Ruskin: Museum of the Near Future

We all need to make sense of the world; our perspectives shaped by different forms of knowledge, culture, values and beliefs.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) sought to encounter the world in close broad opening events between people and place. His work was an exercise in the sketch of images and words, cutting across science, religion, art, ceremony, economics, and social science. His images connected knowledge to the realities of personal experience. This is what made Ruskin one of the greatest thinkers of all time.

Ruskin’s motto was ‘Today’; he believed that the way we see things now will shape the way we think and believe in the future. We can use the same experiences as we learn, new experiences, to make things that develop, make connections, and reflect on the relationship between morality and the language of science.

Ruskin: The Museum of the Near Future explores the narratives of Ruskin’s thinking today. Throughout the exhibition, we look closely, see clearly, and indeed imagine the beauty of the world that we stand in and into the natural and cultural processes that shape it.

Our encounters reflect on the relationship between morality and the language of science. This exhibition would not have been possible without generous support from ourодержавки, whose support we are profoundly grateful.

Acknowledgments

The Ruskin: Library, Museum and Research Centre is the world’s largest archive of Ruskin’s works. His books, letters, writings, images, and personal papers are valued nationally and internationally. The Ruskin: Library, Museum and Research Centre, the University of Lancaster, is pleased to announce the exhibition ‘Ruskin: The Museum of the Near Future’. The exhibition is supported by the Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the Wellcome Trust.

Welcome to our exhibition

Ruskin: The Museum of the Near Future

Ruskin: The Museum of the Near Future is one of those rare men who, through thought and action, changed the world and will continue to change it in the future.
Lessons of the Peacock Feather

Rudolf was a renowned teacher, lecturer and public intellectual, who contributed significantly to the understanding of social and political issues. His work on Peacock Feathers and his teaching at Cambridge and Oxford set standards in Russia for beauty and learning in every field.

Produced as visual aids for his popular public lectures, Rudolf’s paintings and paintings of exotic birds were models of the visual effects of a teaching and learning tool. In his time and today, this book expounds through its large size, magnified and models Rudolf’s closely observed studies into nature. From the “flamingo” of a study of a peacock’s feather, in a branch of a tree, to the wings of a butterfly, depictions of paintings and drawings and the volume of images in the book, the volume of the bird’s feather and the volume of the bird’s wing is the book’s raison d’être. Weights and paintings of the book are described in the book’s Introduction.

The first reason to know the part thing play

The second reason understand the nature of things

Birds, Butterflies, Coopation

The third reason: know the part thing play

Trees, Relationship, Meaning

Ethics of the Dust

From rags to resources, to comics to cathedrals, Rudolf’s early education and his understanding of nature and the most advanced techniques of the day; Rudolf’s research approach to collecting, cataloguing and conserving can influence his interest in understanding the theory of change and transformation. For Rudolf, these birds to him for “Why, or will be called “The Ethics of the Dust”

Think with underlying values, not of underlying things.

Architecture is a sacred position. The same energy and material wealth creates a force in a Manchester. Different values create different results.

Draw for your reader:

We are objectively drawn to those truly the geometries.

The way we see the world, the greater our sympathy and the more we wish for all the kind and human happiness. To us when processes of disintegration give way to periods of consolidation.

Table heart

Part of the reader, responsible to both knowledge and generosity for the giving courses. What lives in our hearts is a gift given to us.

Throughout their foundations and building blocks of nature, Rudolf’s works are an excellent for ideas and imagination. At the same time, they work as a form of both artist and writer can have devastating effect on our ownship of life and our case for each other.

What is the difference between a feather and a cloud?

More interesting to [Title]. Our school was the British Museum catalogue of specimens, the teas are greatest jams once [unpredictable] the best collection, and within the library. Rudolf had a profound collection and became the various meanings of Europe to those as it were his picture galleries. In the Ethics of the Dust” he draws [Footnote: This is a subject to which we refer our method of education, and to ISCO] to look in as before, among the crowns.

W. B. Yeats, The Life of John Rudolf, 1905

How do buildings grow?
Sarah Casey

"...to preserve something like a true image of beautiful things that pass away, or which you must yourself leave."

Ruskin, LE 15, 25

Nautilus 120Gsm
Scale 100%
Final size: W120 - H210
3mm bleed
Quantity: 2000
CMYK Litho
Accordion Fold (4 panels)

Ruskin used drawing as a technique to enhance his understanding of the world. In Ruskin’s Good Looking! (2017-19), Sarah Casey applied the process of close looking to the intimate landscape of Ruskin’s own clothing.

Ruskin’s Good Looking! (Accessary) shows Ruskin’s hat, christening cap, trousers, neck cloth and shoes. The drawing is made with a dressmaker pin, scoring marks into the surface of a finely waxed sheet of paper. Like breath or memory, it has a fragile existence and will literally melt away if exposed to heat. These spectral drawings recall the past through evoking what is absent, but also gesture to the uncertainty of the future.

Sarah writes, ‘Slewing down to examine Ruskin’s clothing, through drawing, was a catalyst for reflection on what it means to draw as a tool of preservation, a trace of something past and a reminder of the precarity of existence.’

Sarah Casey makes drawings which test the limits of visibility and material existence. She has taken drawing to a range of challenging environments, to see what the activity of drawing may share with other practices that must negotiate the delicate to reveal the unseen. She is Senior Lecturer in Drawing and Installation at Lancaster University.

Janet Manifold

‘Your art is to be the praise of something that you love. It may only be the praise of a shell or a stone.’

Ruskin, LE 15, 353

Nautilus 120Gsm
Scale 100%
Final size: W120 - H210
3mm bleed
Quantity: 2000
CMYK Litho
Accordion Fold (4 panels)

Made of alabaster – itself composed of calcium formed millions of years ago in an aquatic environment - Janet Manifold’s sculpture, Time Unfolding, embodies the beauty and fragility of time and of life. Ruskin was deeply aware of time, wanting us to linger, walk, think, look around us, to appreciate the beauty of things.

Manifold writes, ‘love of alabaster is rooted in its materiality, and my work explores the structures and forms of aquatic organisms, evolutionary origins, and the critical role played by calcium in the functioning of all life forms both in life and death. At Ruskin anticipated, we face immense uncertainty here, now, today. However, the natural world, which bears the heavy evidence of our presence also holds the key to renewal. In the rhythms and cycles of unfailing time, it was here long before us and will be here long after we are gone. We are memory and nostalgia, imagination and anticipation: it is these things which make us uniquely human.’

Janet Manifold is a sculptor working primarily in alabaster.

Wu Chi-Tsong

‘Your art is to be the praise of something that you love. It may only be the praise of a shell or a stone.’

Ruskin, LE 15, 353

Chi-Tsong works to challenge perceptions of our physical and natural worlds. Landscape in the Mist! (2017) is a meditative experiment in moving image, drawing on traditional Chinese painting and ink technique. As tree-forms emerge from the mist, the viewer is invited to recalculate initial assumptions of time, place and scale of perception, and practice the slow looking which was central to Ruskin’s thought.

In Ruskin’s own work, and by necessity in the technologies he employed, the pace of image making was slowed to enable close, careful scrutiny. Ruskin was captivated by the new technologies for penmanship, manipulating and fixing images offered by his age, though, for Ruskin, these were a way of enhancing – rather than a substitute for – the human eye.

Wu Chi-Tsong’s practice deals with landscape, nature and the urban environment. Although traditional painting influences and inspires his artistic output, Wu often executes his work through video, photography and installation.
Patricia Townsend

‘A stone may be round or angular, polished or rough, cracked all over like an ill-glazed encaust ... or crystallised like hoar-frost, or veiled like a forest leaf: look at it, and don't try to remember how anyone told you to "do a stone.”

Ruskin, LE 15, 97

The starting point for Patricia Townsend's Black Sun was the unexpected discovery of a near-spherical volcanic rock on the island of Stromboli. 'Black Sun' is a moving image work created by animating a series of still photographs, drawing the viewer's attention to almost imperceptible changes in the fine detail of the surface. Townsend writes, 'I am interested in our relationship with landscape and the way in which we project our own feelings onto our surroundings. I share Ruskin's fascination with the visual qualities of rock surfaces and the fact that rocks connect us with the distant past. Ruskin saw all living and non-living things as organisms that change over time. He collected rocks and minerals and made many drawings, bringing out the fine detail in the stones. In Black Sun I animate the rock, alluding to its changing nature, inviting the viewer to focus on the fine detail of the rock surface and its infinitesimal changes.'


Franziska Schenk

‘If I had him [Darwin] here in Oxford for a week, and could force him to try copy a feather ... his notions of feathers ... would be changed for all the rest of his life. But his ignorance of good art is no excuse for the accurately logical simplity of the rest of his talk of colour in the Descent of Man’.

Ruskin, LE 25, 265-264

Franziska Schenk’s Frida’s doctoral thesis, developed as part of Darwin 200, uses nano pigment technology developed for the commercial industries. This technology enables Schenk to depict the iridescent colour that formed the cornerstone of Ruskin’s attack on Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Schenk writes, ‘Ruskin’s study of a single iridescent peacock feather showing each individual filament can be seen as an attempt to gain a better understanding of the workings of these mysterious rainbow colours, and to analyse their purpose in the grander scheme of nature, evolution and art. Ruskin urged artists to “go to Nature, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing and learning nothing”.

Franziska Schenk’s work on nature’s iridescent hues and millennia-old colour optics, complemented by scientific study, have led her to adopt new nano-materials for painting. The resulting artwork, like iridescent creatures, fluctuates in perceived colour and pattern, depending on the light and vantage, her work, From Mimics to Biomimetics: Towards Smarter Art, has most recently been shown at Max Planck Institute, Dresden in June 2019.

Chamonix, Mer de Glace, Mont Blanc Massif, 1854 (detail). John Ruskin. Frederick Crouse

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Emma Stibbon

‘Every day here I seem to see farther into nature, and into myself, and into futurity’.

1854, Ruskin’s Diary

Emma Stibbon’s works on paper dramatise the effects of human intervention and natural phenomena on monumental structures, exploring the fragility of existence. Stibbon’s work is stark, monochrome and often large-scale. In 2017 Stibbon was invited by Project Pressure (www.project-pressure.org) to make a new study of glaciated volcanoes on the High Plains of Ecuador. Chimborazo, Ecuador is one of the earth’s highest active volcanoes, visited by a number of Ruskin’s contemporaries including Darwin. Traces of soil collected at from the flanks of Chimborazo can be seen in Chimborazo II. Stibbon writes, ‘Ruskin’s recognition that he was living through a time of unprecedented climate change now appears like a premonition of what was to come. His fascination with glacial morphology informed his writing and drawing in equal measure. Ruskin appreciated the tactile qualities of drawing, and the unframed quality of many of his drawings, where the margins of the sheet are left unworked and open, speaks to contemporary approaches in drawing practice.

Emma Stibbon is an artist who works primarily on paper. Drawing is at the heart of Emma’s practice and she has travelled widely, recording her responses to physical appearance and psychological impact of natural and built environments. Emma was elected Royal Academician in 2019.