



Steve Messam

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Profile

“With his site-specific installations Steve Messam aims at setting visual accents in rural or urban context, which include historical relics and vacant architecture and make us perceive the environment we are used to in a new way.”

- Andrea Neidhoefer (*Moca, Shanghai*)

Steve Messam is an artist and curator based in the north of England. In 2002, he co-founded Fold – an artist-led organisation established to provide and promote access to contemporary art in the rural environment. He has overseen the daily management of the organisation and been the lead curator of its 4m-cube gallery in the remote market town of Kirkby Stephen, which has been host to work by over 200 artists from around the world. Exhibitions include ‘snowcase’, ‘Off the Wall’ ‘Paper Cut’ and the debut solo show for Barrie J Davies – ‘Barrie J Davies is an Artist’.

He has developed a particular interest in the cultural reference points inherent in the work of artists living in rural communities and exploiting the assets of landscape, agriculture and community for challenging the preconceptions of contemporary rural arts practice. He is also interested in space, the interaction of art and audience within those confines, the role of aesthetics and the physical experience.

He is co-founder of FRED – an annual art invasion in Cumbria and one of Europe’s largest annual festivals of site-specific work which since 2004 has laid the blueprint for contemporary arts provision in rural areas across the UK. He also has knowledge and experience of managing and devising opportunities for audiences to engage with contemporary art and design in non-gallery and rural environments, including initiatives for the Design Council, the Tate, ONE North East, Arts in the Peak, the Newlyn Gallery, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South Tyneside Council, Durham County Council and the British Council in China. He is currently working with other rural artists and curators building a rural artists network to promote critical dialogue around contemporary land art, Eco-art and rural issues and facilitate a greater understanding of contemporary rural art.

As an artist Steve Messam has worked primarily outside the gallery environment for the past 15 years.

"Much of my work has been inspired by the experience of living in a sheep farming market town and focusing on the cultural reference points of rural living in contrast to mass media urban clichés, challenging the relevancy of contemporary art and design on the world as a whole."

Experience

DIRECTOR AND CURATOR - FOLDGALLERY - FRED - 2004 - 2009

Founding director and curator of Europe's largest annual festival of site-specific art. Curator and director for a small contemporary art space in rural Cumbria.

SENIOR PRODUCER - DOTT07 - 2006-2007

Senior producer on the sustainable tourism programme for the Design Council and ONE North East, incorporating an international design camp in collaboration with the RSA Design Directives and 'Urban Campsite' - a live camp site beneath the Byker Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne.

CURATORIAL ADVISOR - AXIS ARTS - 2006

Part of a national panel advising Axis Arts - the artists' database - on new directions in contemporary art, on behalf of Arts Council England, Scottish Arts Council and Arts Council Wales.

PART-TIME TUTOR - LANCASTER & MORECAMBE COLLEGE. 2002 - 2010

Specialising in Photography, Design, Multimedia and Fine Art for 2nd year HND and Foundation.

MENTOR - BOLTON UNIVERSITY - 2008-2010

Course mentor for Public Art programme

Selected Exhibitions:

INTERVENTION INTERVENTION

Past installations installed inside and outside the gallery space in a curated group show. Fishmarket Gallery, Northampton. September - November 2011

WIRKSWORTH FESTIVAL 2011

Site-specific architectural intervention 'Twisted Puzzle'. Wirksworth, Derbyshire September 2011

BEYOND PATTERN (TOURING)

Touring exhibition of the Oriol Davies curated show featuring moquettes and photographs of 'Clad' installation. DLI Museum & Gallery, Durham. UH Galleries, St. Albans. 20-21 Gallery, Scunthorpe. UK. December 2010 - January 2012.

SENTINEL

Site-specific landscape installation transforming a remote hill barn in the North Pennines, UK. Self-funded piece for Wool Week

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Exhibition on signage. Mobius, Boston MA. USA. September 2010

TATTON PARK BIENNIAL

Site specific installation 'Lily'. May - September 2010

BEYOND PATTERN

Off-site piece 'Clad'. Oriol Davies, Newtown, Powys. November 2009 - January 2010

FLEUR DE SEL: INSPIRATION & DOCUMENTATION

Brantwood, Coniston, UK. September 2009

APHRODITE: WATER + ART

Floating installation. Art Life Gallery, Venice June 2009

SCOPE LONDON

Installation at largest space at London art fair, courtesy of Saatchi Gallery. Lords Cricket Ground, London. October 2008

HUNG

interactive installation. Gallery Mwldan, Cardigan. October 2008 and Woodside Cattleshed, February 2009

BEACHED

18,000 sandcastles on the beach at St. Bees, Cumbria. October 2007

EURASIA ONE

Outdoor installation as part of exhibition marking the EU presidential visit to Shanghai. June 2007

NUIT BLANCHES

interactive installations. Exhibition Centre, Shanghai. June 2007

LANDSCAPE BUBBLES

7 metre diameter inflated bubbles over redundant architectural curios in the wide open landscape of the North Pennines – October 2006

SOUVENIR

site-specific installation made from 120 umbrellas across wasteland in central Shanghai (supported by the British Council China, Arts Council England, and Island6) July – October 2006

Selected Residencies and Workshops:

WHOOSHY SPINNEY

Working with students and staff of a small village primary school to design and create a largescale outdoor installation which connected with a cross section of current school topics. WhooshySpinney was an installation of 2,000 toy windmills in the school meadow. May 2011

84 SPIRES

Creating an installation of 84 small red spires with families and staff at Barnwell Country Park, Northamptonshire exploring the notion of the county of 'Spires and Squires'. August 2011

MIDDLEWOOD

Exploring the hidden geography and rural landscape of central Oland, Sweden with artists, architects and planners. For Yellowbox, Stratta. April 2011

STOWMARTIANS

Reclaiming the local derogatory term for local-born people in the market town of Stowmarket, Suffolk. A series of 'Crop Circle' inspired installations were created overnight across the town, accompanied by lights in the sky and 3 months of press stories of 'sightings'. August 2009

COLOUR IN THE LANDSCAPE

Exploring the effects of colour in a variety of landscapes across the Lake District National Park with planners and architects. For the Lake District National Park Authority / RIBA Excellence in Design Programme. July & September 2009

DESIGN CAMP

One week residential workshop for selected recent graduates from top academies around the world investigating the concept of 'Sustainable Tourism' in NE England. For ONENorthEast / Design Council. August 2007

Recent Commissions:

LEARNING WALKWAY

A series of connected installations exploring the process of learning and identifying the school as a site where learning happens. Commissioned by a group of students at Queen Katherine's School, Kendal. October 2011

NATURAL SELECTION

A series of site-specific installations using wood, water and paper for James Cropper Speciality Paper. Resulting in 'Flow' - an installation of 3,000 pieces of die-cut paper at Luxepack, Monaco. October 2011

SEVEN SPIRES

A half-mile long landscape installation in the Oxford Canal, Northamptonshire for the Northamptonshire County Council Cultural Olympiad programme. August - September 2011

BOXED

Paper installation for James Cropper Speciality Papers Ltd. Luxepack Shanghai, China. March 2011

PAPERWORK

A series of site-specific installations around the Lake District and a 2.4m sculpture in layered paper for James Cropper paper manufacturers. Premiered at Luxepack, Monaco. Oct 2010

LAND PAPER

Etched landscape installation to accompany a major exhibition of William Morris, Blackwell, The Lake District, UK. June 2010

LILY

Landscape installation along 1.5 miles of the river Lily as it traverses Tatton Mere, Tatton Biennial. May - September 2010

CLAD

Installation exploring vernacular architecture and local sheep breeding. Newtown, Powys and Oriel Davies, Newtown Powys. November 2009

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Series of road sign interventions across Cumbria. October 2009

FLEUR DE SEL ON ULLSWATER

Installation over 1/3 mile on Ullswater, the Lake District. September 2009

CLOUD CUBE

Installation for international conference on the gothic. Lancaster University. July 2009

FLEUR DE SEL

Installation. Spazio Thetis, S'Erasmus & La Certosa (Venice) June - August 2009. Ullswater September 2009

DROP

reflective inflatable sculpture at Thomas West's Viewing Stations around the Cumbrian Lakes, for Cumbria Tourism and Culture Cumbria - September 2008

PLOUGHED UP

geometric drawing ploughed in a 30 acre field to be seen from passing trains. Beal Farm, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumbria to raise awareness of landscape management for Natural England and the Design Council. November 2007

LANDSCAPE CAMPER

projection installation in derelict VW camper-van, Baltic Square, Gateshead Quays for ONE North East / Design Council. October 2007

FLAGGED-UP

redundant buildings and quayside wrapped in 3,800 signalling flags and building projection spelling the lyrics to 'When the Boat Comes In' for the Customs House Museum, South Shields and Port of Tyne Authority to welcome the QE2 to the Tyne. August 2007

Curation:

LIGHTHOUSE LULLABY (MARYPORT 2009)

Site-specific sound installation in Maryport Lighthouse by composer Ailis Ni Riain.

FRED (2004 - 2008)

Europes largest annual festival of site specific art across rural landscapes in Cumbria.

Featuring over 100 artists annually plus special commissions by established artists including Graham Rawle and Jenny Holzer (for Cumbria 2005)

I'LL TELL YOU WHERE YOU CAN STICK YOUR MODERN ART... (KIRKBY STEPHEN, CUMBRIA)

exhibition of stencil and sticker graffiti art on a rural bus shelter, featuring over 50 international artists including Banksy (UK), Goin (France) & Sprays Poeticos (Brazil)

SNOWCASE#2 (FOLDGALLERY DEC 2002)

multiples by Steven Barrett, Kate Brundrett, Kate Calico, Lawrence Cassidy, Adam Clarke, Claire Fell, S.Mark Gubb, Susie MacMurray, Steve Messam, Kate Robinson & Christine Stringfellow

SNOWCASE#3 (FOLDGALLERY DEC 2003)

multiples by seven leading Cumbrian artists: Paul Scott • Russell Mills • Maddi Nicholson • Conrad Atkinson • Jac Scott • Malcolm Mitton • Ian Walton

SNOWCASE#5 (FOLDGALLERY DEC 2005)

multiples exhibition displayed in bespoke cabinet. Featuring work by: Samantha Allan, Helen Snell, Lesley Halliwell, Zara Picken, Jon Ford, Tanya Axford, Sally Barker, Emma Bolland, Glen Boulter, Sarah Doyle, John Hall, Erin Hensley, Este MacLeod, Brenda Oakes, Anne Redmond, Richeldis Messam, Christine Stringfellow, Steve Messam, Tinsel Edwards, Victoria Burgher, Breeyn McCarney, and Milly Frances

OFF THE WALL (FOLDGALLERY AUGUST 2004)

seven artists exploring the physical function of a gallery space. Featuring work by: Andrew Bracey, Arabella Harvey, Carl Colley, Debby Akam & Gary Power, Lee Cavaliere, Niki Russell, Tobias Sternberg

Awards

Shortlisted for Art'08 award for 'Drop'

Nominated as Fellow of RSA for rural engagement in the visual arts - Dec 2008

Bibliography (Publications)

'THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE' - 1ST NOVEMBER 1997

Full page interview

'ARTIST LINKS 2002-2006'

224pp Colour Publication (English/Chinese). Edited by Simon Kirby. Published by the British Council, China and Arts Council England.

'FRED - THE STORY OF AN ART INVASION'

88pp colour publication. Edited by Kate Brundrett and Hilary Thorn. Published by FoldPress. ISBN: 0-9549960-0-3

'SCULPTURE TRAIL AT HEBDEN BRIDGE 1995 - 2005'

40pp colour publication. Trudi Entwistle, Lisa Blezard and Paula Chambers. Published by The Sculpture Trail at Hebden Bridge / Dean Clough. ISBN: 0-9553587-0-1

'FORWARD / BACKWARD / RELOADING'

32pp colour publication (English/Chinese). Edited by Thomas Charveriat. Published by Island6.

'EURASIA ONE'

68pp colour publication. (English / German / Chinese) Foreword by Andrea Neidhoefer. Edited by Rolf Kleunter. Published by Timezone 8. ISBN 0-9549960-1-1

'WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF...'

100 pp colour publication (English), John Thackara. Published by Design Council. ISBN: 1904335152

'ART OF ENGLAND' - JANUARY 2009

4 pp article and interview. ISSN 1744-1930

'CUMBRIA LIFE' - OCTOBER 2009

5pp article and interview.

'THE FLEECE & FIBRE SOURCEBOOK'

438pp colour publication. Deborah Robson & Carol Ekarius. Chapter on Kerry Hill fleece featuring installations. Pub. Storey, USA
ISBN: 978-1-60342-711-1

ISLAND6

200pp colour publication. Liu Dao (English / Chinese) features several works
ISBN: 978-0-9549960-3-1

THE A-Z OF VISUAL IDEAS

212pp colour publication. Pub. LaurenceKing. Features several installations.
ISBN: 978-1-855669-714-9

Websites

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www.dott07.com/go/designcamp