

Art Exhibition Preview

6.30pm

Yarrow Gallery, Oundle School

Ross Martin, painting

Rosalind Stoddart, sculpture

Opening times daily 2pm to 7pm

Ross Martin writes

'My hope is that my paintings create a feeling of spontaneity, though they have in fact been created very slowly, often as the result of weeks of work. I work directly from observation, often with some particular glow or radiance to provide my starting point. I aim for an illusion of space, which is the essential magic of painting.'

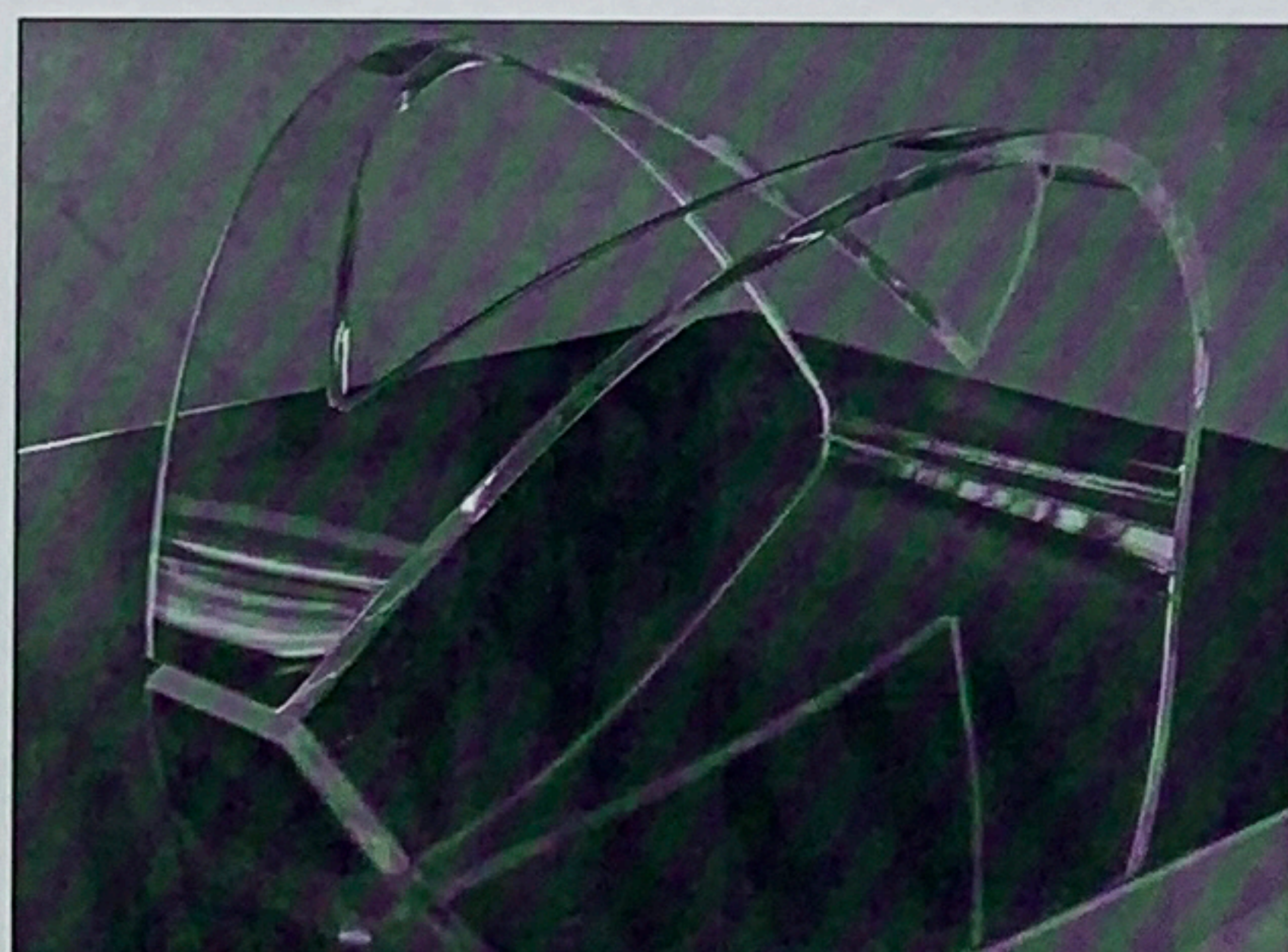
Rosalind Stoddart writes:

'My sculptures are made from acrylic sheet and electric light. Light is colour at its most direct, and this is what has drawn me to this medium. My present work is reduced to essentials, pared down to clarify ideals. The sculptures have a beauty, serenity and spirituality derived from abstract qualities of balance and shape, symmetry and asymmetry, rhythm and proportion. The shapes and the intensity of light change in their relationship to each other as one moves around the works, to observe a three dimensional rhythm of light patterns.'

There will also be a large selection of unframed works by other artists.

The exhibition has been curated by Fermynwoods Contemporary Art.

Wine and cheese for the Preview provided by Arcadia Organics



Mediva

Clare Norburn and

Ariane Prussner - singers

Ann Allen and Sarah Humphrys -

shawms and recorders

Rebecca Austen-Brown and

Viva Biancaluni Biffi - fiddle

Leah Stuttard - harp

Lester Bennett - percussion

8pm

Oundle School Great Hall

Fiesta!

Songs and dances from medieval Spain

Virgen madre gloriosa

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 340)

Instrumental - Por Nos, Virgen Madre, roga a Deus, teu Padre e Fill'e amigo

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 250)

Razon an os diabos de fogir

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 109)

Ondas do mar de Vigo

(Martin Codax)

Todes aqueste mund a loar deveria

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 413)

Mandad ei comigo

(Martin Codax)

Losset Gotxs recomptarem

(Llibre Vermell)

Mariam Matrem

(Llibre Vermell)

Santa Maria, Strella do dia

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 100)

Interval

Laudemus Virginem mater est

(Llibre Vermell)

O Vigo Spendens

(Llibre Vermell)

Vocal and instrumental versions

Imperayritz de la cuitat ioyosa

(Llibre Vermell)

Quen oas servos da Virgen de mal se traballa

Quenas sas figuras da Virgen partir

Como poden per sas culpas os omes seer contreitos

Quen a omagen da Virgen e de seu Fillo onrrar

(Cantigas de Santa Maria nos 95, 76, 166 and 353)

Instrumentals

Polorum Regina omnium nosta

(Llibre Vermell)

Mui Grandes Noit' e Dia

(Cantiga de Santa Maria no 57)

"At noon on Sunday 6th July the fiesta exploded"
(Ernest Hemingway Fiesta 1926)

The tranquil statue of the virgin, sumptuously dressed and serenely smiling, is carried through the streets of Elx in south east Spain, oblivious to the frenzied chaos surrounding her, the singing of hymns or deafening cracks of fireworks which burst into life as she passes..... A medieval mystery play is being re-enacted, full of Spanish flavour and verve, relatively unchanged in the 600 years of its existence.

Historical background to Fiesta!

During the Middle Ages a wealth of music was composed in the Iberian peninsula. The most famous collection of Spanish music to come down to us today is the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a collection of over 400 songs to Mary. Most of these tell bizarre and often scurrilous stories of people in dire predicaments who are saved by the Virgin Mary. Every tenth song is a 'Cantiga de Loor', a simple hymn of praise to the Virgin.

The *Cantigas* were compiled in the 13th century by Alfonso X, 'el Sabio' ('the wise'), who ruled Castile and Leon between 1221 and 1284. A man of great learning, Alfonso was a keen patron of the arts and sciences and was responsible for the compilation of a great number of poems, songs, stories and histories which have survived to this day.

The works are contained in four diversely presented illuminated manuscripts, each containing the same music, though interestingly the pictures of courtly life and musicians vary. The songs were all written in Galician-Portuguese, which may seem a strange choice, but Galicia was one of Alfonso's domains and was widely held to be the most suitable Iberian language for lyric poetry. The *Cantigas* belong to the tradition of monophonic song, which thrived during the Middle Ages. Every country in Europe had its own tradition but the most widely spread genre was troubadour song, originating in southern France. The troubadours had a distinct influence on the composition of the *Cantigas* as there were strong links between the courts of France and Spain; musicians would have travelled between the two countries as members of the royal entourage.

During the 13th century the cult of the Virgin Mary gripped medieval consciousness; millions of miracles occurring throughout Europe were attributed to the Virgin. This was due in part to the strength of the Inquisition at the time - a poet could prove his religious devotion by composing songs to the Virgin. There was already a tradition of troubadour songs to the Virgin. Gautier de Coincy (d. 1236) had produced a collection of poems and songs depicting miracles attributed to the Virgin Mary - *Les miracles de Notre Dame*. These were incredibly popular, and songs from the collection can be found in an amazing 84 different manuscripts.

Another source of songs to the Virgin Mary is the *Llibre Vermell* ('crimson book', named because of its 19th century binding of red velvet). This 14th century manuscript is a collection of instructions, prayers and songs for the pilgrims who made their way to the shrine of the Black Madonna at Montserrat, an impressive monastery located a few miles north of Barcelona and perched on the tip of a severe cliff face which rises unexpectedly out of the landscape.



The collection contains eleven songs, seven of which will be performed this evening, many with instructions such as: pilgrims sometimes wish to sing and dance while keeping their night vigil in the church of Our Lady of Montserrat and also during the day time on the square in front of the church. Only righteous and pious songs may be sung here ... they must be performed in a respectful and sober manner so as not to disturb those praying.

Martin Codax was another troubadour working in Galicia in the North West corner of Spain during the thirteenth century. A cycle of seven songs survives, all recounting tales of lovers separated by the sea. They are written in the same Galician-Portuguese as the *Cantigas*.

Mediva

Mediva is a vibrant ensemble drawn from the leading younger generation exponents of medieval music throughout Europe. In 2001 they made their international debut performing in a series of concerts in the Barcelona Early Music Festival, and in 2002 were guest artists in the Sommerkurs für Musik des Mittelalters at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Switzerland. Finalists in the EMN Young Artists Competition at the 2001 York Early Music Festival, they went on to have a busy schedule last year, with performances in several UK Festivals. They are frequent guests on Radio Four's *Loose Ends* and have been featured on Radio Three's *In Tune* and *Late Junction*. In November 2002 they made their Purcell Room debut.