



Clare Plug
Local Colour



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Local Gallery

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It is light – the mark and the artist, says

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Seeking the shadow

EXPLORING RELATIVE MEANING IN THE QUOTED WORDS BY CLARE PUGH

Does anybody ever leave
all the beauty and the passion
found in each shadow?

To encounter the works of Clare Pugh is to take a journey with her in her world, a world of unadorned beauty, calm and a heightened sense of place. These are images of an essence of place which invite us to dwell at their creation but ponder on their meaning. Clare draws light from the darkness producing works which explore her world and invite us to seek the answers in our own.

The first verse of this poem contains some of the questions I believe are asked by Clare's remarkable quiet. Framed as a question, the poem seeks knowledge, an understanding in personal engagement – what is found within these shadows?

But there is no question they draw us to them.

Beauty suggests some combination of qualities, form, proportion or colour which evokes pleasure, admiration, even to the point of being overwhelmed. The experience of beauty is by definition a ritual one,



Right: Quilt 7
1996, 1999/2000

one that delights the sight – while in certain positions, in its state of strong emotion. But we are talking about the shadow here, an obscuring of the light and of sight, a filtering or reflected image. If shadow is an element, so cannot 'light', yet light it does, leads us to it as it is bound to us, our shadow selves. There are quilts as art: an uncertain association which links the domestic and craft with the public world of the gallery as art.

Clare describes her work as quilts. It was in the process of quilting that she found her place, her voice. Her practice as an artist maintains this connection, a process which she describes as: '...filling the gaps' within herself. Then there are the elements of layering, texture and problem-solving which form the basis of quilting but can equally slip over into language and become compelling agents of communication. Communication is integral to the way Clare works. She describes textiles as having the ability to: '...carry words, emotions and ideas with great subtlety, often subliminally'.

Clare's early work explored the natural world, the flora and fauna of New Zealand which links her scientific self (she has an honours degree in Zoology) with her artistic self in her quilts. *People Dance*, *Search Man*, *Scallops*, *Flora Pacific '01* and *'02* were the first works of Clare's that came to Spilly in 2000. Here were works which reflected the environment in which Clare lives: the ocean, the beach as well as a connection with a land and its people. The quilts had the appearance of woven mats created by the machine-quilting of their surface and the use of oil slick on cotton, resulting in an iridescent sheen characteristic of the *Blue Shores*

Guandao) used in Maori weaving. There was unity of vision which linked art and science, a shared process which withstands repetition to arrive at a solution or work of art. Clae's most recent works simplify further, repeat, explore, discard, return and through transformation of traditional chemical artists at some extraordinary resolution.

Black is not often found in-paints, especially in such quantity. The Aztecs use black in combination with other colours. Black-reds, white in combination with these colours but rarely alone.

However, black brings Clae's works closer to contemporary art. Investigations of pure colour and line, the 'pure' black surfaces of painters like Edvard Munch and sculptor Tony Smith's black cubes. Here black is an absence, a black surface which face the eye towards. It is Post-Minimalism's engagement with the dematerialisation of the object; contemporary art is no longer concerned by form but occupied with its message and meaning. It is this performative nature of art and the structural properties of light which I believe have connections with Clae's work. Her work is as much about the nature of light as it is about its absence in the shadow. Gerhard Richter's *diptych, Passage (Cherrygold)* painted in 1971 draws the eye towards black through over-lightening shades of grey to white and back again. Then, to move beyond the art of the surface, there are James Turrell's *litres II* and Doug Wheeler's installations (*Environment Light*), darkened spaces, with light projected or framed by the fluorescent tube. These are simple forms (sometimes square), a characteristic, which like the grid,



Figure 1
after's response



Peter R. F. F.
Black Light

contemporary art now has in common with the processes of quilting.

Here black is evidence of presence not absence. The physical theory of light makes just this claim. Physics proposes that black surfaces absorb in all the coloured wavelengths of light, whereas white reflects, absorbing none of this visible spectrum. Thus to the eye, black is evidence of every colour, white of nothing. For artist Ralph Hotere, black is a 'primary pigment' and darkness '... persistently, a kind of illumination'.

Clare names Hotere as among her favourite artists and her work, *Peter R. F. F.*, is a tribute to his influence. It tributes that self-knowledge its origin in the quilt form and the personal link through their art.

Clare points out that black as a colour has a particular place in the psyche of New Zealanders and in the national culture. Black sits across the political, the personal and the everyday. In New Zealand art black is characteristic of the work of Ralph Hotere and Colin McCahon, two artists considered paramount in creating the modern movement there. When I visited Colin McCahon's exhibition of *Questions of Faith*, I was unprepared for the effect of seeing such monumental works, a number of which were hung unframed on the gallery walls – the edges of the canvases unbound, un-stretched – as evidence of their origin in cloth, then transformed by the artist into the deeply personal questions of belief. Black has also a recovering presence in Ralph Hotere's works, or 'black light' – a paradox – full of meanings. This is darkness which offers peace of mind, transfiguration, a glimpse of the void but without loss of the self.

For Glass there is emphasis on surface and the optical illusion with that necessary sense of depth. Oscillating between knowing and not-knowing, the quilt surface becomes a screen on which to reflect our thoughts. The structure is that of the traditional quilt—layered and stitched together by machines. Her quilts offer us the opportunity to re-constitute the quilt as art, to reconsider its connections with the home but shifting the focus just a fraction to one of ‘belonging’.

Australian writer of place, Mark Twainich calls this our ‘home place’ which forms and reforms who we are. To be a witness to this place demands both detachment and intimacy at the same time, we need to stand and look and listen carefully enough and the place will speak throughout, an imaginative reality. This is the place to which we belong and which makes our hearts sing. In Glass, the Harke’s Bay area is, and always has been, this ‘home place’.

Glass’s quality of vision indeed dips over into sound, accompanied as the stitching of her quilts are by a soundscape produced by her husband Aris. Even the titles of her works make reference to music (*Christina Rosemary*) and rhythm (*Riptide Boat*). It is as if there is some ancient and fundamental connection to the images of gypsies’ stories on the quilt surfaces, the change in tempo, the footstep, the rhythm of walking. Here is a lesson in the journey. I am thinking of Mark Twain, his clarity and incomprehensibly complexity—I see his writing variations by moonlight). Think of the way patterns form, breaks and reforms in the music of Philip Glass, and feel the rhythm of Glass’s work in progress. This is poetry, no story, no writing, no writing, no writing. The light reflected off water (What is it, ephemeral).



Wind

2012, 100 x 100 cm



Field of Stars
with a ribbon

brown in time. The light 'flashes' on the surface,
flashes to the zenith of the water on the sea above, by
the light of the moon. Thoughts drift, memories slide
in and out of consciousness as we walk by the shore of
an unknown land.

I think of black and white photographs. These drifting
images of which our past is created and which haunt us
in the present and the total range of greys which Clair
attempts to lose surface. To speak of Clair's quilts as
black is to overlook the variety and textual qualities she
produces during the discharge process. It is by no
means these that photography and Clair's quilts share
similarities in their process of becoming. Light (or
other radiation) acts on the surface of the film and
changes it, as the 'discharge' solution (a liquid 'light')
alters the structure of the fabric to produce an image.
Images perhaps of some distant landscape, which
Susan Sontag suggests: "...are instruments of evasion".
There are allusions to great distances -- in *Convergence*,
Flora's, *Slip* -- it is as if we are suspended above some
infinite landscape as if lost dreams. But Clair also
draws us into a reconsideration of the memory works like
Field and the *Flight* Bear series could be read as memo-
graphs and explain the underlying structure of place.

It is again and I am sitting in my darkened studio a
small desk light, the only illumination. The wind and
moon are shifting elsewhere against the book shelves
and a bookend outcalls across the valley. One of
Clair's quilts (*Flora's*) lies on my work table. Looking
up from my words, I catch sight of the quilt. The rows
of greywork stones -- their images captured within the
surface -- glow in the moonlight. I am seeing, full of

wander – as if for the first time. I cannot explain the luminosity of the surface and in that moment, I no longer have a need to understand it. It is an encounter which surprises in its unexpected, and not completely unknown nature. It is a gift of the areas of wonder. I have no need of possession or of explanation, only a wish to recall the essence of that moment.

Come walk with Clara. See the world through her eyes.
Take note of the beauty on the shadows.
Seek light in the darkness.

Jack E' Parker
Brisbane, Australia
December 2009

Allen, "Does anyone ever leave?" *July 2009 - Brighton*,
Shelton McElford (ed.) *McElford's Poetry Society*, 2011, p. 64

Publication *Stephen Perse Foundation Special*, *Art from beyond the Street*, Volume 8, *Contemporary Museum*, New York, March - May 2010

Ed Brown & W Brown, *John McElford: A Journey of Faith*, 2010

See *Woods with Light* (where *Black Light*), *The Edge*, 2010

From Beyond the Photography, *Stephen Perse*, 2010, p. 64

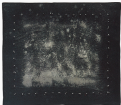
Mark Dickinson, *A Muse on Earth*, University of New South Wales Press, 2011, p. 67

Mark Dickinson, *Writing the Book*, Sydney University, 2011, p. 67

Frank T. Stone, *On, Where to Live*, Blackwell, 2010, p. 64



Black Shadow
1999 x 14 (print)



100
100 x 100 mm



100
100 x 100 mm



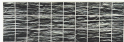
01p
cromo a giorno



01d
cromo a giorno



Alpha Book 2
cover in signature



Omega
cover in signature



Monument
1986, 1992

Clare Flag

EXHIBITIONS, 1986 - 92, 1992-2004

1986

Gold National '86, The Esley Barr, Illinois, (Ohio, USA).
Local Colour: Solo exhibition, in total - the month, Scotland, UK.

1987

Gold Plaque 1987, Grosvenor Museum of Art, San Diego, USA.
AFFORDANCE, The University Museum, Indiana, PA, USA & York.
Banks's Bay Series, Hastings, UK.

Contemporary Art Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, UK.

Exhibition and Gold: Blue Art Gallery, in Toronto, in 1987.

Flower International 1987, Pittsburgh, PA & Museum of Art & Design, NY, USA.

1988

The Blue Book, Wendy Art Gallery Sydney, Australia.

NY National Gold Symposium, Glencairn's Education Center, NY.

Banks's Bay Series, Banks's Bay Museum, Naples, UK.

Blue House, with Blue Book, Blue Pacific Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, UK.

Gold National '88, The Esley Barr, Illinois, (Ohio, USA).

Monument Art Awards, Exhibition Centre, Hastings, UK.

Survey Show: Solo exhibition, Glen Gallery, Naples, UK.

Public Selections Gallery, Astor Center, Auckland, UK.

1989

Banks's Bay Series, Exhibition Centre, Hastings, UK.

Goldstream, International International Exhibition, Pacific Gallery Sydney, Australia.

Myths & Myths, Solo exhibition, ICB Museum, Naples, UK.

Monument Art Awards, Exhibition Centre, Hastings, UK.

Contemporary Art Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, UK.

1990

Blue & Black, Solo exhibition, Greater Naples Gallery, UK.

Banks's Bay Series, Banks's Bay Museum, Naples, UK.

2000 International year, Columbia, Ohio, USA.

NY Gold Symposium in New Plymouth, UK.

Monument Art Awards, Weymouth, UK.

2000

Tanghera, with John Pigg, Art Spikes & Paintings, Creative/Napier Gallery, NZ.
Havel's Bay Museum, Exhibition Centre, Hastings, NZ.
Koranga Secondary Exhibition, Fairfield, Spixey, Australia.
Aurford Exhibition, Exhibition, Otago Exhibition, NZ.
Koranga Art Awards, Waikato, NZ.
Contemporary NZ Quilt Exhibition, Porirua, Hastings, Hamilton, Nelson, NZ.
Book All Round NZ International Exhibition, Dunedin, France, USA.

2001

Mount International 2001, Marlene Cox Award for Distinguished International Entry,
Contemporary NZ Quilt 2001 (Book Award), 2001, North Island.
All Quilt Symposium 2001, Innovative Quilt Quilt & Narrative Challenge, 2001, Edgely's Award,
Quilt National 2001, USA Quilt Councils Regional Recruitment Award for Surface Design,
Havel's Bay Series, Linda Stone-Elton Award 2001 & 2002, Mary Fyfe Brown Quilt
Awards 2001.

2002

Creative New Zealand, 2002, 20 exhibition catalogues, in conjunction with a exhibit - *Be-Work*,
Quilt/Book/Design Symposium, 2002 - 03, *Work - Body/Cross*, Columbus, Ohio.
Creative New Zealand, 2002, *Oneness/Body/Cross*.

BOOK PUBLICATIONS

Quilt Pattern 2002, exhibition catalogue
Surface Design Journal Spring 2002, Pgs - 22, 'Clear' Pigg, Marlene & B. Brown as a Host/
Mount International 2001, exhibition catalogue, April 2001.
Marlene Koppelski, *Left/Right/Up/Down*,
Marlene Koppelski, *Turntable/December 2001*, p 48 - 5, 'Quilt National 2001',
American Top magazine, August/September 2001, p 22 - 23, 'Quilt National 2001',
Quilt National 2001, Left/Right 2001.
New Zealand Quilt magazine, 7th 2001, p 1 - 10, *Be-Work/Quilt, Turntable/Fiber*,
Linda Stone-Elton magazine * 17 2001, p 2 - 23, 'Clear' Pigg - *Feathering Beyond my
Creative Edge*.

COLLECTIONS

Havel's Bay Museum, Napier
Private Collections in NZ, Australia, USA, The Netherlands.

EDUCATION

18 Creative Quilt Workshops, 1990-2001, Napier,
Dip Secondary Teaching, 1973
B Sc Fine/Design, 1974.





THE MARK • DE RUYT

CONDUCTOR: MARK DE RUYT

De Ruyt's Mark, the first of the Mark series, is a new work by American composer, Peter De Ruyt. For more information, please