

Seeing the World Differently

An ncas talk on 7 March 2024

by contemporary Norfolk artist Will Teather

“Art should offer us extraordinary spectacles; art should be alchemy; art should make us see the world differently; art should open conversations.”

Will Teather, Manifesto (excerpt)

Artist, magician, showman, musician. It’s hard to define an artist such a Will Teather, whose intriguing manifesto is a must-read for anyone interested in the creative process.



In a hugely entertaining, whistle stop tour of his career to date, Teather described his early days of art taught at Reepham School to the somewhat unstructured but formative years at Central St Martins and Chelsea College of Art & Design, after which he fully embraced his fascination for magical realism or “ontological ambiguity”, where it is not immediately obvious what is real or unreal.



Teather's inspiration is firmly anchored in Norfolk's tradition of carnival, performance and artistic illusion, and its ability to joyfully subvert authority. He combines this with traditional historical subjects and painting techniques, often using motifs from historical sources. Perspective is key and used as a narrative tool. He says "A lot of my work deals with the carnival-esque and a sense of the uncanny. It's about creating extraordinary visual spectacles through painting".

The resulting body of work is solely figurative - "I don't do landscapes" - where Teather uses models often from a performance art background, with whom he builds the pictorial narrative. Here, Paula Rego and Lucien Freud have been sources of inspiration.

His work is beautifully observed, vividly painted, often with quirky, flying, falling or flailing subjects conjuring slapstick circus. Tudor portraits, which Teather describes as "Tudor psychedelia" have been re-imagined using vibrant neon colours and modern symbols. By way of contrast, the technically mind-boggling and incredibly detailed series of 3D globe paintings, often placed in situ, push the boundaries of what painting can achieve. Teather observes "It's about the relationship between the 2D and 3D, and about creating something closer to the way we see". Teather's fractal series featuring Old Masters such as Caravaggio, distil and distort using psychedelic geometric patterns to create totally new pieces. "I've always enjoyed visual games with artworks, plays upon form, repetition and pattern that are very hard to write about. But they are easy to enjoy".

Teather has recently opened a studio gallery in the heart of Tombland which is open to the public each Saturday in March and by appointment after that.



For more information, visit www.willteather.com

ncas is grateful to The Norwich School for kindly hosting this event at their Blake Studio as part of the ncas talks programme.

Review by Danusia Wurm, ncas trustee