

Cicatrix review by Fiona Robinson RWA

We are nearly at the end of 2014 and have four years to go to 2018 and so three years to continue to memorialize the Great War. There have been a lot of different attempts already to jump on the bandwagon with all the potential for hastily thrown together superficial shows. Cicatrix is not in that category. It is thoughtful, poignant and respectful.

Henny Burnett has constructed *100 Wiltshire Towers* filling the recesses of each one with tiny objects, some as found, others fabricated, altered and displayed alongside small cast figures based on the 'Fums-Up' good luck charms which were given to soldiers by their sweethearts before they set off for the Front. All these tiny sculptures contain an element gathered on Salisbury Plain. The miniscule figures are topped with Juniper berry heads, a plant that grows on the Plain and which is reputed to have a life of a hundred years. This is a touching installation and in a curious and engaging twist visitors are invited to exchange one of the figures with something they have made, a reminder of impermanence, of the charms lost by their lost owners. The scale of the towers and the scale of the figures, so small and insignificant are in gross contrast to the enormity of what happened and the huge forces of power which resulted in so many bodies being blown into smithereens, into tiny pieces and discarded on French soil. It is not difficult to be struck by the sadness of the appalling waste that WW1 was responsible for, but Burnett's *Salisbury Plain Mess Tins* are also heartbreakingly evocative. Collections of objects contained in Kilner jars together with stitched fragments of cloth maps of the area on Salisbury Plain where each object was found. All this could just as easily have been gathered from Flanders Fields, transferring the location to an English Plain associated with the Military, brings it closer to home.

Prudence Maltby

The fragility hinted at in Burnett's sculpture is present in Prudence Maltby's installation of small drawings, paper, scarred and marked, lines pushed and pulled across surfaces, fragile objects in need of protection. Raw pigment and overlaid mark making building layers, a sense of scar tissue healing but always leaving the evidence of the original damage beneath the layers.

Susan Francis' approach is different, using installation and a video which sees all of this through a lens. The lens is that of a camera but inevitably it parallels the barrier of time, the disconnection caused by the placing of glass between an object viewed and the viewer. 21st century perceptions of what happened in 1914 are seen through the wrong end of the telescope of time. Memories are ring-fenced by time, there is no one left now to reminisce, to mull over events, to weave new memories. What we know is now stagnated and set within an enclosure which holds within it, beyond reach, the lost voices of first hand experience. What we have here is a terrible beauty, residues which suggest an almost Baudelairean sense of evil through beauty, reference *Les Fleurs du Mal*.