in the mid-1980s to study at the Pratt Institute, in New York. While studying there, she turned to photography. After completing an MA at Goldsmiths College, London, she was awarded a two-year fellowship by The Henry Moore Foundation. In 1993, she produced her first major solo exhibition 'In a Shaded Place - The Digital and the Uncanny', Site Gallery Touring, UK which saw her working for the first time with the computer, creating a series of works that explored the intersection between autographic photography and the digital image.

A companion text 'Organic Intelligence' by Catriona McAra has been commissioned on the occasion of the exhibition (see attached documents)