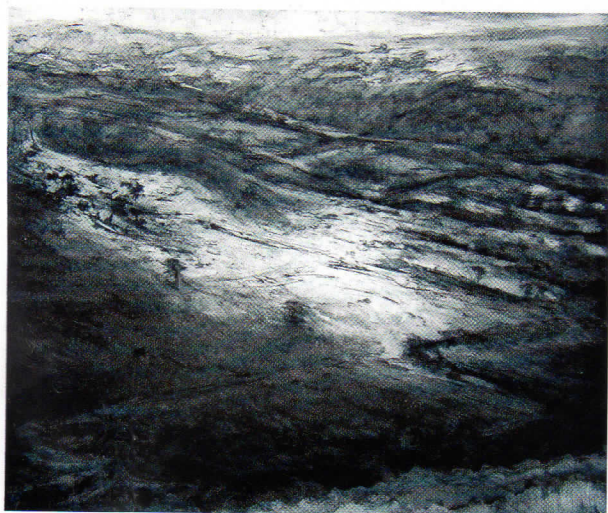


# DARTMOOR IMPRESSIONS

*Kari McGowan meets  
three printmakers*



TOP Anita Reynolds 'Wistman's in Mid Winter' (drypoint print)  
ABOVE Mary Needham 'Wistman's Wood' (collagraph)  
LEFT Mary Gillett 'Breakthrough over Doetor Farm' (etching)

The word 'print' has many meanings: to use capital letters, type set in written material, repeat patterns, multiplied images created from cut surfaces such as polystyrene or potato and, of course, the mass production of photographs and art reproductions. A definitive description of an original print as opposed to a reproduction is elusive in that many contemporary printmakers use photography and computer-generated imagery in their work. What is generally acknowledged as printmaking is a process whereby – however the artist arrives at the final printed image – they have determined and orchestrated the process from the making of a matrix (be it a plate, block or screen) to a resulting printed image.

There is a unique magic to the printmaking processes. An idea is conceived, designs made, problems explored, resolved and an image to print created by any of many means onto a 'plate'. So far, so practical. Once the surface to be printed upon is placed upon the inked plate or matrix, a curtain closes behind which the magic of the process occurs. The unseen image transfer is the work of another agency, pressure – hand applied or by using a printing press. The

patient, deliberate construction of the inked plate gives way to a moment of held breath. The result can disappoint, challenge, delight and enchant. There is an irresistible mystery contained within this process of ritual and alchemy.

Printmaking methods are diverse and experimental. A creative use of methods and materials provides unique marks unobtainable through direct drawing or painting and that 'one remove' provided by the image transfer process gives to the finished image a very special quality.

Briefly – a few ways of working! In the 'relief' printing process, the artist works on a block of material, cutting away at the surface leaving a raised area to receive ink from a roller. The image thus created is transferred to paper using a press or hand burnishing. Relief techniques include woodcut, wood engraving and lino cut.

'Intaglio' printing methods involve incising an image into a surface plate with a pointed tool. When ink is applied to the surface and removed, the incised grooves retain the ink: an image resulting when plate and dampened paper are run through a press. The 'intaglio' techniques include

engraving, drypoint, aquatint, mezzotint and etching.

**Monotype**, a flexible process most closely resembling painting in that ink or paint is applied directly to and manipulated upon a plate creating an image, printed onto paper by hand or press. A 'one of a kind' image results, imparting no permanent trace upon the plate. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, a **monoprint** combines a re-usable matrix with another process to produce a single 'one of a kind' image but which, because of some permanent features on the plate, can be reused not to produce an identical result, but rather variations upon a theme.

A **collagraph** is printed from a plate built up using textured, collaged materials upon which ink is applied and manipulated and the image transferred to paper by hand or press.

**MARY GILLETT** is an award-winning printmaker, painter and teacher running popular courses at her Tamar Print Workshop. The starting point for her atmospheric work is frequently Dartmoor. She describes her images as, 'contemplations on how our surroundings can reflect our histories, our moods and





Anita Reynolds 'Three Copses of Wistman's Wood' (drypoint print)

our thoughts'. Specialising in etching, she sees it as 'a medium developed by artists for its own intrinsic qualities, often used to produce single images as individual as paintings'. She describes her etchings as having been 'eroded by the elements themselves. The metal plates have been scored, furrowed, scraped, burnished rescored and re-furrowed until their history is symbolic of the very subject that confronts me. This tactile immediacy is of the essence and with the use of light and dark, creates images of intense atmosphere. My oil and pastel paintings are informed by the etchings but lighter in feel.' Working on a larger scale, Mary applies etching principles to collagraph, influenced by an abiding love of painting. It has been observed that her ability is to depict the unique light of the moor, capturing moments when a shard of brightness breaks through cloud; also that subdued colour reflects her experiences of Dartmoor which she finds can swallow up the sky's light whilst simultaneously emitting a radiance from underground.

Encountering Wistman's Wood, **MARY NEEDHAM** was 'struck by the magical atmosphere created by the dwarf oak trees that appeared to take on human forms, branches that appeared more like the limbs of a creature, delicate lichen that covered the bark like skin'. This idea inspired her sketches, directing her interest to the shapes created by the superimposed branches, their way of framing, 'giving the audience a feeling of looking into a hole or a tunnel, inviting them to step into it: like Alice did when following the white rabbit'. Mary chose print rather than drawing or painting to express her ideas as printing processes 'automatically knock out, what I began to understand for my purposes, is

irrelevant detail'. Mary builds up her prints in layers, sometimes employing different processes. 'Looking through one layer to reveal another is often present in my work. I am interested in the universal patterns and structures found in many animate subjects in Nature, often playing with ambiguity of scale.'

Her work is developing in response to now living near the moor. 'Since moving to Devon, surrounded by large numbers of sheep and interesting shaped trees, my subject matter has changed and I have been experimenting with different processes to reflect this, moving from woodcuts to monoprints and drypoint; both are fluid, capable of displaying intuitive ways of responding to rapid changes in weather and colour.'

Landscape artist **ANITA REYNOLDS**, having finished a four-year project based on the South West Coast Path, is now working upon 'A Year on Dartmoor'.

She aims to focus upon demonstrating the subtle colour changes across the year while exploring the wilder aspects of the moor. She is committed to celebrating our National Parks, making their more remote regions accessible to those unable to visit for themselves. Using simple sketching materials, charcoal, ink and wax resist candle, Anita spends long periods of time walking and sketching, responding to place intuitively rather than representationally. In her 'Print Bus', using a portable press, she makes small monoprints on location. She finds an energy and enthusiasm from working outdoors, keeping the spirit of these sketches and notes in her studio work.

Anita's methods include monoprinting, directly inking a Perspex plate, manipulating and experimenting with colour, wiping and masking before making a one-off print. She creates limited edition prints, making collagraph plates using a wide range of materials including plant materials, polyfilla, sandpaper, textured papers and foil, inked up and printed on dampened paper with a press.

She also works in drypoint, using a sharp tool on the metal or acrylic plate. The raised 'burr' created by incising the line retains the applied and wiped ink, giving a characteristically dense, soft, fuzzy line when printed. Anita combines techniques to create a hybrid plate allowing for a wider range of expressive possibilities, texturally and tonally. ■



Mary Needham 'Leave Them Alone' (drypoint print)



Mary Gillett 'Shadows in the Gateway' (etching)

**Mary Gillett** Works for sale, exhibitions and weekly, also week-long summer courses.  
[www.marygillett.co.uk](http://www.marygillett.co.uk)

**Mary Needham** Devon Open Studios: Gidleigh Village Hall  
10-25 September 2016  
Email: [mlouise@gmail.com](mailto:mlouise@gmail.com)

**Anita Reynolds** Workshops, exhibitions, blog 'A Year on Dartmoor'  
[www.anitareynolds.com](http://www.anitareynolds.com)