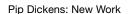
# REMOKENS





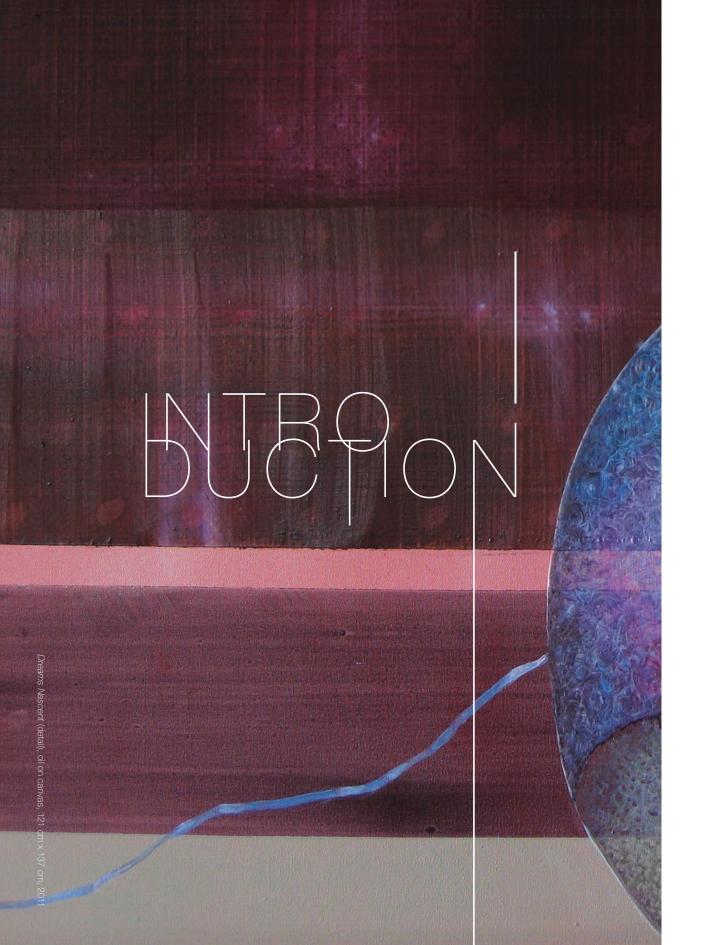
By Layla Bloom



Sequential image of the progression of Dreams Nascent

Throughout the academic year 2011–12, the University of Leeds celebrates the centenary of Sir Michael Sadler (1861–1943), its visionary Vice-Chancellor between 1911 and 1923. Sadler improved the fledgling University of Leeds in many ways, from expanding and developing its teaching and research activities to extending and enhancing the very fabric of its campus. A great lover of the arts, Sadler encouraged cultural life at the University with concerts, public talks, and even dance workshops. When he left Leeds in 1923, he endowed the University with significant gifts from his own collection, including paintings, drawings, watercolours and textiles. This catalogue and exhibition focus on the last of these, Sadler's gifts of Kashmir shawls and shawl fragments.

The shawls themselves featured in an exhibition at the University of Leeds International Textiles Archive (ULITA), 'Sadler and the Shawls' (13 September 2011 to 30 March 2012.) The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery explores these objects in its own way: through the eyes of contemporary art. Leeds-based artist Pip Dickens was invited to create new artworks inspired by the Shawl Collection. She has explored these shawls in many ways: in their physical properties of colour, shape, form, pattern; in the light of the social history of their makers and fashionable consumers; as well as the cultural history of artistic and literary references. The resulting artworks reflect her journey of discovery. This journey has encompassed not only the rich world of the Kashmir shawl, but also the unfolding process of her own experiments with painting and composition.



# Surface and Blemishes







Left: Works in progress in the artist's studio

Right: Images showing progression of Some Travel Alone

Before weaving could begin, at least six specialists were involved in setting up the shawl design, to lay out and dress the warp and to draw and transfer the pattern. A large, richly patterned shawl could take weavers up to 18 months to create, so this preparatory stage was crucial. Pip Dickens works in a similarly methodical way, starting by laying out the coloured ground of her paintings. Dickens began her paintings for this commission with dark base layers, which she slowly built up, interspersing them with layers of high gloss, to create the undulating effect of fine cloth.

While waiting for these base layers to dry, Dickens developed her ideas – in her sketchbooks, as well as on her computer, using digital drawing tools. These concepts were then transferred to the canvases using stencils or by printing the designs on transparencies and projecting them onto the canvases.

Dickens was fascinated not only by the intricacy of the weaving of the Kashmir shawls at ULITA, but by the delicate repair work evident on some examples. Such luxurious and expensive items would have been carefully mended by their previous owners. To evoke this, Dickens deliberately introduced 'blemishes' to her own works, breaching the pristine ground of her paintings. Light layers of paint were pulled horizontally across the canvas with 'dysfunctional' brushes to intentionally leave traced lines. She then repeated this process vertically to produce a 'woven' appearance, one which revealed the depth of the painted layers underneath.

Over the top of these 'blemishes,' Dickens painted thin layers of bright tints; these, in effect 'repair' the blemished works and imbue them with a shimmering, jewel-like appearance. Like the mended shawls at ULITA, Dickens's tinted layers conceal the 'repairs' and prevent the viewer from fully understanding the original construction of her compositions. However, with her many layers, Dickens has achieved an array of optical effects, offering the viewer a dynamic viewing experience.



A digital sketch exploring composition for *The Shadow Followers* 

# Threads and Stories

Once the shawl design was laid out, the painstaking process of patterned weaving began. Weavers built richly dyed wools into vivid compositions that required months of careful, detailed work Dickens, too, transformed her prepared canvases dramatically by introducing bold forms and brightly-coloured shapes to their textured surfaces. These include the curly, cone-shaped 'botteh' or paisley motifs so characteristic of the Kashmir shawls, as well as elements such as fringes and decorative edging.

In this stage, Dickens moved from a distanced view of the shawl as a whole piece to a precise focus on its component parts. Peering into these individual parts, she copied the action of the weavers, who concentrated on minute adjustments of the slender threads, which, brought together, became these magnificent, complex textiles. Thus, individual threads became a very important conceptual motif for Dickens. One of her works is entitled *De Fil en Aiguille*, a French expression which literally means 'from the thread to the needle,' but more idiomatically it implies that 'one thing leads to another.'

For Dickens, this phrase expressed many of her thoughts about the shawls and their connection to her own artistic process. Dickens allows chance to guide many of her experiments, allowing her brushstrokes and her experiments with paint treatments to lead her to new compositions and meanings for her artworks. Threads are also a metaphor for stories and writing, which are important for Dickens who has always made great use of literature as an inspiration for her artwork. She also finds that the weaving of threads is reminiscent of the act of painting, where the build-up of brushstrokes results in a larger image that can be 'read' or understood by the viewer.

As she has commented:

'There is a parallel with fabric and threads in the construction of stories, language and written communication in general — plots are unravelled, lines of enquiry are followed to solve mysteries, the word 'clue' derives from 'clew' meaning a ball of twine or thread... people fabricate stories, hide behind veils of lies, they spin tales. A story is a yarn.1'

It was natural, therefore, for Dickens to do research on the literature related to the Kashmir shawls. Particularly rich were literary references to the value and status of the Kashmir shawl in Europe. By the early 19th century, the shawl was a sought-after women's fashion accessory, often offered as a gift in courtship. These expensive and rare items indicated high status and wealth, and soon became a precious heirloom passed down from generation to generation. The shawls hit the height of their popularity in the mid-19th century.

However, as the trend continued, and cheaper imitations flooded the market, the Kashmir shawl lost its exalted status. It then became associated with vulgar social climbing and undiscerning consumerism. Dickens found a short comedy, by Balzac, 'Gaudissart II,' in which a knowing Parisian salesman attempts to sell a Kashmir shawl to an obnoxious Englishwoman. The moral of the story, as she put it, was that 'the rich may be rich but have no idea about quality.'2



De Fil en Aiguille (detail), oil on canvas, 122.5 cm x 152.5 cm. 2011

/

### 5

# Displacement and Dreams

Left: Saint John the Baptist, by Hieronymus Bosch, oil on panel, ca. 1489–1499 © Fundación

Lázaro Galdiano ('Meditaciones de San Juan Bautista' El Bosco. Inv. 8155)

Right: Mother & Child, oil on canvas, 121 cm x 137 cm, 2012





Though they were highly skilled craftsmen whose wares could command astronomical prices overseas, the Kashmiri shawl weavers themselves were poor and cruelly exploited. Underpaid by their greedy masters and heavily taxed by oppressive rulers, many were barely able to support their families. They were often forced into virtual slavery at their looms. Many fled this persecution in their Kashmir homeland and brought their trade with them to other parts of Asia, though they could never attain the same quality of shawl manufacture with less refined wools.

Pip Dickens was touched by the historical plight of these weavers, whose forced migrations paralleled the flight of Huguenot weavers from France and Flanders in the 17th century. In her work, she sought to capture not only the textile qualities of the shawls, but also the weavers' displacement and alienation from their homeland. She developed a textured painting technique using a wax and medium mix, which gave her works a glittering quality. The impression of movement created by the technique reflects the weavers' own journey through space and time.

With this background, the boteh motif became, for Dickens, an anthropomorphic figure, representing the shawl weavers themselves. Unhappy, drooping boteh traverse the terrains of the canvas/shawl, crossing the borders together or meditating alone on their isolation. For Dickens, the interactions of the boteh allude to a range of socio-political relationships. Dickens described her concept for *Mother & Child*, as 'a large, rather sad, boteh... as if the world has turned upside down.'3

With their implied feelings and inter-relationships, the boteh also began to embody internal mental states and fantasies. In several works Dickens uses transparency effects in the boteh to indicate their immaterial nature, inspired specifically by a pod shape in Hieronymous Bosch's mystical painting of Saint John the Baptist. She also created strange theatrical interior compositions for some works, with surreal shadow effects, reminiscent of paintings by Francis Bacon.

Dreams Nascent takes its title from a poem by D.H. Lawrence, which describes the birth of dreams. Lawrence begins: 'My world is a painted fresco, where coloured shapes/Of old, ineffectual lives linger blurred and warm'<sup>4</sup>. Watching the ebb and flow of railway workers on the move, Lawrence meditates on the creation of new dreams:

Here in the subtle, rounded flesh Beats the active ecstasy.

ſ...

Oh the great mystery and fascination of the unseen Shaper, The power of the melting, fusing Force – heat, light, all in one, Everything great and mysterious in one, swelling and shaping the dream in the flesh, As it swells and shapes a bud into blossom.<sup>5</sup>

# Conclusion















Sequential image of the progression of *The Shadow Followers* 

There is a mysterious, numinous quality to many of Dickens's works. Her process of layering offers much for the viewer to explore, examine, and experience. Optical effects create a sense of movement, making the viewing experience a dynamic and embodied one. Dickens's abstraction of the motifs and her reinterpretations of Kashmir shawl designs as contemporary paintings, continue the bold re-designing of these textiles by the Victorians, who remade these objects to their taste using newly-discovered vibrant dye technologies. Sadly, in the face of this competition, the traditional craft of shawl weaving in Kashmir completely disappeared, and the weavers' skills are now lost forever.

Many of the layers of meaning in Dickens's work are private and even subconscious, or literally obscured by her time-consuming artistic process. The shawls that Sadler gave to the University of Leeds are also, in many ways, mysterious. Almost a century after their creation, the ULITA team continues in their efforts to identify the origins and histories of these artefacts. However, as curator Jill Winder emphasized in her exhibition 'Sadler and Shawls': 'An indefinite origin in no way reduces the fascination of a shawl, but rather, by inviting inquiry and speculation, refines the viewer's appreciation.'5 This has been Pip Dickens's own experience in undertaking this commission. In tugging at the threads of these objects, she has unravelled much more than she expected. The viewer is welcome to take hold of those threads as well.

# References

- [1] Correspondence from the artist, 2011.
- [2] *Ibid*.
- 3) *Ibid.*
- [4] 'Dreams Old and Nascent' by D.H.Lawrence.
- [5] Ratti and Paisley. New York: Fashion Institute of Technology, 1987.



# The Kashmir Shawl Collection at the University of Leeds

By Jill Winder and Layla Bloom





Sir Michael Sadler gave two separate gifts of shawls and shawl fragments to the Clothworkers' Museum of Textiles at the University of Leeds, first in 1918–19 and again in 1922–23. Today, the museum, now known as the University of Leeds International Textiles Archive (ULITA), boasts a collection of 36 shawls and over 220 shawl fragments (approximately 20 of these shawls are thought to constitute the original

Sadler's Shawls

Sadler gift).

Sadler was a firm supporter of textiles research at the University, given the growing needs of the national textile industry. In 1914, he appointed Professor Aldred Barker (founder of the Bradford Textile Society) to the Chair of the Department of Textile Industries. Then, in 1915, Sadler helped establish the Textiles Research Association (later the Wool Industries Research Association). Under his leadership, the department moved away from craft-based teaching and towards investigating new technologies, including textile chemistry and manufacturing processes. Textiles research soon became one of the University's major strengths in the years leading up to the First World War.

Sadler also helped enrich textile design innovation at the University through his gifts to the Museum. During the years he worked as the Chair of the British Commission looking into the affairs of Indian Higher Education (1917–1919), Sadler developed an enthusiasm for Asian art. Inspired by a friendship forged on the boat to Calcutta with archaeologist and collector Sir Aurel Stein, Sadler set about collecting various Eastern artefacts in India. Among these were the Kashmir shawls he later gave the University, which were unique specimens for its teaching resource collection.

Above: Kashmiri shawl (254), 19th Century

© University of Leeds International
Textiles Archive

v: Kashmiri shawl (255), 19th Century
© University of Leeds International
Textiles Archive

# Kashmir Shawls

These delicate textiles, made in Northern India using the silky fleece of Himalayan mountain goats, have been produced since at least the 15th century. The raw fibre, known as 'pashm,' becomes 'pashmina' when processed. Kashmir shawls are traditionally woven in an intricate process called 'kani,' which results in a pattern that is visible on both sides of the fabric. Shawls were also decorated with embroidered motifs ('amli'). In the Mughal era (1586-1753), the craft found great favour at court, and shawls were produced for men's ceremonial attire and for symbolic gifts. The Mughals favoured naturalistic motifs as decoration. One common plant form or 'tree of life' motif, developed in later centuries into a more abstract cone shape called the 'boteh' or paisley motif.

Europeans encountered these fine textiles in the late 18th century, when traders and travellers to the East brought the shawls home as gifts. They soon became sought-after fashion accessories for women in 19th-century Europe. But, as Western demand steadily increased, the Kashmiri artisans struggled to keep up. By the mid-nineteenth century, supplies of the fleece were insufficient to meet demand, and so some makers introduced coarser wools into the fine 'pashm' raw material. European weavers notably in Britain, in Paisley, Edinburgh and Norwich – quickly learned to copy the shawls and soon began to develop their own designs for this lucrative market. With the development of the Jacquard loom, copies of these intricately-woven shawls became available to a much broader market.

This influx of cheap imitations threatened the livelihood of the traditional Kashmiri artisans, who were also affected by a devastating famine in India in 1877. Ultimately, however, it was a change in women's fashion at the end of the century that led to the industry's final collapse. As stylish Victorian women adopted the bustle, shawls fell out of favour, as they covered the bustle's decorative drapery.

### The shawls at ULITA

Since 2008, a Clothworkers' Company-funded project has been steadily documenting ULITA's major collections, in order to present them online. Research continues on the Kashmir Shawl Collection, in the hopes of dating and identifying the shawls, as well as improving knowledge of their association with Sadler and successive donors. Alongside this documentation, conservation work has been carried out on the shawls, many of which are fragile and in poor condition, to ensure that these artefacts survive for future generations of students and scholars.

From 13 September 2011 until 30 March 2012, ULITA celebrated Sadler's legacy in initiating the shawl collection with the exhibition 'Sadler and the Shawls,' which explored the origins, fashion, construction and designs of the Kashmir Shawl.





oft: Kashmiri shawl (2009.99), 19th Century

© University of Leeds International
Textiles Archive

oht: Kashmiri shawl (259)

Kashmiri shawl (259), 19th Century
© University of Leeds International

To learn more about the Kashmir Shawl Collection at ULITA, please visit http://ulita.leeds.ac.uk

University of Leeds International Textiles Archive / St.Wilfred's Chapel / Maurice Keyworth Building / University of Leeds / Leeds / LS2 9JT

0113 343 3919

Open Tues-Fri, 9:30-16:30

Free admission

# Artist Statement

By Pip Dickens

Every age has its objects of desire. The Kashmir shawl as status symbol is one such example. In its heyday, 'the average woman was stirred to such emotional depths by her desire for a Cashmere example that today the feeling can be comprehended only if it be compared with the agitation which fills certain feminine bosoms at the sight of a good mink coat's.

Many aspects of the Kashmir shawl were explored and scrutinized during this residency - how the shawls were manufactured, designs and motifs, their emulation and absorption into European culture and their use in literature as symbols of aspiration, social acceptance and important heirlooms. The novels of Honoré de Balzac7 (in particular), Charlotte Brontë8, Alexander Dumas<sup>9</sup>, Gustave Flaubert<sup>10</sup> and Henry James<sup>11</sup> use the Kashmir shawl as a device to symbolize social mobility; as a bargaining chip, and as a status symbol. I explored this notion of the inanimate object playing a somewhat animated role and so form, character and expression became key to developing a new series of works.

I used the boteh motif to convey a variety of sentiments within environmental/atmospheric contexts. This led together with observations of the colour palettes used in the shawls, to a link with the colour fields used in Disney animation. The borders and expansive fields of colour characteristic of these shawls morphed into environments traversed by these boteh shapes and, in so doing, allowed me to journey into a world of fantasy where characters 'activate' and are shadowed by shadows greater than themselves.



Sheltered from Shadows (detail), oil on canvas, 137 cm x 121 cm. 2011

It is a rare experience to develop, in just five months studio practice, a new series of works that encapsulates so many new ideas, interpretations and working methodologies. As I came to the completion of this project, these ever-evolving and journeying boteh shapes mirrored my own journey through the very broad and fascinating research subject that is the Kashmir shawl. I think of it as my very own 'Ariadne's Thread12" as I told curator Layla Bloom as we progressed:

'The emerging single thread motif acknowledges the painstaking structure of the shawls – the intense fabrication of such individual, fine threads producing extremely complex structures and patterns. I suppose also a parallel with the act of painting itself, in that so many individual marks/brushtrokes transform to make a visual image that can be 'read'. Harks back also to that notion, previously discussed of a thread, or yarn, spinning itself into a story.'

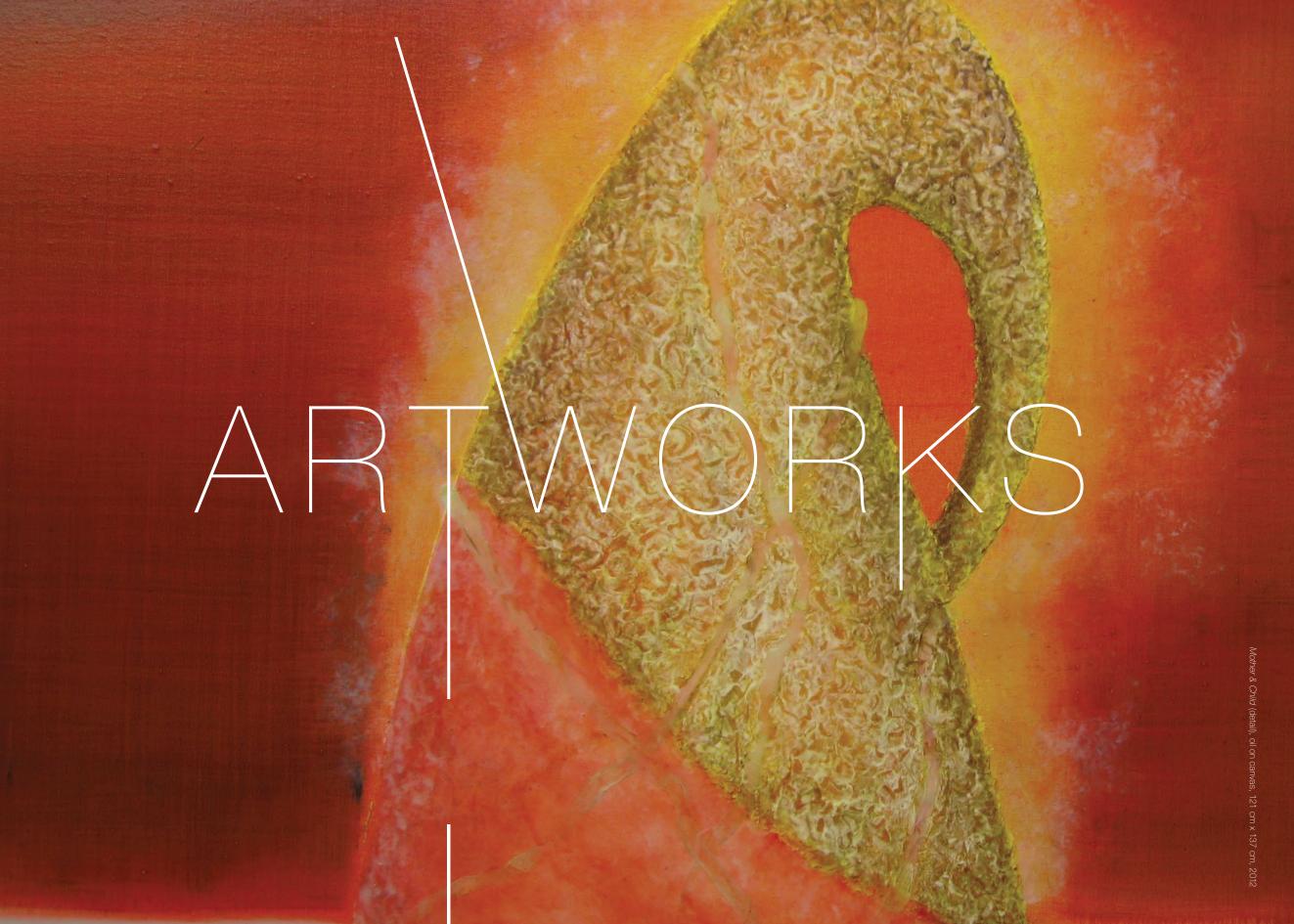


The Shadow Followers (detail), oil on canvas, 137 cm x 121 cm, 2011

My warm thanks to Layla and the staff at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery for a thoroughly enjoyable experience and also to Jill Winder at the University of Leeds International Textiles Archive, which is a veritable jewel in the crown of the University of Leeds.

### References

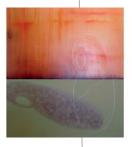
- [6] Frances Lichten, Decorative Art of Victoria's Era (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950) p.45
- [7] The Lesser Bourgeoisie, Louis Lambert, The Last Incarnation of Vautrin, Cousin Bette, L'illustre Gaudissart,
- [8] Charlotte Brontë, Villette, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1899)
- [9] Alexandre Fils Dumas, The Lady with the Camellias: (Camille). (Paris: Societe Des Beaux-Arts. 1905)
- [10] Gustave Flaubert, A Sentimental Education: The Story of a Young Man. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000)
- [11] Henry James, Washington Square, (Oxford: Oxford University 1998)
- [12] Ariadne's thread, named for the legend of Ariadne, is the term used to describe the solving of a problem with multiple apparent means of proceeding such as a physical maze, a logic puzzle, or an ethical dilemma through an exhaustive application of logic to all available routes. It is the particular method used that is able to follow completely through to trace steps or take point by point a series of found truths in a contingent, ordered search that reaches a desired end position. This process can take the form of a mental record, a physical marking, or even a philosophical debate; it is the process itself that assumes the name Source: Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariadne's\_thread\_(logic)



# 15

# Drawings and Sketches













Sequential image of the progression of *The World Within Us* 



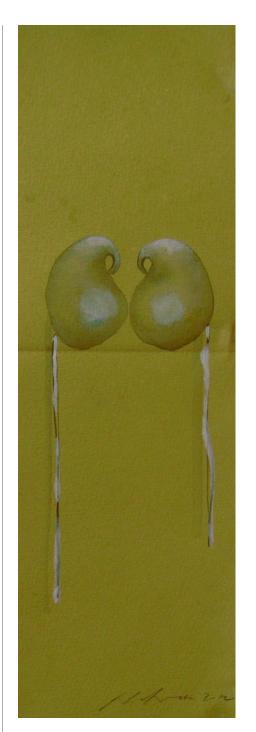


Drawing 13





Sketch 28



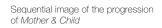
Sketch 36



Sketch 29



Regency Boteh





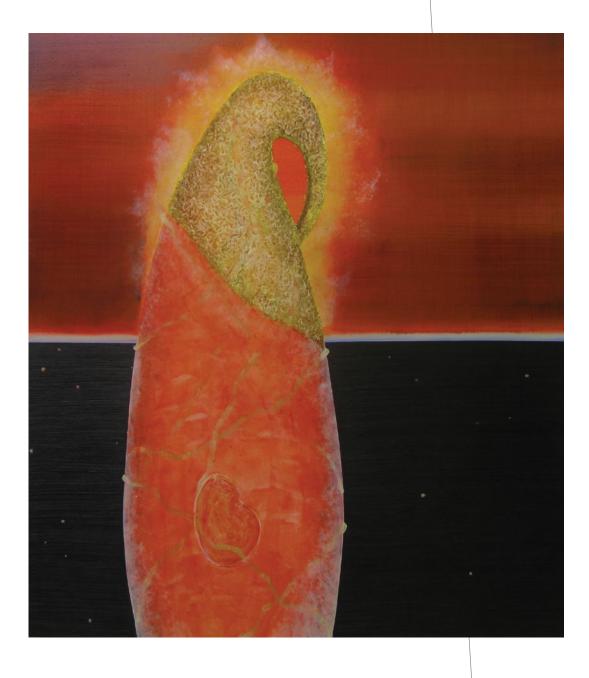












Some Travel Alone, oil on canvas, 182 cm x 182 cm, 2011



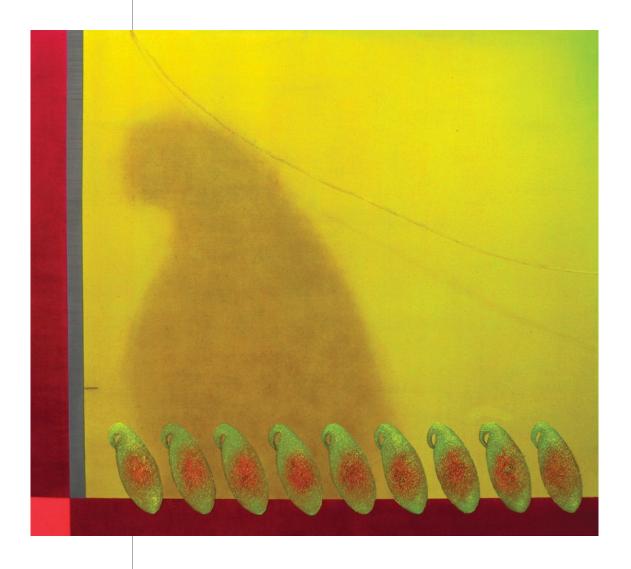
Mother & Child, oil on canvas, 121 cm x 137 cm, 2012

18



De Fil En Aiguille, oil on canvas, 122.5 cm x 152.5 cm, 2011

The Shadow Followers, oil on canvas, 137 cm x 121 cm, 2011

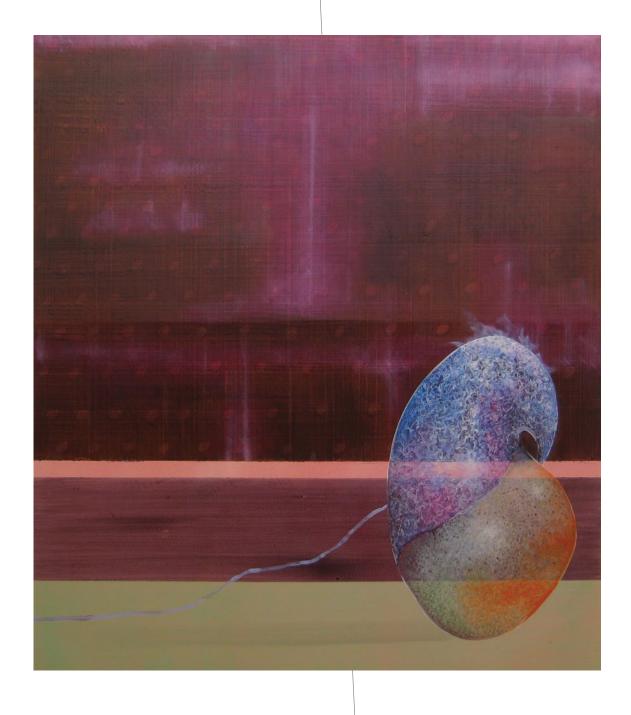


Sheltered from Shadows, oil on canvas, 137 cm x 121 cm, 2011





The World Within Us, oil on canvas, 121 cm x 137 cm, 2011



The Watchers, oil on canvas, 41 cm x 40.5 cm, 2011

Dreams Nascent, oil on canvas, 121 cm x 137 cm, 2011

Fabricator, oil on canvas, 56 cm x 56 cm, 2011





The Wayfarer's Companion, oil on canvas, 137 cm x 121 cm, 2012

# Pip Dickens

CV

1962 Born in Fiskerton-cum-Morton, Newark,

Nottinghamshire, UK

1998-2000 Slade School of Fine Art, University College London,

London Master of Fine Art: Painting

1993–1996 Leeds Metropolitan University BA (Hons) Fine Art: Painting

Lives and works in Yorkshire

# Solo Exhibitions

2012	'Pip Dickens – Patterns of Shadows', Daiwa Anglo-
	Japanese Foundation, London (6 Mar-17 April 2012)
2012	'Toward the Light - Pip Dickens', The Brindley Arts
	Centre, Cheshire, (31 Mar-12 May 2012)
2012	'Pip Dickens: New Works', Stanley & Audrey Burton
	Gallery, University of Leeds
2011	'Hajime - The Beginning', with Sound compositions
	by Professor Monty Adkins, University of Huddersfield
2010	'Towards The Light - Pip Dickens', Cartwright Hall
	Art Gallery, Bradford (Touring Exhibition)
2008	'Fabrications', Brass Gallery (Brahm), Leeds
2001	'Pip Dickens', Cassian de Vere Cole Fine Art, London
2000	'Pip Dickens', Cassian de Vere Cole Fine Art, London
1998	'Pip Dickens', Yorkshire Television, Leeds

# Two-person Exhibitions

2002	'Oil & Stone', sculpture by Deveren Bowman and
	paintings by Pip Dickens, East 73rd Gallery, London

# Selected Group Exhibitions

2011	"Colour in Art", Beldam Gallery, Brunel University, London
2010	'Twelve Constellations', Vulpes Vulpes, London
2009	'A Feast for the Eyes', Gallery II, University of Bradford
2009	'Art Auction for the Medical Foundation For the Care
	of Victims of Torture', Royal Institute of Great Britain,
0000	London
2009	'A Room with a View', Gallery II, University of Bradford
2009	"Porno-Graph", Brass Gallery (Brahm), Leeds
2009	"On Your Wall", Leeds Metropolitan University Gallery, Leeds
2009	'Mill', Monika Bobinska Gallery, London
2007	Stephanie Hoppen Gallery, London, curated by
200.	Alan Kluckow
2006	'Noctumal', Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, London
2004	'Double Take', The Business Arts Council,
	San Francisco, USA
2004	'Edna', Retrospective of past winners of the Edna Lumb
	Art Travel Award, Leeds Metropolitan University Gallery
2004	'In The Mix', Tangent Contemporary Art at The Marina,
	San Francisco, USA
2003	'Starting A Collection', Art First, London
2003	'Illusion', Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, London
2002	'Sharon Ben-Tal, Pip Dickens & Laurel Hunter',
0000	Tangent Contemporary Art, San Francisco, USA
2002	'Beneath The Surface III', Sarah Myerscough
0000	Fine Art, London
2002 2002	"Best of Art 2002", Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, London "Beautiful & Unique", Beatrice Royal Gallery, Eastleigh
2002	"FRESH ART FAIR" Business Design Centre,
2001	Islington, London
2000	"Bittersweet", Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London
1999	'Gm!', The Paper Bag Factory, London
1998	'Edna Lumb Art Travel Award Retrospective',
	Dean Clough Gallery, Halifax

# Recent & Forthcoming Publications

Catalogue	Pip Dickens: New Works, The Stanley & Audrey Burton		
Book:	Gallery, Leeds, 2012 ISBN-13-978-1-874331-47-6 Shibusa - Extracting Beauty, by Professor Monty Adkins		
	and Pip Dickens, University of Huddersfield Press, 2012 ISBN-13-978-1-86218-101-4		
Catalogue	Toward the Light - Pip Dickens, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford, 2010, ISBN 9780946657650		
Public Art Works			

# Public Art Works

2006	Design for integral external public artwork, Piccadilly
	<ul> <li>Make architects</li> </ul>

# Awards and Residencies

2011	Artist in Residence at Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery,
2011	University of Leeds Leverhulme Trust Award Artist in Residence (University
	of Huddersfield) Department of Music
2010	Artist in Residence, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford
2009	Arts Council of England Grant
2009	Celeste Painting Prize – short-listed
2008	Jerwood Contemporary Painters 09 - nominated
2001	AXIS Sponsored Stand Award at FRESH ART FAIR,
	London
1990	Jeremy Cubitt Prize (Slade School of Fine Art)
1997	NatWest Art Prize – short-listed
1995	Edna Lumb Art Travel Award – Research in Iceland
Collections	

Doyle Caygill Capital SA, Geneva, Switzerland The Arch, London Sovereign Capital, London, UK Private collections in UK and overseas



Pip Dickens: New Work

First published in 2012 to coincide with the exhibition Pip Dickens: New Work, 18 January – 14 April 2012

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