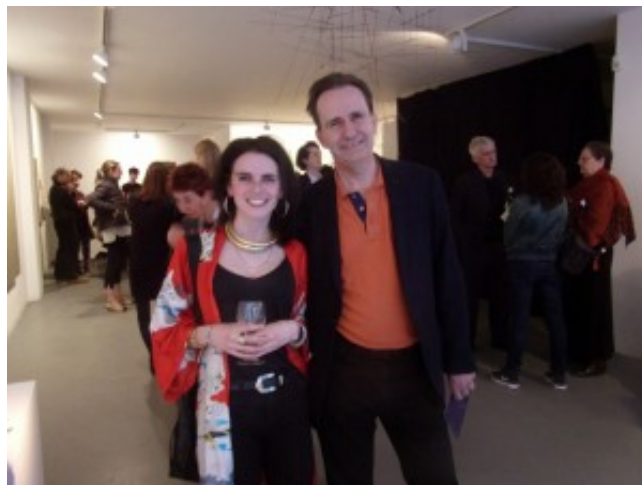


📍 The Artist's Statement



THE DOUBLE LIFE OF PAUL CAREY-KENT

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Paul Carey-Kent with Liv Fontain

Paul Carey-Kent has more available space in his mind than the average human being. One would venture to say, given what he manages to pack into one day, that Paul Carey and Paul Kent are two brains that share the same body. Paul Carey is a philosopher, writer (Art Monthly, Photomonitor,

artcritical, Border Crossings), a weekly column at www.fadwebsite.com, blogger (<http://paulsartworld.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/top-ten-up-now.html>), poet (see below), curator and art lover who sees up to 80 shows and exhibitions a month. Paul Kent is a financial director in the public sector, who operates with the kind of attention to detail that is life changing: with one clause he added to a contract for the Hampshire County Council he saved them £25million. Unbelievably, he also commutes from Southampton and characteristically turned that time into an opportunity and created another blog: <http://paulsartworld.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11/art-stuff-on-train-71-80.html>

At this pace, although he has only been a curator for 20 months he already has 6 shows and four catalogues under his Carey hat. His most recent show at Maddox Arts *Weight for the Showing*, which he pulled together in under five weeks including the most beautiful title essay I have ever read, is my stand out show of the month. A thoughtful but provocative offering, the show is at once very balanced and periodically completely out of kilter – to great effect.

I met with this maverick of the art world ahead of the private view at White Rainbow to find out as much as I could about the Carey-Kent phenomena. Unsurprisingly with this double aspect to his life, when curating for a show his process of selection is based on a number of often competing but not mutually exclusive criteria – because he believes that having them all is, at least in theory, possible.

“I have a background in philosophy, so firstly I want to provoke thought, but at the same time I quite like to provoke a reaction. So I want both to be present, in varying degrees, in each work. I like art that gives you an aesthetic or physical – instinctual – response as well as having an intellectual aspect to it. I can be interested in something but I am not likely to want to put it in the show.

The mix can vary – little idea and lots of aesthetic impact or the other way round.”

So are you trying to find artists’ work that illustrates your initial premise?

“I don’t like heavy-handed curation where you feel the work is illustrating the curatorial thesis. I want to have work that is interesting in its own right which might be playing to various agendas, and loosely group them together in a way which you can tell a tale around but without looking to close it off that way. I am saying here is some interesting art and here is one way of looking at it, but there are other ways.”

Are you setting the scene or creating an experiment?

“I like the way a show develops chance elements and dynamic of its own, and as it turns out this has happened with all of my shows like the first one at a food factory in Kings Cross with all those uncontrollable elements. Then with the second one there were 14 artists in it and it turned out that lots of the pieces were made out of wood or referenced woodland animals in some way, the

theme was about time but then the space looked like a woodland. So my co-curator, Christina Niederberger and I slightly emphasized that.”

How much do you leave to chance?

“I begin with a long list of artists I would like to consider, and once I have a group together who agree I write the catalogue essay which is brief introduction and then something to orientate the viewer with each work. I am fairly relaxed about the details of the installation, and said to the artists in my painting show *Into and Out of Abstraction* ‘you meet at the space and decide where you want to hang the work.’”

With your most recent show at Maddox Arts – so perfect in its selection – you introduced an element of chaos that could have thrown everything off balance with Liv Fontaine’s performance.

What was your intention there?

“Two things I suppose. It was risky and I was not sure how it would work out – but I don’t mind taking a risk. There was a potential link with the weight of art history and weight of the plinth and how that fitted into the theme of the show. She is a relatively unknown artist, so it could have been perceived over-sexually – with a known artist it becomes more natural that everyone was going to look it in the right way.”

It was hard and very uncomfortable to watch – how do you feel it fit with the rest of the show?

“She said herself ‘I need to suffer for this to work’ which is very much a part of the tradition of performance art. Indeed she did have scratches and bruises all over her afterwards... I don’t think there is a sense that there is any medium artists *should* be operating in. I like having unusual elements like sound or smell for example.”

How does an artist like that live?

“There are three editions of the video though they are likely only interesting to institutions. She has a day job as a receptionist at the Southampton University but also runs the Ha Ha (<http://hahagallerysouthampton.tumblr.com/>) Gallery in Southampton with Jen Harris. They are both recent Chelsea graduates and they are very go ahead and dynamic.”

Who are were you most excited about getting into the show?

“All of the artists in the show were exciting to me – it was great to get some established artists like Richard Serra, whose fame rests on his mighty sculptural explorations of weight and space, and Phyllida Barlow (recently at the Tate Britain) who makes work that typically looks a lot heavier

than it is, alongside some emerging talent. Levi van Veluw's *The Collapse of Cohesion* video has a powerful and compelling aesthetic that offsets the big ideas of chaos and emotional trauma he is exploring. Hopefully it is more interesting to people with this sort of mix of established and emerging."

Who would you like to work with?

"I enjoy what I am doing – and I get artists to fit the theme just as much as I pick themes to fit the artists. I probably know about 500 artists in London. Most of the artists I like tend to use the medium which best expresses the idea that they want to express. I had possibly the best sculptor under 30 Nika Neelova and the best painter under 30 Martine Poppe in my last show."

What's next for you?

"In September I am co-curating a show with Bella Easton at Rosa Lux in Berlin on the theme of 'collateral' with 5 London and 5 Berlin based artists – showing some of the work and some of the by products of the work be it drawings and sketches or more arbitrary things like the coat they were wearing. In October I am working on a special commission for the Northern Festival of Contemporary Art in Warrington where the first IKEA opened... oh and I am writing a book about how to integrate health and social care."

Are there any artists you think were overlooked?

"Underrated dead artists? Askeli Gallen-Kallella, Alexandra Exter, Kenneth Armitage, Nancy Holt, Al Held come to mind..."

If you were to teach history of art who would you focus on?

Pre-C15: Giotto (1267-1337), Cimabue (1272-1302), Duccio 1255-1318) and his pupil Simone Martini (1284-1344).

C15: Fra Angelico (1387-1455), Piero della Francesca (1420-92), Botticelli (1445-1510), Bosch (1450-1516), Bellini (1434-1516), Leonardo da Vinci (half and half: 1452-1519). Uccello (1396-1475) and Masaccio (1401-28) are unlucky.

C16: Raphael (1483-1520), Michelangelo (1475-1564), Titian (1489-1576), Pieter Brueghel (1525-69), El Greco (1541-1614) and Durer (1471-1528). A bit of a strong century! You could include Leonardo here, and Holbein is among the casualties.

C17: Caravaggio (1573-1610), shunted out of the previous century, Poussin (1594-1665), Claude Lorraine (1600-82), Velazquez (1590-1660), Rubens (1577-1640) and Vermeer (1632-75) –

which, I admit, leaves no room for Rembrandt (1606-69)!

C18: Canaletto(1697-1768), Chardin (1699-1779), Gainsborough (1727-88), Stubbs (1724-1806), Goya (semi-sneaky: 1746-1828, but C18 seems to me the weakest), Hokusai (1760-1849: counted as having a major western influence).

C19: Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), Turner (1775-1850), Monet (1840-1926), Seurat (1859-91), Van Gogh (1853-90) and Cezanne (1839-1906). A fearsome century with such as Delacroix, Ingres, Gericault, Constable, Manet, Degas and Gaugin omitted! Which may make Friedrich a controversial choice...

C20: Picasso (1881-1973), Matisse (1869-1954), Duchamp (1887-1968), Kandinsky (1866-1944), Pollock (1912-56) and Warhol (1928-87). Plenty of omissions!

Weight for the Showing is at Maddox Arts until 13 June

* Paul Carey-Kent will be at Maddox Arts 11-12 on Sat 9 May, after which he will take a group walk round some other galleries.

* The gallery is open late on 22 May, during which – at 8.00 – Liv Fontaine will reprise her ‘Plinth Piece’, which was quite a talking point at the opening!

* Paul will also be at Maddox Arts from 2-3 pm on Sat 6 June.

* The catalogue is available on paulsartworld.blogspot.com

After our incredible meeting, which was more a private art tutorial than interview, the phenomenal Paul Carey – or perhaps it was Paul Kent – sent me one of his poems for this post. He later informed me that the poem was written for his wife “a rather wonderful woman who was Stephanie Kent when I was Paul Carey – that’s the prosaic reason for my double name, as we’re both now Carey-Kent.”

Her Earrings

Cautiously – is that the door? –

I quantify her habit:

three boxes with thirty four

pairs (admittedly five from me),

two lonely extras (one mine –

a parrot whose mate flew free

in high winds at Devil's Dyke)

plus the six she always wears.

Eighty-odd, of which I like

especially the bamboo

drops which, looking so heavy,

yet fall light; the dangle-zoo

with lizards and swinging apes;

the yellow shells – with the surge

of the sea on tap, perhaps –

and the abstracts which make her

a miniature gallery.

But enactments talk louder

than taste; and more than suggest

that of all her adornments

I love this repertoire best –

for what do I tend to buy

as proof? And what does she wear

that I never even try

to take off? In ears we share

a mild imbalance – with which

we're happy, being a pair.

◀ LEVI ◀ MADDOX ARTS ◀ PAUL CAREY-KENT ◀ PHYLLIDA BARLOW ◀ RICHARD SERRA