

PRESS RELEASE

HARD BITTEN

INTAGLIO PRINTS

By Albert Adams - Michael Sandle - Peter Freeth - William Kentridge - Emma Stibbon

7 December 2018 – 25 January 2019

22 December – 3 January closed for Christmas

This exhibition presents the work of five artists making prints in its most austere and poetic manner. And, although in their finished work they declare a shared humanity and concern for the world we live in each artist works in different ways, on a different scale and in response to different agendas. But they all use straightforward techniques and celebrate the richness that can be achieved from such simple, timeless means, for those with the vision and dedication to keep pushing at the boundaries.

Albert Adams, born in South Africa (1929) of mixed race, arrived in London (1959) to train under Anthony Gross at the Slade - as did Sandle and Freeth. He went on to study in Munich and then Salzburg with Oskar Kokoschka, who remained a lifelong friend, and returned to London (1959) where he worked in self-imposed isolation whilst teaching in East End schools to earn a living. When he died in London (2006) he left behind a remarkable body of masterly works known only to a few friends and colleagues. His work engages with the issues of apartheid and explores human violence and oppression as part of the universal human condition, and towards the end of his life he was drawn to images of the ape and other animals caged and alienated in unnatural environments.



[\(view his Art Space Gallery exhibition catalogue on-line\)](#)



Michael Sandle is one of the few contemporary artists to tackle the most momentous subject of the 20th century – warfare. Themes of combat, death, destruction, inhumanity and media manipulation are constant in the work as he treads a path outside of the fashionable mainstream. A sculptor and printmaker he is instinctively drawn to the physical demands of engraving and for this exhibition is

launching a suite of new works engraved and etched onto hard steel plates.

An etching by **Peter Freeth** might depict a biblical story or a city divided by walls, big black birds on roofs, a hungry feline leaping at night or the vestiges of a giant head. But by contrast with other artists here his work is characterized by refined tones, subtle transitions and a delicate play of light. It is a deliberately painterly approach in which a unique and radical process has been devised and refined over a thirty year period that starts with a painted



image, which has in itself all of the tones, that is subjected to a method of printing whereby the whites, greys and blacks are bitten in one go rather than the usual process of multiple stages of selected stopping and biting. In this way an image of muted tonal harmonies is achieved.

One of fundamental themes of South African artist **William Kentridge** is the desire to forget; to



remain oblivious to difficult and unpleasant aspects of reality and history, his characters locked into a state of denial. In this exhibition his monumental *Sleeper*, a print measuring 97x193 cm and a group selected from the *Nose*

series reveal the power and complexity of his practice where multiple plates, often using different processes, are used to produce a single image. Here the sleeper is a metaphor for blissful ignorance that blocks out external discomfort. *The Nose*, is a series based on a story by Nicolai Gogol about a pompous Russian official who wakes to find his nose has left his face; a satirical story suggesting a refusal to acknowledge something as 'plain as the nose on your face' like poverty, corruption or inequality.

Emma Stibbon brings to her images of the natural world a tension and dramatic power rarely found in landscape images. She is an artist who travels widely, drawing and photographing her responses to the physical appearance and psychological impact of natural environments which are developed into stark, often large-scale works that dramatize the effects of natural phenomena and human intervention. Images of the immense and 'awful' Polar Regions and active volcanoes explore the fragility of the planet and the effects of human intervention.



This exhibition consists of prints by contemporary, progressive, *avant-garde* artists who have retained a dedication to the great intaglio tradition and have achieved eminence with a combination of creative originality and supreme technical skill. And the mastery with which these artists use the medium is the result of an exacting and thorough apprenticeship. There is no shortcut.

Images:

- Albert Adams: ***South Africa 1948: Triumphant Ape with Flag***, 2006; etching & aquatint, 43.5 x 33 cm
Michael Sandle ***The Oak Chalice***, 2013; aquatint & engraving, 67.5 x 81 cm
Peter Freeth ***Night City***, 2016; aquatint 15 x 25cm
William Kentridge ***Sleeper- Black***, 1997; etching, aquatint & drypoint, 93 x 197 cm
Emma Stibbon ***Stromboli Smoke***, 2016; intaglio print with woodcut, 58.5 x 39cms