

The Elephant Bed

John Grade

11 July – 31 August 2009

Twin clusters of horn-like cones float down from the rafters of the gallery. One group dissolving into a mysterious pool, the other, awaiting a ceremonial end in the sea...

This huge new sculpture created specifically for Fabrica by US artist John Grade is inspired by the life cycle of a micro-organism – the coccolithophore.

Coccolithophores are invisible algae that congregate in their billions just beneath the surface of the world's oceans. When they die their protective outer casings drop to the seabed, where over time they form thick sediments on the seafloor. Around 80-110 million years ago they were responsible for forming the chalk which we now know as the South Downs.

It was the eminent Sussex geologist Gideon Mantell who originally identified the Elephant Bed in 1834. A thin strip of shale and chalky sands washed out from the Downs towards the end of the ice age. It is the bedrock that runs under Brighton & Hove from beyond Portslade in the west to Black Rock in the east. Estimated at 200 thousand years old, it is recent in geological terms.

Landscape is at the heart of John Grade's work. Past projects have involved travelling across the vast wildernesses of North and South America and making degradable works in response to the environment. More recently he completed a creative residency in the Western boglands of County Mayo, Ireland, where he has historical family ties.

His work is characterised by the meticulous crafting of sculptural objects that are then left outside – either buried, left to rot or dissolve – to let nature take its course. His preoccupation with change and natural disintegration means his works are rarely finished, always remaining in transition and open to chance. Periodically items are brought back indoors to be exhibited, re-examined, or to be worked on again, then returned once more to the landscape as a final resting place.

Grade's drawings and sculptures have been shown extensively in galleries, museums and outdoor locations across the USA. This is his first UK exhibition. www.johngrade.com

LEFT *Seeps of Winter 2008*
Cast pulp, cellulose, glassine,
wax and fumed silica

COVER *Meridian 2008* & ongoing
Rubber, rigid foam, cables and filament

BELOW *Collector 2007*
Wood construction, Wilpa Bay,
Washington State USA



[Events and activities]

Digging Deep

John Grade's work draws out geological connections, and highlights questions about what role artists should take, if any, in engaging with the contemporary environmental agenda.

John Grade – Artist's Talk

Wed 15 July 6.30-7.30pm

With reference to past projects and his working methods, John Grade talks about his interest in landscape, destruction, decay and sculpture.

The Artist as Explorer

Wed 22 July 6.30-8pm

Undisturbed wildernesses can offer inspirational and spiritually uplifting experiences for artists but what does it mean to explore the last truly untouched places on earth?

John Grade (via Skype), artist Chris Drury, Oliver Lowenstein, Editor of *Fourth Door Review*, and Jonathan Swain, Project Manager for *The Elephant Bed* discuss. Further details of the speakers can be found on our website.

Glimpses under the Elephant Bed

Thurs 23 July 6.30-7.30pm

Touching on dinosaurs, ice ages, a controversial Iguanodon tooth and other aspects of the natural history collection, with which he has worked for almost 30 years, John Cooper, past Keeper of Geology at The Booth Museum of Natural History gives an illustrated introduction to some Sussex landscapes over the last 85 million years.

Micro to Macro

A programme of activities that focus in on microscopic organisms and other life forms beyond the everyday. Suitable for adults and young people, but children must be accompanied by an adult.

Fossil World

Sun 12 July & 2 August 3-4.30pm

Find out more about coccolithophores and create plaster 'fossils' of your own. Drop-in workshop with artist Tila Rodriguez-Past.

Drawing to Film

Led by artist Jane Fordham these two events invite you to draw your responses to two classic sci-fi films. Materials and 3D specs provided.

The Day of the Triffids

Wed 5 August 8.30-10pm

Dir. Francis & Sekeley (1962). British sci-fi thriller based on the John Wyndham novel. 15 cert.

Creature from the Black Lagoon

Wed 12 August 8.30-10pm

Dir. Jack Arnold (1954). Amphibian horror film with a daft script, now in glorious 3D. PG cert.

Artist Anatomist Teresa Whitfield

Sundays 9, 16, 23 and 30 August 2-3pm.

Best known for her intricately detailed drawings of lace, and of cells in the human body, Teresa will work with Fabrica volunteers to create a series of drop-in activities.

For full details of the programme visit www.fabrica.org.uk

See website for details of other events including Fabrica's regular exhibition activities: **Armchair critics** and **Second sight**. All events are free unless otherwise stated.

[Artist resource events]

Artist's Story – Stephanie Bolt

Thurs 16 July 6.30-7.30pm

In 2008 Stephanie Bolt spotted a small credit to modernist designer Lazlo Moholy-Nagy on a film still in Littlehampton Museum. One year on, Stephanie has secured a lottery grant to present an exhibition of the documentary film and other works by Moholy-Nagy in 2010. Stephanie outlines the development of this project, including the process of reintroducing a neglected work by this influential artist into her local community and the effect that it has had on her own work.

Figure Ground

Thurs 30 July 6.30-8pm

Katy Beinaert, Jo Thomas, Jon Adams work together as Figure Ground. They are planning a series of events in the South East which will enable artists working in public spaces to meet

and debate issues key to their practice. This first event introduces the project and provides an opportunity for artists based in the Brighton & Hove area to become involved.

<http://fig-ground.blogspot.com/>

Artist's Story – Dan Robinson

Thurs 6 August 6.30-7.30pm

Using photography, drawings, texts, websites, events and installations, Leeds based Dan Robinson creates projects that are dialogues with specific sites and contexts.

Dan will discuss his renovation of a Cumbrian farmhouse and its conversion into *Thinking Space for the North*, a collaboration with Grizedale Arts and Bryan Davies.

To book email:
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[Contact]

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Opening times
Wed-Sat 12-5.30pm
Open until 7pm Thursdays in August
Sun & Bank Holiday 2-5pm
Closed Mon & Tues

Free Admission
Ramped entrance in Duke St.

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