

WED 28 NOV 07**ATTENDING (in addition to David Dye)**

Janet Marsh, Michelle Hobby, Paul Dixon, Maiko Kobayashi, Yvonne Boyle, Geoff Crannage

The first part of the crit took place in DD's office, where I used a brief PP to explain and describe the context to my studio practice, which is a barn attached to my house. I also presented my digital and browser-based work. From there we went to JM's studio space, where I presented and explained the rest of the work I had done over the course to this point. I hoped to describe how the different aspects of my work are linked through some motifs that I regard as being universal. These I have observed from the natural world, and evolved and 'refined' their use over many years. However, the motifs and links were not at all as obvious as I thought, and I was surprised that attendees did not recognise them in my representational work. The attendees were all extremely supportive and seemed determined to participate in a positive way. However, the general theme of the critique developed around the seemingly diverse nature of the pieces, which was totally unexpected by me, and so I found it difficult to respond. Although I wanted to be challenged by my peers, the critique did not really address some of the deeper issues that I thought were present in the pieces of work. This could have been due to my very clumsy presentation, and compounded by the use of two different spaces and unfamiliar equipment.

Comments and discussion points

Attendees saw connections to the work of other artists; they seemed particularly drawn to the 'style sheets' and saw references to ritual, myths and folklore in the etchings and monoprints. PD saw references to urban graffiti. I said that I wanted to create imagery that was accessible to the widest audience spectrum, and considered to be 'cool', as a way of moving the popular aesthetic away from commodified culture. The discussion continued by exploring other ways that the imagery could be used – for example, as tattoos – and YB gifted me the idea of painting with henna.

A discussion developed around an assertion by me that I did not regard myself as a landscape painter. I try to move beyond a topographical portrayal, to demonstrate a situation; therefore I call these pieces 'situscapes'. They are situations, habitations and habitats, comprising changes in weather, seasons and land-use. DD seemed not to be convinced about this. He thought one piece bordered on the kitsch, in the way I had chosen to depict various aspects. He wondered if I was being deliberately ironical, and was surprised when I denied that. He later went on to suggest, with the support of others, that I should abandon the pursuit of fusing the 'situscapes' with the motifs over the course of the MA, since there was a danger that the work would seem confused and disjointed.

JM said that she recognised some of the motif shapes from a TV programme about wind erosion in the Grand Canyon. GC was reminded of the green man and the wicker man. DD linked a drawing to sedimentary rock formation. MH saw how many of the pieces were depicting both space and time.

DD introduced the term 'folk art', and wondered if I had an interest in that. I said that I did, but in a contemporary context. This started a discussion about the relevance of folk art, and the dangers of it being associated with nostalgia, racism and extreme nationalism. He also suggested reading material.

Conclusions

As a result of the crit, I have resolved to:

- Experiment with a more obvious use of the motifs in the situscapes, but to be prepared to abandon this line for the MA if they continue to confuse.
- Explore further the motifs' connections with vernacular and folk art from different cultures, and to revisit the Thomas Hardy novel, *Jude the Obscure*.
- Continue with ideas of developing the barn as a 'wonderbase'.

I offer my sincerest thanks for the generous support of DD and my fellow students in helping to create such a motivational and intensive learning experience.