

Stephen Turner

Stephen was born in 1954 in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. He lives in Kent and has a studio in the former Royal Naval Dockyard, Chatham. Natural processes and materials, and a concern for the distinctiveness of different environments inspire his work. His interests in the flow of time and in cycles of change provide a reminder that in a modern, wasteful and polluted world it is more important than ever to have a dialogue with nature.

Acknowledgments

Stephen Turner would like to thank the many people who provided an opportunity to discover more about the fishing industry. These include Cliff Bloomfield, John and George Botterell, Jeff Caister, Pat Cicconi, Bill and Russell Drew, Julian Porter, John Priestley and Brian Stent. With special thanks to Ricky Goodsell and crew, for the trawling trips on his boat 'My Jane', Jimper Sutton for introducing him to fishing with keddle nets, and also to Dick Comport EHO for his time and many introductions.

For help in the creation of the artwork, the artist would like to thank Michaela White and Steve Mace.

Rye Art Gallery

Rye Art Gallery comprises two historic buildings, the Stormont Studio and the Easton Rooms, linked by a courtyard garden.

As well as hosting contemporary exhibitions the Stormont Studio holds a collection of 19th and 20th Century fine art. The artists represented in the collection are of regional and national importance and include painters Edward Burra and Paul Nash, both of whom

lived in Rye, Vanessa Bell, Gus Cummins RA, Jacob Epstein, Duncan Grant, Roger Hilton, Ivon Hitchens, LS Lowry, John Piper, Ceri Richards, Graham Sutherland and many more.

The Easton Rooms is recognised nationally for its exhibitions of work by high calibre artists and craftspeople. This gallery shows paintings, prints, photography, drawings, ceramics, jewellery, textiles, wood and metal work.



FISH

Stephen Turner

5 June – 15 August 2004



Stephen Turner's time spent with the Rye fishing community in September and October 2003 (coinciding with the Coastal Currents Festival) has resulted in an installation that reflects on the nature of local sea fishing. It is supported by an exhibition, selected by the artist, of photographs, paintings and artefacts drawn from the collections of the Towner Gallery, Eastbourne and Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, as well as the Rye Art Gallery Collection.

Rye Art Gallery

Stormont Studio

Ockman Lane

East Street

Rye

East Sussex

TN31 7JY

01797 222433/223218

Open Thursday to Sunday

10.30am – 1.00pm, 2.00 – 5.00pm

The Stormont Studio is staffed by volunteers,
please call in advance to confirm opening times.

www.ryeartgallery.co.uk

This installation is a shrine for the fish and a tribute to the generations of fishermen who have netted, keddled and trawled for a livelihood from the port of Rye. It was inspired by the long history of sea fishing that has been so important in Rye Bay for 1400 years since St Wilfrid introduced the activity to a famine afflicted Anglo-Saxon population in the seventh century. His miraculous draught of fishes saved the souls of the Sussex folk who presumably converted to the church in gratitude. By the sixteenth century, half the population of Rye were engaged in fishing.

Today, a few souls still enjoy riding the chevron waves that criss-cross the seventeen fathom depth of the bay, but a large catch of mature fish seems to get more infrequent every year.

Whilst the largest plaice ever caught in Rye Bay was landed as recently as 1994 and weighed 20lb 10oz, the average size of fish caught is much smaller now than it ever was. A local fisherman told me that, "For every 8 stone of fish caught five years ago, 5 might be a good size, 2 average and one small. Today it's the other way around."

The thousands of mackerel and herring caught on each tide by the many families keddling in 1904, compares with just a few score in the net of the sole keddler working in Rye Bay today.

Scientists tell us that many species appear to be in decline due to climate change and to over-fishing. If true, we face a meltdown in fish stocks and then, of course, in our communities of people.

The fertile currents around the Hole in the Sand, Shell's Bank, Hooks Hard and The Mud have produced a seemingly unending piscine bounty, but maybe we must now appreciate that there are no infinite resources in nature. Difficult debates and choices lay ahead to ensure we will always have fishermen in Rye and an abundance of fish in the sea.

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14 May 2004