



The Museum of Imagined Kent

Catalogue

Introduction

At the Museum of Imagined Kent, we strive to bring you the truth about your county. Here you will rediscover Kentish narratives, and learn about the stories - myth and fact combined - that make Britain's oldest county the place it is today.

There are many great moments recorded in Kent's history: after all, it did serve as a passage into Britain until the invention of planes, so anyone who is anyone has passed through. This is where Charles Dickens wrote his best works, and where Winston Churchill saw out his retirement. But what about all the moments which weren't recorded, or that weren't even witnessed? What have we missed?

We are here to highlight more of these unexplored moments, using forgotten evidence to bring stories to life. With archaeological finds from the lost island of Lomea (as recorded by Julius Caesar himself), to a new version of Alfred Barr's chart recording the origins of Abstraction, there is bound to be something here to connect you with the county, whether you grew up here or are just passing through.

When we go to a museum, we take what we see and read as a source of absolute truth. After all, we are presented with history, and facts. But the curators are only human - what about when bias, or opinion come into play? What about when the truth gets twisted, or omitted?

You will find the museum split into four smaller galleries, each uncovering a different side of Kent's histories. Perhaps you will find most meaning diving deep into myths and folklore, or whilst exploring the modern art of Kent. Or you might prefer communing with nature in Kent's own Natural History Museum, before crossing the seas to learn more about the forgotten links between Kent and Japan.

When so much is lost to time, how do we present the full picture? Should it be up to curators to decide?

~ Curators Natasha Sasha Viegas and Polly Andrews

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Introductory Liminal Effect

Ten Songs for a Lar



The Lar was pulled out of the river Medway in 1888 – but who are they, and what purpose did they serve in Roman Britain? A good luck talisman, a symbol of worship...listen to their songs and see what you think.

(Courtesy of The Amelia Scott)

Can you hear me?

Ten Songs for a Lar presents a series of sound-based artworks inspired by the Rochester Guildhall Museum Lar. Hear how this tiny bronze statuette has been reinterpreted by musicians, song writers, sound artists, poets, and those working with sound, in the creation of ten new 'audio-artefacts'.

The project explores the important role that sound can play in helping us understand the past and present. Can voices, music, frequencies and sounds, help us to relate further to objects and stories from history? How can sound be used in new and different ways and allow for a more multisensory approach to learning?

Through the commissioning of ten artists to explore one single object, the project further highlights the complex and often multiple narratives that museum objects may hold.

What is a Lar?

The Guildhall Lar is a bronze figurine believed to date from around AD 200. It was found in Frindsbury in 1888 during chalk extraction work. Lares (the plural of Lar) are relatively rare archaeological finds in the UK. Primarily these figurines served as household guardian deities and were believed to observe, protect, and influence all that happens within the boundaries of the home. Figurines like these would have been placed at the table, honoured, and confided in, during important family occasions such as feasts, births, deaths, weddings, and before long journeys.

Although there is much that is still unknown about this Lar, these objects are often depicted as dancing, protective forces. The Roman poet Ovid describes how these deities were often described as 'Muta' ('the speechless one') who are required to carry out their safeguarding activities in silence.

Scan each QR code to hear a selected 'audio artifact'



Lunatraktors
Larentalia
Hear how sound can be experienced as a form of touch from Margate based broken-folk duo, Lunatraktors



Quiet Boy
Falling for the Sky
For this commission Margate based Gaz Tomlinson (Quiet Boy) has further developed his 'SAD Audio' explorations of the positive impact that sound and words, like sunlight, can have on our health and mental wellbeing.



Yeji Yeon
Veni Lares Veni
Based in Seoul, South Korea, Yeon's work is both a soothing lullaby and haunting evocation, willing the Lar to appear.



Freddie Murphy & Chiara Lee
A Visit From A Lar
'A Visit from a Lar' by Italian sound artists Freddie Murphy and Chiara Lee, is a 'sonic liturgy' aiming to engage listeners on a cognitive and emotional level - shaping our thoughts and feelings, and inducing physical movement.



Stergin & Louise Fazackerley
Unwritten
Told from the often unheard perspective of a woman within a Romano-British household, Unwritten explores family ties, fertility and devotion.



James Marren (Cyanotype)
Lar II
Lar II by Isle of Wight based James Marren seeks to enable its listeners to connect with this mysterious ancient artefact and with the people who historically took comfort from it.



Donna McKeivitt & Jan Noble
Song For A Lar
'Song for a Lar' by poet Jan Noble and composer Donna McKeivitt depicts the journey this lar may have taken, from its creation, use, and burial, to its eventual rediscovery.



Ariel Chan
Gal Wu Yo! Liq Naa Hhaq Zeq (Gesangsversion)
Ariel Chan's field recorded compositions of songs from remote Hani and Miao groups near her home in Yunnan Province (China) present a direct link to a belief in animism (the attribution of souls to inanimate objects) and provides a living connection with our Lar figurine and ancient Roman beliefs.



Iain Chambers
Household Gods
Travel back in time from the present day to AD 200 with Chambers' reimagining of the lar as a receiver actively tuning into the sounds it has heard over a period of almost 2000 years.



Anil Sebastian
Carmen DCCIII
DCCIII refers to peak frequency in roman numerals (703Hz) which the object resonated most when Anil Sebastian, and collaborator Cherif Hashizume, channelled their sounds and music directly through this tiny metal deity.



To hear an audio description or the lar by VocalEyes please follow the link or scan the QR code provided:



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



THE HISTORIC DOCKYARD CHATHAM



The Amelia

Key & Medway Museum Partnership NPO
Supported using public funding by Arts Council England

Section 1: Uncovering Forgotten Kent

If you have lived in Kent at any point in your life, you are probably well aware of the fact that it is rich with stories - myths, legends, hauntings... you name it, Kent has it! And while a lot of visitors and tourists will laugh these off as fictions, there's no denying that there is so much more to these stories. After all, why do these same tourists flock Kent year after year looking for the very things they claim to be fiction?

Ellen Blean's ghost is said to haunt Bishop's Finger Inn and the surrounding streets, but that's just a story right? Surely? But have you ever felt what everyone feels when walking down St. Dunstan's Street at night... the hair standing up on your neck... the feeling of being followed... of being watched?

And surely Kent's motto *Invicta* i.e. unconquered, isn't really true, as we have been repeatedly defeated by countless armies? But have we actually been defeated... despite invasion, generations upon generations of the original inhabitants have managed to survive and prevail here.

Most of the South East of England rushes to Kent's beautiful sandy beaches - but have you ever wondered why these beaches in particular are sandy? The west coast has the Gulf Stream from America, but what does the east coast have? A Roman God looking out for us? Perhaps it is in his kingdom that the water nymphs have peaceful dwelling.

Do you think you truly know the whole story? Surely science and fact will disagree... but then why is there a nagging feeling in your stomach which agrees?



As displayed in Studio 3 Gallery, Jarman Building.

Stephanie Fuller, *Anthony Gormley sculpture in the Sea* (2023)



Have you seen this person?

Sub-Section: The Ingoldsby Legends

A collection of myths, legends, ghost stories and poems written supposedly by Thomas Ingoldsby of Tappington Manor, actually a pen-name of an English clergyman named Richard Harris Barham.

1. Vadim Ezhov (Chewie Co.), *Rupert the Fearless* (2024)



Don't fancy odd fishes!
Don't prig silver dishes!
And to sum the whole, in the
shortest phrase I know,
**BEWARE OF THE RHINE,
AND TAKE CARE OF THE
RHINO!**

*After all - "hell hath no fury like
a woman scorned!"*

2. Postcard showing *The ghost of Nell Cook*, crypt under the chapel of Edward the Confessor (1924-26)

The endless loop of souls-tainting-souls:
which was worse - the servant, Nell Cook,
poisoning the Canon? Or the Canon, a man
of faith, engaging in an affair of lust? Either
way, she paid a high price...



(Courtesy of the Chapter of Canterbury
CCA/DCc/AddMs/264_177r)

Postcard showing *The ghost of St. Thomas Beckett, Canterbury Cathedral crypt (c. 1910)*

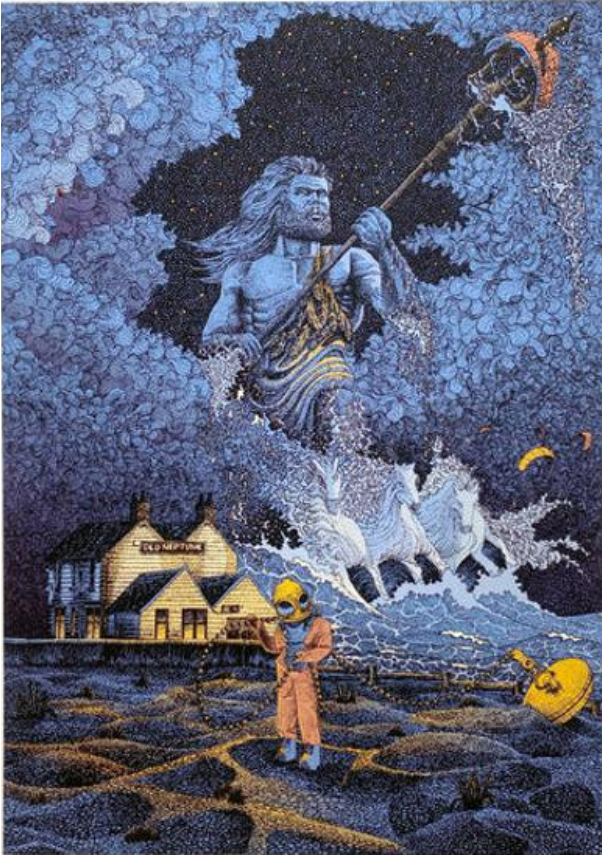


“Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?” were the fateful words uttered by King Henry II which set into motion the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket. Careful what you wish for...

With such a violent murder that recorded knights cracking open the priest’s skull and spilling his brains on the cathedral floor - is it any wonder that his soul still wanders the cathedral vaults, unable to pass over? Sorry sire, it looks like the priest outlasted you!

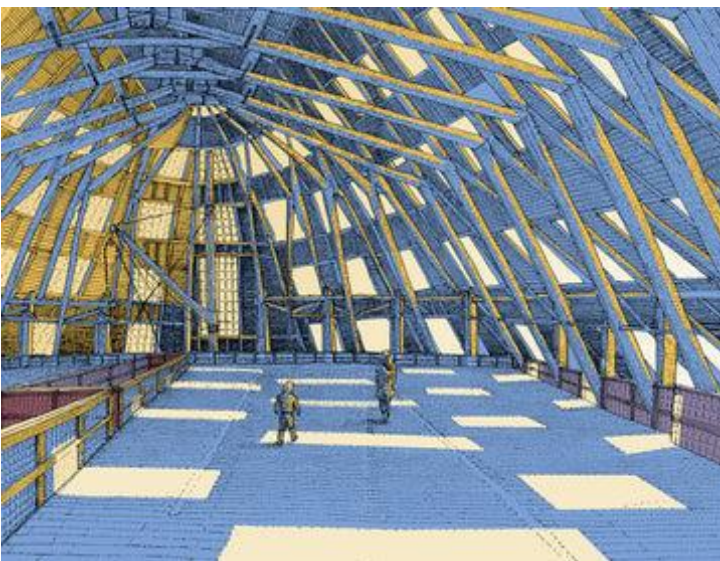
(Courtesy of the Chapter of Canterbury CCA/DCc/AddMs/264_83r)

Phil McKeith, *Old Neptune* (2022)



It is no secret that Kent has absolutely amazing sandy beaches! But why? Could it be possible that a certain someone was looking out for us?

Phil McKeith, *Dockyard Slip 3* (2022)



The hallowed halls of the slip, a place of safety for boats and their sailors alike. The stories told of adventures at sea still reverberate around the timber.

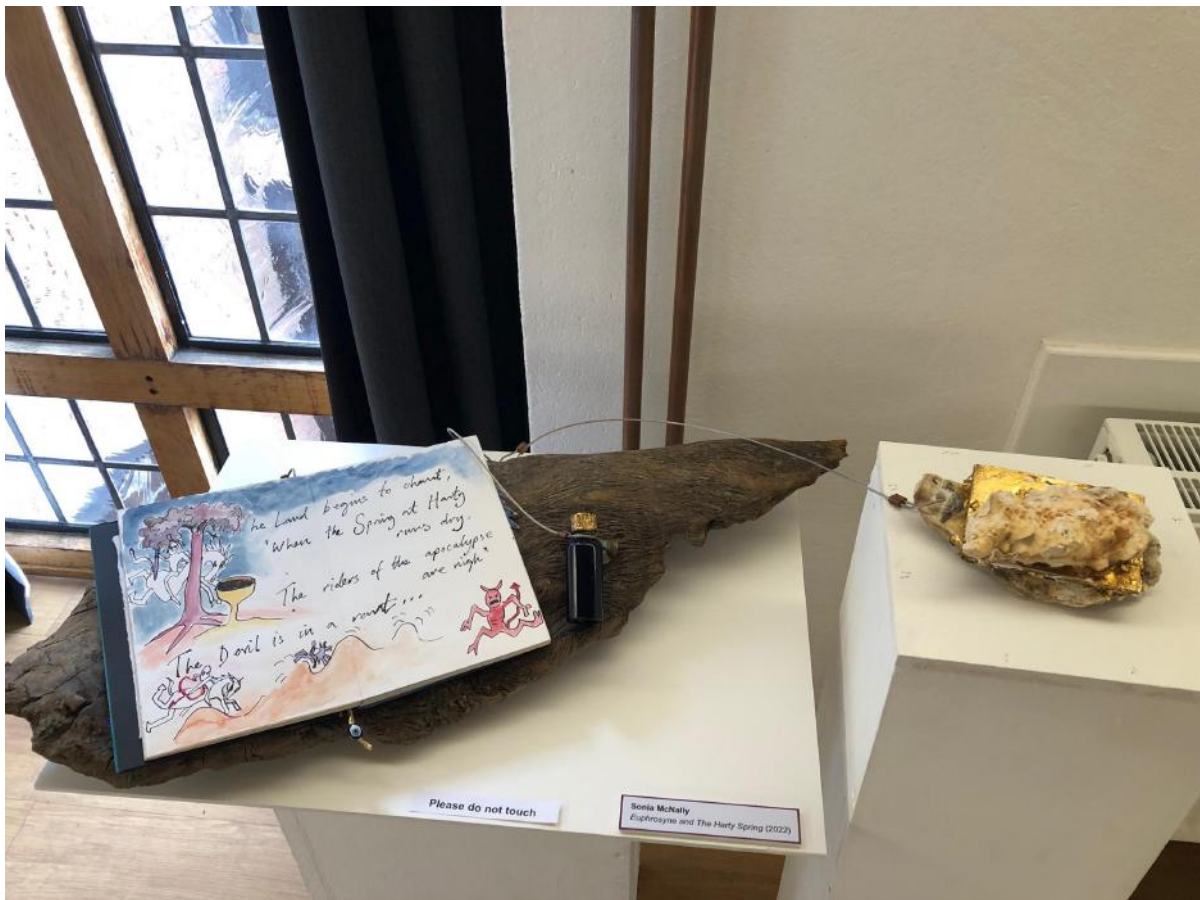
Hannah McDonald, *The Myth of Salacia* (2024)



Whitstable is well-known for its rich oyster diving tradition, and this culinary delicacy can be found in abundance here. We never stop to question why?

We have all heard of *“hell hath no fury like a woman scorned”*, but maybe we should start talking about *“woe befalleth to the poor maiden who perchance wandereth into the sight of a powerful man”*.

Sonia McNally, *Euphrosyne and The Harty Spring* (2022)



You can read the e-book version here: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/mwkuv/mnox/#p=1>

You can read more here: <https://www.soniamcnally.co.uk/project/euphrosyne-and-the-harty-spring/>

Sadie Hennessey, *Hooden Horse* (2024)



(This work was accompanied by a fictional story, and a video).

The following is the fictional story to accompany the artwork, written by the artist.

Bianca

On May 12th 1971, Rockstar Mick Jagger married actress and human-rights activist Blanca Pérez-Mora Macías, now known as Bianca Jagger. The wedding, in St. Tropez, was a star-studded event and set the tone for their wild rock and roll marriage.

All this is well-documented by the World's media, but what is lesser-known is Bianca's fascination with Kentish Hooden Horses. For the uninitiated, Hoodening is a folkloric performance tradition which developed in the working-class corners of East Kent. It revolves around a handmade, decorated, wooden horse head on a broomstick, with a hinged jaw with clacking teeth. The horse has a sackcloth hood, which conceals the man under it, as he takes part in the traditional 'mummers'-type play.



Hoodeners from Walmer Court Farm, Walmer, in March 1907

It is believed that Bianca's interest in the Hoodening tradition originated in the Winter after her rockstar wedding, when Mick Jagger took her back to his hometown of Dartford (Kent) to show her the house in Denver Rd, where he started out in life. The fiery Bianca is reported to have found this expedition a little dull and set off for an adventure on her own, leaving Mick to help his mum Eva put up her Christmas tree in their family home.

Reports at the time suggested that Bianca ended up in The White Horse pub in Sittingbourne, where the Winter Solstice Hoodening performance was in full flow. Customers in the pub recall that she seemed entranced by the play, and laughed uproariously when the horse was

beaten with a broom by 'Molly'. Onlookers reported that she chatted for a long time with the hoodeners, after the performance.



The White Horse Pub, Sittingbourne, Kent.

Some months later, the head Hoodener, a Mr John Carpenter, received an anonymous package through the post, via the pub. In it was this silver 'disco' Hooden Horse, which the Hoodeners named 'Bianca' after their glamorous visitor.

A few years later the real Bianca was snapped atop a white horse in the Studio 54 nightclub in New York. While the paparazzi were snapping, she was overheard to say 'I'd much rather be in the White Horse in Sittingbourne with the East Kent Hoodeners'.

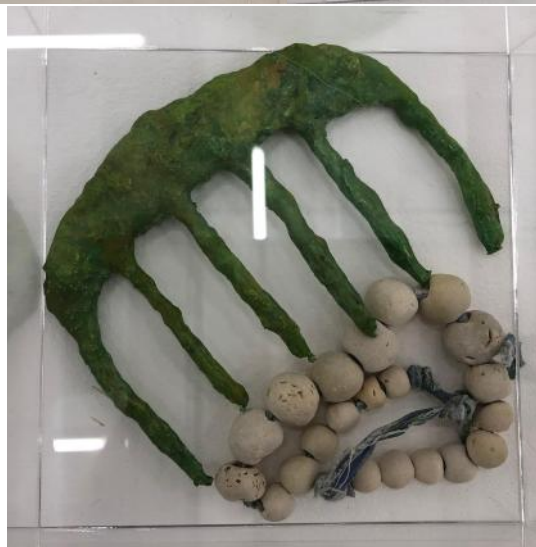


Bianca Jagger at Studio 54, NY 1977

(Video is thought to show the wife of John Carpenter trying out the Hooden Horse 'Bianca', in the fields behind their home in Sittingbourne in 1972.)

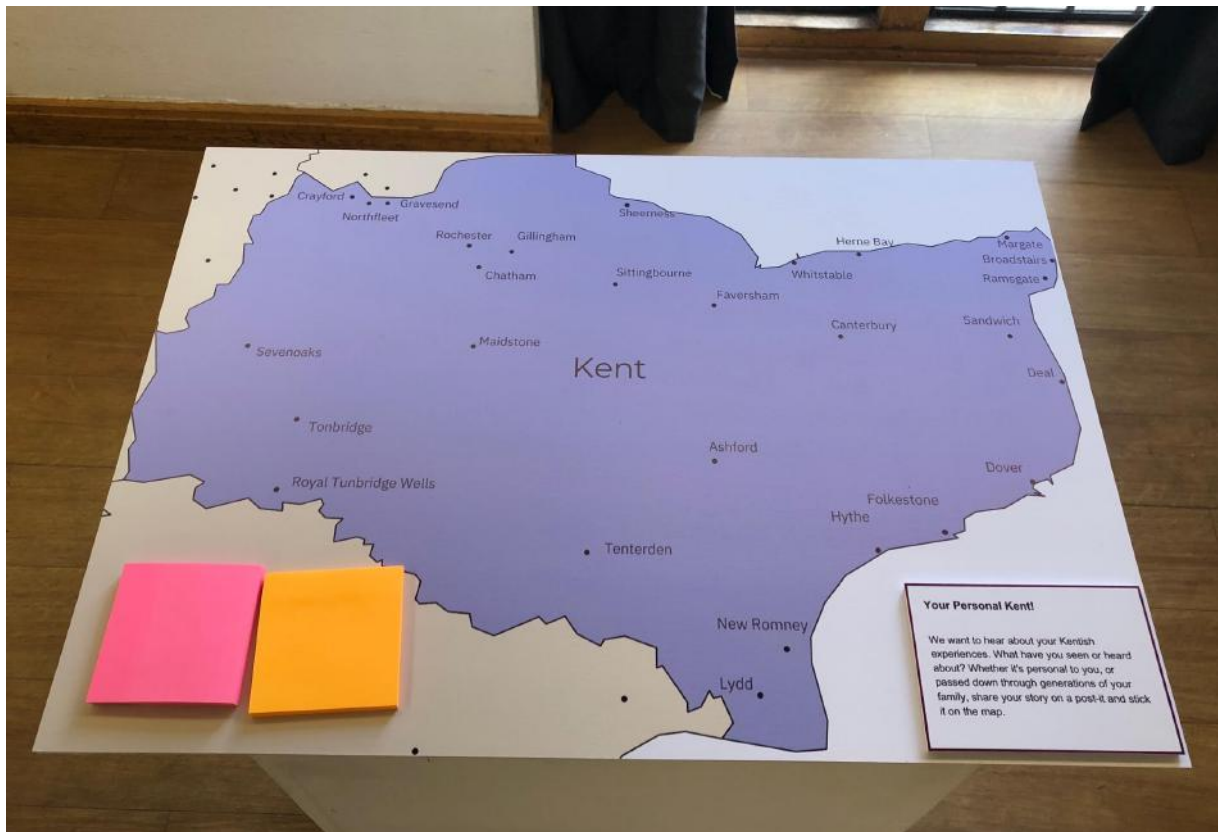
You can watch the video here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EszE-oJMDzz3cQmjZBV0i66HmgasouO/view?usp=sharing>

Sara Trillo, Lomea (2020-)



You can read more here: <https://www.saratrillo.co.uk/lomea>

Your Personal Kent



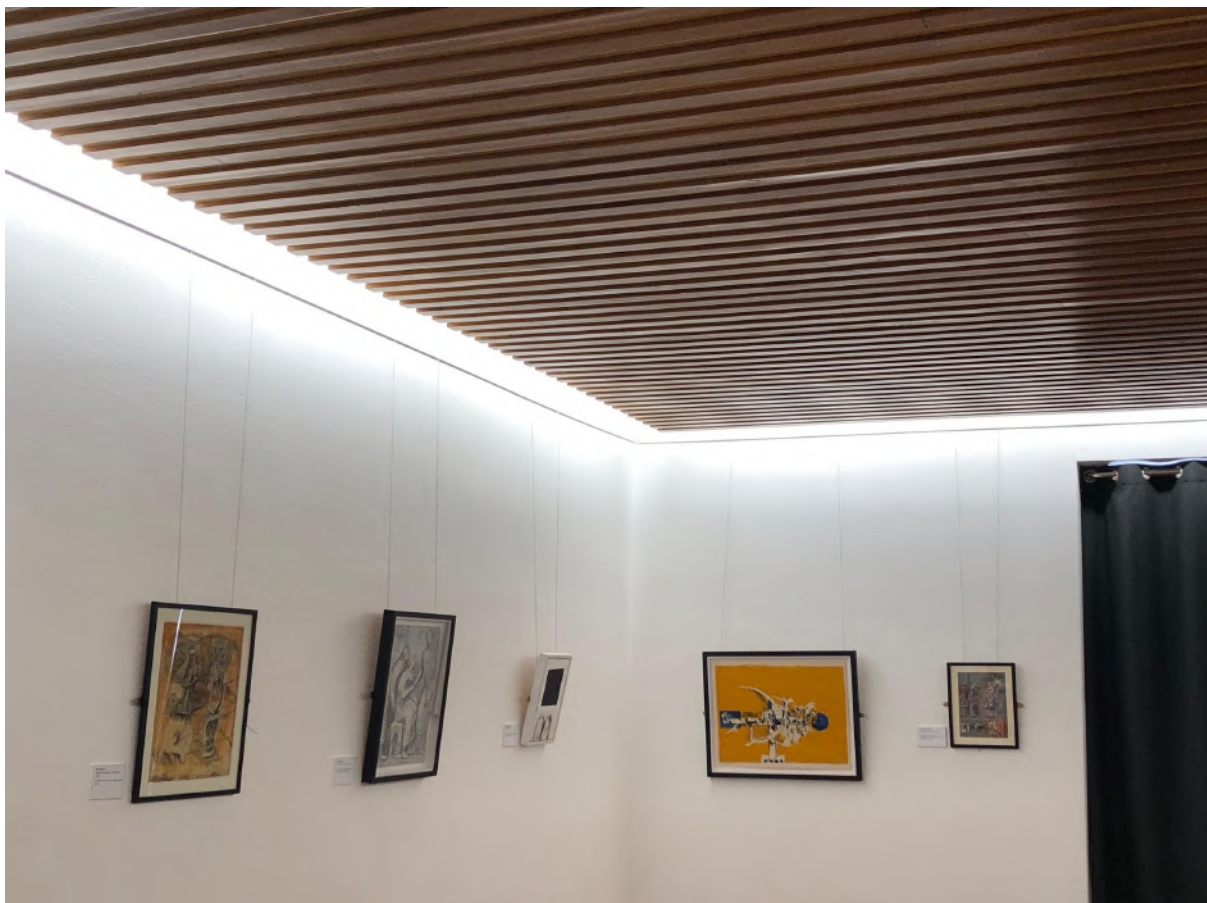
We want to hear about your Kentish experiences. What have you seen or heard about? Whether it's personal to you, or passed down through generations of your family, share your story on a post-it and stick it on the map.

Section 2: Museum of Modern Art Kent (MoMAK)

Paris, Berlin, Moscow... These vital Metropolitan centres recur on New York curator Alfred Barr's well-known diagram demonstrating the seemingly inevitable development of Modern Art towards Abstraction. Yet a recently discovered revision of the so-called Barr Chart shows an unexpected, if belated, acknowledgment of the role of the Kentish villages and sea-side towns in the story of Modern Art.

Vincent van Gogh lived in Ramsgate in 1876, while Marcel Duchamp visited Herne Bay in 1913. Mere coincidence? Or an unconscious gravitation towards the source? Henry Moore lived in Jasmine Cottage at Bafreston in 1931, moving to Burcroft at Kingston in 1937. Graham Sutherland made Trottiscliffe his home from 1937. Both modernist innovators benefitted from the quiet of Kent's countryside to achieve greater focus in their work. Cobra group member William Gear relocated to Littlebourne in 1953, and it was in this village near Canterbury that John Blackburn reconciled geometrical and non-geometrical abstraction in his reworking of Malevich's Black Square.

What do you think about the exclusion of these key cities from the overall narrative of modern art? What was it about Kent that drew all these artists here? Can we see indications in their works?



As displayed in Sandwich-Guildhall Museum

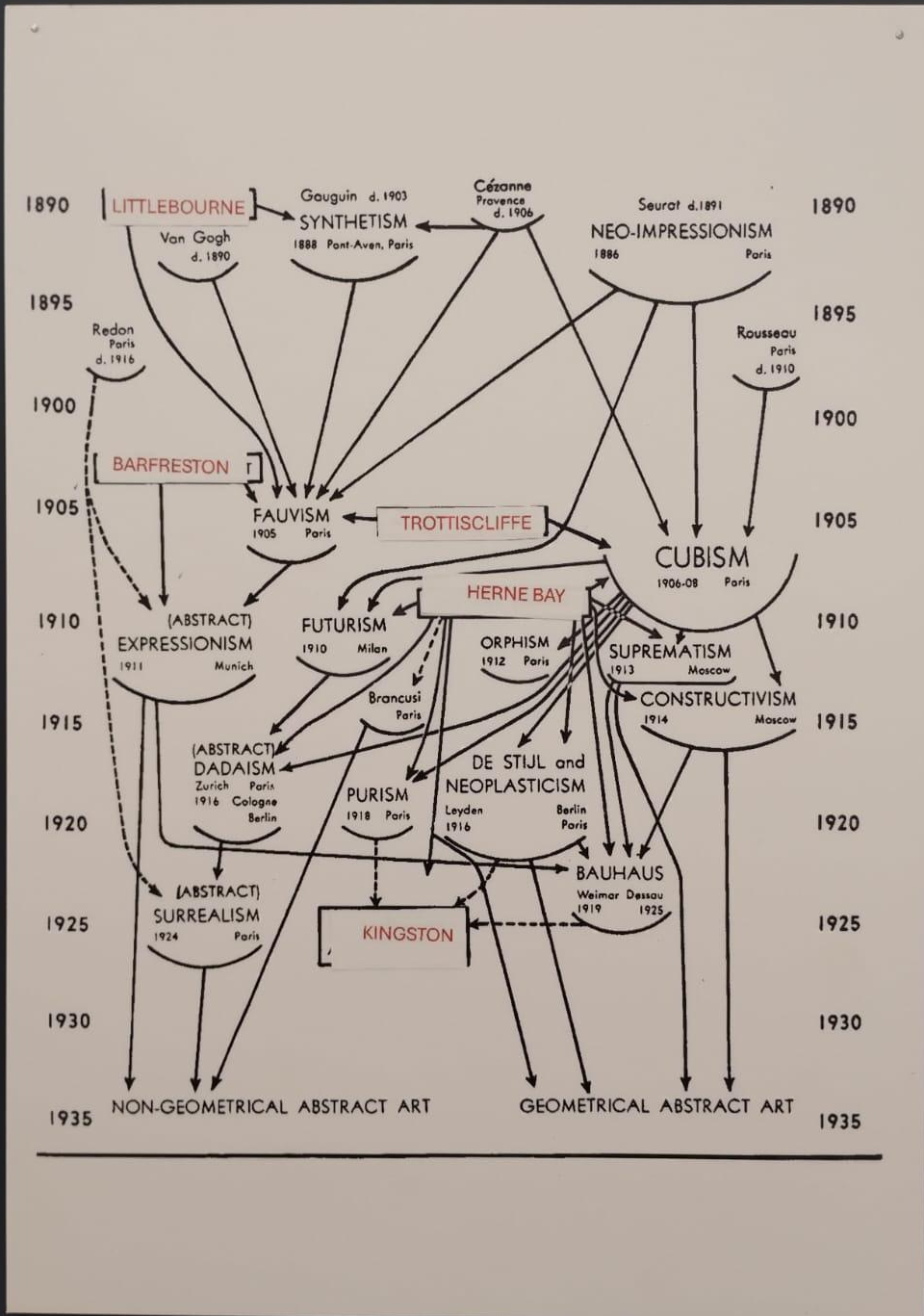


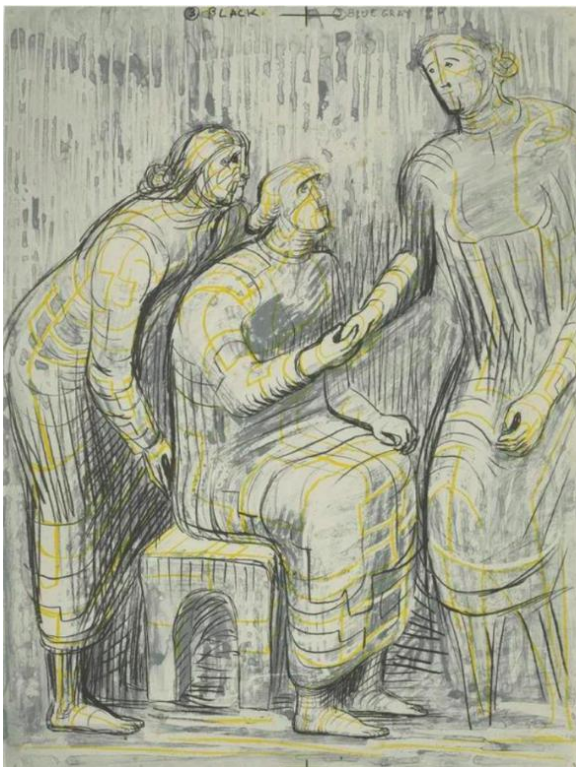
Image of the recently discovered revision of the so-called Barr Chart.

Henry Moore, *Drawing for Sculpture: Two Women* print (1939)



An anatomical diagram of the typical Kentish woman.

Henry Moore, *Three Female Figures* print (c. 1950)



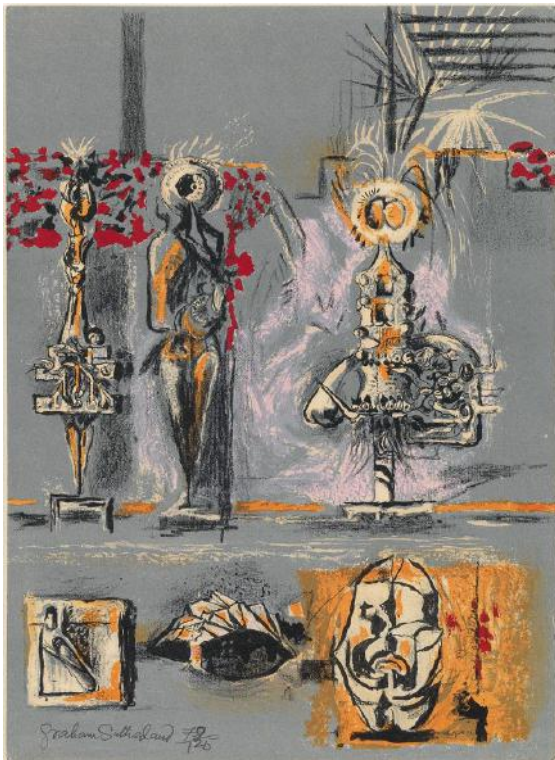
Preliminary sketch for the *Colossus of Canterbury*, never realised.

John Blackburn, *Black Square* ()



Clearly, inspired by Staner Hill, overlooking the Margate Town Square.

Graham Sutherland, *Three Figures in a Garden* print (1953)



Leybourne Lakes County Park in Trottiscliffe, Kent? You can almost feel the water splash off the page...

Graham Sutherland, *Thorn Cross* print (1955)



There's no denying the uncanny resemblance this bears to the HMS Pearl!

Section 3: Secrets of the Garden of England

Kent is not insignificant in the world of Natural History, being where Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, and it has a number of important natural sites, such as Romney Marsh and the Kent Downs. What's happening out in the countryside can be something of a mystery, and a lot of ground remains relatively untrampled. This means there are still secrets to uncover, and questions that remain unresolved.

Did you know that fossils only preserve the hard bits of bone, teeth and shell - but nothing else? Every single other soft tissue element - skin, feathers, flesh-bone ratio, hair etc. - of the discovered specimen is a mystery to us. How then do we say that we know history from this scientific evidence... this mere 30% of evidence we uncover from found fossils?

Ever pondered what the *real* difference between horses and unicorns is? Surely one just has a horn on its head? How can we say factually that none of the horse fossils we have discovered could have had one? After all, it was only relatively recently uncovered that dinosaurs might have had feathers! And does taxidermy show us the true animal in all its glory if only a fraction is the actual animal? What is real and what is 'scientific' artistic liberty?

Observe the specimens on display for yourselves. Removing the context of what we know, is it ever possible to picture what the Garden of England might have looked like?



As displayed in Sandwich-Guildhall Museum

Stephanie Fuller, *White Cliffs of Dover Wildflowers* (2021)



Can you spot the differences in the wildflowers over just a few seasons? What do you think the differences would be like in the distant future?

Sara Trillo, *Going Underground* (2023)



Who were the ones who created Dene holes throughout Kent, and what was their purpose? Perhaps we can figure it out from the bottom of one...

You can read more here: <https://www.saratrillo.co.uk/going-underground>

Stephen Bann and Bob Chaplin, *Jullieberry Downs: The Absence of the Past* (1980)

JULLIEBERRY DOWNS
THE ABSENCE OF THE PAST



Absence of the Romans



(Absence of the Britons)

∴some think this place was antiently called Julham, or Juliham, i.e. the village or dwelling of Julius, in regard to Julius Caesar, the Roman emperor, who had several conflicts with the Britons in and near it... on the height above... ..the noted mount of earth, usually called Jullieberries grave" (Hasted, History of Kent, entry on Chilham).

∴Here the river was forded; here the little men of the South went up in formation; here the Barbarian broke and took his way, as the opposing General has recorded, through devious woodland paths, scattering in the pursuit; here began the great history of England" (Hilaire Belloc, 'The Absence of the Past', in First and Last).

Bob Chaplin, Stephen Bann, 1980

Hamish Fulton, *A Kentish Lane in the Month of May* (1977)



Sub-Section: Fossils

We imagine the Kent of some of these creatures would have been rather different than the county you are standing in today! And when you consider that only ten percent of all creatures become fossils, we have to wonder what the other ninety percent would have looked like!

1. Prehistoric Animal Bones



(Courtesy of Seaside Museum, Herne Bay)

2. Local Marine Life



(Courtesy of Sandwich-Guildhall Museum)

3. Mammoth Tooth



(Courtesy of Seaside Museum, Herne Bay)

4. Horse Skull

Oldest horse found in Britain, or unicorn? Unicorns were sought out and hunted during mediaeval times for their horns which were thought to have magical properties. Surely their fossils would be found without the presence of one?



(Courtesy of Seaside Museum, Herne Bay)

Sub-Section: Taxidermy

Taxidermy is such a beautiful artform - but is it truly realistic? Of course, the outside skin is of the actual animal, but the insides are made in a studio to recreate the animal's body structure.

So how much of the animal is actually factually correct? And how much is 'scientific' artistic liberty? Is taxidermy a reliable source of zoological information?

1. Great Tit



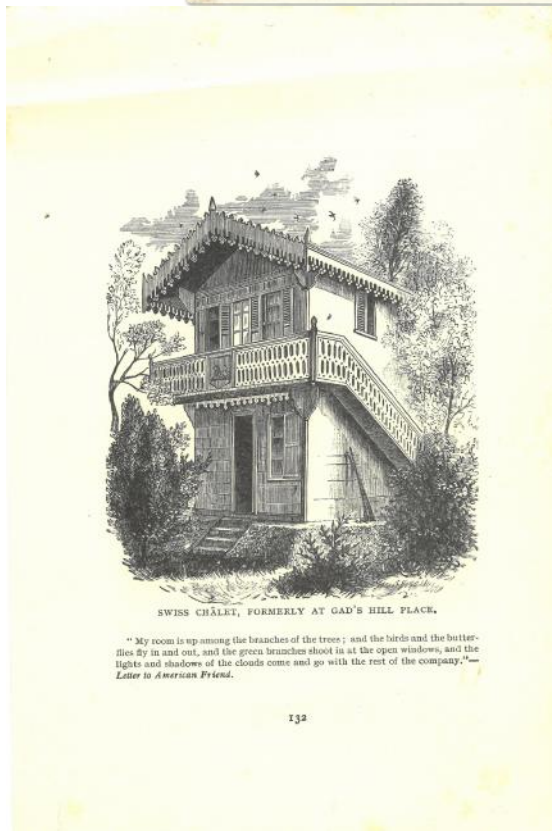
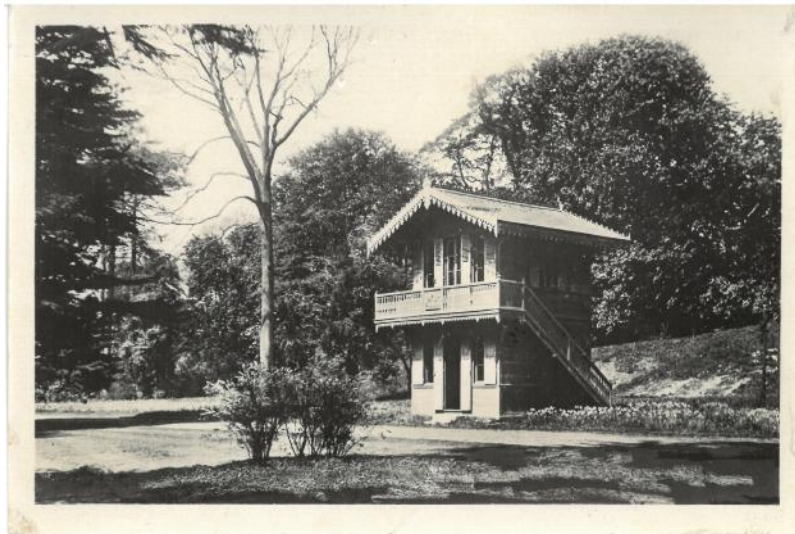
(Courtesy of The Beaney House of Art and Culture)

2. Hawfinch



(Courtesy of The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge)

Swiss Chalet prints



The **Swiss Chalet**, now in the gardens of Eastgate House in Rochester, belonged to the writer Charles Dickens. He would cross the road outside his house at Gads Hill Place in Higham through an underground tunnel to reach his writing desk in the chalet. Dickens spent the last days of his life in 1870 working there on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The chalet was given to him in kit form in 1864 by the actor Charles Fechter. Dickens first saw the house at Gads Hill when he was a boy of 9 and dreamed of living there one day...



A monument that has stood, unweathering, throughout time, simply moving through space. Time machine? Is it such a marvel that Dickens could write so deeply if he had his own private Tardis?

(Courtesy of Dickens Museum)

Section 4: *Kentpan* – Rediscovering Bridges

You may have heard of *Japonisme*, a word from Europe's initial obsession with Japanese culture, and art in particular, back in the late 19th century. You may even have heard of *Japandi*, the interior design trend combining elements of Japanese and Scandinavian minimalism. But have you heard of *Kentpan*?

Never content with what's in front of us, we love to take inspiration (and sometimes more than that) from other cultures. *Kentpan* explores the phenomenon of Kent's intrigue of Japanese culture, spurring collectors from as early as the 1840s - but the obsession goes both ways! Take a look at some of the art on display by Japanese artists - who can only have been taking inspiration from Kentish aesthetics.

The pieces on display work to bridge the gaps between the two cultures, which can be seen quite literally represented in a number of the pieces, such as the balloon flying over the River Medway in Chisato Tamabayashi's work *Airborne*. Another way of describing this crossing might be 'translation': in its original form, a moving from one place to another.

However, things can often get lost in translation. How can we tell if it really is the river Medway depicted in Tamabayashi's work, or know the true intentions of the three Kentish collectors of Japanese goods? We suppose you'll just have to see for yourself...



As displayed in Studio 3 Gallery, Jarman Building.

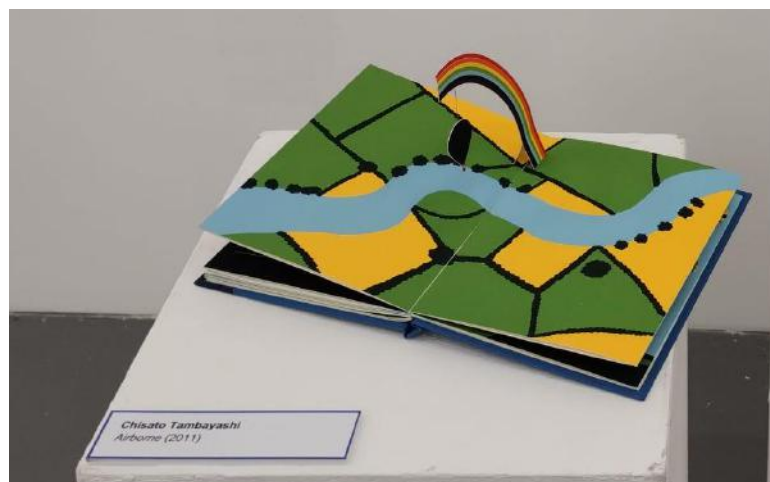
Sub-section: Translation

As we translate works from Japan into an understandable format for Kent, and *vice versa*, we begin to see patterns emerging.

These three Japanese works explore translation through river crossings, as well as balloon travel. Do you see the balloon going over Westgate Towers and Canterbury Market, or over the River Medway?



1. Chisato Tamabayashi, *Airborne* (2011)



2. Unknown, *Oigawa River Crossing*



3. Mitsumasa Anno, *My Journey* (1977)

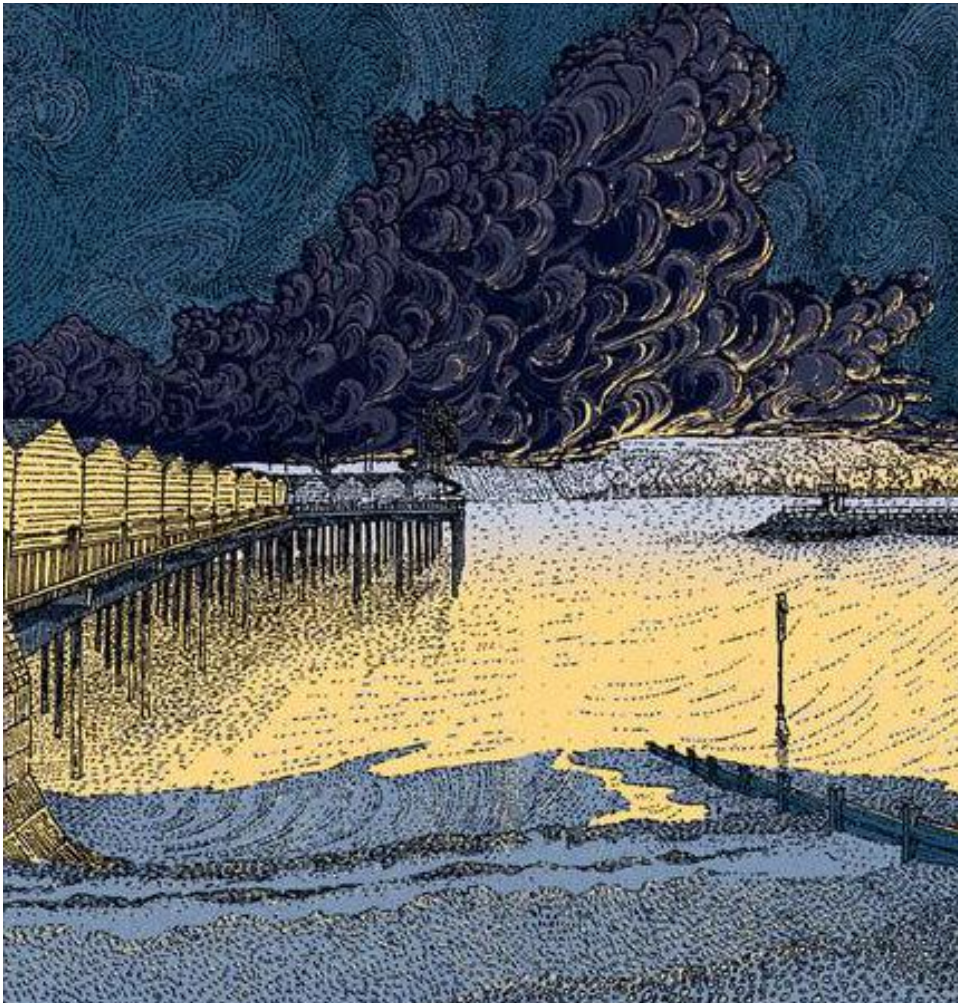


Sadie Hennessey, *Kentish Cottages Krap Kintsugi* (2024)



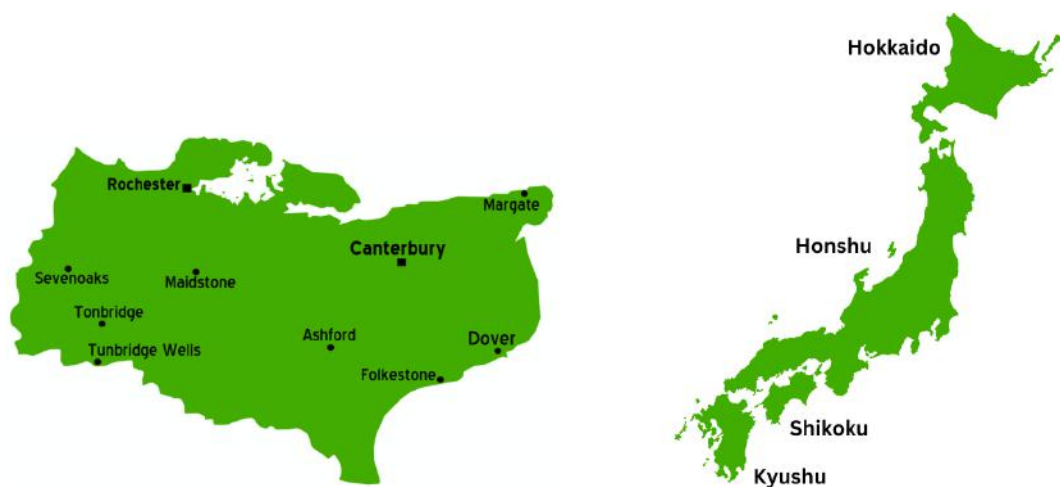
Could we call *kintsugi* a form of translation? Fixing broken art for the better.

Phil McKeith, *Herne Bay Pier* (2020)



Does this remind you of Van Gogh's work? He was also inspired by Japanese woodblock prints.

Did you know..?



- As you can see from the maps above, Kent and the islands of Japan have a lot in common geographically.
- Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island is most famous for its snowy weather as well as its dairy output, particularly in the form of soft-serve ice cream. Kent's northernmost point is the Hoo Peninsula in Medway. The Hoo Peninsula is known for its windy weather, and appears to have at least two ice cream shops.
- Honshu is Japan's main island. It is home to the country's current and previous capitals, respectively Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara and Kamakura. Some call Canterbury, Kent's only city, "the Tokyo of Kent".
- The southernmost island of Japan is Kyushu, known for its tropical weather and sandy beaches. I know what you're thinking...that sounds a lot like Kent's southernmost point, Dungeness! Aside from the shingles, anyway.
- In 2023, 14,125 islands of Japan were counted. Although Kent doesn't have quite as many, we do have the Isle of Sheppey, and historically Thanet was an island too. Including the lost isles of Lomea and Richborough, Kent has at least four!

Sub-section: Henry Marsham (1845-1908)

Marsham was a retired army officer, moving to Japan in 1905, not long before his death. Whilst in Japan, he collected ceramic pieces, shipping them back to Maidstone to be displayed in the museum there.

Sub-section: Walter Samuel (1882-1948)

Samuel's father owned and founded the oil company Shell, and helped support his Japanese collecting habit. Samuel collected over 600 woodblock prints and nearly 400 sword and weapons-related artefacts. During the Second World War, he served in the Secret Intelligence Service, now MI6.

1. Utagawa Toyuhara, *French Churches of Holland*



It's easy for our idea of place to get skewed. Here, the artist is apparently depicting the Netherlands.

(Courtesy of Maidstone Museum)

2. Utagawa Hiroshige, *Lobster*



A Japanese sighting of Whitstable's Crabzilla!

(Courtesy of Maidstone Museum)

As you've probably already noticed, Kent and Japan have a lot in common. This is clearly what these three historic collectors of Japanese art and artefact thought too. The three Kentish men were collecting Japanese items of cultural value all through the 19th and 20th centuries, but why? Why wasn't it enough to simply read about and view these objects - why did they need to own them too?

All three men have links to violence and warfare in some way, making their collecting feel somewhat aggressive - and there seems to be a fascination with weapons too. What were they preparing for? Perhaps they were getting ready to fight for Kent's independence from the rest of the UK, and trying to live up to Kent's motto, *Invicta*.

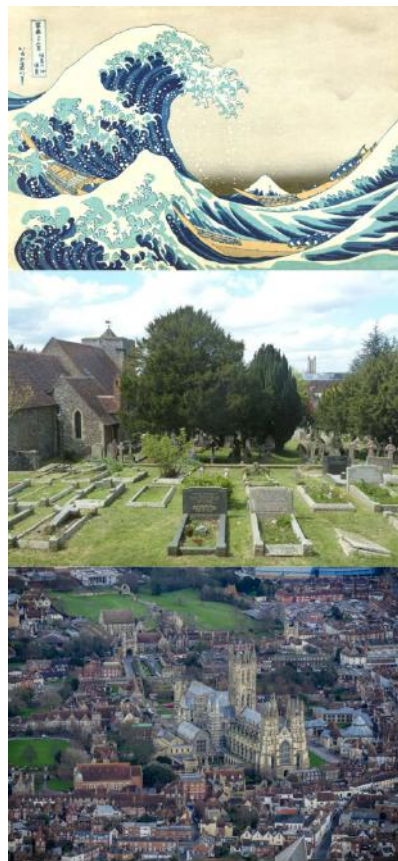
Can collecting artefacts like this ever give us the full story of a culture? Were these men displaying the *real* Japan through their collections, or just the elements that appealed to them the most?

Thirty-six views of Canterbury Cathedral

Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849) created a series of woodblock landscapes, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. Help us create our own for Kent!

Take a look at the reference pictures below, or work from your own imagination. Some of Hokusai's prints didn't necessarily focus on Mt. Fuji, although it was always in view.

Don't feel like you have to stick to reality!



End Notes

This exhibition originally started out as a student dissertation project, run by the last MA Curating students of the University of Kent – Natasha Sasha Viegas and Polly Andrews. It was originally displayed in Studio 3 Gallery, Jarman Building between 8 May – 6 July 2024, and received great feedback from all the visitors (including a local primary school, who interacted really well with the fresh tone of the exhibition).

We were very pleased to be given the opportunity to tour this exhibition at Sandwich-Guildhall Museum, where the exhibition ran between 22 July – 26 July 2024. The challenges of displaying the same exhibition in a new location were very interesting and exciting, and greatly helped us in our curatorial journey.

Furthermore, one of the curators, Natasha, is now in the process of creating a podcast – *Delving into the Imagined* – in dialogue with the artists and museum curators who were involved in this project. You can follow this on Instagram @delving.into.the.imagined.

Overall, we have been very pleased with the successful outcomes of this small project, and would like to thank everyone who played a part in helping us achieve this.

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