

Ictis



Bridgette Ashton

ORCID Number: 0009-0004-2494-2470

Output Type: Exhibition

Output Date: 2023

Exhibition Details

'Ocean'

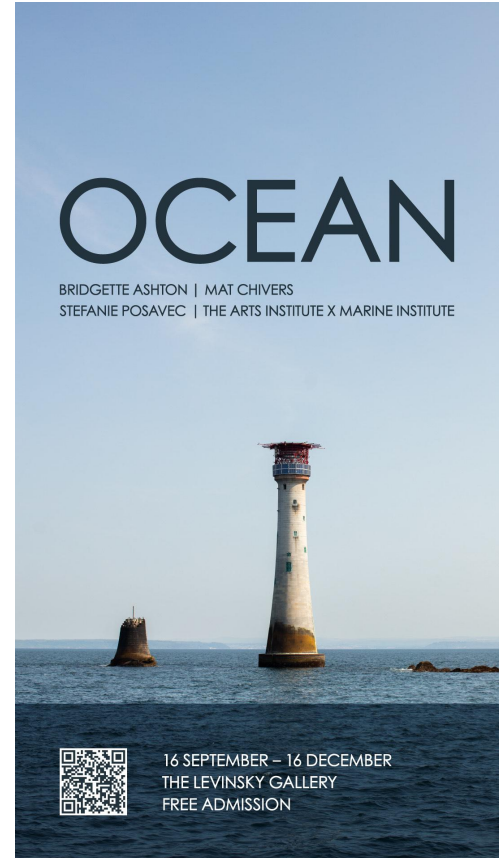
16/09/23 – 16/12/23

The Levinsky Gallery,
Roland Levinsky Building,
University of Plymouth,
PL4 8AA

'Ictis' was commissioned for the exhibition 'Ocean' curated by Mary Costello & Simon Poulter exhibited alongside new work by Mat Chivers and Stefanie Posavec.

Bridgette Ashton's research is supported by Arts University Plymouth.

Audience numbers for the exhibition as a whole: 3400



Ictis is a scale model of St Nicholas (Drake's) Island in Plymouth Sound, incorporating imagined underground and submerged tunnels. Its title alludes to Ictis, a possibly mythical tidal island described by the ancient Greek writers Diodorus Siculus and Pytheas as an Iron Age centre for the collection and export of Cornish tin to Gaul.

The work draws on fragmentary evidence from different periods including accounts of tin trading, rabbit warrens, and the island's surviving defences and tunnel networks. Displayed alongside the sculpture were cassiterite specimens from The Box, Plymouth, and historical writings by John Leland, Richard Polwhele and Diodorus Siculus.

As Bridgette explains,

Diodorus' account of Ictis drew on Pytheas' record of his voyage to Britain, 'On the Ocean'. The philosopher and historian Strabo later called Pytheas 'a notorious liar' and I really liked the unreliability of these accounts (further complicated by variations in Greek translation) set against the strong, often conflicting views of historians over the past 500 years. That sense of slippage between record and interpretation continued when in 1135, the island was granted to Plympton Priory, 'cum cuniculis' (with rabbits or warrens), according to the poet and antiquary John Leland, though others suggest this may have been a mis-reading. It is perhaps no surprise that monks were early adopters of rabbit husbandry for meat and fur. By around 600 AD, a papal edict had even determined that foetal rabbits (laurices) did not count as meat, making them permissible fare for monks during Lent.





'Ocean, our new exhibition in The Levinsky Gallery from September, has been curated by The Arts Institute team in collaboration with the Marine Institute as a forum where science and creativity meet. Three commissioned works by Bridgette Ashton, Mat Chivers and Stefanie Posavec create a rich tapestry of ocean narratives exploring the hidden secrets of Drake's Island, the awe-inspiring majesty of the Eddystone Lighthouse, and the intricate, underwater world of Plymouth Sound. Each artist innovatively bridges the gap between science and art, offering an immersive, experiential exploration of the marine world.

Situated in Plymouth, a city that has long held a special connection to the sea, Ocean explores the city's unique natural harbour and maritime history that's steeped in a complex history of trading, culture, and colonial narratives. This encounter is amplified by the city's ongoing role as a global pioneer in marine research. The historical associations and ongoing journey paint a unique portrait of Plymouth as a site of global resonance and local relevance. Ocean charts the human and environmental concerns that are raised within the climate crisis.

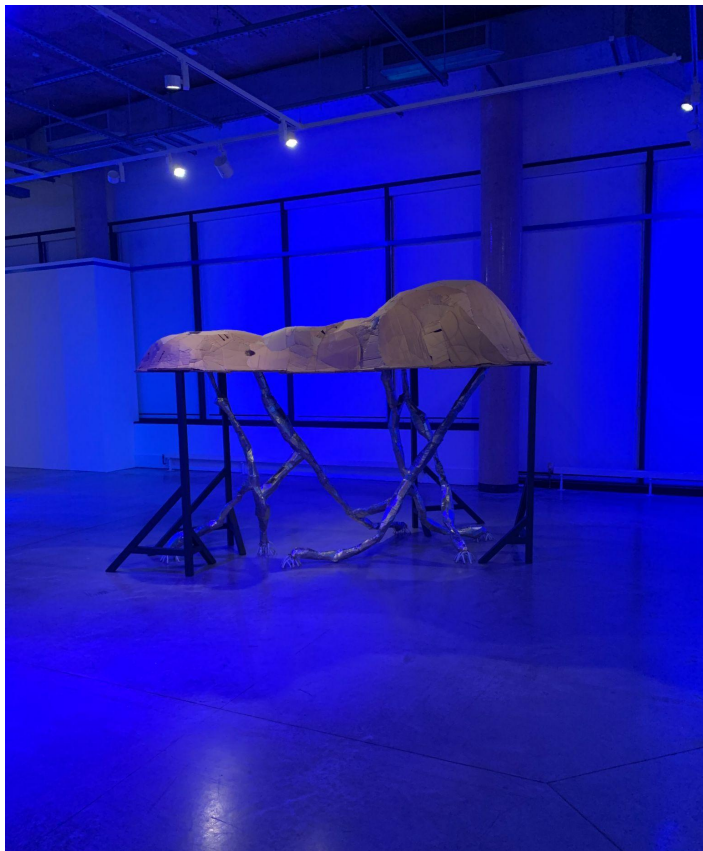
At the core of the exhibition, three commissioned works by Bridgette Ashton, Mat Chivers and Stefanie Posavec create a rich tapestry of ocean narratives informed by Plymouth's special significance. They explore the hidden secrets of Drake's Island, the awe-inspiring majesty of the Eddystone Lighthouse, and the intricate, underwater world of Plymouth Sound. Each artist innovatively bridges the gap between science and art, offering an immersive, experiential exploration of the marine world.

Bridgette Ashton has created a new sculptural work, Ictis, based on Plymouth Sound's iconic Drake's Island. It references the history of the island, dating back to 1st century BCE, and the unreliable narratives that continue to add colour and complexity to accounts of the island and its heritage.

Mat Chivers' short film Keepers, specially commissioned for the exhibition, features the Eddystone Lighthouse. It considers how the precarious moment of change we're in right now confronts us with the urgent need to focus our actions in a way that recognises our dependence on other-than-human life and ecologies, in the oceans and on land. Lighthouses remind us to proceed with caution. Stefanie Posavec, an artist/designer who specialises in data visualisation, has collaborated with the Marine Institute on a new work rendered within the gallery. Her playful presentation of real-life data sets invites the visitor to situate themselves in a volume of water equivalent to a specific area of Plymouth Sound, and envision what is present within it; from the macro to the micro.'

Visual Arts South West listing
<https://vasw.org.uk/whats-on/ocean>





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