

Prudence Maltby writes about the concluding *Cicatrix* events at the end of its touring.

Swindon and Montreal: These final exhibitions have been an opportunity to further expand the *Cicatrix* project, successfully reflecting the Commonwealth collaboration between the six artists on Salisbury Plain, honouring their compatriots who trained in this landscape to fight in WW1.



Cicatrix at Swindon Museum & Art Gallery 2018

photo Martin Urmson

For Montreal we each created a print version of the project for Montreal, *Cicatrix Imprimé*; showing the work of all artists from four Commonwealth countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Britain.

With none of us regularly working in print, we had been encouraged to think laterally of the discipline and produce work that stretched our capabilities and allowed us a 'voice' in their world to share the concept for our project.



BURNETT *Forget-me-not* **CAPE** *Warrior spectres of gigantic bones wheel on feiry steeds* **FARISH** *Sacred and Profane*



FRANCIS Road to Porton MALTBY Beneath the Seven Sisters WILLIAMS Call and Response - Poem

The Montreal opportunity came about as a result of Henny Burnett's Canadian visit in 2016 funded by a-n Travel Bursary when she met with print maker, Catherine Farish; the artists' choice to collaborate with them on the project.

Henny writes: *The Montreal exhibition provided a fitting conclusion to our four-year journey with Cicatrix, exhibiting all six artists in a Commonwealth country was an objective identified in 2014. All of this has made it an extremely beneficial and productive time, which has been shared already with artists on returning to the UK. In this sense an opportunity like this not only benefits us while we were exhibiting there but the contacts and potential collaborations have further possibilities back in the UK. Through this exhibition new international links and friendships have been made between artists from not just Britain but New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Tunisia, Korea, France, Germany, Argentina and Canada. A truly international experience for all involved.*



left: attending the residency at Atelier Circulaire, Montreal Top right: Susan Francis, Prudence Maltby, Caro Williams, Henny Burnett in downtown Montreal



left: Henny Burnett talking about her installation
photos: Atelier Circulaire

right: viewing Sophie Cape's print through Caro Williams's installation

Supported by AIDF (Artists International Development Fund, Arts Council England and British Council) Henny Burnett, Susan Francis, Caro Williams and I spent a week in Montreal at the invitation of the Atelier director Larry Silberman. Missing from the group was Sophie Cape (Australia), however representing her involvement was her large print which brought about a real presence with its reference to Australian troops. With Catherine Farish - we established links with other artists, creative practitioners and organisations in Montreal, presenting talks and conducting tours of our collaborative exhibition at the Atelier Circulaire Gallery, strategically staged to coincide with Armistice Day in Canada.

Catherine wrote: I joined the Cicatrix project as their Canadian representative in 2016. I feel a deep appreciation and thankfulness to all concerned for having had the privilege of being part of this collaboration which included, amongst many wonderful opportunities, a residency in Salisbury, an exhibition at the Salisbury International Art Festival, another at the Swindon Museum and finally an exhibition here in Quebec at Atelier Circulaire. These experiences both informed and nourished my artistic practice from so many perspectives, from meeting and exchanging with the other artists and Canadian and Quebec dignitaries in England and in Canada to visiting galleries, artist's studios, printmaking centres and museums in London, the Salisbury area and Bristol. In return, here in Quebec I was able to host the international artists, to share our collaboration in a printmaking exhibition to the Quebec public. These international exchanges are an invaluable experience for any artist. This collaboration was particularly meaningful because of the seriousness of the subject matter and the dedication of the people involved to present something of significance and value.

With our final UK tour concluding at Swindon Museum & Art Gallery in the lead up to travelling to Canada, we worked together with Curator Sophie Cummings to install the exhibition presented as the only time when all artists were represented in England. Cicatrix at Swindon was supported by the High Commissions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand and Quebec, London.

Present at the launch were representatives from the Commonwealth embassies and Quebec, London. Five out of the six collaborating artists attended the launch.

During its installation at SM&AG, there were 3,676 visitors to the exhibition, with free lunchtime talks and 9 large tour groups, including the Welsh Contemporary Art Society, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Art Fund Wiltshire.



Cicatrix at Swindon showing pieces, as selected by the six artists from the Swindon Collection of Modern British Art on the left
Photo: Martin Urmson

Here are some words from Swindon Museum & Art Gallery from Curator Sophie Cummings MA AMA, as it appeared in the Cicatrix catalogue:

...Cicatrix offers a unique and profound perspective on that period of time. The art on display here is reflective, personal and acute. A theme that runs through all six artists' work is their reflection on the landscape and history of Wiltshire. Wiltshire has a strong association with the military, particularly on Salisbury Plain. In Swindon, Wiltshire's military experience can be harder to read on the local landscape, and yet we too share in the county's long and complex history. Swindon is a town that has changed radically since the 1910s and our connection to countryside or to nature is more complicated. The town may wear its scars differently, but this exhibition has much to say about our modern concerns with surveillance, the human impact on the landscape, and shared memory.

To accompany the exhibition, the six artists have spent time considering the Swindon Collection of Modern British Art and have each selected works of art that offer a particular resonance with their interests and practice. While Swindon is known for its collection of modern art, it is through working with contemporary artists that we develop new perspectives on this art. Here, artists have discovered levels of subtlety and poignancy in their chosen works, helping us all see it in a new light. For instance, the selection of landscapes by Graham Sutherland and John Piper encourages us to reappraise these beautiful works through the ideas of humans scarring or remaking the landscape. Contemporary works by Steven Pippin and Susan Gunn encourage us to consider the textures and surfaces of work. Paintings by Alex Hanna and Lisa Milroy are connected to ideas of selection and collection.

It has been a privilege to work with the artists involved, especially in seeing the final exhibition develop and helping the artists explore Swindon's own art collection. The finished exhibition transforms Swindon's gallery space with contemporary drawing, painting, printmaking, film and installation. It brings together artists from the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. It re-evaluates Swindon's own collection. It shares six unique viewpoints on the legacy of scars and scarring. We hope visitors will find the

exhibition profound and insightful, and that they leave with a new curiosity to explore the history and landscape of this county. We hope, too, that they enjoy seeing the work of these six talented contemporary artists here in Swindon.

I would just like to say that submitting this blog marks a full circle. Wiltshire Council supported us at the beginning of Cicatrix, so it's fitting at the project's end - to say thank you to the council, for all the backing over the four years and SM&AG.



Martin Urmson's photographs from the exhibition

As the founders of Cicatrix we have recently been invited to speak at the *Landscape Legacies* festival to be held in May as part of the *Shared Heritage* event in Northern Ireland. (Cleenish Island and Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh). Led by researchers of the *Living Legacies 1914-1918* we will give a presentation about our own 4 year project.

www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk

Prudence Maltby Salisbury 2019