

# Touchstone

02 April – 26 June 2010

contemporary art  
encounters  
archaeology



It has been said that each age reinvents Stonehenge in its own style.

The re-envisioning of Stonehenge by scientists and artists continually remakes this prehistoric landscape. Stonehenge is returned to us as a place contemporary and ancient, familiar and strange.

Helen Wickstead  
Director of Art+Archaeology

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This exhibition is kindly sponsored by the Caroline Humby-Teck Trust

Salisbury Museum would like to thank the Stonehenge Riverside Project and Wiltshire Heritage Museum for loaning artefacts for the exhibition. Those from the Stonehenge Riverside Project are still to be analysed and have never been seen by the public before.

Salisbury Museum would also like to acknowledge Salisbury International Arts Festival for their support of this exhibition



**Exhibition organised by Salisbury Museum in collaboration with Art+Archaeology**

SALISBURY & SOUTH WILTSHIRE



**Art +  
Archaeology**

#### Curator's Foreword

When Art+Archaeology invited a group of contemporary artists to creatively interpret the excavations of the Stonehenge Riverside Project, their immediate challenge arose from a brief based on archaeological experiences.

The artwork exhibited in Touchstone reveals a story of exploration and discovery, where the processes of excavation became a meeting point between artistic and archaeological practice. Within this overall structure, a preoccupation with issues of time features predominantly in both physical and conceptual terms across the two disciplines.

Each artist took up residence in a difference space. The location in which they worked and the archaeological excavations they encountered shaped the outcome of their art. Perhaps because the archaeologists were more concerned with what was under the landscape than what was on top of it, the artists followed suit. Their work presents a recognition of the way our cultural perceptions of time and place are rooted in our own experience and how a discovery can change the shape of the whole landscape. Some artists appear more than once as the journey progresses throughout the gallery space. This is a result of their own ongoing narrative with archaeology and is conducive to the story of the exhibition.

By the very nature of the brief, some of the work was developed and created in the midst of the action, like Julia Midgley's reportage drawings or The Collectiv's futuristic film. Some, like Janet Hodgson, have visually interrogated their on-site experience so that the archaeological process becomes redefined as a creative interplay between scientific approach and subjective interpretation.

Like Simon Gallery's painting or Rebecca Davies' sculpture, or even an archaeological dig, viewing the exhibition requires some effort on our part, which in turn will reveal treasures along the way.

**Kim Chittick, Salisbury Museum**

### Art+Archaeology at Stonehenge

In the past few years, archaeological excavations have taken place on an unprecedented scale at the prehistoric sites around Stonehenge. For archaeologists, opportunities like this come once in a lifetime, if at all.

A series of residencies were created for visual artists to work alongside archaeologists on the excavations, in research laboratories and inside Salisbury Museum.

*Touchstone* assembles the traces of this encounter, the latest manifestations of thousands of years of human creativity based within the Stonehenge landscape.

#### Artists and Archaeologists

At the site today archaeologists make technical drawings that help work out how different layers of material relate to different periods of time. In the Stonehenge landscape the artists investigated how drawing is linked to the modern compulsion to unearth and reconstruct. During the project, practices of both groups were brought together, compared and reworked, extending the boundaries of drawing practice. They researched the spectacle of the excavation and the methods of drawing and visualisation that archaeologists used to interpret the remains.

### Contemporary Stonehenge

Evidence provided by the new excavations reveals the iconic stone settings are only one component within a much larger group of structures.

The most recent discovery is a new stone circle, 'Bluestonehenge', which lies at the very end of the earthwork avenue linking Stonehenge to the River Avon. Excavation of a stone avenue connecting the giant henge called Durrington Walls with the Avon suggests that Stonehenge, Bluestonehenge and Durrington Walls are all linked within a massive monument complex.

New evidence shows that the mysterious Stonehenge Cursus, a colossal enclosure over a mile in length, is hundreds of years older than Stonehenge. It may be one of the most significant, as well as one of the most incomprehensible, interventions within this landscape.

For archaeologists the research process is not only a matter of retrieving evidence and assembling data. They must also try to understand why the history of 'making' at Stonehenge has taken such extraordinary forms. Working with artists enriches this process by providing fresh insight, often in unexpected ways.

#### Helen Wickstead, Director of Art+Archaeology

More details about Art+Archaeology and the Stonehenge Project can be found at: [www.artarchaeology.org](http://www.artarchaeology.org)

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The exhibition is designed to visually assemble the story of the artists' encounters with the excavations of the Stonehenge Riverside Project from 2007-9. As such it is intended as an exploratory process for the viewer, as it was for the artists. Archaeological processes, and a preoccupation with similar themes, became the vehicles for artistic expression. These themes interlink and overlap between sections, echoing the continuous narratives that inform our past, present and future.

*Touchstone* begins with a foray into the world of archaeological exploration, moves on to consider a response to the resulting discoveries and ends with how new evidence affects the history of Stonehenge as we know it.

The archaeological artefacts displayed alongside the artwork help to tell this story but are not listed in this booklet. Many of them have been loaned by the Stonehenge Riverside Project and have never been exhibited publicly before.



### **Discovering Archaeology**

As the artists encountered archaeologists in the field for the first time, they were challenged to creatively interpret the spectacle of the excavation and the methods of drawing and visualisation that archaeologists use to interpret their finds.

The work in this room represents an accumulation of methodologies used by the artists to explore their experience and how they reacted to what they discovered.

### **Julia Midgley**

*Trench 1 DW07*

Mixed media on graph paper, 2007

*Finds – Stonehenge*

Pencil, watercolour and acrylic ink, 2007

*Aubrey Hole '08*

Pencil & acrylic ink on graph paper, 2008

### **Rebecca Davies**

*Untitled*

Tracing paper, 2007

### **Janet Hodgson**

*My passage through a rather brief unity in time*

D.V., 16mm and 8mm film; 10 minutes, 2010



**Julia Midgley**

*Finds - Stonehenge*

Pencil, watercolour and acrylic ink on graph paper, 2009

Midgley describes herself as a fly on the wall observing and recording archaeological drawing and techniques but investing what she sees with an artist's eye. She became intrigued by the idea of the blurring of boundaries between archaeological and artist practices, and so archaeological materials and processes became vehicles of artistic creativity.



**Pil and Galia Kollektiv**

*Another proof of the Preceding Theory*

VHS transferred to DVD, 15 min, 2007

The Kollektivs explored the relationship between science, work and ritual during their residency. In doing so they interrogate our current approach to an ultimately unknowable prehistoric past. By deliberately working in a medium already degrading and relegated to history, the Kollektivs play on the visual disruption between image and meaning and our understanding of past, current and future exploratory processes.





**Janet Hodgson**

*My passage through a rather brief unity in time*  
D.V., 16mm and 8mm film; 10 minutes, 2010

On the Stonehenge excavations, Hodgson's interest lay in turning archaeological techniques into artistic reference points. At its core, the film Hodgson has made for this exhibition questions how we see and construct history according to our current understanding. She uses a diaristic format to collapse time upon itself, superimposing fact with fantasy so that the viewer faces a dilemma of constructed realities.



**Rebecca Davies**

*Untitled*  
Tracing paper, 2007

Davies' work is intrinsically linked to the materials and processes she uses to communicate her ideas. The material itself becomes an active component and a vital constraint upon the process of making her ideas tangible. She documented the time and space of one excavation by observing the archaeologists' instinctual reactions to their discoveries.

### Articulating Time

As an artist I regularly get asked, 'So what do you do?' and perhaps more candidly, 'Why do you do it?' I feel that artists practicing today need to justify this question more than ever. It is certainly something that drives me to challenge my own working methods and validate why I feel compelled to make work for others to reflect upon, or indeed, question.

When I was asked to join a group of over 250 archaeologists working on The Stonehenge Riverside Project, I too asked the questions, 'What do they do?' and 'Why me?' Most artists, myself included, tend to be in complete control of their own working process right up to the point of the final outcome being exhibited or shown to an audience. Before the final piece is finished I have the chance to collate, articulate, modify and often adapt and edit work privately before an inquiring audience analyses it. With plenty of interested archaeologists peering over my shoulder from the very beginning of this project, my comfortable and private working method was now fully exposed and quite rightly examined before I had the chance to even evaluate it myself. Although this was a little intimidating at first, it immediately allowed me to understand that archaeologists and artists both share a fundamental connection with process and materials.

With plenty of interested archaeologists peering over my shoulder from the very beginning of this project my comfortable and private working method was now fully exposed and quite rightly examined before I had the chance to even evaluate it myself.

During the excavation, I watched them sensitively remove layer after layer of what appeared to be just soil, then grit, then stone and with every layer a new drawing was completed to encapsulate that specific slice of history. I realised that this process was completely reliant upon their instinct, feel for materials and subjective interpretation of what they revealed. Whilst they were recording the history of the space, I was recording them. I built up a series of drawings that concentrated on the human activity within the space rather than recording the space itself. I translated human activity into visual diagrams, finding patterns and visual connections that would help me to explain how the archaeologist plays an active yet subjective part in revealing and remodelling historic spaces.

Like the archaeologists themselves, collecting my observations was only the first part of the overall process. I needed to find a way to recreate these layers of history. Three dimensional models and drawings allowed me to see their actions as spaces again. Finally, I translated these into a series of time-based etchings and a full-scale Perspex model. Taking my own work through a series of physical processes prevented me from completely controlling or predicting the final result. Time, materials and human involvement all fight for control, not so far from the archaeological examination of history.

Returning to the question: 'What do they do?' Now I can say, with great conviction, that if I can convey that same passion for discovering new perspectives that inform our understanding of past cultures, then I too will have done my job.

**Rebecca Davies**



### Traces of Time

Both artists and archaeologists share a preoccupation with time. They make visual forms that capture, suspend and collect moments of time - although their techniques and purposes may be very different.

In this section there is an overwhelming sense that human intervention constantly shapes the world around us. Archaeologists excavate and analyse historic time, physically embedded in the layers of a trench. The artists observed how our own actions and current attitudes shape our perceptions of history, and how this is reflected in the temporality of our surroundings.

The Stonehenge landscape becomes a place in a constant state of flux, where time is found beneath its surface but where history is made in the present.

**Leo Duff**

*West Amesbury, Circle trench*  
Paint on board, 2009

**Rebecca Davies**

*Stonehenge Observations Sketchbook*  
Paper and mixed drawing materials, 2007

*An Exploration of Time and Space*  
Etchings on paper, 2008

*Time and Space, Frozen*  
Ink on perspex within perspex box, 2008

**Simon Callery**

*Chromium Green Painting*  
Canvas, wood and distemper, 2010

**Brian Fay**

*Pillar Drawings Woodhenge 1927*  
Digital Projection and digital hand drawings on paper  
2007- 10

**Mark Anstee**

*Curse of the Cursus – poster no. 1*  
Shellac ink & graphite on gesso paper, 2009

*Troughs of the Cursus – 1*  
Conte and pastel on concrete, 2010

*Cursus Flag 1*  
Woven polyester-appliqued, 2010



**Leo Duff**

*Worn trowel (Cuckoo Stone)*  
Chalk, 2010

Duff examines the way human activity imprints itself on the surrounding landscape. Recent work evokes a sense of the layers of history and the human activity embedded within an archaeological site. This stems from her interest in ideas of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction within human society.



**Simon Callery**

*Chromium Green Painting*

Canvas, wood and distemper, 2010

Callery works outside the limits of traditional landscape painting. As he says: 'It has become clear to me that a visual engagement, representing landscape as image alone, limits what can be communicated.' His current work proposes painting as a multi-sensory, temporal and mobilised experience which involves the viewer in its revelation of the historic past.



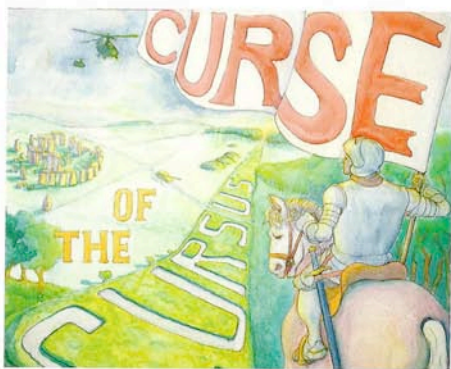
**Brian Fay**

*Light blue outer pillar – Woodhenge 1927*

Digital hand drawing, 2007

Fay explored the site of Woodhenge during his residency. He used different drawing technologies to record and mark time; the drawings themselves acting as records of the gradual deterioration of original artworks and cultural artefacts. They remind us that a piece invested with the time of its own making begins to fall apart from the moment it is made.





**Mark Anstee**

*Curse of the Cursus – poster no.1 (detail)*  
Shellac ink & graphite on gesso paper, 2009

After encountering the mysterious Greater Cursus in 2007, Anstee has devised an alternative history for the monument. This work is connected to the idea of monumentality, and the search for its meaning. By constructing and 'discovering' evidence, Anstee playfully interrogates the notion that archaeological truth can be a subjective experience.

### Alternative Realities

Art can redefine the ways in which we encounter archaeology. The engagement between art and archaeology at Stonehenge produced artworks that uncover alternative aspects of time, place and story.

Outside the immediacy of the landscape, the artists have pursued archaeology into different spaces. Within this section artists rediscover archaeology in the formalised settings of research lab and museum store. They also present visions of archaeology which generate strange new intersections between past and future.

As our perceptions and ways of seeing the world change, the dialogue between art and archaeology can offer us fresh insight into what the discoveries at Stonehenge could mean for future generations.



**Gail Wight**

*Kit*

Digital print on canvas, 2010

**Sian Bowen**

*Wrapped Stone Drawings*

Graphite on paper, 2009

**Leo Duff**

*Chalk Plaques*

Chalk, 2010

*Flint Trench*

Paint on board, 2009

**Pil and Galia Kollektiv**

*Another Proof of the Preceding Theory*

VHS transferred to DVD, 15 min, 2008

**Julia Midgley**

*Mike Allen Home Lab*

Pencil, watercolour and acrylic ink on graph paper, 2009

*Oxford 1 Accelerator Mass Spectrometer*

Mixed media, 2009

*Ellen's Desk*

Pencil and acrylic on grey paper, 2009

*DW04 Box and skull*

Watercolour and acrylic on dark brown paper, 2009

**Kit**

For many centuries, art has provided a metaphorical stage for our doubts, desires, and demons. In like manner, I construct biological allegories that tease out the impacts of life sciences on the living: human, animal, and other. Recently, my imagination has fixed on the topic of deep time. I find myself craving a better understanding of the unknowable past. What were the sounds and smells of the Mesozoic? What was it like to rock back and forth in a Cambrian sea? I look at the ground differently as I walk, feeling time receding miles below its surface. I try to imagine ancient shorelines in desert patches and swamps covering barren plateaus. It seems so relevant, speeding along a freeway constructed of pulverised river beds and seashells. I'm looking for prolonged chords, where the deep past resonates in the present.

Stonehenge is one of those chords. People assemble from around the globe, paying high fees to stand at its centre, eager to touch when the guards turn away. Many millions of photographs must have been taken by now, attempting to capture something of this mute spectre hovering alongside us. I'm mesmerised by the unreasonableness of it all, past and present.

An invitation to join Art+Archaeology for their sixth season with the Stonehenge Riverside Project offered me my first opportunity to spend time in this extraordinary place. I'm a creature of the present, and an accompanying invitation to burrow into the Salisbury Museum's Stonehenge archives suited me perfectly. Hundreds of bits of flint turned into sweeping

landscapes, maps of ocean voyages, and ice age snow fields beneath the lens of my microscope. I looked for cavities in mammoth molars and stared into the sockets of ancient locals. In the end, the tools were the thing that most captured my imagination. Like their larger counterparts in the local henges, they are physical embodiments of the human psyche. They convey intent, desire, a plan, a hunger. Unlike the henges, though, they're practical. They imply simple pleasures, as in dinner and footwear. Yet they come from the same mental musing that brought us the massively improbable henges.

Through the leaded windows of the museum, I could see Salisbury Cathedral with its stained glass reveries. Somehow these two fenestrations seemed analogous to the ancient stones - the tools that built Stonehenge, and the henge itself. One was essential and elegant in its purpose, the other a desperate yearning of impossible measures. This is where *Kit* emerged for me, as a hybrid of the profoundly utilitarian with the euphoria of impractical folly. There's nothing mundane, to me, in these tools. Each individual hand axe is an ode to our daily existence. Humble, but enough.

#### Gail Wight



#### Gail Wight

*Kit* (detail)

Digital print on canvas, 2010

Wight describes her current work as addressing the issue of scientific practice, contemporary biology and evolutionary theory. Recently this has led her to explore the topic of deep time and the ways in which the earth retains a record of past time but also modifies that record and by doing so structures our interpretation of history. *Kit* explores the junction between past and present human endeavour.



**Sian Bowen**

*Wrapped Stone Drawings (detail)*  
Graphite on paper, 2009

Bowen's drawings evoke a sense of touch and of history. She explores how the ephemeral can be expressed through the materiality of drawing and the drawing process and how history can be rediscovered through touch. In the museum's archaeology stores, she found a strange reality where she saw the flint tools as the antithesis of objects which by their very definition were meant to be touched and handled.

### Wrapped Stone Drawings

Before exploring the archaeology stores of the museum, I travelled to different sites of excavation across the Stonehenge landscape. I was struck by the polarity of soft and hard materials – white chalk against black flint – and how these had determined ways in which the sites had evolved. Stone hammered against stone, stone cut into the surfaces of chalk and clay, antler pick axes used to dig into the soft earth.

Entering the stores at the top of a steep flight of stairs and hidden from public view, was a special and intimate experience. Boxes upon boxes lined the shelves, all containing objects from numerous excavations of the sites surrounding Stonehenge. As I unwrapped flint tools (each individual in terms of their shape, colour and size), roughly cut spherical hammer stones and softly indented antler pick axes, it felt as though they were being rediscovered once again – echoing something of how the archaeologists must have felt when they first uncovered them.

My work in recent years has often explored notions of touch in relation to visual language. At times this has led to ambitious processes of production in which traditional techniques and new media methodologies are brought together. During this residency, I wanted to return to simple equations but, none the less, produce a series of drawings that were experimental in their making. All the objects that I chose from the stores were tools designed to touch and affect another surface in some way. The drawings followed suit – the paper was wrapped around or over the surface of each object that I had selected. It was then pushed, teased and moulded into the crevices and cracks of the stone tools.

Taking the imprint of the objects in this way felt highly relevant – without actually being able to see them (because they were hidden beneath the paper), I began to discover their forms and surface, purely through touch. The weight of the stone starkly contrasted with the lightness of the paper. This method of understanding form through a non-visual experience was then translated into a visual one at the final stage of making the drawing. The imprint of the object was dusted or burnished with graphite powder. At times the imprint was worked from the reverse side. Gradually an image appeared on the paper.

The objects that I selected were used tens of thousands of years ago, lay buried beneath the earth and finally were encased in tissue and cardboard boxes at the museum for safe keeping. Beautiful to handle, I feel privileged to have once again been able to use them as tools – not to dig into the earth or chip and grind stone but to create a series of drawings which attempt to rediscover and reinterpret the diverse nature of their physicality, function and form.

**Sian Bowen**

## Events and talks

### Free Familiarisation Session

Monday 12 April 2010, 10.00am – 12.00pm

Open to teachers, tutors, educators, group leaders and facilitators, this familiarisation session is aimed at supporting education and lifelong learning visits to the exhibition.

Session includes a tour and talk by the Exhibition Curator and an opportunity to share ideas with the museum's Learning Officer about ways of using the exhibition to inspire learners and themes that can be drawn from it.

### Exhibition talks

Arrange a visit to the exhibition with the Exhibition Curator. Available for schools and groups. Normal admission charges apply, group discounts available on request.

### The Big Play

Tuesday 1 June 2010, 12.00pm – 5.00pm

In partnership with Salisbury International Arts Festival

Join the museum at the Greencroft and help us create an outdoor art exhibition inspired by *Touchstone* and the museum's collection of Stone Age tools.

### Gallery Spotlight Tours plus drink and a cake

Every Wednesday in June, 12.30pm – 1.15pm

£7, booking advised, group discounts available.

Includes drink and cake at the Kings House Café.

## Acknowledgements

### Photographic acknowledgments

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### Exhibition organised by Salisbury museum in collaboration with Art+Archaeology

Exhibition Curator: Kim Chittick



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Personally the similarities between the journey of the archaeologist and that of the artist were enlightening, starting out with an idea of an end result, but no certainty of what the end result would really become. Negative and positive became themes in my drawings, working parallel to the archaeologists who discover more by removing more, and find information in the resulting 'empty' space. Two and three dimensions become blurred, and you revisit what you think is wrong (or right) frequently to keep on seeking new information and new ways of describing the 'theory' on the path to proving it; these and other systems of working were remarkably similar.

*Leo Duff*

*Co-coordinator of Art+Archaeology*

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