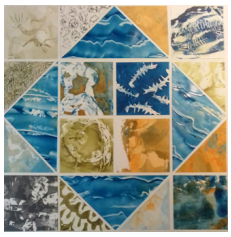
FIRST IMPRINTS 10th January - 6th February 2022, at The Heseltine Gallery: Catalogue

1. Mary Jane Pearce
Commemorative plates of all the major discoveries and key palaeontologists from 1909 to 2019.
Multiplate etchings

2. Elizabeth Piggott
Unfolding Life II,V/E/16
Mixed media

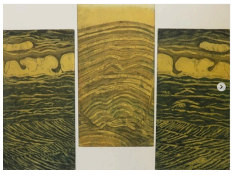


3. John Dew
Professor Trilobite's lecture
Etching

4. Catriona Brodribb
The Trilobites' Tea Party
Etching, engraving, aquatint, softground

5. Sally Levell
Proterozoic Glacial Sediments
Two plate etching/aquatint

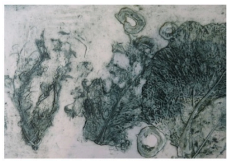
6. Sally Levell
Ancient Stromatolites
Etching & aquatint



7. Jackie Conway
Stromatolites
Etching & aquatint

8. Sally Levell & Rose Bradford
Symmetries
Multiplate etchings

9. Sally Levell
Bacterial Decay
Collagraph



10. Sally Levell *Ancient Rock with Bradgatia & Oak* Etching & aquatint

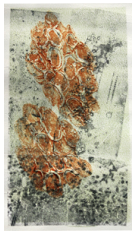
11. Hilary Fox *Charnia masoni II*
Etching & collagraph

12. Rose Bradford
Edicaran Kimberella SP
Etching/aquatint

13. Sally Levell
Edicaran fractofusus
Etching

14. Claire Drinkwater
Dickinsonia
Etching & collagraph

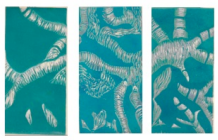
15. Ann Spencer
The Mysterious Ivesheadia
etching, drypoint,
relief printing
and collagraph



16. Rahima Kenner
Triple cloudina
Etching & aquatint

17. Asma Hashmi
Present Sense Impressions
multiple plate mono etching

18. Felicity Cormack
Treptichnus pedum
Woodcut



19. Kathrin Luddecke
Cambrian Life Exploding
Screenprint

20. Jenny Lines *Vetulicola cuneata* Etching & aquatint

21. Betsy Tyler Bell
Trace V & Trace IV
Colour viscosity etching

22. Margot Bell *Trilobites roamed the seas* Woodcut

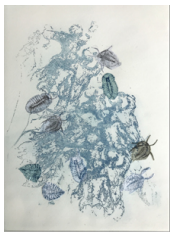
23. Uniz Chuey *Wiwaxia*
Screenprint

24. Uniz Chuey
Vauxia
Screenprint

25. Richard Stephens
Diania cactiformis I

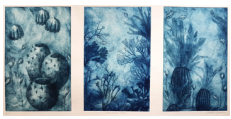
26. Richard Stephens
Diania cactiformis III
Screenprint

27. Mary Jane Pearce
Origins and Cambrian destinations
Etching and chine collé



28. Betsy Tyler Bell *Sea Lily*
Colour viscosity etching

29. Charlie Davies *Cambrian Seas (triptych)* Hard & softground etching



30. Catriona Brodribb
Cambrian têtel àl tête
Monotype, drypoint, hand colouring

31. Elizabeth Piggott
Unfolding Life, V/E, 6/10
Collage, screenprint, embossing

32. Anne Marie Lepretre
Amplectobelua I

33. Anne Marie Lepretre
Amplectobelua symbrachiata
Drypoint

34. Elizabeth Piggott
Trilobite Heaven, A/P Mixed media

35. Jackie Conway
Ottoia
Etching & aquatint Browser

36. Chris Otley
Galeactena hemispherica
Etching with aquatint

37. Claire Drinkwater
Life evolves in the ocean
Etching & collagraph

ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION

On July 12th 2019 a major exhibition started at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History entitled "First Animals". Rare fossils around 500 million years old or more, had been loaned from as far away as China and Greenland, and together they recorded the development of life. Many of these fossils were mere impressions on the rock surface of strange soft bodied creatures and the task of bringing these precious creatures to life visually fell to Oxford Printmakers.

Sally Levell curated this unique palaeontology/art collaboration at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, her skills and training both as an earth scientist and a printmaker are combined here for the first time.

Twenty two enthusiastic artists from Oxford Printmakers were involved, many of whom first cut their teeth on similar collaborative work with the Wellcome Trust in 2016.

In this show, First Imprints, we aim to give more artistic than scientific expression to our insights but still tell the amazing story of how complex life developed from just single cells.

Terminology

A/P Artist's Proof C/P colour proof
E/P Epreuve d'artiste, or Artist's proof (A/P).
N/A Not Applicable T/P Trial Proof
U/P Unique Print V/E or V/P
Variable Edition/Print W/P Working Proof

With thanks to all those who helped put the exhibition together.
At the Oxford University Museum of Natural History:
Rachel Parle, Kelly Richards, Katherine Clough, Dr Jack Matthews, Dr Duncan Murdoch, Dr Imran Rahman.
Nicola Laird of the Northwall.
Isis Framing: Ali & Veronika
The following members from Oxford Printmakers: Margot Bell, Rose Bradford, Catriona Brodribb, Uniz Chuey, Jackie Conway, Felicity Cormack, Charlie Davies, John Dew, Claire Drinkwater, Hilary Fox, Asma Mahmud Hashmi, Rahima Kenner, Anne Marie Lepretre, Sally Levell, Jenny Lines, Kathrin Luddecke, Chris Otley, Mary Jane Pearce, Elizabeth Piggott, Ann Spencer, Richard Stephens, Betsy Tyler Bell.

The exhibition team from Oxford Printmakers, including Sally Levell, who had the vision in the first place. Catalogue by Catriona Brodribb.

ABOUT US: Oxford Printmakers' Co-operative (OPC) has been running for over forty years as a non-profit making organisation offering a high standard of professional printmaking facilities for their hundred members in their East Oxford workshop.
It is one of the oldest printmaking studios in the UK, formed in 1977/8 by a group of ex- Ruskin School of Art students and staff who wanted to continue their printmaking practice in a professional environment. Since then many very able and distinguished printmakers have been through its doors.
Many members are professional artists who exhibit in the UK and abroad.

With an active membership, the workshop has flourished over the four decades with National Lottery funding in 1995 enabling further essential improvements.

As well as holding regular exhibitions, and participating in annual events such as Oxfordshire Artweeks, the workshop runs courses in many of the print processes: such as linocut & woodcut, wood engraving, etching, monoprinting, screen-printing, collagraphy and stone lithography.

These regular courses offer anyone with an interest in printmaking the opportunity to get started as a member, or to learn more from specialists in the field.

OPC offers different membership options and new members are always welcome.

OPC is run by two part time technicians and the management committee, which is made up from the membership.

Recent projects include the Wellcome Trust Genetics Project whereby members were paired with researchers to produce a body of work for a touring exhibition.

Earlier in the summer of 2018 we staged our most ambitious exhibition *Celebrating Forty Years* at SJE Arts in Iffley Road, Oxford. The show featured over five hundred works by a hundred and seven artists, including former and founding members.

Members' work is currently featured in the recently published Oxford Art Book, which is on sale at the OPC workshop and at some bookshops.

Oxford Printmakers:
www.oxfordprintmakers.co.uk
oxfordprintmakers@hotmail.co.uk
Tel: 01865 726472
Christadelphian Hall, Tyndale Road,
Oxford OX4 IJL
Twitter: @OxPrintmakers
Facebook, Instagram

THE CAMBRIAN EXPLOSION AS VIEWED BY OXFORD PRINTMAKERS

For billions of years, life on Earth was seemingly inactive, but in a relatively short period of time from about 571 to 500 million years ago there was an evolutionary burst of creativity that produced the ancestors of almost all animals alive today. This is now commonly referred to as the "Cambrian explosion".

Unlike, say, from the dinosaur era, there are few fossils or traces of early life forms, particularly in the era before the Cambrian. However, thanks to the chance discovery of remarkably preserved, fossilized assemblages of mostly soft-bodied creatures in ancient rocks, it is proving possible to unravel some of the mysteries of these precious forms.

The Oxford University Museum of Natural History has brought together iconic fossil specimens of early animals from all over the World, including the Chengjiang UNESCO World Heritage site in China, as a basis of a major new exhibition:

First Animals and the Origin of Oceanic Ecosystems.

Oxford Printmakers have been given access to these specimens with the aim of bringing these delicate extinct forms to life–if only in our imagination. The earliest forms are mere impressions and later forms with hardened body parts are frequently small and flattened. Nevertheless, as printmakers are used to "pressed" images, these creatures from long ago have been a source of great inspiration and we have reconstructed them enthusiastically on our plates or screens.

This has been a very exciting challenge for the participating printmakers, who have relished the opportunity to meet the fossils on a set drawing day, with first rate researchers to hand, and to then interpret the material using the printmaker's mindset, thinking texture, inking techniques, colour pathways and anything else that goes into image making. (Blood, sweat and tears included). It opened up many intense discussions about such early life forms at the workshop and on many a day the place would be teeming with members getting stuck in to their new work with great passion and intensity.

In this exhibition we try to illustrate the key stages in the early evolution of animals in visual terms, omitting much geochemical and microscopic data. The Precambrian period was a time of substantial global change with at least two possibly three major glaciations affecting the global carbon cycle. There were changes in oxygen levels as a result of the slow but steady activity of 'blue-green' photosynthesizing cyanobacteria, which absorbed light and carbon via carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen into the atmosphere as a waste product. Some of the first biological structures on Earth were these unicellular microbial mats which grew layer-by-layer in shallow marine areas into beautiful banded structures called stromatolites.

Complex multi-cellular life forms with mitochondria, including animals, came into being in the late Precambrian. One of the oldest possible animal fossils in the world was discovered by schoolboy Roger Mason in Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire, in 1957, and was named *Charnia masoni*. Similar marine forms were discovered in the Ediacara Hills in South Australia, leading to

the naming of this time period as the Ediacaran in 2004. These soft-bodied forms are the subject of a lot of taxonomic controversy, with impressions such as *Dickinsonia*, *Charnia*, *Bradgatia* and *Fractofusus* even having been suggested to belong to their own unique kingdom group: Rangeomorphs.

Other forms such as *Dickinsonia* and *Kimberella* show bilateral symmetry and may have been capable of movement. Microbial mats were still common at this time and formed a useful source of food and as a firm substrate for their holdfasts. Some Ediacaran forms (notably in the Conception group in Newfoundland) show evidence of bacterial degradation on the sea floor, whilst forms buried by volcanic tuff are preserved in pristine detail. Elsewhere, in the late Ediacaran, reefs formed by the shelled *Cloudina* appeared, sometimes covering stromatolite mounds, which, were themselves, much reduced in the Cambrian.

The boundary between the Ediacaran and the Cambrian periods, around 542 million years ago, is marked by the appearance of a widespread and distinctive trace fossil, probably of a burrowing worm, known as *Treptichnus pedum*.

In 1909, the Burgess Shale was discovered by Charles Walcott. This Cambrian fossil assemblage, which provides a snapshot of life around 508 million years ago, was dominated by the wonderful, woodlice-like trilobites. Other well-known forms include the mollusc *Wiwaxia*, demosponges like *Vauxia*, 'worms' with legs including *Hallucigenia*, arthropods like *Opabinia* and *Anomalocaris* and strange penis worms such as *Ottoia*. This was a marine world full of sex and predation.

Another important Cambrian assemblage that predates the Burgess Shale by about 20 million years is the Chengjiang Biota. This site was discovered in 1984 by Hou Xianguang and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2012. Covering the sea floor were sea anemone-like forms such as *Xianguangia sinica*, alongside strange brachiopods such as *Lingulella chengjianensis* and the walking cactuses, *Diania cactiformis* and *Microdictyon sinicum*.

Top of the food chain in this ancient ecosystem was Amplectobelua symbrachiata, a metre-long predatory arthropod. Most exciting from our own viewpoint is the presence of the first species that are thought to be closely related to vertebrates like ourselves, such as the fish-like *Myllokummingia fengjiaoa*.

Sally Levell, Oxford 2019

The Heseltine Gallery
Chenderit School
Archery Road, Middleton Cheney,
Banbury, OX17 2QR

@theheseltinegallery
friends@theheseltinegallery.org.uk
theheseltinegallery.org.uk