

# As is the Sea

AN ANTHOLOGY

~ 20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2014 ~

~Private View 19<sup>th</sup> March, 6-9pm~

~Darwin Foyer Gallery, Royal College of Art, Jay Mews, London SW7 2EU~

~Open Daily, 11am-6pm~

*As is the Sea* is a group exhibition of artworks by current and former RCA students that accompanies Critical Writing in Art & Design MA programme's recent publication of the same name. This anthology of art criticism, cultural analysis, memoir and fiction, sifts through the ocean's strata, descending page by page from the sunlit surface to the darkest abyss. The artworks on display either respond directly to the texts or resonate with the themes explored within *As is the Sea*. Both the book and exhibition address our multifaceted relationship with the sea, drawing on what we love, fear, disregard, are in awe of and long for from that vast saline expanse.

The exhibition includes four original artworks commissioned for the book. *Strata*, a large-scale charcoal drawing by Betsy Dadd, was specially created to capture the layers of the ocean that also act as a structuring device for the publication. Sam Ashton's print of his woodblock mimicking illustration, *King Canute*, accompanies a text that explores the myth of the legendary monarch. *Nereus*, by Isobel Church is a delicate response to the layers of nacre that build up to form every pearl, outlined in a personal investigation into the social and cultural significance of these desirable objects. Billie Muraben's *Surf 'n' Turf* is a play on Cornwall's surf culture, made in response to an account of tourism in a shabby seaside resort.

Ryan L. Moules' print, *of Depth & Tide*, was created by placing an unexposed negative into the ocean at the exact location where the *s.s. Christina* ran aground on Aberavon Sands in 1902. The resultant image, resembling distant galaxies or creatures hidden in underwater depths, was reproduced in the publication to accompany the final text in the book exploring the ocean's abyss. *Groundings* captures the flash-lit foam of a breaking wave, and was created collaboratively by Moule and Alex Duncan as part of a public art commission to respond to the South Wales coastline. The four-panel piece, that accompanies a tale of misunderstood marine monsters, evokes the ferocious power of the sea as well as our unease with its nighttime state. For this exhibition Duncan has also installed *Cove*, a work formed from blocks of weathered polystyrene and polyurethane collected on the coast. At a distance, amassed in the gallery, they may look like rocks or pebbles on a beach, but they are a reminder of the more destructive and polluting relationship we have with the sea.

The exhibition also features two video works by alumni of RCA Photography. *Two Breathe*, by Emma Critchley, is a single screen video that evokes the intimate and bodily relationship we have with the ocean. Here breathing, an otherwise reflexive function, becomes heightened in this silent yet rhythmical exchange between body and environment. Alice Evans' *Rusalka* – named after a mythical water-dwelling character from Antonín Dvořák's opera of the same name – presents a fractured narrative across three screens, unravelling the artifice of the artwork's construction.

The book, *As is the Sea*, emerged from a project started in collaboration with Philip Hoare – author of *Leviathan, or the Whale* (2009) and *The Sea Inside* (2013) – and was realised and produced by second year Critical Writing in Art & Design MA students. It was designed by current Visual Communications students Luke Griffiths and Remy-Alban Valton.

More information on *As is the Sea* can be found at [www.asisthesea.com](http://www.asisthesea.com)

The book can be purchased from [www.cwadra.bigcartel.com](http://www.cwadra.bigcartel.com)

For enquiries about the exhibition, please contact: [jose.silva@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:jose.silva@network.rca.ac.uk)



Royal College of Art

List of Works (counter-clockwise from right)

Sam Ashton  
*King Canute*, 2013  
Digital print

Alex Duncan  
*Cove*, 2007-2013  
Polyurethane and polystyrene

Alex Duncan & Ryan L. Moule  
*Grounding*, 2013  
Four split panel photographs

Billie Muraben  
*Surf 'n' Turf*, 2013  
Graphite and Indian ink on paper

Betsy Dadd  
*Strata*, 2013  
Charcoal on paper

Emma Critchley  
*Two Breathe*, 2011  
HD video, 2 minutes continuous loop

Isobel Church  
*Nereus*, 2013  
Inkjet print on etching paper

Ryan L. Moule  
*of Depth & Tide*, 2013  
Inkjet print on paper

Alice Evans  
*Rusalka*, 2011  
Digital video, 6 minutes

**Sam Ashton** graduated from Visual Communication in 2013 and is currently working as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer.

**Isobel Church** is a current second year Ceramics student, working towards her degree show.

**Emma Critchley** graduated from Photography in 2011. Her work *Aria* was exhibited in a shipping container on Brighton's seafront as part of House Festival last year, and she is currently showing at The Wilson Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum in an exhibition featuring artists whose work hints at their fascination with the human embrace.

**Betsy Dadd** graduated from Animation in 2013 and is currently collaborating with two composers, making animated drawings to be installed for a live performance.

**Alex Duncan** is a current first year Sculpture student. His work *Cove* was installed at Vulpes Vulpes as part of Art Licks Weekend 2013.

**Alice Evans** graduated from Photography in 2012. She is currently working on her first no-budget 129-minute feature to be filmed in Wales and Devon over two weeks in July.

**Ryan Moule** graduated from Photography in 2013 and is working on a commission in collaboration between the Rothchild family and the RCA, whilst preparing for a solo exhibition at Ffotogallery in Cardiff in May 2014.

**Billie Muraben** is a current second year Visual Communication student and is working on a collaborative project with Polly O'Flynn, which will culminate in a fully functioning hotel room at the head of the School of Communication.

