

Survival

of the Fittest

Waterworks Nature Reserve and Golf Centre

20 July – 1 October 2012



Survival *of the Fittest*

An exhibition of works by 40 artists
from Great Britain and beyond

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With the kind support of



PICTOREM GALLERY



E17olution – all things evolve

Around the same time that the ancient Olympic Games began (2,500ish years ago), The Greek philosopher Empedocles, suggested that the universe is in a state of gradual change, affecting living and inanimate things. Since the 1600's, we have called this process 'Evolution', which literally translates as 'to unroll a scroll'. Our understanding of evolution is evolving.

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace described a process whereby the successful members of a species would pass on their genetic material to the next generation (survival), which would, in turn, steer that species in a new direction if those individuals had new traits or features. It is not just about fitness; luck and chance can also help: being in the wrong place at the wrong time can be the difference between survival and death.

Darwin observed finches on the Galapagos Islands with a variety of different beak shapes – like little bird tools, some of them were chunky for cracking seeds, some slender for catching insects and one type had worked out how to use cactus spines to dig bugs out of holes. He concluded that they had all come from one common ancestor and the variety had been caused by competition for food.

The wonderful world of art can be competitive too and it evolves. What began as ritual and ceremony, personal and tribal storytelling, created to express emotions, opinions and to record the world around us has become very diverse indeed – covering painting, print, sculpture, ceramics, music, photography, film, textiles, literature, theatre, poetry, dance and more. Each genre has a myriad of its own sub-genres. The evolution of these different types of art have, and have been 'sculpted' by the societies, landscapes and events around them, the materials and technologies available, by the media, fashions, fads and not forgetting the people.

What makes 'good' art? Beauty? Originality? Something else? Each person has a different idea of what they like, which is what makes the world such an interesting place. Local lad William Morris said, "If you want a golden rule that will fit everything, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful."

The Olympic Games are upon us (in case you hadn't noticed) and were created to celebrate some of the fittest people in the world in many different sports- some about speed & strength and others about artistic merit and creativity, some of them as individuals, but overall in teams. If the individuals in a team don't perform well enough, the team is knocked out. The 100m race is being run 1 second faster compared to 100 years ago due to competitive determination.

Some Olympic sports and art movements come and go, in and out of fashion, something that a species cannot do. Live pigeon shooting, the tug-of-war, golf and croquet are out, whereas women's boxing and BMX are in.

Imagine what Walthamstow, London, The Olympics, the World of Art, our understanding of evolution and what we consider beautiful or artistic will be like in another 2500 years?

Michael Holland

Head of Education, Chelsea Physic Garden and E17 resident and hedge artist

July 2012



Charles Darwin

Design by Silvie Jacobi, made at Southbank Mosaics



Fatma Aslanoglu

Adam and Eve's Exile from Heaven

Acrylics, water based colours and real gold on hand made coloured paper

According to the belief, the peacock is the animal that guards the gates of heaven. Almost every century the topic of Adam and Eve has been portrayed in a different light and I wanted to contribute to this tradition by painting Adam and Eve in the form of Turkish miniature art. Taking my own view of the story of Adam and Eve I put my thought to paper.

The peacock feather symbolises the gates of heaven, the tree symbolises the forbidden fruit and the dragon symbolises the snake. The birds around the tree symbolise the doves of heaven.



Fatma Aslanoglu

Infinite Circle

Gouache, water color and real gold painted onto handmade paper

The circle is considered to be a sacred shape due to its simplicity and stability in nature.

One infinite line, with no clear beginning or end, with no upper or lower boundaries, its denotes simple spacelessness. Due to the strong features carried by such a simple shape, I carried these features across in the form of Turkish illumination art.



Claire Aucouturier

Survive, Raise Your Sphenoid Bone

Ink and oil on paper

The progress of a small skull bone gets the whole humanity moving. When it is moving, everything is moving. In 800 000 years a little shtick from it will make your face different.



Valeria Bateson

The Chambered Nautilus

Oil on canvas

I saw this beautiful and mysterious creature in a recent TV series about survivors from more than 500 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs evolved, let alone our ancestors the apes. An effective predator, it has survived many of the most catastrophic events in earth's history. It leaves a mother-of-pearl spiralled shell that makes fossils. I'm fascinated by its scary primitive eye, working just like a pinhole camera, and its splendidly camouflaged party clothes.



Aziza Azul

The First Rule of Fight Club...

Photography

The boxing ring is one place where by definition only the fittest survive, you need to be both physically and mentally prepared if you're to go the distance and overcome your opponent. Here, I am supporting Donal "The Lethal Leprechaun" McElwee (left) at The Real Fight Club - Westside Glory - White Collar Boxing; who won his fight. The event was held in the Kensington Town Hall, London.



Keith Bray

Buddha's Eatery / Déjà vu

Collage

The two companion mixed media collage pieces are based on experiencing the "Westfield" shopping complex bordering the Olympic site. They are about ordinary people's day to day survival. Everyone is in their own bubble, but fortunately there is some shopping to be done. There is no moral intended, the two pieces just serve as a reflection on our present world and how things are.



Omar Castanedar

Canibalia I & II (detail)

Collage

An interpretation of the phrase "survival of the fittest" to mean "only the fittest organisms will prevail". Any individual organism which succeeds in reproducing itself is "fit" and will contribute to survival of its species, not just the "physically fittest" ones, though some of the population will be better adapted to the circumstances than others. A more accurate characterization of evolution would be "survival of the fit enough".



Marta Claret

The Explorer

Mixed media

My drawings are based on images I recently saw illustrating a text about the explorer Fridtjot Nansen (1861-1930).

One of Nansen's efforts was to try and reach the Arctic Pole in 1893 with his ship the Fram. He tried to freeze the Fram into the ice in order to have it transported by the ocean's currents. Two years later, Nansen and his assistant left the ship in order to reach the Arctic Pole by foot. They got to the most North Easterly point any human had ever been to before they were forced to return. This adventure took 70 weeks and included a winter surviving on walrus lard and polar bear meat.

Fridtjot Nansen was also a diplomat and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

There was also time for romance in Nansen's life – the report includes a rather handsome photo the explorer had taken of himself naked to send to his lover – at the age of 67!



Steve Edwards

Inheritance

Etching

The old man raised his head.

When he saw he was not dreaming a dream, and an angel was standing by – the knife fell from his hand.

The boy, released from his bonds, saw his father's back.

The son was not offered up in sacrifice. He lived a long time, experienced the good, until the light of his eyes grew dim.

Nonetheless, that hour, the father gave to his progeny an inheritance.

They are born with a knife in their heart.

From a poem by Haim Gouri



Diana Furlong

The Family of Fit...Fit as a Flea!

Acrylic on canvas

As a new graduate from the University of Sunderland's London based course in Western Calligraphy based at Kensington Palace, I am keen to use traditional hand drawn letterforms in a fun expressive way.

This piece is the animated physical dialogue between the font family of "Fit".



Ahmed Farooqui

Before the Fall

Resin on aluminium

Creatures of improbable grace and lustre leap exultant into space – the world is balanced around them like a delicate confection. Inspired by the banking crash I use the colours and textures reminiscent of pop confectionary to focus on the moment that all winners think will last forever.



Ferha Farooqui

In the Shadow of the Stadium

Three colour reduction linocut

The image attempts to capture one of the iconic public houses, and symbols of former working class culture in East London, fast disappearing even at a time of great national celebration. The colours attempt to reflect the pensive mood amongst co-existing populations of East London, with the Olympic Stadium casting a hopeful/watchful shadow over unrolling history. During the making of this piece this pub was closed down. Clearly not 'fit for survival'.



Kate Fortune Jones

Cuckoo

Mixed media on paper

A notorious bird of folklore and a welcome herald of Spring. The cuckoo has evolved a unique survival strategy. This parasitic bird is programmed to trick another species into incubating its eggs and rearing its young. The fledgling cuckoo, a merciless impostor, is born with the natural instinct to survive, removing all other eggs and young from its surrogate parent's nest. A charismatic, handsome bird which journeys thousands of miles to breed, so superbly adapted, is ironically in peril, with numbers declining disastrously due to human interference, through habitat loss and hunting.



Kate Fortune Jones

Heart of the Matter

*Collagraph and screenprint
(variable edition of 5)*

The heart – central to survival, the life-giving force powers all effort and desire. Sprouting forth from the arteries, roots, branches, a tree reaching for the sun. Providing oxygen, food and shelter, the tree is another essential life-giving force crucial to the survival of a whole ecosystem of living creatures. At the summit, haloed by five golden rings of sunlight, a small bird claims the first berry.



Valerie Grove

Team MSK

Installation

MSK means muscular-skeletal and this work uses a skeletal model and anatomical charts to illustrate the physical realities upon which all fitness depends.

On the walls around Team MSK, the audience is invited to comment and react to all the work in 'Survival of the Fittest' by posting notes and drawings.



Wendy LeBer

Papilio Esoteric

Mixed media

Papilio Esoteric is inspired by old science, the idea of cataloguing and study of insects. In this work I have imagined discovering a new evolutionary direction for the butterflies (papilio). This is a secret knowledge as not everyone can see that they have taken on new forms and are embodying particular qualities.



Oriane Le Cheminant

Littlepool 2012

Screenprint on Somerset paper

My work has its roots in the still life tradition and I am interested in the activity of collecting and in the aesthetic of variation. I work with ordinary everyday things, things that are often overlooked, and explore the combination of artefacts and manmade systems with objects and ideas from the natural world. In Littlepool images of flattened cardboard boxes have been placed in an evolutionary context, highlighting the variation in design and the idea that the 'best' designs will survive in the long term.



Rachel l'Anson

Buddleia

Photography

For this image I wanted to climb inside the camera and peer out into the world.

Buddleia creeps around the mannequins in a slightly menacing fashion; making its way inside the camera and connecting directly with the viewer. I used a homemade pinhole camera to capture the feelings of disconnection and distortion.



Wendy MacMillan ARBS

A Grain in the Balance

Paper collage

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

Charles Darwin

The DNA Double Helix is constructed from personal pronouns taken from 'The Origin of Species'. Using the language that defines our external selves in a structure of the internal I aim to draw together two of the most important advances in human knowledge.



Naomi McIlroy

2.8 Billion Years

Handmade felt panel with embroidery and bead work

This panel is inspired by the colours and cell patterns of blue green algae (cyanobacteria) which is the longest still existing life form. It evolved to its present form 2.8 billion years ago and hasn't changed since then.

Fiona McGregor

Hazardous Waste 1-3

Pencil on paper



1. Giant Hogweed
(*Heracleum mantegazzianum*
Somm.&Lev.)
Don't touch, as its sap causes blisters.
2. Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)
3. Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

These three remarkable plants can be seen within a 10 minute walk from the Waterworks Nature Reserve. Each is in its own way beautiful and striking. Giant Hogweed can grow to an amazing 5m. Himalayan Balsam has large, beautiful delicate flowers, and Japanese Knotweed can grow through concrete and damage buildings.

All three are great survivors. They were introduced to Britain in the 19th century into gardens and botanic collections, but have since escaped and spread. They have no natural enemies here, and form dense clumps that prevent native wildflowers growing and providing food and shelter for wildlife.

These plants might be the 'fittest'; they out-compete native species; but 'fittest' does not mean 'best'. They do not belong in our wild places.

Note, please do not interfere with any specimens you find. They need disposing of properly to make sure they are not spread further.



Louiz Kirkebjerg Nielsen

Mountain Top

Screenprint, embossed etching and metal.

I am inspired by the climbers who risk all and go for the mountaintop experience. The context for the climbers in this piece is a photographic collage of architectural high places here in the city of London. A city that is large like a mountain to be climbed and conquered.



Julia McNeal

Leaping Man

Collagraph

Inspired by a press photo of the Chelsea footballer Drogba celebrating scoring a goal, I have produced a series of prints. Here the figure has become stylised and lost all suggestion of contemporary context, but hopefully it has retained the spirit of exuberance.



Fabienne Monnot

Wanting Something

Sheepskin, fabric, acrylic

Wanting something, the ultimate driving force?

Pouncing when you least expect it.
Hopeless trying to fight it.

Life without it, meaningless.



Fabienne Monnot

Tricot 2012

Knitting needles and yarn made from various materials

Tricot 2012 is wandering through various exhibitions around London during the Olympic year. Visitors of each exhibition are invited to knit on for the tricot to grow through the seasons into a year's worth of communal knitting.



Catherine Linton

Baby Doll Casket I & II

*Wood box, polycarbonate front panel.
Etching prints onto fabric. Found and
hand made textiles and mixed media.*

Casket n.

1. A coffin
2. A small case or chest, as for jewels
and other valuables

An assemblage, after Joseph Cornell,
of human diorama: miniature
three-dimensional scenes. Each casket
holds uninhabited clothing on vacant
beds with fragmentary narrative of dolls
and toys.

Beautiful cherished relics; a personal
archive, or grotesque cabinet of
curiosities? The doll or puppet tested
and manipulated by wheel mechanisms,
absent psychology and the suggestion
of trauma and injury. A sense of
wrongness; were they fit to? Did they
survive?





Martin Mossop

What Makes Us Tick

Photopolymer gravure with watercolour.

I intend to make a print of medicine that is crucial for the survival of many people nowadays, me included. I am interested in the way science and technology are extending our lives and all what that implies for us and the planet.

With developments in medicine more and more people are remaining fit and healthy with the help of prescribed drugs. This image was inspired by early science fiction posters and the promise of a life free from illness.

There is also a subliminal reference to the Olympic drug debate that gets more and more complex as science develops.



Stephanie Pau

Pentathlon

Screen printing on canvas

The events for pentathlon tests the athletes for the skills of a soldier. As the skills of soldier change with time, so does the events in the game. Survival underpins this game - the design of the game and the evolution of the game. The pentathlete has, as Aristotle remarked in Rhetoric, "a body capable of enduring all efforts, either of the racecourse or of bodily strength" – the fittest.



Bethany Murray

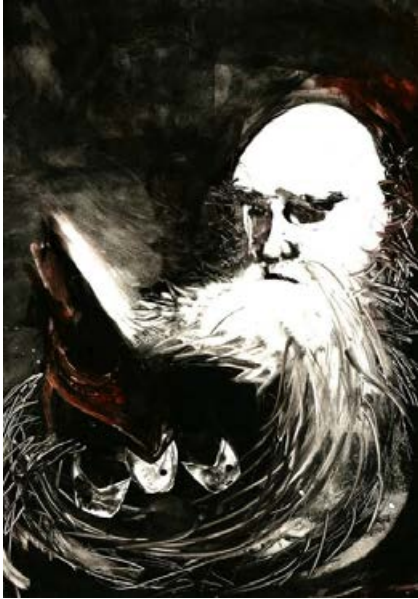
**Rooftop Performance I & II,
Tower Hamlets**

Photography

'Rooftop performances' comes from a project I ran in Tower Hamlets, as artist in residence, Room 13, East London from 2009 to 2012. I worked alongside children helping them not only form an art studio for their community but develop an ongoing love of the creative and different ideas of what art is. These 'performances' refer to the isolation when different lives are alongside but invisible to each other. These children are the real Olympians who live and try to flourish in the area before during and after the Olympic Games.



The collaboration between the children and myself is what is special in the work and demonstrates how trust can be a foundation for the sharing of ideas and visions. This is a hope for what the Olympics can bring to London and this work asks it to touch the people living on its doorstep too.



Erika Pál

Selecting the struggle for survival as a central theme, my hand-pulled prints depict imagined situations, pressing on a playful approach saturated with dark humour.

Darwin's Nest

Monoprint

An unknown moment from the life of the famous naturalist, observing a feeding frenzy from an unusually close range.



Erika Pál

The Survival Games

Monoprint

An award ceremony inspired by a nightmare of super-modified human beings taking the podium.



Sumi Perera

Beauty is Contentment

Etching & aquatint

A print reflecting on the excesses of attaining perfect beauty.

I don't like standard beauty – there is no beauty without strangeness.

Karl Lagerfeld

I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin deep. That's deep enough. What do you want, an adorable pancreas?

Jean Kerr



Sumi Perera

Mens Agitat Molem (The Mind Moves Matter)

Etching & aquatint

The phrase 'Mind over Matter' first documented by Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) refers to the evolutionary growth of the minds of animals & humans.

A similar phrase 'The Mind Moves Matter' was coined by the poet Virgil two millennia earlier in his work the Aeneid.

Is it *nature* over *nurture*?



Janet-Ferrier Robinson

Pole Vault

Chinese ink and watercolour

One little frog got bored with swimming and leaping about and was always getting into mischief.

One day he found a long springy stick and after a few false starts and a couple of tumbles he discovered he could leap higher and further than all his friends.

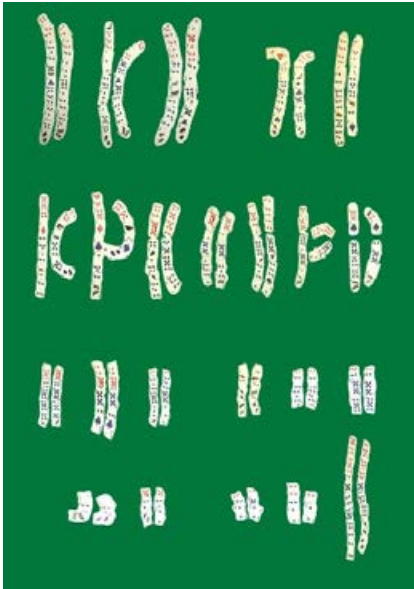


Janet-Ferrier Robinson

Cassie

Etching

Cassie, a native tawny owl, is one of the most beautiful creatures I have ever come across. After sticky beginnings as an unwanted and improperly cared for pet she was passed to a pet rescue charity where she is being properly nurtured and cared for and is gradually losing her fear and gaining confidence.



David Redfern

Darwin's Chromosomes

Digital print

On first looking the image appears to be a set of human chromosomes, but on closer examination the shapes are made up of piles of playing cards, randomly distributed by chance.

Darwin's theory of evolution embraces the element of chance, perhaps serendipity plays a large part in a species' survival.

The playing cards are a special "Darwin Pack" purchased on a visit to Darwin's home, Down House in Kent.



Peter Rapp

Bright Eyes

Etching

To survive in the big city you need a big car in case someone in a big car runs you over.



Katja Rosenberg

Just for You

Monoprint (variable edition of 15)

A fossil of unrequited love from a world long gone but not forgotten.



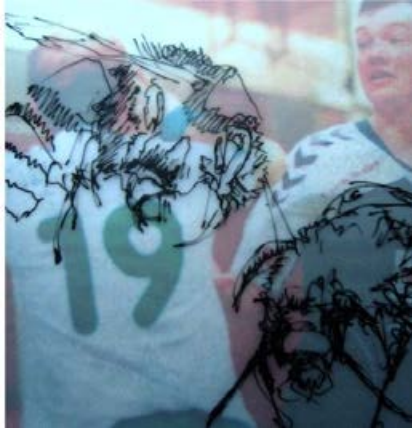
Elisabeth Schubert

Chimeras

Drawing on paper

In any cosmogony, the appearance of a living form stems from an initial disaster, endlessly repeated.

Survival is the name of its wandering.



Annelene Schulte

The Bumble Bee (detail)

Drawing on transparency and digital print on paper

Following the myth, the bumble bee cannot fly due to the laws of aerodynamics. These thoughts are based upon a "stable wings" theory and ignore other bee's wing functions, e.g. that the wings work similarly to helicopter blades.

In my work the bumble bee reminds us of our unknown skills.



Martina Simonc Adamic

Rise Above

Mixed media on canvas

Rise above negativity, like the lotus flower
 Rise above the muddy waters and grow
 into something more beautiful
 Yet at the same time, be fully grounded
 Just as the muddy water sustains the
 lotus flower, in the same way
 The gritty realities of life helps you to
 bloom and reach your potential
 So, don't just look at the muddy water:
 Notice the beautiful lotus that grows
 out of it.

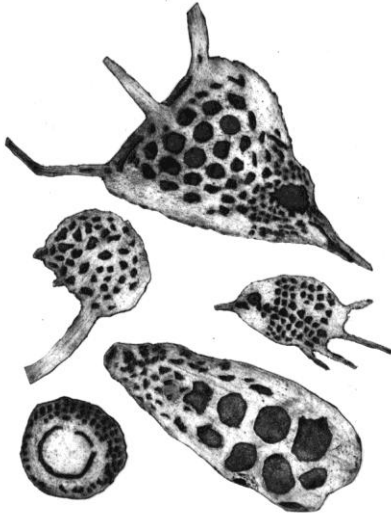
Inner Space

Janet Wilson

Protista

Collagraph

Darwin's theory of evolution highlights the continuity of nature in all its manifestations – from tiny single cell organisms to the magnificent athletes competing in the London Olympics 2012. A single drop of pond water swarms with single cell protista, wearing delicate and exquisite shells of silica or lime.



Sophie Venturini

Pliosaur

Sketchbook pencil drawing

Pliosauroides is an extinct clade of marine reptiles. The pliosauroids were short-necked with large heads and massive toothed jaws. These swimming reptiles were not dinosaurs but distant cousins of today's lizards.

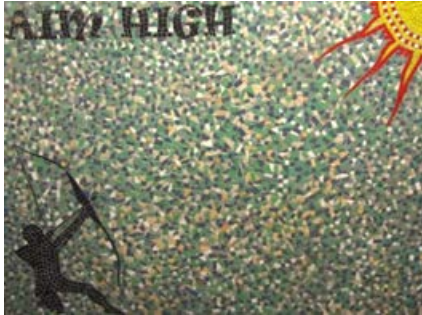


Southbank Mosaics (design by Joshua Gordon)

Aim High

Mosaics

Aim High is made by young people at Southbank Mosaics studio. Their aims include:



- Having fun
- Being creative
- Learning new skills
- Gaining artisan qualifications
- Keeping out of trouble with the police
- Making London more beautiful
- Channelling aggression in positive ways
- Working at highest standards

The Arts & Crafts movement sought to tackle the squalor of the British interior. We want to transform the British exterior and bring an aesthetic to the industrialisation of public space.



Southbank Mosaics
(design by Naomi Hope)

Mexican Death Mask

Mosaics

The death mask was inspired by the Day of the Dead holiday, celebrated in Mexico, to honour friends and family members who have died. The skull is a common symbol of the holiday. I felt inspired by the contrast between this symbol which is usually so strongly associated with death, being carefully decorated with bright colours and flowers, more often symbols of life and vigour.

This red skull is the second one I designed, the first having a more playful expression, whilst this one I tried to make look more menacing.



Katrine Storebo

Sports and Nature

Mural for the Waterworks Nature Reserve and Golf Centre

The Survival of the Fittest

*The survival of the fittest,
The advancement of the best,
The enthronement of the truest
In the world's great crucial test,
Is emblazoned on each banner
Wherever man is found,
And e'en 'mong plants and animals
This holds, the world around.*

*Then prepare for the survival,
Allow no base retreat,
(Dethronement means delinquency,)
Endure the cold and heat;
The elements that meet us
May all be overcome,
With God and right ever in sight,
The victory may be won.*

Jared Barhite

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About Art Catcher

Art Catcher alias Katja Rosenberg is a London based artist curating exhibitions inspired by subjects of emotional and cultural identity.

Projects include

Loveletter to London, London City Hall, 2007

Wonderland, V&A Museum of Childhood, 2009

A Suite of Lighted Rooms, Pushkin House, 2010

Guns & Roses, touring exhibition in Germany, Britain and France, 2009/10

Dreams, Freud Museum London, 2011

The Fishwick Papers, Forman's Smokehouse Gallery, 2011

Spring at the Smokehouse, Forman's Smokehouse Gallery, 2012

12-20 – This is Us, community mural in Walthamstow St James, 2012

To find out more about projects in the past, the present and in the planning, please visit www.artcatcher.co.uk.



