

Documenting the past



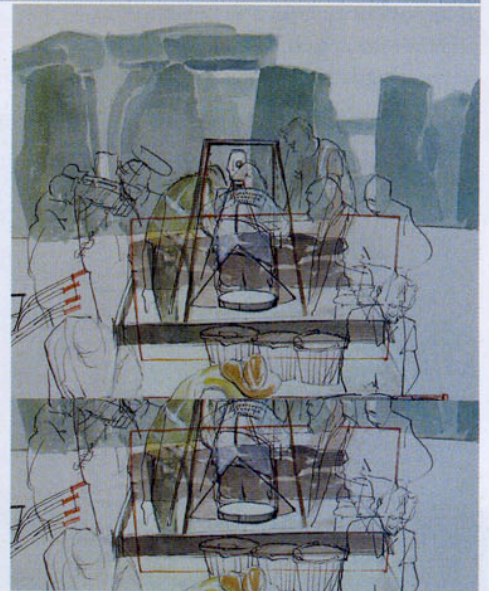
WORDS BY
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Above and right: Stonehenge artwork by Cheshire artist Julia Midgley

Left: Mark Rothko: Red on Maroon 1959. Tate © 1998 by Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

Bottom: Francis Bacon: Triptych - In Memory of George Dyer 1971. Fondation Beyeler, Basel © Estate of Francis Bacon. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2008. Photo: Peter Schibli, Basel



thought you might enjoy reading about something a little different this month. 'The Stonehenge Riverside Project', which has been co-ordinated by Helen Wickstead and funded by the Caroline Humby-Teck Trust, is the biggest ever archaeological investigation of the Stonehenge landscape.

The project brought together a group of artists from various British universities, all of whom explore archaeological themes in their work. Mark Anstee, Rebecca Davies, Leo Duff, Brian Fay, Janet Hodgson and Julia Midgley went to Stonehenge to witness this extraordinary excavation and were asked to research and respond to archaeological processes and practices, including archaeological methods of drawing and visualisation.

One of the selected artists, Julia Midgley, lives in Cheshire and before working on the Stonehenge project she had, among her many documentary projects, been Artist in Residence to the excavation of Chester's Roman Amphitheatre in 2005.

Drawings of the Stonehenge project are on

exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester until December 23 2008, and more of Julia's drawings of the excavation can be seen at The Brindley in Runcorn whose Drawing Exhibition continues until mid-November. Both exhibitions are worth a trip for anyone interested in history and documentary drawing.

Moving further afield to London, two great exhibitions that are strongly recommended are currently showing at the Tate galleries. Tate Modern is showing an exhibition of paintings by Mark Rothko. It is the first major exhibition of this artist's work for more than 20 years and has been brought together from various parts of the world, so has to be worth a visit.

It is wonderful to see The Seagram Murals which were originally commissioned for The Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York. Rothko's distinct style is easily recognisable in the numerous books that contain reproductions of his work but those images have nothing like the impact of the original paintings that appear simple in the extreme while at the same time, possess a

complexity and depth of colour that is quite extraordinary. The exhibition runs until February 1st 2009 and booking is advisable.

Tate Britain is showing an amazing retrospective exhibition of the work of Francis Bacon. As with the Rothko exhibition, this is the first major retrospective exhibition of Bacon's work for more than 20 years. Recognised as one of the greatest painters of the 20th century, I have to admit that I find his work difficult to digest. His own turbulent life is echoed in these very disturbing paintings that spew out raw emotion and the unpleasantness of life.

Bacon produced a series of triptychs during the late 1960's and 70's and one of the most haunting is a triptych in memory of George Dyer, his lover who committed suicide the night before the opening of a major retrospective exhibition of Bacon's work in Paris. This exhibition does not give the 'feel good factor', on the contrary, it can play havoc with your mind. Showing until January 4th 2009, booking is advisable.

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