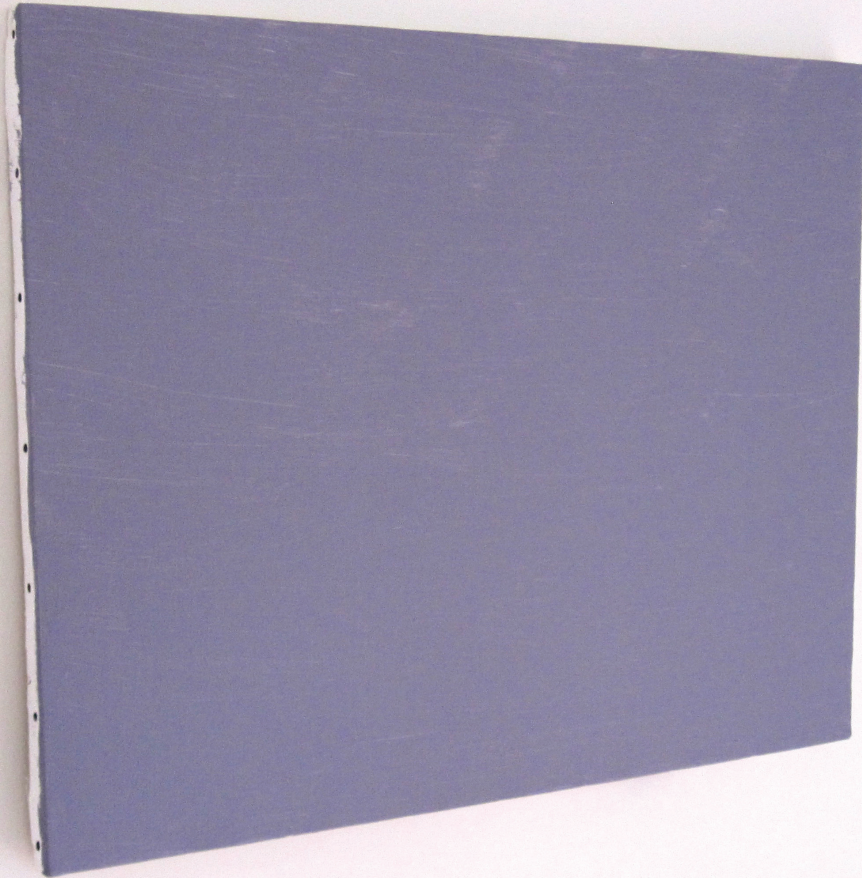




2020
Michael Windle is
in the house
all year
just like you



Average Painting

I thought I would test the capabilities of a new scanner a while back by scanning the whole catalogue of paintings in the National Gallery of Scotland. By the ecstasy of Photoshop™ and agony of Pantone™ I found an average size and colour. Average is also called mean, but I don't see it that way. Future projects are to include surface, presence and ennui.

Grey is associated with conformity, boredom and old age. Surely everything is in context. Grey is an intermediate colour between black and white. This is that in print...



< you can compare it with that one over there...


... or this one here >



Duncan's Painting 2020 24x24cm

"The images on the wall were tired, static, self-referential, each one a repository of forgotten insights, now incapable of arousing fresh interest"

Will Self - Grey Area

I made this painting for Duncan. It has the sea in it, and a canoe. He is a keen canoeist. He has always said he wanted one of my paintings. One evening we were in my studio drinking wine and listening to my selection of music. The painting was up on the wall with some others. He didn't mention it. It is rather a drab painting in dark greys and black. Perhaps he wasn't in the mood. Perhaps he  thought the canoe was a banana (my wife did).

Later on, as the wine  and music took hold, I switched on an electric light that changed colours slowly over time. Duncan was amazed at the effect the light was having on another one of the paintings pinned to the wall. This was a brightly coloured thing on crumpled paper. He was transfixed watching parts of it fade in and out, depending on the colour of the light. Duncan loves the big outdoors, mountains, sea, sleeping in a bivvy bag. He is very attuned to the experiential. More than me. I can ponder for hours a grey area.

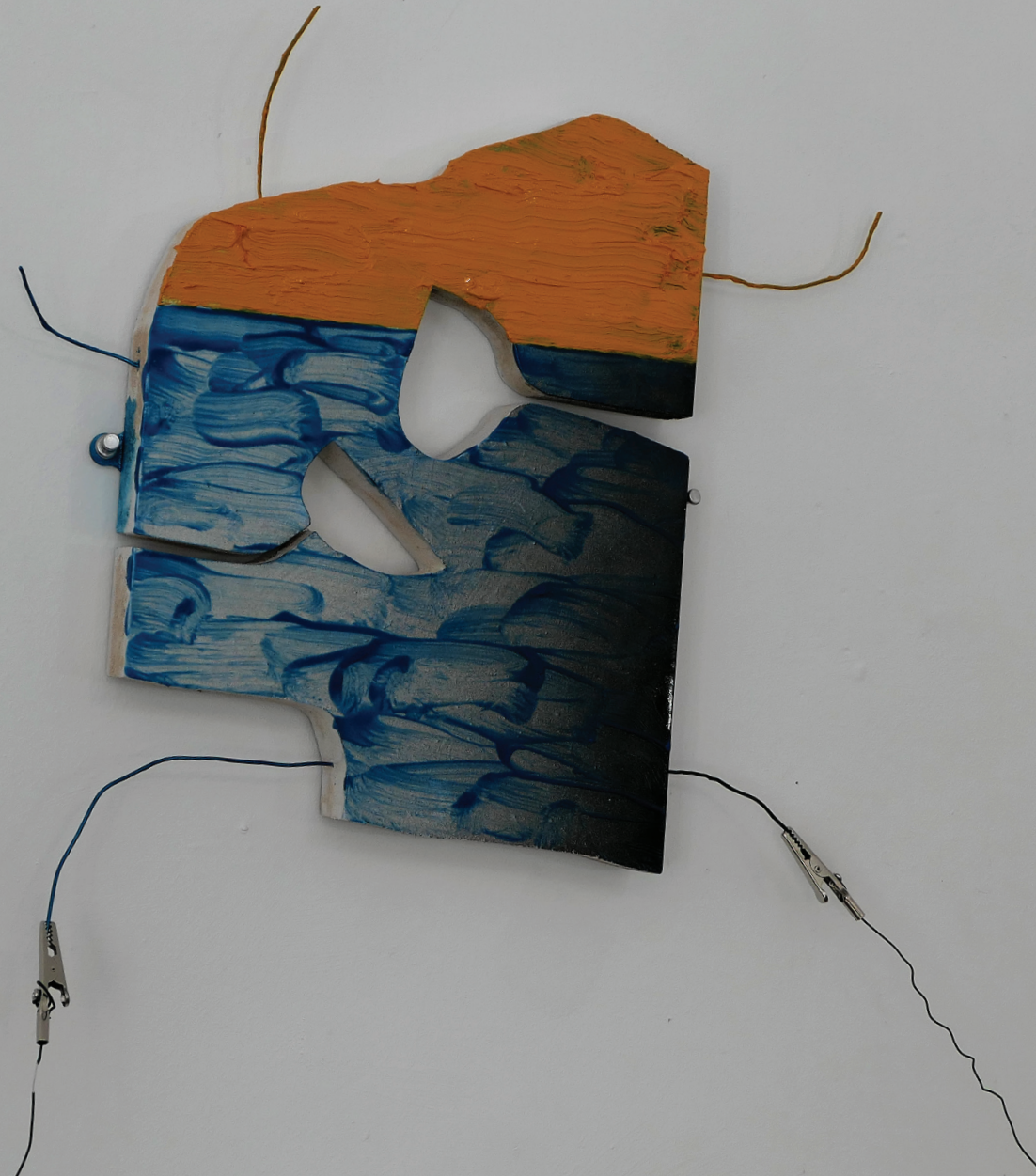


Alfred Wallis's Painting 2020 24x32cm

Alfred Wallis was the man. His early life was spent at sea between Penzance and Newfoundland, only taking up painting at the age of 67 'for company' after his wife died. He became something of a celebrity when the St Ives Group discovered him in the 1930s. His Wikipedia page suggests disappointment however that floating with such important company did not rub off on him. The work didn't evolve into something else. Alfred just kept on doing his thing.

My wife has started painting. She does this as relief from the current book she is writing, and she does that when she is not running Health All Round (a rather busy community health project in West Edinburgh). I suspect people like her paintings more than mine. Wait until they read my novel.

I read recently the Nike™ slogan 'Just do it' was inspired by Utah murderer Gary Gilmore who proclaimed this to his firing squad. God bless the folks that just do it, but maybe not all of them.



Mother's Painting 2003 40x27cm

This is from 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1' 1871 by James McNeill Whistler AKA 'Whistler's Mother'. It is in fact the painting on the wall behind her. I haven't seen the original so I had to guess dimensions from a photograph.

Coming home from town on the top deck of the 26 bus in the wintertime one can see into many living rooms. They all have these rectangles on the walls that I can't quite make out from the bus. I have not yet been moved to sneak into gardens to see who painted what.



That would create a similar problem to when as a student, in the spirit of research, I descended into a childhood haunt to photograph the space underneath my old primary school. It was an overcast Christmas holiday and my little automatic camera flashed every snap. The janitor next door wondered what was happening and chased me down the street. I ran, not in the mood for explanations, to him or myself.



Duncan's Painting II 2019 A4 paper crumpled

This is the painting I mentioned earlier that comes with a coloured light.

Duncan and I had been on an expedition to St Kilda in 2018. I was exploring the best way to paint mountains. I found crumpling the paper up to be the best way.



Our trip was for four days but bad weather closed in and we were eventually marooned for seven. It was exciting for us - we lived off mushrooms, pollock (caught easily from the pier) and managed to finish the crate of red wine we packed. We were the only ones in the camping area until the last day when a group of golfers on a tour of Scotland came for the night.

One of the group was from Liverpool, not such a natural sailor, and complained bitterly to us that he had been marooned on St Kilda for three hours.





Cardboard Box Painting 2020 40x22cm



Fair Marion 2020 24x36cm

Returning from St Kilda we stayed in my friend Anne's house on Islay. Her house is on the beach where we watched ferries all day long setting out and arriving from the Outer Hebrides. There is a famous story of doomed love from the island which goes like this..

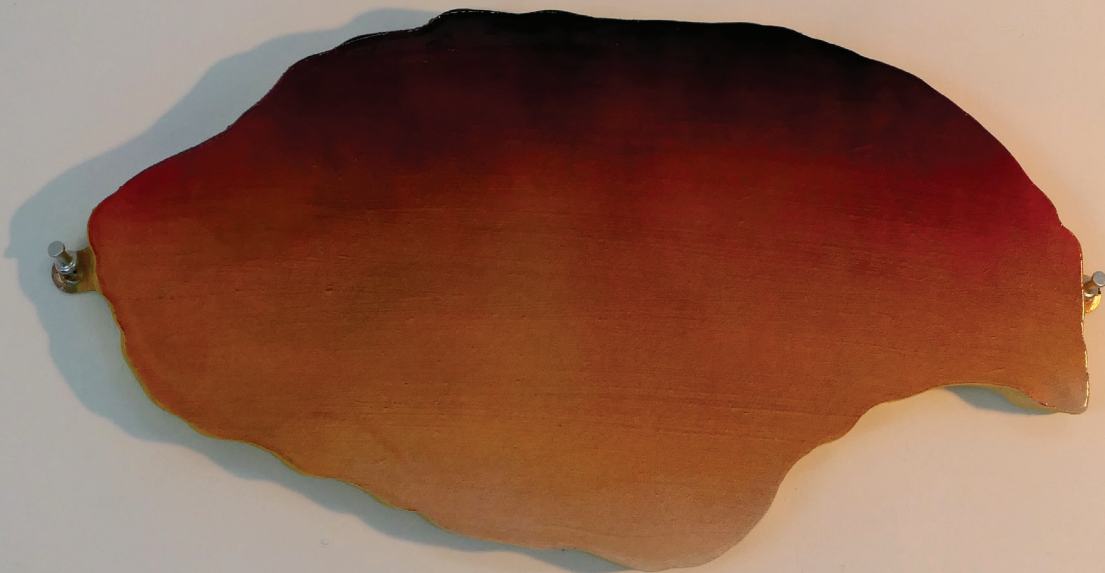
There was a wealthy laird of Islay who
1756. He became entranced by a certain
may have been Marion Gillies... or
to return next year to marry her.



visited St Kilda in
'Fair Marion' (who
Morrison) promising

He eventually arrived the following summer onboard a sizeable yacht bedecked with garlands and decorative cannons as was the style. This was not long after the Napoleonic Wars however, and the islanders took fright at the sight of a military looking vessel in Village Bay. They ran away and hid in the hills. The laird sailed home a batchelor, even.

My friend Anne has a fabulous singing voice. She has sung in the Mòd. I asked her to sing 'Òigear a Chùil Duinn' for me which is reputed to be a song composed by Marion describing the affair. She said she would. I'm still waiting.



John Martin's Painting 2014 41x22cm

This is of a bit of the sky in 'The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah' 1852 by John Martin. He made these enormous panoramic landscape paintings that toured the town halls of Britain and charged a penny entrance. Before cinema was invented, they were the Apocalypse Now! of the times.

I lived in Kirkcaldy in Fife for a while growing up.

Kirkcaldy has an amazing small but perfectly municipal art gallery, with a number of landscapes by William MacTaggart in it.

Occasionally there are small figures which look like afterthoughts in the image, and were

added for greater sale potential. The earlier Victorians like John Martin did this too. I think the small hokey people spoil the pictures.



formed energetic

probably

They could have come with Letraset™ figures to put in or leave out.

If Letraset had been around. My wife told me that Letraset always made things better.

And that reminds me of an Alan Bennett story (or was it David Hockney) whose auntie told him 'If we had some eggs we could have egg and chips, but we don't have any chips.'



Figure Painting 2004-19 40x43cm

NEVERTHELESS, somewhat of this subtlety shall I tell thee as me think.

Prove thou and do better, if thou better mayest. Do that in thee is,

to let be as thou wist not that they press so fast upon thee betwixt thee

and thy God. And try to look as it were over their shoulders, seeking

another thing: the which thing is God, enclosed in a cloud of unknowing.

And if thou do thus, I trow that within short time thou shalt be eased of

thy travail. I

conceived, it

God, to feel

such a desire is

eased. (Dionysius



trow that an this device be well and truly

is nought else but a longing desire unto

Him and see Him as it may be here: and

charity, and it obtaineth always to be

the Areopagite AD500)

And while we are talking of Dionysus/God of Chaos/Loss of Self/Doctor Who..

in 2016 I was in the Greek Peloponnese in the Temple of Zeus in Olympia.

It is in ruins now, however the guide told us the building originally

housed a 4 metre high Zeus standing in a shallow pool of olive oil, which

reflected slow rippled light and animated the stone. The effect was that

worshippers were visiting a living god. A few days later when exiting the

Acropolis Museum in Athens, I realised that there had been no suggestion

anywhere in the building that the gods did not exist. You can't argue with

stones, they carry more weight than clouds.



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