

## **Drawn from Life – A Green Cardamom project**

### **Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Cumbria**

**15 January – 26 March, 2011**

Curated by Hammad Nasar and Helen Watson with Justine Blau, Sierra Kaag and Nick Rogers

### **Artists' biographies**

Hammad Nasar & Nick Rogers

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#### **HAMRA ABBAS**

(b.1976, Kuwait. Lives and works between New York, USA and Islamabad, Pakistan)

Using media that ranges from large-scale fibre glass sculpture to painting, video and paper collage, Hamra Abbas creates works that take a playful look at widely accepted traditions. By appropriating culturally loaded imagery and iconography, and transforming their spatial and temporal properties, she develops new platforms from which to view notions of culture, tradition and exchange.

#### **NAZGOL ANSARINIA**

(b.1979, Tehran, Iran. Lives and works in Tehran)

Ansarinia's work brings new languages and systems of meaning to traditional objects, motifs and patterns, to explore contemporary life and the social issues that often lie behind the ordinary, the familiar and the beautiful. These conceptual interests are combined with a commitment to material and making, resulting in drawings, video and text-based works and, more recently, modified household furniture.

#### **JEAN ARP**

(b.1886, Strasbourg, France, d.1966, Basel, Switzerland)

A painter, sculptor and poet, Jean Arp was a founder member of Dada. Arp's abstract reliefs and paper cut-outs evolved into sensuous bio-morphic forms. In 1931 he became a founder member of the Abstraction- Creation group, creating sculptures in the round whose organic forms manifested his dictum that art is 'a fruit that grows in man'.

#### **FRANK AUERBACH**

(b.1931, Berlin, Germany. Lives and works in London)

Auerbach is an artist who creates images of startling power and presence through the most rigorous of working methods. His sitters are usually people he knows well, who attend his studio routinely at the same time on the same day every week. Each work, with its thick swathes of paint jutting out from the support, is in fact created in only one; any unsuccessful attempt at capturing the essence of the subject is scraped away from the board or canvas and the artist starts again from scratch.

#### **MUHANNED CADER**

(b.1966, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Lives and works between Oxford, UK and Colombo)

Muhanned Cader's drawings and paintings echo Dadaist practices in their combination of marks and shapes, with 'ready-mades' taken from nature or culled from magazines and art historical sources. Cader edits, combines and overlaps these ingredients to create works that transform the meaning of the original documents, often throwing up playful and uncanny juxtapositions and allusions.

#### **JOHN ROBERT COZENS**

(b.1752, London, UK, d.1797, London, UK)

Described by John Constable as 'the greatest genius that ever touched landscape', J R Cozens used washes of muted colour to create atmospheric, melancholy images that left a large amount to the viewer's imagination, and were hugely influential on the development of

landscape watercolour in Britain. Both the young Turner and Thomas Girtin developed their supreme skills copying watercolours by Cozens at the informal 'academy' of Dr Thomas Monro.

#### KEN CURRIE

(b.1960, North Shields, UK. Lives and works in Glasgow, UK)

Glasgow is central to much of Ken Currie's work, providing the background for the contemporary dramas and manifestations of social unease depicted in his prints and paintings. The bustling crowds and cityscapes executed in a linear, expressionist style in works from the 1980s and 90s, such as *Story from Glasgow* (1989), have more recently been replaced by a less distinct, more spectral style of painting focusing on the individual.

#### IFTIKHAR DADI & ELIZABETH DADI

(b.1961, Karachi, Pakistan and 1957, Seattle, USA. Live and work in Ithaca, New York, USA)

Though based in the US, the Dadis draw much of their inspiration from the streets and popular culture of Karachi. Their work takes the form of site-specific installations, photographic prints, multi-media objects and light boxes, which address themes that range from the postcolonial condition, belief, ethnicity and political violence to visual culture and the effects of global media. For their large-scale installations they also regularly collaborate with artisans, deliberately blurring the line between fine and folk art and popular entertainment.

#### LUCIAN FREUD

(b.1922. Lives and works in London, UK)

A painter of realist portraits and nudes, Freud regards etching as an extension of drawing, and the variety of marks made on the etching plate – hatching, cross-hatching and stippling – as akin to those made by pen or pencil on paper. Regardless of the medium he employs, be it paint, pencil or printmaking, Freud subjects his models to intense psychological scrutiny, with the aim of revealing a truth about the sitter.

#### ELISABETH FRINK

(b.1930, Thurlow, UK, d.1993, Blandford Forum, UK)

The male form, as well as dogs, horses and, in particular, birds, are the principal subjects of Elisabeth Frink's sculpture. By using bronze as a medium, and focusing on a limited range of seemingly traditional subject matter, Frink often placed herself at odds with the prevailing trends in sculpture in her time, such as assemblage and the use of unconventional materials. Yet the unsentimental universality of her sculptural forms, sometimes playful, sometimes threatening, has ensured that her work continues to find a broad-ranging audience today.

#### ANDY GOLDSWORTHY

(b.1956, Cheshire. Lives in Penpont, UK)

Goldsworthy uses the natural materials to hand to make site-specific, often ephemeral, sculptures and installations, mostly outdoors, which are then documented through photography. Leaves, branches, rocks, flowers and ice all serve as raw materials for his beautifully crafted constructions, in which 'process and decay are implicit'.

#### GONKAR GYATSO

(b.1961, Lhasa, Tibet. Lives and works in New York, USA)

Using a combination of drawn marks, cheap stickers, and signs and text in multiple languages, Gyatso's paintings draw attention to both the extraordinary and mundane aspects of material and pop culture. His work is often uncanny and playful at the same time, revealing the environments and cultures that have shaped his life, particularly the fraught politics of his native Tibet.

#### ZARINA HASHMI

(b.1937, Aligarh, India. Lives and works in New York, USA)

The work of Zarina Hashmi is characterised by a minimalist sensibility that conceals a deep engagement with the world around her. Best known as a printmaker of exquisite refinement, she often uses text inscribed in her mother tongue, Urdu, to acknowledge the importance to her work of language and literary culture, but also as a gesture of resistance to the decline of Urdu in India. Her art poignantly chronicles her life and explores recurring themes of home,

displacement, borders, journey and memory.

#### THOMAS HEARNE

(b.1744, Brinkworth, UK, d.1817, London, UK)

Thomas Hearne's beautifully atmospheric landscape watercolours were influential on subsequent generations of artists, including Thomas Girtin and J M W Turner, who copied his works at the informal 'academy' of Dr Thomas Monro, one of Hearne's most loyal patrons. Unlike the dazzling watercolours of these younger artists, or those of near contemporaries such as John Robert Cozens, Hearne's compositions relied on a crisp, clear outline executed in pen or pencil, which were then filled with delicate washes of colour, a technique clearly indebted to his earlier training as a printmaker.

#### BARBARA HEPWORTH

(b.1903, Wakefield, UK, d.1975, St Ives, UK)

After studying sculpture at the Royal College of Art, London, Hepworth, together with artists such as her first husband John Skeaping, and Henry Moore, went on to become a leading figure in the 'new movement' in British sculpture associated with direct carving. She was also an important proponent of pure abstraction, introducing piercings to her organic forms, and attached great importance to the link between figure and landscape. This last preoccupation is clearly evident in works such as Torso III, Galatea (1958), where the weather-beaten rocks of the artist's surroundings, St Ives in Cornwall, are echoed in the sculpture's forms.

#### DAVID HOCKNEY

(b.1937, Bradford, UK. Lives and works in the UK and USA)

David Hockney is one of the most successful and versatile of modern British figurative artists. In early works, such as his etchings of A Rake's Progress (based on Hogarth's eighteenth-century series of the same name), his superb draughtsmanship is placed in the service of a strongly narrative art that draws on his own public and private mythology. Following his move to Los Angeles in 1964 he started to use a more traditional figurative style, influenced by his interest in photography.

#### AYAZ JOKHIO

(b.1978, Mehrabpur, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

After beginning his career as a poet and cartoonist, Jokhio now brings his ironic and sometimes cynical look at the world to his art. Based on a variety of media, his conceptual projects challenge viewers to examine ideas and objects from different perspectives. His art practice also displays a virtuoso commitment to material and the craft skills of making – whether it is hyperrealist painting, collage with text or drawings with dust.

#### NADIA KAABI-LINKE

(b.1978, Tunis, Tunisia. Lives and works between Tunis and Berlin, Germany)

Sometimes described as similar to that of a forensic scientist, Nadia Kaabi-Linke's practice identifies 'evidence' in the everyday urban environment, which is then analysed, reconstructed or transformed, before being returned to the public arena. Her drawings, objects and installations evoke the primacy of place and often reveal traces that lie just beneath the surface.

#### ALI KAZIM

(b.1979, Pattoki, Pakistan. Lives and works between London, UK and Lahore, Pakistan)

Kazim's paintings use watercolour washes over virtuoso under-drawings of human figures to create rich, multilayered and textured constructions. After beginning his career as a circus-hoarding painter in small-town Pakistan, Kazim turned to painting deeply intriguing images, often of men with pronounced Dravidian features, which offer beatific, sometimes unsettling, glimpses into other lives.

#### R B KITAJ

(b.1932, Cleveland, OH, USA, d.2007, Los Angeles, CA, USA)

Although American by birth, Ronald Brookes Kitaj spent a large part of his life in England, famously coining the term 'School of London' to describe the important figurative painters – such as Freud, Auerbach, Michael Andrews and Francis Bacon, as well as Kitaj himself – living and working in the capital at the time. A consummate draughtsman and fierce

polemicist, Kitaj used searing colours and striking imagery to create mysterious and opaque narratives whose precise meanings continually elude the viewer. At the same time, he also produced numerous intimate, small-scale portraits, often centred around important Jewish figures in his life, which show the more introspective nature of his personality.

#### NOA LIDOR

(b.1977, Petach-Tikiva, Israel. Lives and works in London, UK)

Noa Lidor's sculptures, drawings and installations are characterised by a diverse range of everyday materials, including dough, salt, thimbles, flutes, Braille paper and plaster cast nipples, which suggest an interest in tactility and embedded content. But her work thwarts these instincts – bells don't ring, flutes can't be played, and even text (often in Braille) can't be read. These failures of communication and connection serve as poetic metaphors for what the artist calls an 'existential longing to break free'.

#### L S LOWRY

(b.1887, Stretford, UK, d.1976, Glossop, UK)

Lowry is one of the most popular and, arguably, misunderstood of British artists. Often labelled an amateur, or naïve painter, despite years of formal artistic training, Lowry composed his images carefully, transforming his impressions of the streets of Salford into beautifully orchestrated studio paintings, always with the same limited palette of five colours. He is best known for his industrial scenes populated by stick-like figures hurrying about their business, which are now often seen adorning mugs, tea towels and place mats in homes throughout Britain.

#### JESS MACNEIL

(b.1977, Inverness, Canada. Lives and works between London and Sydney, Australia)

Jess MacNeil takes as her subject matter the relationship between humanity and nature, producing works that lie at the intersection of painting, video and photography. Water, in particular, is a continual point of reference, which interests her for its 'innate movement, distortion of light and ambiguity of image as representative of our relationship with our environment'. In both videos and paintings MacNeil relies on structures that are often fluid and shifting, frustrating attempts to 'take it all in', and mirroring the fragmented process of remembrance and understanding.

#### AHMED ALI MANGANHAR

(b.1974, Tando Allahyar, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

After beginning his career as a billboard painter, Ahmed Ali Manganhar developed a fascination with the layered method of working that this practice involved, and with cinema and historical narrative. He often builds his paintings in soft thin washes to create a translucent, luminous quality, and his drawings, executed in swift, spare gestures, have a similar dream-like atmosphere. Manganhar recently began experimenting with stop-motion animation to link hundreds of chalk drawings on blackboard, forming complex narratives that weave the biographical with the historical.

#### REHANA MANGI

(b.1986, Larkana, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

Rehana Mangi trained in miniature painting, but has become known for extending the rigour and intimacy of the genre to produce exquisite repeated patterns, which occasionally form motifs such as flowers or butterflies, out of human hair. The painstaking fragility and labour of Mangi's work and the act of sewing conveys a sense of the domestic, a suggestion of samplers and of the diligent, unacknowledged skill of labour. The hair also evokes a feeling of longing, which is tightly contained by the base grid.

#### IMRAN MUDASSAR

(b.1982, Gujranwala, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

Initially trained as a printmaker, Imran Mudassar has developed a multi-media practice centred on his exquisite drawings, in which he often uses his own drawn body to express the plight of humanity in his native Pakistan in times of strife. He is best known for a haunting series of male torsos drawn onto the surface of photographs of shrapnel-marked walls in Kabul, which become transformed into wounded figures.

#### PAUL NASH

(b.1889, London, UK, d.1946, Boscombe, UK)

A contemporary of some of the most important British artists and movements of the early twentieth-century, including Vorticism, British Surrealism and Unit One, Paul Nash created strange, eerie landscapes that fused the Romantic influence of William Blake and Samuel Palmer with a Surrealist impulse fuelled by his experiences on the front during the First World War. Works such as *Dry Land Appearing* (1924) apply Biblical source material to a modern world recovering from the ravages of war. He was also a prominent member of the Society of Wood Engravers, exhibiting in their first show in 1920.

#### BEN NICHOLSON

(b.1894, Denham, UK, d.1982, London, UK)

Synthesising Cubism, Abstraction, Constructivism and other artistic avant-garde tendencies of the early twentieth century, Ben Nicholson established himself, along with Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, as a key figure in the development of British modernism, both in London and St Ives, Cornwall. His works veer between figuration and pure abstraction, and exhibit a preoccupation with the relationship of objects in space and the beauty of line. For Nicholson, a successful painting was, in his own words, 'a living thing as nice as a poodle with two shining black eyes'.

#### CELIA PAUL

(b.1959, Trivandrum, India. Lives and works in London, UK)

Celia Paul has always painted and drawn the human figure, but portraiture is her central concern, using friends, family and the people closest to her as subjects. Her work is suffused with spirituality – a sense of inner mood and compassion – achieved through the evocative use of light and space and her ability to capture emotion and character.

#### JOHN PIPER

(b.1903, Epsom, UK, d.1992, Fawley Bottom, UK)

As a draughtsman, John Piper used a variety of techniques, often in combination, to create rich, haunting images whose aim was, in the artist's words, to demonstrate a 'personal love of country and architecture, and the humanity that inhabits them'. Like his contemporary, Ben Nicholson, Piper also made abstract works alongside his figurative production, while in his landscape drawings and paintings Piper followed his friend, the artist Paul Nash, emphasising atmosphere and emotion rather than topographical accuracy.

#### NUSRA LATIF QURESHI

(b.1973, Lahore. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia)

Trained in miniature painting and with an interest in postcolonial theory, Nusra Latif Qureshi has developed a visually seductive but critically astute artistic language that finds expression in small, seemingly spare surfaces. On close inspection, however Qureshi's works often emerge as busy combinations of painting, collage and digital photography, teeming with complex references and imagery. By creating fanciful juxtapositions that suggest multiple viewpoints, she disrupts the conventional order of recorded history.

#### NEDA RAZAVIPOUR

(b.1969, Tehran, Iran. Lives and works in Tehran)

A multidisciplinary artist, who also collaborates with other artists, Razavipour uses video, photography and performance to explore the socio-political conditions of everyday life in Tehran. In her ongoing series *Daily Notes*, pages from a diary bear witness to the passage of time and to changes in the social fabric occurring over an extended period.

#### PAULA REGO

(b.1935, Lisbon, Portugal. Lives and works in London, UK)

Paula Rego is a storyteller, who uses paint, pastel, drawing and printmaking to create narratives that are disturbing and darkly humorous. Her richly coloured and masterfully executed tableaux rely heavily on ambiguity to explore the complex undercurrents of human relations, particularly within the family. In certain works, such as her *Abortion* (1999) etchings, Rego is more direct in approach, using her art to raise awareness of important

social and political issues.

#### BRIDGET RILEY

(b.1931, London, UK. Lives and works in London)

A key figure in the Op Art movement of the 1960s, Riley uses repeated patterns of lines and colour to create paintings and prints whose surfaces shimmer, vibrate and excite the eye. Her early works employed a strictly monochrome pallet until she started experimenting with colour in the late 1960s. The sophistication of her use of colour developed further following a trip to Egypt in the 1980s, where she encountered ancient hieroglyphics.

#### GEORGE ROMNEY

(b.1734, Dalton-in-Furness, UK, d.1802, Kendal, UK)

George Romney was one of the foremost portrait painters of the eighteenth century, along with other notable artists such as Gainsborough, Ramsay and his great rival, Joshua Reynolds. At the peak of his popularity, Romney was sought after by many important public figures of the day, who were attracted by his natural skill and ability to capture a pleasing likeness. Later in life, struggling to fulfil commissions and suffering great mental fatigue, he concentrated his efforts on private drawings, creating deftly drawn images of startling vitality.

#### JOHN RUSKIN

(b.1819, London, UK, d.1900, Coniston, UK)

As an art critic, social thinker, polemicist and poet, John Ruskin was one of the most important cultural figures of the Victorian age, but he also created beautifully realised drawings and watercolours, which combined his meticulous obsession with truth to nature with vivid colouration and sublime effects derived from his idol Turner. Most of his artworks also served didactic purposes, illustrating arguments made in books and letters, and frequently appear unfinished, a compositional economy that has helped keep his works fresh and vital to modern eyes.

#### KURT SCHWITTERS

(b.1887, Hannover, Germany, d.1948, Kendal, UK)

Kurt Schwitters played an important role in the Dada movement in the years immediately following the First World War, before his avant-garde experimentation led to persecution by the Nazis, forcing him to flee his native Germany. In exile Schwitters continued to develop what he called 'Merz', an art form constructed from the detritus of everyday life. As well as making large-scale installations, such as the Elterwater Merz Barn (1948), the interior of which has subsequently been transferred to the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, Schwitters also produced 'Merz' works on a much smaller scale, examples of which can be found in the Abbot Hall collection.

#### SEHER SHAH

(b. 1975, Karachi, Pakistan. Lives and works in New York, USA)

Trained as both an artist and architect, Seher Shah decided to concentrate on her artistic career after realising that it was drawing that she valued most in architecture. Often working on a monumental scale and in a limited range of colours (mostly black and white), she uses space as allegory or metaphor and explores relationships between architectural structures and the human figure. Her work also mixes personal photographs, historic archives, iconic Islamic spaces, geometries and symbols.

#### ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA

(b.1928, Simla, India, d.1985,Stafford, UK)

Anwar Jalal Shemza was a pioneer in investigating the relation between visual and textual forms, referencing particularly Islamic motifs and calligraphy. Also inspired by Paul Klee and carpet design, Shemza developed his own aesthetic based on a rigorous and disciplined practice. His career culminated in the Roots series, which uses a formally restrained language to convey the anguish of diaspora.

#### STANLEY SPENCER

(b.1891, Cookham, UK, d.1959, Cliveden, UK)

Stanley Spencer was one of the most individual British artists of the twentieth century, a

painter whose unique vision was shaped by war, sexuality and biblical imagery. A contradictory figure, his subjects ranged from depictions of large-scale mystical events – frequently using his home village of Cookham as a backdrop – to brutal, frank nudes and portraits, often informed by complicated and troubled relationships in his personal life.

#### GRAHAM SUTHERLAND

(b.1903, London, UK, d.1980, London)

After studying at Goldsmiths' College of Art in London, Graham Sutherland developed a style of landscape painting, which, like that of Paul Nash, was heavily indebted to Surrealism and the Romanticism of William Blake and Samuel Palmer. His landscapes are often inhabited by unsettling organic forms painted in vivid colours, a way of representing the world that was also influenced by his experience as an official war artist during the Second World War.

#### MOHAMMAD ALI TALPUR

(b.1976, Hyderabad, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

For the last few years Mohammad Ali Talpur has immersed himself in line: closely woven, intense clusters of lines in ink on paper and acrylic on canvas. This body of work stemmed from his desire to make 'art without content' – to 'unlearn' his art school training and go back to the craft of drawing. Sitting on the rooftop of his studio, he began tracing the flight paths of birds with felt tip on paper. These sparse works have developed into a meditative, sometimes obsessive, concern with line.

#### BEATE TERFLOTH

(b.1958, Hong Kong. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany)

Beate Terfloth's love for places and spaces informs every aspect of her work. Referencing maps, graffiti, borders and landscapes – both urban and rural – she plays with materials and processes to produce works that are characterised by a singular lightness of touch. By making marks on walls, gluing together cracks in the floor, following the lines made by dancers or tracing the outlines of tree bark, she questions the very act of looking.

#### J M W TURNER

(b.1775, London, UK, d.1851, London, UK)

J M W Turner revolutionised landscape painting in Britain, elevating it above history to the most exalted of subject matters, and advanced the techniques of both watercolour and oil, using thin washes and glazes to bring a brilliant transparency to the treatment of light and space and heighten the sense of the sublime. As well as revelling in the beauty of pure landscape, Turner also used his paintings to comment on the social and moral issues of the day. He was enormously influential on successive generations of artists, not least the young John Ruskin, who helped advance and preserve Turner's critical reputation.

#### DOUGLAS WHITE

(b. 1977, London, UK. Lives and works in London)

Douglas White has been likened to a contemporary shaman, who 're-enchants the world, scavenging the detritus of society and compulsively transforming it into strange, monumental sculptures.' Working with discarded and overlooked materials, both natural and man-made – exploded tyres, arson-struck recycling bins, decaying trees – he often subjects his materials to violent change, revealing an inner delicacy or potency that he describes as 'finding something magical within the everyday and revealing it through an action.'

#### EDWARD WILSON

(b.1872, Cheltenham, UK, d.1912, Antarctica)

Edward Wilson was a physician, naturalist, explorer and artist, who was a member of the team, along with Captain Scott, Captain Lawrence Oates, Edgar Evans and Henry Robertson Bowers, that perished in Antarctica, having been beaten to the South Pole by the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen. A great admirer of Ruskin, Wilson sought to convey not just the topographical details of the uncharted terrain he encountered, but also the wonder, hardship and sublime character of hitherto unseen, and undocumented, polar landscapes.

#### JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY

(b.1734, Derby, UK, d.1797, Derby)

Although best known for his dramatic, candlelit scenes, often depicting the scientific and

industrial advances of his day, Wright of Derby was also a prolific portrait and landscape painter. His use of chiaroscuro (the contrast of light and dark) also found its way into many of his landscapes, a genre he became increasingly interested in towards the end of his life, but he could also handle oil paint and watercolour with tremendous subtlety. In *The Bowder Stone, Borrowdale* (undated), Wright of Derby employs monochrome washes of varying tonality to create a beautifully balanced depiction of this famous Lake District destination.

#### MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN

(b. 1980, Mirpurkhas, Pakistan. Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan)

At the heart of Zeeshan's practice is the knowledge that what distinguishes a form also constitutes its limits. Trained initially as a commercial billboard painter, he subsequently turned to the miniature, both in form and subject, investigating notions of tradition and exploring the tension between media and surface. In the ongoing *Dying Miniature* series this becomes literal where the image is formed by the residue of graphite ground down by sandpaper.