

Exhibitions

essays by a number of authors on such themes as battlefields and ruins, war memorials and society and the hopeful but doomed attempts at a 'Return to order'.⁴ There is a list of all the art on display and comparative illustrations. The whole is a compressed but stimulating and eminently accessible visual history of the period, set in context and with an excellent historical chronology. Missing however are succinct biographies, which would be particularly helpful as a number of artists are little known today, and an index would have been equally desirable.

1 See www.1418now.org.uk, accessed 27th July 2018. THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE published a special issue on the First World War in September 2014.

2 *Magic Realism: Art in Weimar Germany 1919–33* is on view to 14th July 2019; *Portrait of the Artist: Käthe Kollwitz* is at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, to 30th September. The C.R.W. Nevinson prints at the British Museum can be seen on request until 13th September.

3 M. Sarde: *Colette* (London 1978), p.307.

4 Catalogue: *Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One*. Edited by Emma Chambers. 128 pp. incl. 100 col. ills. (Tate Publishing, London, 2018), £19.99. ISBN 978-1-84976-567-1.

Groundwork: international art in Cornwall

West Cornwall (various locations)
5th May–September 2018

by ANNA GRUETZNER ROBINS

Groundwork is an exhibition of new and existing work by international contemporary artists across various sites around the Lizard Peninsula.¹ With curatorial assistance from Tate St Ives, Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange and Kestle Barton, the summer's displays are organised by CAST (Cornubian Arts & Science Trust), which is based in a former Victorian school in Helston. Opening the series of films shown in CAST's superb viewing room (on monthly rotation since May) were Steve McQueen's *Unexploded* (2007) and *Gravesend* (2007). It is easy to see the connection between the latter film, about the mining of the 'blood mineral' coltan in the Congo, and the long history of tin and copper mining in Cornwall, which fed the once prosperous town of Helston



and financed its surrounding estates. Indeed, one of the principal aims of *Groundwork* is to make meaningful connections between Cornwall's histories and landscapes and those of the wider world.

Gravesend starts with a close-up shot of an uprooted tree trunk that marks the entrance to a mine by the Congo River. Two miners, barely visible except for their hands, hammer, pick out and wash tiny pieces of coltan, a crucial component in the production of mobile phones and other digital devices that are part of our increasingly technological culture. The switch from this brutal display of physical labour to a sanitised laboratory, where robots collect the molten mineral and transport it to rounded moulds, ready for commercial use, is shocking. The film closes with a time-lapse, shot at sunset, of the Thames at Gravesend, where in boated anchor the narrator in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* had told the story of his journey up the Congo. On the other side of the globe, an extinct volcano in New South Wales was the starting point for *The Judges II*, a thought-provoking work about

25. Film still from *As the World Turns*, by Semiconductor. 2018. (© Semiconductor; exh. Goonhilly Earth Station).

26. Installation view of *Ghost*, by Adam Chozko. 2018 (© Adam Chozko; exh. St Anthony-in-Meneage Church, Helston).

landscape and time that Christina Mackie installed in Godolphin House. The fifteenth-century estate on which the house sits flourished on the profits of tin and copper mining.

Helston Museum, better known for its local social history collections, screened Sean Lynch's video *What is an Apparatus?* (2016–17; on view 5th May–2nd June). The artist attended some of *The Cornwall Workshops* – a residential programme led by artists and writers run by CAST at Kestle Barton – and during his time there spent several weeks collecting Cornwall's unwritten narratives and forgotten histories. These are retold in three stories, in a voice-over by Gina Moxley (together with thirteen others from North America and Ireland). Each concerns a new belief system that has changed or obliterated older narratives embedded in the landscape. One of the Cornish stories recounts the disappearing history of the tin mines, the last of which closed in 1998, combined with shots of the steam-powered beam engine at Levant Mine that the retired mining community restored to working order in 1993.

Another of the spectacular sites used for *Groundwork* is Goonhilly, one of the first satellite earth stations, from where the first transatlantic television communication was transmitted. The largest of its enormous extra-terrestrial-looking towers is one of a group spanning several countries that can support communication between earth and missions to Mars. Screened in the Old Battery Store at Goonhilly, Simon Starling's film *Black Drop* (2012) combines sixteenth century prints and





nineteenth-century photographs of Venus with footage of an expedition to Hawaii and Tahiti to record the transit of Venus in 2012. A voiceover, in the style of a documentary newsreel, offers a historical narrative about astronomy and the changing nature of image-making. Footage of a film-editing suite and the knowledge that this will probably be the last 35 mm film of the transit of Venus means that *Black Drop* is likely to become a compelling historical artefact. It was screened back-to-back with *As the World Turns* (Fig.25), a moving-image work with video footage, music and a script by Semiconductor (the collaborative name of the artists Ruth Jarman and Joseph Gerhardt). The video, with its haunting sound effects, shows the Goonhilly transmitters in the eerie, semi-deserted earth station, where beehives and incipient flowering hedgerows frame the technological landscape. 'Dig deep inside the fertile dark for new forms of being', speaks the wavering voice of a female scientist, but even with the help of scientific thought, the poetic script suggests that little is certain.

The uncertainty of scientific thought was further tested in the screening of Andy Holden's *Laws of*

27. Film still from *The Mother's Bones*, by Abigail Reynolds. 2016. © Abigail Reynolds; exh. Epworth Hall, Helston)

Motion in a Cartoon Landscape (2011–16), accompanied by a rare performance by Holden (5th May) at Falmouth University. Assisted by his cartoon avatar and a host of others including Porky Pig, Wile E. Coyote, Roadrunner and Bugs Bunny, Holden seeks to explain the ten laws of cartoon physics. These were acted out to hilarious effect, but with the recent addition of a Donald Trump character Holden's opening comment that 'the world has come to resemble a cartoon landscape' makes its bizarre irrationality a little less funny.

A performance in a rather different key was Adam Chodzko's *Ghost*, in which the artist paddles single, silent visitors under the hooded bow of his beautifully handcrafted kayak. When not in the water, she rests across the pews of the medieval St Anthony-in-Meneage, at the edge of Gillan Creek (Fig.26). Here visitors can watch the video of the boat in action, accompanied by the symphonic sound recorded by three microphones, below, above and in the boat, on Chodzko's journeys. This immersive experience makes a primal connection with an ancient place. The relationship between sound and landscape is also

explored in Abigail Reynolds's film *The Mother's Bones* (2016; performed 6th May), which was on view at Epworth Hall (Fig.27). Set within the abandoned Dean Quarry on the tip of the Lizard Peninsula, members of the multi-generational St Keverne Band, first formed by the quarry workers in 1886, are seen reinhabiting the landscape, performing in the ruins. The band also provide the soundtrack, composed and conducted by Gareth Churcher; the haunting modern music was played by band members with long-established links to a local tradition.

In the gallery of the ancient farmstead Kestle Barton, Manon de Boer's newly-commissioned film *Bella, Maia and Nick (From nothing to something to something else, 2018)* (closed 8th July) again looks at how local traditions can cross generations. The title comes from the names of three young music students from Helston Community College, who De Boer invited to experiment with unscored sound and rhythm. They are notably unselfconscious as they discuss and test their ideas in Porthmeor Studios, St Ives, where generations of British artists have worked. With its impressive programme of moving

Exhibitions

image, sound and performance and range of spectacular sites, *Groundwork* breaks the hallowed ground of St Ives Modernism, and offers new possibilities for the making and exhibition of art in Cornwall.

¹ For a full programme and archive, see www.groundwork.art

**Christo and Jeanne-Claude:
Barrels and The Mastaba
1958–2018**

Serpentine Gallery, London
19th June–9th September

**Christo and Jeanne-Claude:
The London Mastaba**

Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park, London
18th June–23rd September

by **MARINA VAIZEY**

Christo, born on 13th June 1935 in Bulgaria, and his late wife, Jeanne-Claude (d. 2009), born in Morocco to a French military family on exactly the same day, evolved together a genuinely new concept in making art. It was novel both in the temporary public sculptures that they created and in the methodology of permissions and finances. As Christo has remarked, justly, ‘The story of each project is unique. Our projects have no precedent’. It is arguable that the modern emphasis on individuality and originality in art is both a relatively recent phenomenon and potentially misleading. But these notions are



28. Wall of oil barrels – The Iron Curtain, by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Rue Visconti, Paris, 1961–62. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Jean-Dominique Lajoux; exh. Serpentine Gallery, London).

29. Wrapped cans, by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. 1958. Cans, rope, lacquered canvas and paint. Group of seven cans, two wrapped. Wrapped cans: each 12.5 by 10.5 cm.; black cans: each 12 by 10 cm.; painted can: 12.5 by 10.5 cm. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Hugo Glendinning; exh. Serpentine Gallery, London).

essential to the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, albeit the physical realisation of their imaginative projects are huge, co-operative ventures involving hundreds, even thousands, of collaborators. As far as their respective roles can be perceived by an outsider, Christo, a trained and committed artist, visualised their projects through a variety of media such as prints, drawings and collages. Jeanne-Claude was a businesswoman and logistical wizard. Both were entrepreneurial, the projects were invented and evolved jointly, and the conceptual armament of their work was shared.

The couple evolved what might be termed a kind of altruistic capitalism. Using a capitalist framework, original art – prints, drawings, lithographs, small sculptures – effectively acts as units, almost as stocks and shares, which when sold provided the funding to realise further projects. Financed entirely by the artists, these large-scale projects were then made free to the public. Along the way thousands of people were employed to provide the raw materials or make readymades (such as barrels). The artists supported skilled workers, even revivifying factories. This is true of all the realised projects, for example the special cloth provided for *Running fence* in

northern California (1972–76) or the skills provided by the scaffolders from East Berlin for the *Wrapped Reichstag* (1971–1995).

Christo met Jeanne-Claude in Paris in 1958 when, having escaped across Europe from the totalitarian communist regime of his native Bulgaria, he was eking out a living as a gifted and persuasive portraitist. Then came the first wrappings – brown paper packages containing nothing or an unknown something – and a few structures made from tins and barrels, which were occasionally massed together to form the pair’s first ephemeral works, temporary barriers in public places. Their work has always been about both changing and underlining identities, enlarging both imagination and perception. After they moved permanently to America – or as they preferred to say, New York – in 1964 the scope of their ambitions and scale of their realised projects increased radically.

The bipartite London project is *sui generis*: the first large-scale examination of their longstanding engagement with prefabricated barrels and the largest mastaba to date (20 metres high, comprising 7,506 stacked barrels), made to float on the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park (Fig.30). Christo and Jeanne-Claude have always indicated that their art holds no political or social reference. Nevertheless, the word mastaba refers to a particular structure, a bench, often in front of domestic dwellings, found in ancient Macedonia (present day Iraq).

The accompanying exhibition in the Serpentine Gallery shows the artists’ continuing and persistent fascination with barrels and containers, second-hand and readily available, long before their projects involved specially fabricated materials. Some of the early wrappings, for example, were of cans and bottles (Fig.29), like wonderfully grubby objects by Jasper Johns, that evoke a kind of European acceptance of wear and tear so alien to America. They are stacked and piled in the gallery, and the photographs of the many ways in which Christo and Jeanne-Claude made ensembles of these humble materials are curiously affecting.