

# Steel Jackdaw

Edition 1 - Jan 2021

An arts magazine with heart, celebrating the power of creative expression and positive action



tchack

[www.steeljackdaw.com](http://www.steeljackdaw.com)



# Steel Jackdaw has landed!

Edition one is the culmination of months of preparation and is the passion project of Jason Conway, a Stroud-UK-based creative professional.

This magazine is launched during a historic time, where COVID-19 has caused the world to pause and people to reflect upon what really matters to them. While many of us struggle through the financial, social and mental hardships experienced during lockdown, Steel Jackdaw aims to shine a light of positivity amidst the confusion and worry.

This publication features the work of a group of selected creatives, from a wide range of disciplines, to celebrate the positive messages of environmental and social change.

We acknowledge the plight of the natural world and our communities, and want to encourage the positive action taken by our readers to do what they can to make the world a better place.

## Supporting good causes

All proceeds from the first edition of Steel Jackdaw magazine will be donated from eBook sales, in an equal split, to an environmental organisation, ClientEarth, and a local Gloucestershire-based charity, The Nelson Trust.

Why? Simple. To do good and to show that any venture can and should support good causes as part of its core principles and limit its environmental impact in the world through sustainability and social responsibility

Thank you for making a difference with your donation!



## A note from the editor

I'm delighted to be able to welcome you to the launch edition of Steel Jackdaw, a project that I have been wanting to do for some time. I have a wide ranging background and active



experience in the arts and have always wanted to create something to celebrate the arts in its widest sense, a celebration of creative expression.

Steel Jackdaw is my dream project and I hope that over time this will help to spread inspiration to others to enjoy a creative pursuit, find their creative spark, to stand up for what they believe in and make a difference in the world.

I also want to celebrate the work of all the contributors selected in this launch edition, each having a unique style and approach. If you love the work featured inside, then show your support for them, give them a call, email or follow their social media, hire them for a commission, buy their products and services and recommend them to your friends and peers.

## Cover artist

Many thanks to Myrn Fisher for her fabulous jackdaw collage artwork, featured on the cover! As a thank you for her artwork, you can see her dedicated artist page in this magazine.

Each edition will feature the work of a different, selected creative, jackdaw inspired, of course.



Would you like to be a featured cover artist? Send in your Jackdaw inspired creations to [tchack@steeljackdaw.com](mailto:tchack@steeljackdaw.com).

If successful, you will have your own page in the magazine to promote you!

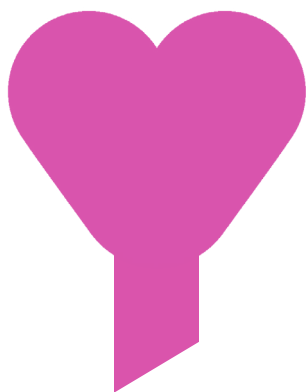
# Mind

# Heart

# Eye

Enjoy the deliciously rich and inspirational work of a diverse group of carefully selected creatives inside this magazine!

# Ear



**CANDY**



## **Abi Boughton-Thomas**

If I had to choose a word for last year, it would be connection. Despite the pain of enforced distancing from friends and family, I have never felt more connected; to my vocation, as I left my work as a Speech Therapist behind and moved full time into the coaching arena; to colleagues and friends, close and distant, getting to grips with digital technology and social media; and most importantly and profoundly, to myself as part of the natural world. My relationship to nature had been one of a tourist - I treasured my holiday experiences in glorious settings, but weeks would go by where I didn't walk the hills on my doorstep. There was a longing I carried with me, that I might have labelled 'wanting a break', 'wanting to travel', 'wanting to escape'. I didn't realise that what I was looking for was just the other side of my door.

Something changed in the first lockdown, with the new found appreciation of an hour outside. The longing was somehow amplified, but I was so grateful to be allowed to walk on those hills, when car parks were closed to all visitors. I was acutely aware of the privilege of living somewhere with open green spaces and wide skies. Daily walking became a habit, camera in hand, and has led to an integration of the holiday part of me to my other multitudes, and is leading to a deeper, richer relationship with the natural world. This growth in me was supported by the work of others - Fi MacMillan, in her wonderful course Outdoor Intelligence for Online Coaches, Ruth Davey's mindful photography teaching, Diana Tedoldi of the Nature Coaching Academy and many more inspirational people who have seamlessly woven nature into their work. All offer practices that are supporting me in building this new relationship - some meditative, some creative, some designed to bridge my outdoor experience and coaching work.

I take my questions out walking and watch shifts in my thinking, allowing my subconscious to do its work with fewer interruptions and my attentional system to rest. I take my emotions outdoors and observe how they gradually settle, sometimes capturing pictures that reflect an aspect of my inner world. I meditate outside when the weather is warm enough, feeling from the inside of me out into a space I'm not looking at with my eyes, but am aware of with other senses. Sometimes I go out deliberately to capture images of small treasures. I also regularly step from behind my camera - lean out of my bedroom window at night to breathe the cool air and take in the stars, take off my shoes and socks and walk barefoot, swim in the river, lean up against tree trunks, close my eyes and listen. I am no longer a tourist or observer, but in dialogue with something immense, beautiful and mysterious. Truly connected.



Abi Boughton-Thomas is a wellbeing coach based in Great Malvern who spent 2020 developing and delivering coaching programmes in primary care settings for people experiencing challenges to their mental health. She has trained a cohort of wellbeing coaches and provided resources to enable them to support

patients across Worcestershire.

As a private practitioner, she coaches for Cognomie, Best Hopes Coaching & Consulting, Hereford diocese and supports the work of Make Time Count. She draws on extensive training including an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology, solution focused practice, therapeutic coaching, and mindfulness. She has an interest in how using images and somatic attunement supports growth of insight. Over the coming year, she will be deepening her solution-focused practice with organisation Brief, but also working on incorporating nature connection into her coaching work. As an ambassador for the Nature Coaching Academy, she is helping run a nature immersion retreat in the South Downs in June 2021 and participating in Nature Coach training. In her spare time, she hangs out with her teenagers, swims in local rivers, walks on the Malverns, takes photographs on a camera phone and plays with photoshop. She is an avid reader, coffee drinker and is usually found barefoot.

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# The Price

Adam Horovitz

In the eighth year of the Trojan War, King Palamedes addressed the Greek Kings, and spoke out against the war. He was taken away, by Odysseus and Diomedes, and quietly killed.

...tattered, ragged,  
blood-smirched, damaged,  
raped, abused,  
ripped up, confused,  
diced, mauled, bent, deformed,  
muddy, spat-on,

hopeless bloody dreams of men  
grown tolerant of screaming.  
No refuge in sleep;  
they see awake what they see dreaming.

No time to keep,  
just more blood steaming  
on the arid fields  
to while away the hours

and that accursed Trojan ritual  
of sending arrow showers  
out among the poppies;  
the only life this desert yields.

These poppies are not flowers,  
but leeches sucking at our shields.  
The gift, no doubt,  
of some abusive god.

I suppose it's only right  
we pay with blood,  
since Agamemnon  
would not pay the Trojans' tax.

The men at least know nothing  
of these brutal facts.  
The trade routes will be ours  
at their expense.

Only a few will live  
to seek out recompense.  
Anyway, money is the domain  
of brutal Kings;

it is our lullaby only  
that the poet sings.  
War does not elevate  
the common man,

just returns him to the mud  
where he began;  
an unknown soldier  
in a far-off field

buried beneath lies  
or, perhaps, his shield.  
The crows eat well  
whichever way fate turns.

Only they will truly profit  
when Troy burns.  
The rest of us  
will merely carry home our scars

and we Kings will be forced  
to invent more wars  
so that questions  
cannot ever be asked

about the indelible truth  
or the murky past.  
We must endeavour, I suppose,  
with all our might

to make our subjects  
stand and fight  
for a cause that is just,  
an aim that is true;

make it seem as if  
there's nothing else they can do.  
We cannot allow them  
to think they are free

and all they must ever be able to be  
is:

tattered, ragged,  
blood-smirched, damaged,  
raped, abused,  
ripped up, confused,  
diced, mauled, bent, deformed,  
muddy, spat-on,  
hopeless bloody men

who will not ask questions

ever again.



Adam Horovitz is a Stroud-based poet, performer and editor. His first full collection *Turning* (Headland, 2011) was followed by *A Thousand Laurie Lees* (History Press, 2014) and *Little Metropolis* (a CD of poetry and music commissioned by the Stroud Fringe Festival in 2015). He is one of Ledbury Poetry Festival's Versopolis poets, and was poet in residence for Herefordshire and the Pasture-fed Livestock Association. His second full collection of poems, *The Soil Never Sleeps*, was released in a second extended edition in 2019. He co-presents *The Thunder Mutters*, a poetry and music podcast, and is one of 10 poets appearing on Cerys Matthews and The Hidden Orchestra's album *We Come From the Sun* (2021). His next book, *Love and Other Fairy Tales*, will also be released in 2021, by Indigo Dreams Publications.

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**Annalisa Jackson**

## Avebury Gold

I love the Avebury stones, there's a certain peace and mindfulness I get from walking in non-urban areas. With my autism and Bipolar the world can be an overwhelming place sometimes and the sensory peace I get from just going out walking with my camera, in the wind and quiet places, resets and centres me somewhat and allows my senses to regulate. My camera has been incredibly important in my recovery from a pretty bad mental breakdown a few years ago by enabling me to do just that. I love the wind particularly.

Avebury is fascinating because there's a certain mysterious power to it. This image was from a 5am shoot I went to, just me and my daughter. It was a good way to have some quality time, and teach her to use a camera, plus I'd never really watched the sun rise from total dark to total light.

As it happened, we got there just in time to see the sun come in over the stone. We walked the ridge on the right to the rear of the shop and around the back to a sheep field before doing the same on the other side.

The telling of stories is an art too precious to be lost if humanity wants to remain humane and enjoy the air we breathe and the beauty that can be found in the meanest of places as much as the glorious. That's the reason I put pen to paper or a camera to my face, it makes me mindful of my present and considerate of the world I see. With the knowledge that in a "tunnel vision society" I look up and see the things that bring me joy and counteract sadness.



Annalisa Jackson is a Wiltshire-based writer, performance poet and photographer. She spends her time trying to start a new business, chronicle life with autism, chronic pain and bipolar, as well as the world in general, in both photos and words. All while trying to be a decent human being and remember to pick the kids up from school on time. Occasionally one ball gets dropped but luckily they bounce.

Annalisa's first children's book: *The Sky Painter* talks about explaining the big emotions of happiness and sadness for small humans via the medium of telling stories and is available on Amazon.

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On the train we were dreaming and smoking  
our skins yellow. It felt hot walking through London,  
all twist and totter in platform shoes  
and newly teenaged legs. Perched on the pavement

outside the Odeon,  
we talked about her brother's golden hair  
until the scramble for balcony seats.

I scuffed my knee,  
a badge of blood on my silver jumpsuit.

Bowie rose from the stage in a crane,  
swung over our heads. Giddy from screaming,  
hands slippery with oceans of sweat,  
we reached for his shoes, skin, shadow.

I thought about her brother then;  
I was turning blond boys into gods.

Afterwards, on the shivering road,  
we buzzed, ached, needed someone to untangle us.  
Heading home, ears ringing, fingers looped  
together, we were Spiders From Mars.

I wanted to lock-in the moment,  
stop it disappearing, all that love.



Belinda has worked as a psychiatric nurse, lecturer and creative arts practitioner. Her poems have been widely published, including: Under the Radar, Ambit, Prole, Acumen, Ink, Sweat & Tears. In 2018 she came second in the Ambit Poetry Competition. She was also a joint runner-up in the 2019 Stanza Poetry Competition. She is one of the two winners of the Indigo-First Pamphlet Competition, 2018, with her pamphlet, Touching Sharks in Monaco (published Spring 2019). She has a PhD in Women's Voices in Contemporary Poetry with Manchester Metropolitan University.

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Belinda was the judge of The Gloucestershire Poetry Society 2020 Open Poetry Competition and the winning and honourably mentioned poets and their poems are featured later in this magazine.

## Hard Frozen Water

In the Czech Republic, in the Elbe River  
Was a stone with glyphs that could give you the shivers.  
The Hunger Stones, as they've come to be known.  
Archaeologists from all over the world have flown  
in to take a look at this strange marvel.  
It seems that the rocks indicate water level,  
lots of marking and cuttings across the hard shiny bevel.  
It probably meant nothing, or we thought that at the time.  
Plenty of rocks have carvings, temples and their shrines.  
But recently it became easier to notice the new rocks,  
the water of the valley slipped like sands inside a clock.  
And so, the people came back to the rocks,  
wondering of the message from a people, forgot.  
The scorching new heats have caused a drought in the valley.  
Revealing other marks on the boulders that tally:  
Massive hunger, lack of food, high prices, bad crops.  
And more rocks were revealed under this stony stop.  
As the river drew back, as it dried to the bed,  
a group of scientists found a single stone that read:  
Simply in German, dated 1616,  
A warning from a time that's been.  
"If you see me, weep."

## Charlie Chitty

This poem is part of  
Charlie's recent  
collection, 'Everything  
Fun is Illegal or  
Immoral'.



Charlie Chitty is a writer who lives in Birmingham, UK. He writes primarily fiction and poetry. His current works include Short Story Anthology and Everything Fun is Illegal or Immoral.

His works have appeared in Alien Buddha, Expat Press, Rabid Writes and Terror House Magazine.

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## Faithful

Watercolour on paper

'Faithful' uses a combination of figures that could be interpreted as nuns or monks of any faith, alongside plants from different parts of the globe.

I attempted to depict the almost divine relationship that people from all walks of life can all experience through nature.

My name is Chisara Vidale and I am an emerging visual artist, currently living and working in London. Inspired by human connections to our environment, my work is a vibrant exploration of our interaction with different elements of the natural world. Working mostly in watercolours and mixed media painting, I am interested in the relationships between person and place.

My practice is inclusive and promotes collaboration and skill sharing. I work voluntarily with other artists, running arts classes and workshops at local festivals and community events. I love working with others and being involved in community arts, as I feel it is empowering and inspires engagement within diverse communities. Skills sharing is also a part of my practice. Over the last two years I have helped run children's art classes that support young people in the development of their skills and creativity. Working with others allows for everyone to grow and builds bridges across ages and cultures, creating an environment that is more compassionate and understanding.



My current work is an exploration of connection and relationships. I feel that the natural world is a place of emotional and spiritual sanctuary. Being immersed in a natural environment allows us to centre ourselves, it protects us at our core. In a similar way, I think that it is important to take time to reflect on this beauty, so that we continue to cherish and protect the natural world. Within my work I hope to express the wonder, complexity and beauty of the natural world, that may in turn inspire protection of our wider environment.

[www.paintedmind.info](http://www.paintedmind.info)  
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# Every Sunset Brings The Promise Of A New Dawn

Daniel Kay

Into each life will always come  
a time to start anew,  
a new beginning for each heart.  
Although the cares  
of life are great,  
the storms of life will  
leave behind  
the promise of a new tomorrow.  
The years will never take away  
our chance to start anew,  
It's only a beginning,  
our dreams can still come true.  
When the sunsets have mellowed,  
they reflect upon memories –  
that sparkle and shine.

As another day drifts by,  
just before the  
purple haze of twilight  
colours the sky,  
as the last rays of the sun –  
disappear from sight.  
The darkness,  
like large, black bat wings,  
covers the sky.  
Something to remember  
with each new orangey glow,  
that every sunset brings  
the promise of a new dawn.



My name is Daniel Kay and I've been writing since 2017. I've got a book out called "View From a Wheelchair", and I co-curated an anthology called "Poetry Is For Life Not Just For Christmas", which is raising money for Birmingham Dogs Home.

I'm in a wheelchair because I've got CP (Cerebral Palsy). I like my poems to raise awareness on equality for all, and hopefully help people to feel more positive.

*'Keep on walking, even when you can't stand,  
one steady step at a time, is enough to carry on'*

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David Bez

## City Heist

From the Dark Cities series of paintings.

Inspired by the global financial crash of 2008 it portrays the Machiavellian machinations of the city raptors as they practice their dark arts of voodoo economics.



Born and raised in Manchester, David was encouraged to paint from an early age by his mother, a fine textile designer in her own right. Pursuing his love of art throughout his youth, David emerged a graduate of illustration from Manchester Polytechnic in his early twenties, and used the subsequent years to gain experience in the worlds of graphic design and glazed art.

Having now spent the past two decades as a professional painter, he works full time from his home studio in Levenshulme, South Manchester, just a short bus-ride away from the bustling city centre, and is enjoying a career which sees him widely collected and exhibited throughout the North of England and beyond.

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**David Nicholls**

## Mend My Broken Heart

I started creating mosaic heart reliefs many years back. They have always proved popular and I have created them in multiple styles and colour variations. Due to their popularity it justified me in making a mould of several different size hearts so I could then reproduce cast heart substrates when needed. Sometimes I apply mosaic to both the background and the heart and sometimes as in this piece just the background. I use a variation of glass tesserae, broken china, repurposed jewellery and found and bought objects.

For this piece, the heart was made in clay, then when nearly dry incised and holes pierced into the surface. The clay was fully dried and then glazed and raku fired in an outdoor kiln. Repurposed copper wire has been fixed in place to give the impression it has been stitched together. I kept the background very simple so as to exemplify the vibrancy of the red heart. It consists of white glass tesserae, silver glazed clay shapes and repurposed glass beads and jewellery and is finished with an ebony tile grout.

It speaks of loss, grief and heartache and pain but also of the love and support that can be found around us. A plea for help maybe? I would overall like to think it portrays a positive message of recovery and overcoming difficult life events. Time, after all, is the greatest healer. We must remember it is vital that we surround ourselves with positive and caring people and remind ourselves that there really are people out there who care enough to help. And sometimes it just takes the courage to ask.

[www.whitestonesportland.com](http://www.whitestonesportland.com)  
[www.facebook.com/DavidNichollsArt](https://www.facebook.com/DavidNichollsArt)  
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David works from his studio in Portland producing unique hand finished sculpture in a variety of materials. Sculpture over the years has ranged from one off, hand carved original

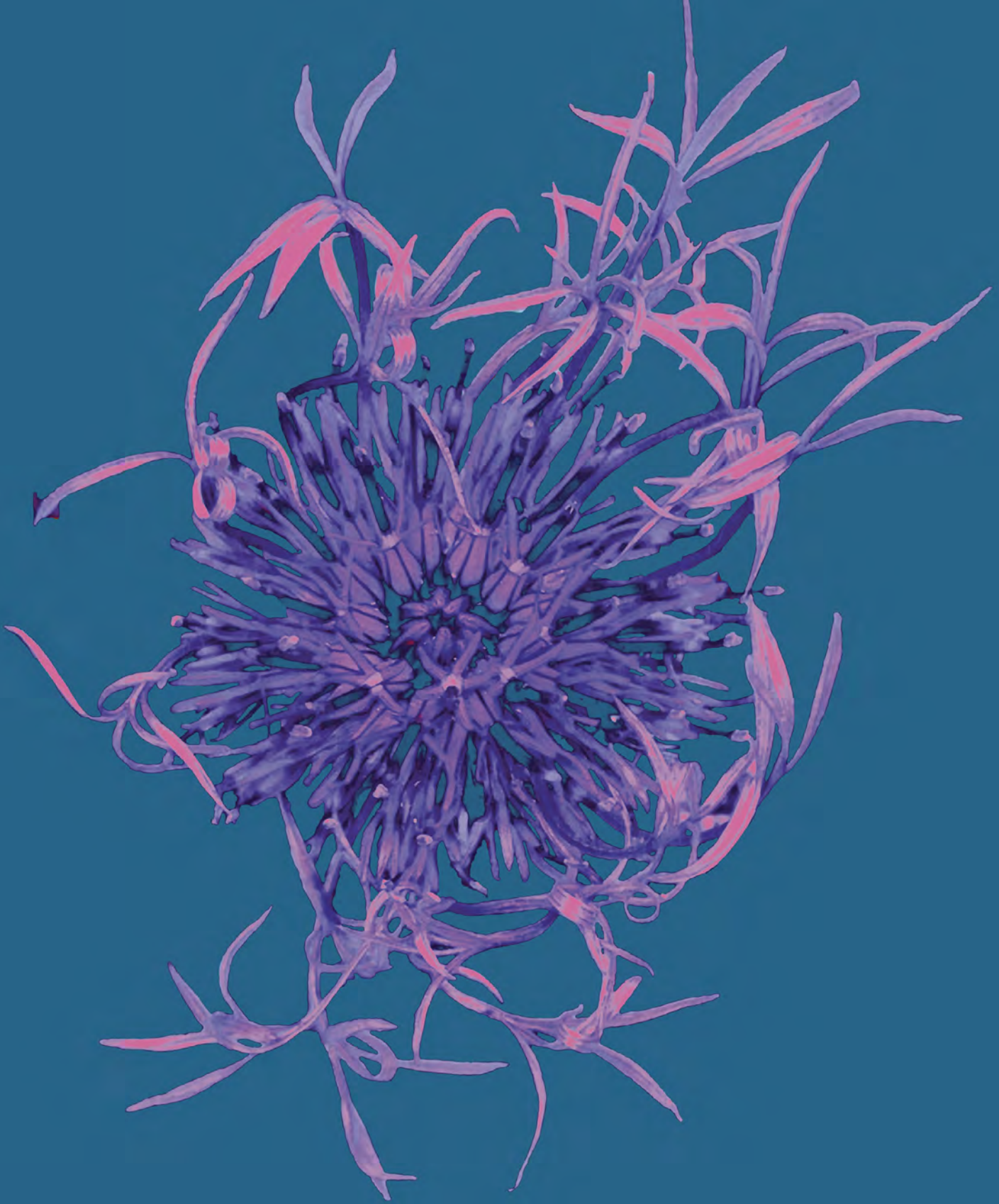


pieces in stone and wood and small editions cast in bronze and aluminium to large pieces for a garden setting. His work encompasses themes such as growth, vitality and nature using carving, modelling and casting techniques whilst exploring a diverse variety of materials.

After a trip to Barcelona many years back, inspired by the masterful architectural work of Anton Gaudi, David's work took on a whole new direction. He had already been using found objects combined with clay to make cast textural reliefs but by using a combination of mixed Tesserae, ranging from glass tiles and dismantled costume jewellery to broken ceramic tiles and semi-precious stones. He delights in repurposing objects that would normally be stuck in a drawer for years or end up thrown away. You could say David is hooked on this ancient form of art and the beauty of Mosaic.

Since graduating in 2001 he has exhibited extensively around the country. His growing reputation in high quality work producing abstract sculpture has earned David various public and private commissions; one of which was for Dorset County Council.

Recent work represents a new direction in his artistic language. David hopes to produce work that is tactile, visual, stimulating to human senses and works in harmony with its surroundings.



**Freda Dusnic (aka Freddie Holding)**

## Spirit of the Dance

Centaurea Scabiosa, Giclee Print

Separated from the ground and set against the sheer blue colour of a summer sky, Spirit of the Dance invites us to join in and feel the delight that nature offers beyond the casual glance.

It is actually one of three identical images in a photographic triptych in which the tiny petals of the wild flower intertwine with one another in a delicate fusion of colour and form.

This image I hope reflects the essence of a Summer's day and the exquisite form of a single flower in the joyful spirit of a dance.

There is a walk on the top of Leckhampton hill with a view over to the Welsh mountains and the Malverns Hills on a clear day, with the immediate expanse of short grassland beneath your feet.

In a gentle breeze, wildflowers like this Scabius sway and are joyful to see. Any one of them is a perfection of form and colour which, though appreciated in passing, may soon become just a lovely memory.

As I capture it's image in my camera's tiny space, it is the spirit which the flower evoked in that moment, even subliminally, - the poignant, carefree lightness-of-heart which is perhaps what is looked for by going for a walk in the first place.

Printed and preserved forever as a piece of art.



I am English, half Czech. I like to think the Czech half is the photographer in me; so I keep my maiden name for expressing this creative side of my character.

On a road trip across America I learned photography on the run with a Nikon and some black and white film. I photographed in the Mojave desert at track events and in Baja, California, eventually spending two years in Los Angeles in a studio environment photographing faces for album covers. For every job, I read up the technical processes required. That was in the 1970's

When I returned to England, I continued to work as a professional, commercial photographer, until taking a degree course in Media & Communications at the University of Gloucestershire, graduating in 1996. Through working as a curator in a gallery and in managing the photographic portfolio of talented photographer, Cavan Kendall, I developed a passionate interest for myself in exploring the subjective relationship between photography and landscape.

I enjoy looking at the intricacies within the landscape, particularly of woodlands and trees. I try to capture in the photographs the fleeting fabric of light, colour and graphic forms that I see - the natural world seen through imagination and a sense of daydream.

I hope also within the compositions to be reminded even of the elements of sound and movement which helped stir me to separate these images as fragments of the vast world, into the camera's tiny space, and then to enlarge and re-present them again through the material processes of print.

A process of revisiting and recapturing the timeless and temporal nature of the natural world.

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## Threatened Isle

Threatened Isle, an environmental art project on Portland, Dorset.

His latest work, entitled Threatened Isle, uses Gaia and Neptune, the mythological gods of Earth and Sea, to highlight this abuse.

A team of local, creatively minded, people have worked together to produce a series of visually striking, powerful photographic images which send a clear message about nature's response to the destructive invasion of plastic in their precious world. From working alone as a painter of abstract landscapes, Ian now recognises the increasing importance of team work and community in the battle against consumerism, climate change, pollution and pandemic.

The photographs, together with a 3D installation, will form the basis of an exhibition when Covid restrictions are eased. In the meantime Ian is working with Plastic Free Portland, a local environmental group encouraging businesses and organisations on the island to reduce their use of plastic.

Instagram: @threatenedisle



Artist Ian Dyke lives and works on the Isle of Portland on the southern most tip of the British Isles. The inspiration for much of his work, since retirement in 2010, is the stunning and varied coastal and rural landscapes of Cornwall and Dorset, but particularly his home environment.

Ian has gradually fallen under the spiritual spell that pervades Portland, an island with a unique apartness. With this awareness comes a natural concern for the environment and the damage it suffers as a result of our throw away society.

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*"I once met a man who told me someone once described his eyes as 'puddles of the sea' which he thought was poetic. I disagreed and thought I could do better because I'm that poet. So, this is what I wrote in return..."*

You said, his eyes  
are like "puddles of the sea."  
Which is to say, they are shallow?  
I would have to, respectfully, disagree.

They're like snippets of the sky,  
I know, cliché of me,  
but I'll explain, you see,  
even the smallest extract of the sky carries with it the possibility of infinity.

And his gaze is endless when he looks at me.

And do you see the way the sky hugs the world  
like that's exactly where it needs to be?  
Well, even though I'm the smallest fraction of his world,  
that's how his eyes hold over me.

So, shallow waters?  
Sure. If you believe there isn't much beneath the surface,  
you keep digging holes at the shore.  
But I believe there's more.

Because it's the ocean that reflects the sky,  
not the other way around.  
The ocean wishes it was that deep,  
not restricted by its bounds.

To clarify, when I look into his eyes,  
I don't see puddles, I see skies.  
And I figured if I put this into rhyme,  
I might be able to make him realise

why puddles weren't enough.



Sit back and don't relax. A multi slam winner and runner up in the 2020 UK Slam! Jemima Hughes is a performance poet who will drag you through the "mindfield" of the unorthodox. Her work emphasises mental health awareness and covers taboo subjects such as sexual violence, mental illness and suicide. Jemima will take you on a journey through her own experiences, providing a relatable outlet and encouraging conversation. Always a gripping performance, she will leave you questioning whether she meant to do that, or whether she needs to go and have a lie down. Not for the faint hearted, but definitely from the heart.

Jemima's debut poetry collection 'Unorthodox' is published with Verve Poetry Press.

[www.vervepoetrypress.com](http://www.vervepoetrypress.com)  
Email: [jemimahughespoet.co.uk](mailto:jemimahughespoet.co.uk).



# The Gloucestershire Poetry Society 2020 Open Poetry Competition Winners and Honourable Mentions

Steel Jackdaw is associated with The Gloucestershire Poetry Society, an all-inclusive poetry society with members worldwide and a core group of poets across the Gloucestershire region.

As Steel Jackdaw is based in Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, this association is part of a collaboration to celebrate poetry on a local 'shire' level and poetry as a universal and powerful form of creative expression.

Part of the 2020 Competition prizes was for the winners and honourably mentioned poets work to be published in the first edition and future competitions run by the society will also be featured in forthcoming issues of Steel Jackdaw.

The final shortlisted poems were judged by Belinda Rimmer. Belinda has a poem accepted and published in this magazine and you can read her bio earlier in these pages, on the page following her poem.

You can find out more about The Gloucestershire Poetry Society by visiting the website at:

[www.thegloucestershirepoetrysociety.co.uk](http://www.thegloucestershirepoetrysociety.co.uk)

## Congratulations to the winners:

**Iris Lewis**

**David Linklater**

**Jennifer A McGowan**

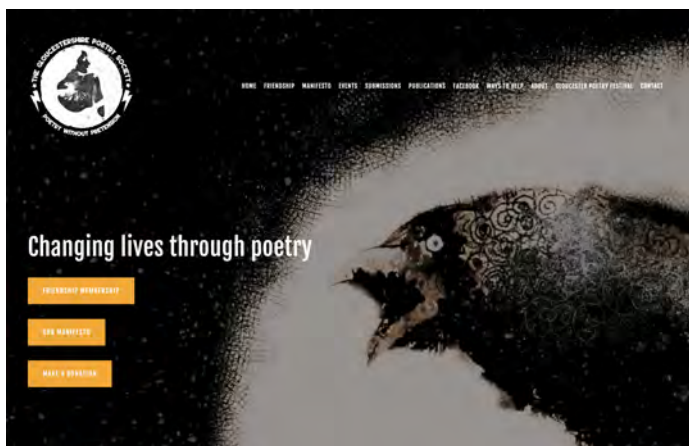
## Plus, three honourable mentions to:

**David Butler**

**Scott Elder**

**Ben Ray**

## Enjoy their poems on the following pages!



***'Changing lives through poetry'***

# The Dark Hill Speaks

Iris Lewis

*After Graham Sutherland's 'Dark Hill with Hedges and Fields' and the corresponding ceramics by Joanna Still.*

My daughters, stone of Preseli,  
lie snug in my womb. They are blue,  
shot through with stars.

I guard them with wall-solid  
hedges, shield them in fields,  
sallow as ochre.

Axes of flint hack at my belly,  
gouge out my girls. Woad  
flows from my wounds.

Men carry them off to be brides  
of the sun. They will wed  
at the mid-summer solstice.

I summon the potter,  
bid her scoop clay  
from my sides.

She moulds my flesh  
into vessels, bakes them in fire,  
conjures spirits in smoke.

Brimming and foaming  
with sweet honeyed ale,  
they are laid on an altar.

I call on the wind – blow  
cloud, blot out the sun,  
cloak light with shadow.

I cry to the gods – spin  
summer to winter,  
freeze warmth into frost.

Lightning bolts,  
sleet spits,  
hail beats.

Grief, like a wolf, prowls over my pastures.

# Poem for the Dreaming Corvid

David Linklater

I have seen many things  
in the cupped hand of God.  
Each soul low to the ground.  
Rhododendrons and lavender ladies,  
the terra-firma of lilac where I rest  
my weary bones after a day of feats.  
I have chased the morning bluebird,  
focused in on needlepoints at sudden  
shining things, tended my home  
with an architect's design.  
I have seen cats kill for luxury  
and though it's in their nature  
I cannot reconcile this with my own  
vision of life as a circle. They rise  
in my consciousness with long tails,  
blind kittens about their legs.  
    The same life-pulse.

Last night I dreamed  
the yew tree was my grandmother  
bowing her head. I was young,  
my flight scattered and unrefined.  
Distant thunder clapped and I saw  
my ancestors, that I was worshipped as a deity.  
What am I to do with that?  
I am a mere detail. My time is short,  
largely unseen and though I am worn,  
split in the beak, parts of me going,  
I am still capable of the most drastic flight.  
I blaze with life. Nothing is so black as my coat.  
I think of my mother, I have her wings.  
We meet on the rooftops of my memory.  
I think of the kings and queens of mountains.  
I think of a series of dreams that I am born from  
    and return to.

# One Breath

Jennifer A McGowan

for *this* navigation  
under *this* sky  
any star will do

We swim around each other  
    curved and silent  
        as sea lions

    nosing with curiosity  
    all the new things

shaping  
    re-shaping  orbiting

smoothness of wet-silken skin  
    eyes closed  
    not needing light

long lengths  
    of each other

    fluid punctuation

we go deep and dark  
not even bubbling a name

and then we reach up  
gasping

and fix the sheets



# Van Gogh

# David Butler

See

as he saw in colour

the contoured world -

chrome yellow, cobalt blue -

the furrowed field;

the dark flame of a cypress

praying to sky's oceanic

turbulence;

the sower's shadow,

the acid green of

loneliness.

Sense

what he sensed -

the consubstantiality

of man and earth;

the static charge of angst;

the cosmic sunflowers

swelling to decay

as suns do.

Then step outside,

see anew.

# The Pier

Scott Elder

I won't say what I saw  
some stood endless some were gone  
rain was wind the wet in my breath  
I dared not cough

sky was heaving before the dawn  
and you? a feather  
a taste of kelp a smell of tar  
I breathed you in and out again

but where were you when the ship drew near  
when shadows swarmed?  
tires burning on the pier  
no one's stirring now

a woollen glove a worn-out shoe  
the plastic leg of an orphan's doll  
I feed the fire to warm my hands  
the smoke is black the flames: blue

# Epska Pjesma for a New Millennium

Ben Ray

*In October 2000 huge protests broke out in Serbia's capital, Belgrade, against the perceived authoritarianism of Serbian government, and resulted in the overthrow of President Slobodan Milošević. The protests saw a high level of youth engagement.*

You wanted to be an epic poem in the drafting

to sit with Marko, Branković, Crnojević

but our palimpsest homeland had forgotten poetry

gifting us only hoarse voices, bloody footprints.

We stayed at your house, frustrated we could not make history:

but you had inherited from a vanished world

distant stories, new borders that tightened round the neck

and a rusted can of tear gas from some atrocity.

Like good citizens we shut the doors, pierced the cap

and inflicted our country upon ourselves

pushing / staring / turning / running / choking / children

vaulting over chintz sofas in desperation

then outside, gasping laughing – you tore your chest open

found three hearts: around the third, the snake was still sleeping



**Julie Edwards**

The poem 'Selene', inspired by this artwork and written by poet Lisa Johnston, is featured in this magazine.

## Forbidden

Oil on Canvas

Looking at nature, natural rhythms this painting is a visual seduction. It hopes to place the viewer into a more 'idealised' vision of the world, although still with drama and tension.

"Forbidden" is full of hope, an opportunity to breathe inspired by the wonder and mystery of the natural world.



Born in 1970 in Lancashire, Julie Edwards (Prev. known as Julie McNally-Hayes) graduated with a 1st Class Honours Degree from Wolverhampton University in 1991 where she is now based and works in her new studio at the bottom of her garden. Unlike so many of her contemporaries, Julie has been working steadily ever since, progressing from large semi abstract paintings that often took on an aerial view of the industrial landscape towards a more sophisticated and personalised, semi-representational format of the natural world.

Julie has had many exhibitions, including many solo exhibitions and has recently exhibited work in San Francisco and Canada and is represented by Gallery 44 in Bragg Creek, Canada.

Julie's work is preoccupied with an intense inquisitiveness about the world she inhabits. She says that, 'I do not endeavour to portray a realistic painting of the landscape, but aim to show the relationships and interactions of human beings within it.'

Inspired by the natural landscape as her source material, and achieved through a meditative painting process or simply through the thrill of using paint or other media, she places the viewer into the painting to experience the landscape. The works are borne out of the accumulation of many references but are always inspired firstly from a place visited as well as; nostalgia, literature, myths, traces, and spiritual response to the ephemeral nature of light, creating something either beautiful or peaceful or creating an uneasy landscape where the tensions are shown by the vast, bleak wilderness of it all.

Currently Julie strives to provide a visual seduction, sometimes a subliminal experience, putting the viewer into a more thoughtful and 'idealised' vision of the world, a form of escapism from this current unsettled world.

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## **If You Want to Talk About Redefining**

trees, take ash – see how its branches carry their burdens. Brown paper bags stuffed with complaints against the sky. A flare of red, a leaf edge cutting at the rain: go home, a pox on your crown! See how ash throws its keys on the field, summoning all-comers with energetic fruits, green as infidelity. How the amber of October lights up the brothel of its trunk, testicles and ovaries slung from the burrs with their secretions. Leaflets flash their green / yellow / red / green / yellow / red stopping traffic on the wind and I think this is how your love grew, shimmying through the arboretum of our lives, spreading spores and photosynthesising – a disco under threat. Defined as more or less endemic. Meaning tough as furniture.

**JLM Morton**



JLM Morton is a poet and hybrid writer interested in the interplay between language, sound, musicality and visual culture. In between demands from her kids for high calorie snacks and wrenching another toy from the jaws of the dog, she writes. Some of this has been published recently in the likes of Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal, Riggwelter, Magma, Poethed, Atrium, The Lake, Good Dadhood and Streetcake. Juliette was runner up in the Goldsmith's Pat Kavanagh Prize, placed second in the 2019 Stroud Book Festival Poetry Competition. In 2020, she's had wins with the People's Poetry Podcast and International Dylan Thomas Day competitions. She's been invited to read / forced her way in to various poetry nights and festivals including Ledbury Poetry Festival and Stroud's Wool &

This poem was written for my poetry residency at Lake 32, Cotswold Water Park. There are a number of mature and veteran ash trees in the Park which support important lichens and invertebrates and are thought to provide a corridor for movement across the upper Thames landscape. Threatened with dieback, the decline of ash will hinder the movement of insects, an issue of grave concern in the midst of our climate emergency.

[www.jlmmorton.com](http://www.jlmmorton.com)  
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Water Festival and last year the Places of Poetry project made a beautiful film of her poem 'Stroudwater Navigation.' JLM Morton is Poet in Residence throughout 2020 at Waterland (Cotswold Water Park), for which a poem is published each month of the year.

Her first full pamphlet, *Lake 32*, is forthcoming from Yew Tree Press.

As a response to COVID-19, Juliette teamed up with artist Susie Hetherington on The Outposted Project. This began as an initiative bringing together thirty writers, artists, makers, performers and musicians from across the Five Valleys to map our collective, creative responses to isolation. This project is now nationwide, involving more than sixty artists.

Juliette recently founded Dialect, a new writer development network providing learning, sharing and publication opportunities for writers across Gloucestershire and the upper south west. This includes craft workshops for Stroud Book Festival and a writer in residence programme.

Darkness cowers as Selene rises, submissive to her ethereal beauty.

Trailing fingers turn the lake to quicksilver against the golden joinery of sky and land.

Rivulets tracing carved curves of translucent alabaster as she stands, her upright body luminous in the pitch.

A shake of her head sprays out showers of stars from her blazing crown, each one cutting a bright pin prick in night's black curtain, to reveal glimpses of hidden forms with their weak light.

Her gaze peels a pale path across the surface of the pewter pool to where, on the shore, a swollen bud waits. Its soft petals tell tales of betrayal and tragedy as they unfurl

Memories of treacherous lips that dripped with deceitful whispers of floral gifts for lovers

She plucks that wretched bloom and clasps it to her chest,

Slices through the stem and rips it from the ground. Its roots will not share the same earth to which her lover's body has now returned.

Its subtle scent held captive in her fist unable to release its spell on another

Each petal crushed as she fights the visions of the sleep from which no mortal wakes

Raging, wailing, she commands the wind and water to wreak her vengeance

A mighty maelstrom that hides her tears and steals the screams from her throat

Night banished, Selene's bitter light extinguished, she returns to the water clothed in the weight of her grief

Every nightly waning a tribute to the memory of her lover's smile.



Selene was written for a fabulous project called PoArtry put together by the brilliant Rick Sanders. The project paired a poet with an artist and you respond to each other's work to produce a brand new piece each. I was paired with the lovely Julie Edwards.

I was invited to her studio to view her recent works and that's where I saw the artwork "Forbidden". The light and colours in the painting captured the mood of a moonlit night with forms in the foreground left to the viewer to fully interpret. I was drawn to the pale space at the top of the painting which to me brought ideas of the full moon and the darker forms in the foreground suggested flowers growing and ripples on water. I felt like I was on the bank of a lake looking through the vegetation at the edge to the horizon where a full moon was rising and throwing light out onto the surface of the water.

This led me to research myths and legends about the moon and the discovery of the lunar goddess Selene. I took themes from the story of Selene and Endymion, which despite having many different versions, has central themes of the moon personified and "forbidden" love. These seemed to link directly with the painting.

I felt the shape to the left of central in the foreground represented a rose and the idea that it had been used to trick the moon into harming her mortal lover, by giving it to him as a gift, came to mind. The cyclical nature then became apparent to me with the observation of the place where her lover died, the growth and flowering of the plant with the waxing and waning of the moon. Selene was then trapped in this repeated routine in memory of her lost love and as a protector of the same happening to any other mortal. In this way perhaps creating another seasonal version of the myth linking the observation of the full moon with the blooming of a flower. An opportunity for a date on which to observe the full moon, as in some versions of the myth Endymion is an astronomer, imagine the beautiful goddess Selene and remember the tragic loss of her lover.



Lisa Johnston is a Staffordshire poet involved in the local spoken word scene. Recently this involved Wolverhampton Literary Festival 2020 with work being displayed in the PoArtry exhibition, being part of the opening for There Is No Planet B 2020, reading at Body Matters, a focus on mental health at Stafford library and as part of Word Stafford participated in open air, public poetry recitals for Stafford Walking Street. She also took part in the community poem for Hope Radio where her words are used in the body of the poem and as the title. She has had work published in two anthologies in 2019, "Greetings" put together by Enthusiastic Press and "One Hundred Memories" from Dream Well Publishing and so far in 2020 has had Pathya Vat poetry published in an anthology for World Poetry Day and photography and poetry published in "Poetic Vision" an anthology from Dream Well Publishing.

Lisa runs the Poetree Project which is a community project to encourage the writing of poetry and has put together an exhibition of art and poetry called About Face, a multi-disciplinary response to the topic of the human face.

You can check out other projects and creative opportunities by looking at Red Bucket Projects Facebook page.

Email: [redbucketprojects@gmail.com](mailto:redbucketprojects@gmail.com)  
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## Louise Amelia Phelps

I work with hand spinning, natural dyeing and weaving. I create tiny woven bowls from plant dyed silks and plant fibres, their diameters are around 5.5cm.

The folklore and medicinal properties of the plants as well as when and where they are gathered are woven into the story of each bowl. I have a collection of bowls dyed with the 9 sacred trees of the British Isles. I also combine my threads into wearable items, a series of twisted braids. Each one has a story with names such as 'The Huntress', 'Ancient Learning', 'Rhiannon', 'Winter Solstice' and 'The Trees Travel with You'... among many more.



During Covid I arranged a community fibre interest group: a monthly gathering of people interested in natural processes and potentials contained in everything around us. These will continue through 2021 as restrictions allow. I have been a student of The Ancient Wheel of Wisdom™ by Lady Colleen Heller for 22 years and now offer her celebrations of the seasons out in the community. In 2006 I began Sacred Land Walking™ studies with her which informs how I walk, gather and perceive the landscape.

I use only what I can find myself walking in my local area. I enjoy finding the colour possibilities wherever I walk there are so many lining the pavements and filling the parks. It is important to help people find connection with, then love for all that grows around them. In 2021, I will be volunteering with a local charity to create a dye garden, help create positive relationships and harvesting practices with those recovering from mental health issues.

Here are some of my dye journal notes:

“There is reflection everywhere, in each stage of making: in the plants, in the processes, within the vessel of the maker and in how we receive what the earth offers.

Did you know there is a name for the kind of time that stars have? A name for the imperceptible arcs of light they strike on our skin? The trees know it, the plants and stones: sidereal. While we sleep, the processes we ignite by day cure beneath tides of stars. There is always purpose in the stillness, in the movements that are not for us to know.

“While we sleep, the processes we ignite by day cure beneath tides of stars”.

With dyeing many processes need a night. I work with the day and with the night. I set vessels to be ready for morning and set the threads to dream within them; soaking, seeping, conversing, until I join them there. The stars shine on the surface. We all began as this, a glint of white light of star, of flint struck on flint, magnesium bright. The crashing of stones into stones that the earth remembers, seared by starlight.



Louise Amelia Phelps is a visionary artist, poet, writer, spinner, weaver, maker and Sacred Land Walker™ with MA Art Therapy. Her inspiration has always come through communion with the earth, stars and elements.

She completed BA (Hons) Sculpture from Bath Spa University College in 2000 and spend the next 9 years travelling and exhibiting her work in Cairo, New York and San Francisco. She spent the most time in the Sinai desert: Bedouin lands where the vastness of the wind and water shaped mountains and clear skies inspired her to create. Her written work has been published in adult and children's anthologies and magazines. She returned to the UK to complete a MA Art Therapy which she completed in 2012.

Today she hand spins silks on her spinning wheels and dyes them with plants, trees and flowers. She then hand paints the silks with copper and iron. She works with the interface of plants, place and people to create braids and tiny woven works of art that create a sense of the sacred that she finds in every step. She shares her skills with groups and classes she offers in her community.

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Top: The Person Beneath...Rahela  
Bottom: The Person Beneath...Aysha

## The Person Beneath

My intent during the project was to penetrate a barrier. A barrier instigated by a piece of cloth based on social, cultural or politically preconceived opinions.

An article of clothing, the hijab, provides a protective shield for some Muslim women. I invite the viewer to gaze beneath and seek the person beyond the veil.

By placing Rahela and Ayesha at various angles, the viewer has been invited to look and look again thus making oneself receptive and available to reach an empathetic understanding of the person viewed.



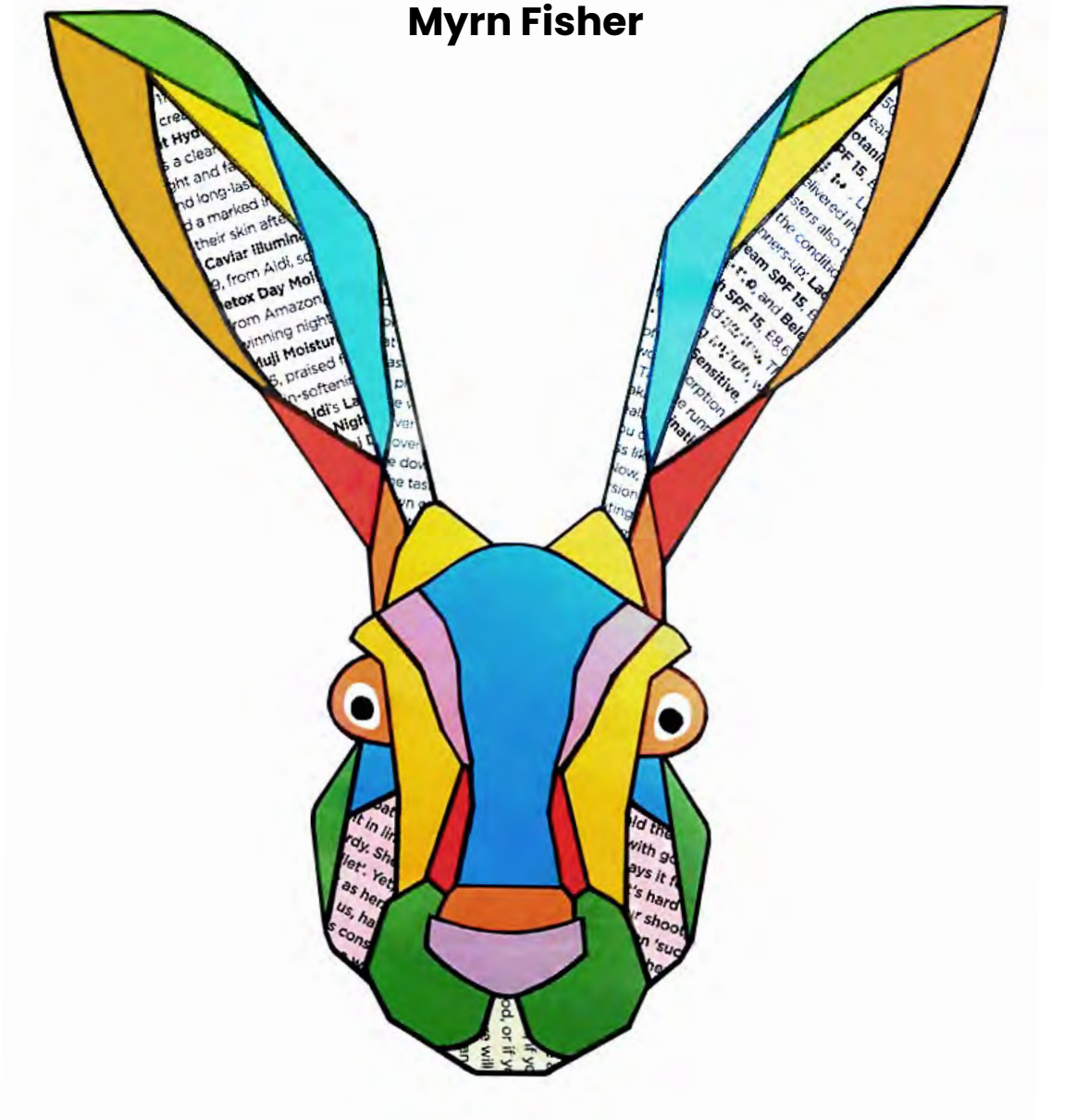
Through the medium of creative, social photography I am committed to education and my passion for issues that I have chosen to study and explore. My intrinsic interest in people has made photography a stimulating, rewarding and natural activity.

I am a photographer who embraces challenges. I am a collaborative photographer who relishes working with people where relationships are established and maintained. My camera has enabled me to meet diverse sections of the community. An integral element of being an effective photographer is learning and obtaining an understanding of issues, which surround my subjects. This challenging process has made an impact on my development as a photographer. My intention is to stimulate discussion and questions, within the frame and outside the frame, about those whom I photograph.

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# Myrn Fisher





Myrn has a love of all things creative, working with all materials. She has never been able to say that she has a medium preference and a 'jack of all trades' is the best fit for her. She has been a secondary design teacher for 8 years. Sharing her love of creativity every day is a wonderful thing for her to be able to give to others.

Through studio3stroud, an art collective based in Stroud, Gloucestershire UK, of which she is the Co-Founder, Myrn can now share her practice with people of all ages and abilities.

Before the first lockdown, she ran a series of creative workshops.

She is also a nature inspired collage artist.

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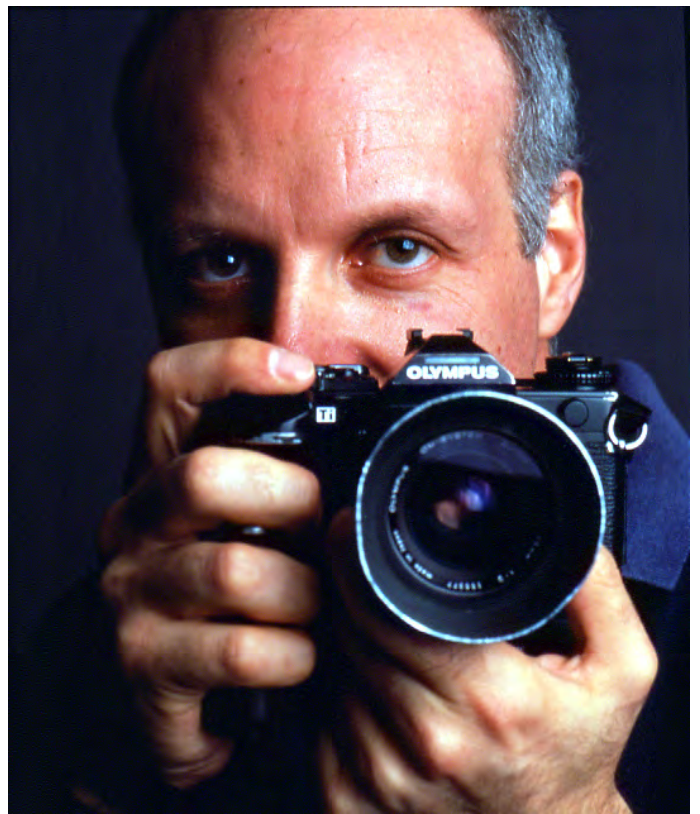




## Larisa

Larisa lives on the fourth floor of a dilapidated Soviet-era housing block. In addition to being bedridden with a broken leg and bedsores, she has asthma. Unable to move around her apartment, Larisa has had her bed put in the kitchen. She lives alone and receives a daily visit from her 82-year-old sister, who does not stay with her as she finds the apartment too cold. There is no electricity, no heating and no running water. The bedpan that the Red Cross nurses remove needs to be taken to a neighbour's apartment where the toilet functions.

When her sister comes, she lights the candle on the chair next to Larisa's bed. Larisa would like to use it more of the time, but she worries that if it gets knocked over in the night, she won't be able to reach it to prevent the wooden floor from catching fire. Like several of the elderly people I visit, she has a son living in Russia who does not provide for her.



Nick Danziger is one of the world's most renowned photojournalists. Much of his life has been dedicated to documenting the social and political issues that define our times in best-selling books, and in award-winning documentaries and photography. He has won numerous awards for his outstanding work, amongst them is an Honorary Fellowship awarded by the Royal Photographic Society, and the Royal Geographical Society's Ness Award in recognition of raising public understanding of contemporary social, political and environmental issues through documentary films and photography. He has also won the World Press Photo 1st prize in the single portrait category. His photographs have been published internationally and are part of several museum collections.

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A storm gathers over this beach in Dorset as we holidayed, in an all too brief, respite from Covid-19 lockdown's.

As black clouds gathered, we stood on this beach, gambling on when the first drops of rain might fall. Soon, the rain fell, in great wetting dregs, lashing our skin.

I am deeply concerned about the effects of climate change. We seem to be experiencing evermore unpredictable weather changes and my response, has to be to champion efforts to mitigate climate change.



My photography and writing explore my concern for the care we give to each other and ourselves as well as the world around us. I am interested in how our identities are affected by the pressures of our lives in an uncertain 21st century.

My work uses portraiture and environment reportage to explore themes of resilience, humanism, self-expression, alter ego and identity.

I like to make portraits of people that demonstrate the personal resilience and identity that can thrive despite the very real challenges and fear that exist in 2021.

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## Panic

One thing that struck me at the start of the Covid pandemic was all the panic buying and the way people just took what they wanted without thought to others. What led me to create this image was after seeing a photo in the news, showing a bin that was overflowing with bags of food that someone had bought in a panic and couldn't eat it in time before it had gone out of date.



It just struck me as a complete waste and that there were people who went without because by the time they had gotten to the supermarket, the shelves were bare.

The Little People have played a big part in my photography journey, well it was down to them back in 2010 that got me into photography to start with.

I originally used them to create a world within a world. I would make scenarios for them and leave them on the pavements for people to either find or walk by without even realising that they were being watched by 1.5" high little railway figures.

My name is Steve Rolfe and I'm a creative photographer based in Gloucestershire. I started photography as a hobby and found that my creativity enabled me to create images and to think outside the box. I first started with the Little People, basically model railway figures that are 1.5 inches tall. I would create urban street art installations with them and place them in the real world on pavements. Almost creating a world within a world and I would leave them to their own devices, maybe a passer-by would see them and find it interesting or maybe no one saw them. As my creativity increased, I created more and more interesting ideas, even a prison break from Gloucester Prison (back when it still was a working prison).

It was on the back of my love and the amount of interest that I had from the Little People that made me go self employed as a photographer after being made redundant from the civil service back in 2014.

I still love to create different scenarios with the Little People and use them more now as a way to highlight social issues, instead of just funny sets of images. I have been lucky to have had the Little People featured in local and national newspapers along with a two page spread in magazine.

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## **Swarez**

This original modern art painting was created during a period of change and amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected us all.

I don't need to talk about how this time-frame has changed a lot of things for a lot of people. So, whilst in lockdown (and endeavouring to keep things normal) I have inevitably been drawn to thoughts of moving forwards and coming through this time of uncertainty with a renewed sense of purpose, hope and motivation.

# Phoenix from the Ashes

## A New Hope

It is with great pride then that I give you Phoenix from the Ashes. A personal expression of being lifted from this most unusual of times and to thoughts of carrying ourselves off to a more fulfilled and richer existence. From the darkness into the light if you will.

## Embracing change

Though I have been working harder than ever before (as if that were possible!) this effort has been for a reason – it is fuelled by a determination to be stronger, happier and more grounded than before. Being uplifted and risen gives way to new hope, clarity and change in the perceived way of living.

## Bringing everything together

Metallic gold shines and radiates whilst other colours dance and burst through around it. I cannot feel anything but happiness when I look at this.

Its creation was equally liberating too; it became what it is in the very last minutes before I stopped after a few final additions brought everything together.

Phoenix from the Ashes is an incredibly personal, and unique, modern painting borne from an equally unique time-frame in our history.

You can watch this painting being created on my YouTube Channel by watching the LIVE Stream here: <https://youtu.be/Iu2IBFvIv54>

[www.swarez.co.uk](http://www.swarez.co.uk)

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Twitter.com: @SwarezArt

[www.facebook.com/swarezmodernart](http://www.facebook.com/swarezmodernart)

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[www.pinterest.co.uk/swarezart](http://www.pinterest.co.uk/swarezart)



My name is Ed. I'm a UK based artist (Gloucestershire) who creates large original abstract paintings that are now being collected all over the world. Swarez isn't my real name but a nickname that seemed to fit really well many years ago, so I kept it. Oh, and just 10 years ago I was delivering parcels for a living. Just goes to

show what you can do with a small idea and big dreams.

I create one-off original paintings; lovingly crafted, exquisitely detailed and filled with an honesty rarely seen in today's marketplace. Originals are never replicated and I don't do prints of anything. I use my own formula enamel paints that I have developed over the last five years. They are unique to me and are one of the key ingredients in my work.

In fact almost every part of my material and creative process is bespoke. I love colour and shapes. That's it – no personal angst or turmoil – just a love of colours and forms.

And I love to work on a large scale too.

I work very hard. Every day in fact. You can't achieve something great if you sit around all day waiting for it to happen. This is the reason I am here. I found the one thing I am good at and my reputation is growing rapidly because of it. My energy and determination is relentless and I never settle for second best. When you buy into my art you get the whole experience as I deliver and install everything personally and by hand.

I'm doing things differently. I built my own gallery with my own bare hands and it only has my art hanging in it. It's a brilliant place.

It would be great to show you why I believe I'm on the verge of something extraordinary.





I was moved to paint this police dog Stark as a thank-you for his bravery and courage. He was attacked with a machete as he fought to detain a suspect.

Start is a gorgeous action dog and I felt very emotional that someone could cause harm to such a loyal, beautiful and utterly awesome creature.

I am now helping his handler PC Paul Hopley raise money for the Retired West Midlands Police Dog Benevolent Fund.

I'm hoping to meet with Stark & Paul soon to present him with the original. With the sponsorship of local companies, I am now selling mounted prints of the original with all profits going to the fund.



Alongside art, my other passion is kickboxing and martial arts and I'm convinced this has given me the confidence to take the plunge with my painting.

I think it also goes some way to explain why I'm so preoccupied with movement in my work. I want my subjects to have a punch, a whoosh moment, a sense of being alive.

It has helped me realise I should be brave, not let fear hold me back, to have faith in myself and to fight to make my dreams a reality.

And so I found myself showing at my debut exhibition in June 2019 with no other relevant qualification than my art with art history A-level from sixth form.

I'm on an art adventure, I'm loving the ride and I'm doing it my way.

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## The Dandelion Poem

Trevor Valentine

Imagine for one moment  
A dandelion seed head  
Perfectly formed  
And I purse my lips  
And blow  
Blow it out  
To the four winds  
And the seven seas  
And, by some miracle  
You catch each seed  
And collect  
And reform them back  
Back into their original shape  
Or even slightly different  
But at least close  
You would have grasped  
The full meaning of my words;  
Both the dandelion head  
And the poem  
Would be complete  
And, so would I.



We are all on a journey. Lifelong. For some, poetry hitches a ride, sometimes without you knowing or inviting it in. It just appears. It can even grab the wheel and take over, taking you on a different journey, to a different place, maybe helping to heal along the way. And so it was with me. My latest poetry journey started with a jolt.

Almost 5 years to the day, at 8pm, mid-January, 2016, the doorbell and knocker both hollered in unison. Desperation. I knew something was not quite right. 'Quite' wasn't the word. My friend and neighbour had collapsed. I was unable to save him.

My head and my thinking, as if turned sideways, needed to balance and understand. My subconscious became an inner insistent voice. Even a shopping list could pose in poetic form. Or so I thought. One of the first poems to emerge from this quite traumatic experience was "I Cut The Lady's Lawn Today", which proved a little too graphic for Facebook, and so it was taken down. But I persisted on various social media platforms, posting every poem which popped into my head. Hardly anyone read them at all, which can be the norm. Like most similar aged poets I think, my love of poetry started in English Literature classes, reading Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Milton, Moliere, Donne, and many more. I also studied Russian and French literature. Out of all this came a love for the poetic form of The War Poets, especially Wilfred Owen, one of my favourites being 'Dulce et decorum est'.

I love playing acoustic guitar, appearing regularly on the open mic spots which are flourishing, given we can't meet 'in the real world'.

Email: [trevorvalentine321@gmail.com](mailto:trevorvalentine321@gmail.com)

In a crag-tooth cave  
of steam echo drips  
I crunch up to chitters  
and pull back curtains

From the window rivers  
descend as masks  
early bird noses stuck out  
catching conversation

I hear crows on the path  
a dog ventilating  
on a two metro cord  
friends slapping shoulders

Behind, the radio flares  
I'm blinded by news  
another lie to ignore  
safely gaslit indoors



'Z. D. Dicks holds an MA in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of Gloucestershire.

He often works with other poets locally and nationally to create events and to work on poetry projects.

In 2016 he founded the Gloucestershire Poetry Society and the Gloucester Poetry Festival.

He has had his work accepted by many publications including Ink, Sweat and Tears, Sarasvati, Obsessed with Pipework, Three Drops from a Cauldron, Words from the Wild, Outlaw Poetry, Fresh Air Poetry, I am not a silent poet, As it Ought to Be, Nymphs, and Stride (plus many more and anthologies).

He currently has two collections 'Malcontent' and 'Intimate Nature' with Black Eyes publishing (2019) and one 'Vexed' with Hedgehog Poetry Press (2020).

Dicks has a keen interest in imagistic poetry and his work has been described 'muscular language' by Helen Ivory and has himself been described as 'a gothic Seamus Heaney' by Anna Saunders.

In 2019 he was appointed Gloucestershire Poet Laureate and works in various settings to promote poetry.'

[www.facebook.com/TheGloucestershirePoetLaureate](https://www.facebook.com/TheGloucestershirePoetLaureate)

Twitter.com: @ZiggyPoet

[www.apexpoetry.uk](http://www.apexpoetry.uk)

[www.gloucesterpoetryfestival.uk](http://www.gloucesterpoetryfestival.uk)

# Thank You!

I'm delighted at the first edition of Steel Jackdaw Magazine, for its depth, diversity and quality. I'd like to thank all of the successful artists in being included in this publication and helping to make it such a wonderful celebration of creative expression.

Thank you, also, to everyone that submitted their work for consideration. It was a tough choice to make the final selection and you all helped in raising the bar for the final choices!

Thanks also to Lucy Negus of Peacock Strut Digital Marketing for proofreading the magazine:

[www.facebook.com/peacockstrutmarketing](http://www.facebook.com/peacockstrutmarketing)

Thanks to Myrn Fisher for her fabulous cover artwork.

Thank you to all of you that have 'donated to download' this first edition. All of your donations will be split equally between the two charity partners, ClientEarth and The Nelson Trust. Your payments will make a real difference in protecting the environment and supporting vulnerable women in Gloucestershire, respectively.

My last thank you goes out to my parents, Peter and Pauline Conway, who encouraged me to go to art college, after doing so badly in my final exams at school. Without their support, I would not have followed my wonderfully artistic and expressive journey as a creative spirit and to flourish through experimentation and learning.

*Jason Conway*  
*Editor of Steel Jackdaw*

# SJ Edition 2 Out in April

Steel Jackdaw will become a quarterly publication and the second edition will be out in April. To stay informed about the magazine, please bookmark the new website and sign up to the newsletter at [www.steeljackdaw.com](http://www.steeljackdaw.com).

Please support the creatives featured in this magazine, however you can. Share their links with your contacts, buy their work for you or your friends, or commission them for your business or organisation.

Steel Jackdaw will become a for-profit magazine going forward but a percentage of all submission payments and magazine purchases will go to both charity partners.

This is a new magazine, in its infancy, so please show your support by sharing the news about the launch of Steel Jackdaw with your friends and contacts.

If you're a creative and would like to contribute, please visit the website for details of each editions submission window.

There are more planned additions to Steel Jackdaw in forthcoming editions and lots of ideas too and the magazine will hopefully evolve into a respected art's publication, locally, nationally and internationally.

Big dreams, made real, always start small. This small seed of a magazine has been planted with love, nourished by creative content and will thrive through the care of nurturing readers. This magazine can spread its roots far and wide and create a network of people committed to supporting the arts and creativity. People making personal commitments, through positive action, to do good, to spread love and cultivate compassion in the world.

*During the COVID-19  
Pandemic and  
lockdown, we have  
been given the gift  
of reflection, to  
realise and focus  
upon what really  
matters to us; our  
physical and  
mental health, our  
loved ones, family  
and friends, our  
local communities  
and the joy and  
value of the natural  
world.*

*Let's use that  
reflection to build  
and nurture  
connections and  
create our own  
positive change.*



## **Steel Jackdaw**

An arts magazine with heart, celebrating the power of  
creative expression and positive action

[www.steeljackdaw.com](http://www.steeljackdaw.com)