

James Fotheringham

The Garden | Sarah Wiseman Gallery Annual Summer Exhibition

16th June – 28th July 2018

'The new work has evolved since Christmas through to Spring mainly in response to encounters with birds. I have taken over some farmland at home and have been keen to attract more wildlife. I have planted 1000 trees, let the hedges grow, and let the exhausted pasture recover. As a consequence, we have been overwhelmed by the flora and fauna that has returned to what has been a barren, over-grazed oasis with little wildlife.

I have been privileged to have had a flock of yellowhammers all winter that I have tried to capture, not only them, but the light in the hedgerows. The Coal Tit and Fieldfare paintings are a document of my amazing view out of my kitchen window on to an old pear tree entwined with a rose, painted during 'beast from the east' week. I encounter goldfinches at all my gardens, the environments and light are so important.

My response to this exhibition's garden theme was to keep honest to what I do anyway. I document moments, encounters that occur within these environments. I'm looking to paint in-between the plants, find and create something beyond what the garden is. A sort of spirit that inhabits the garden but is transient.

I tend to work on big garden designs and only work on one or two projects a year. I have a flagship garden in Lechlade, which is open to the public in September. I visit here every week, as we now have an apprentice. This garden is nearly 18 years old but constantly evolving with encouragement from the client for me to document, look for and experience the wildlife. He ends up with a photo album every year containing around two hundred photographs from my perspective, and I get to make paintings in response. This garden has become part of me.

My own garden is however, in no way similar to the gardens that I design and plant! I live in a beautiful house dwarfed by a majestic Wellingtonia (giant redwood) We are surrounded by more rewilding garden and a large pond grandly called 'the Moat' on which I have coracles, which I made. It is certainly not an advert for my design practice but perfect for wildlife.

My wife, Rachel Higgins, is a sculptor in metal and jointly soaks up our environment for her work. Although she would probably like me to have more of a professional outlook to our garden. Our work compliments each-others and often overlaps with similar experiences of nature. Work is life for both of us, and the richer it is for it.