

The Shadowlight Artists
Creative Bridges



The Shadowlight Artists **Creative Bridges**

Tom Breach
Mark Hemsworth
Russell Highsmith
Richard Hunt
Lucy Skuce
Danny Smith

Edited by

Chris Oakley & Richard Duriez, 2016



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Introduction

Richard Duriez



I first came into contact with people with learning disabilities when I was a small child. My mother who worked at a long stay hospital used to take me there sometimes, and we also visited my adult aunty in another nearby hospital who was brain damaged after contracting meningitis as a young child. I remember these places as bare and uniformly institutional, not at all like the homes my friends and myself lived in. At that time there was no concept of "care in the community"; instead people with learning disabilities were warehoused and rarely seen out and about in the community.

After a background in filmmaking & TV I took up a job in the late 1990s at Film Oxford, which was established in 1987 as a digital arts education charity, providing training and creative activities for the community as a whole, including adults and young people, and has had great success in running large community projects.

My partner Sharon Woodward, a freelance filmmaker who works with Film Oxford delivering courses and projects, was managing another Oxfordshire based charity for young people with learning disabilities. She introduced me to many other support organisations, and we came together in 2005 to run a film festival for people with learning disabilities in Oxford, loosely based on the Brighton "Oska Bright" Film Festival.

After developing an enthusiastic group of local filmmakers with learning disabilities, and creating many local partnerships, we went on to develop further arts-based projects with them. A crucial development early on was to recruit established artist Chris Oakley, whose work involved digital filmmaking, and who could approach a community arts setting from the background of a professional arts practice.

It became very clear that there were some amazing talented and creative artists out there, but they were not being given the same access to professional development and audiences that artists without disabilities were. They also needed a strong community organisation behind them to fill out complicated funding applications, manage finances, act as advocate and support them technically. It is out of this that the Shadowlight Artists were born.

The group, which started out in 2008 with support from Film Oxford and funding from the Arts Council of England, have gone on to achieve great success both creatively and professionally. They have exhibited work that has reached audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

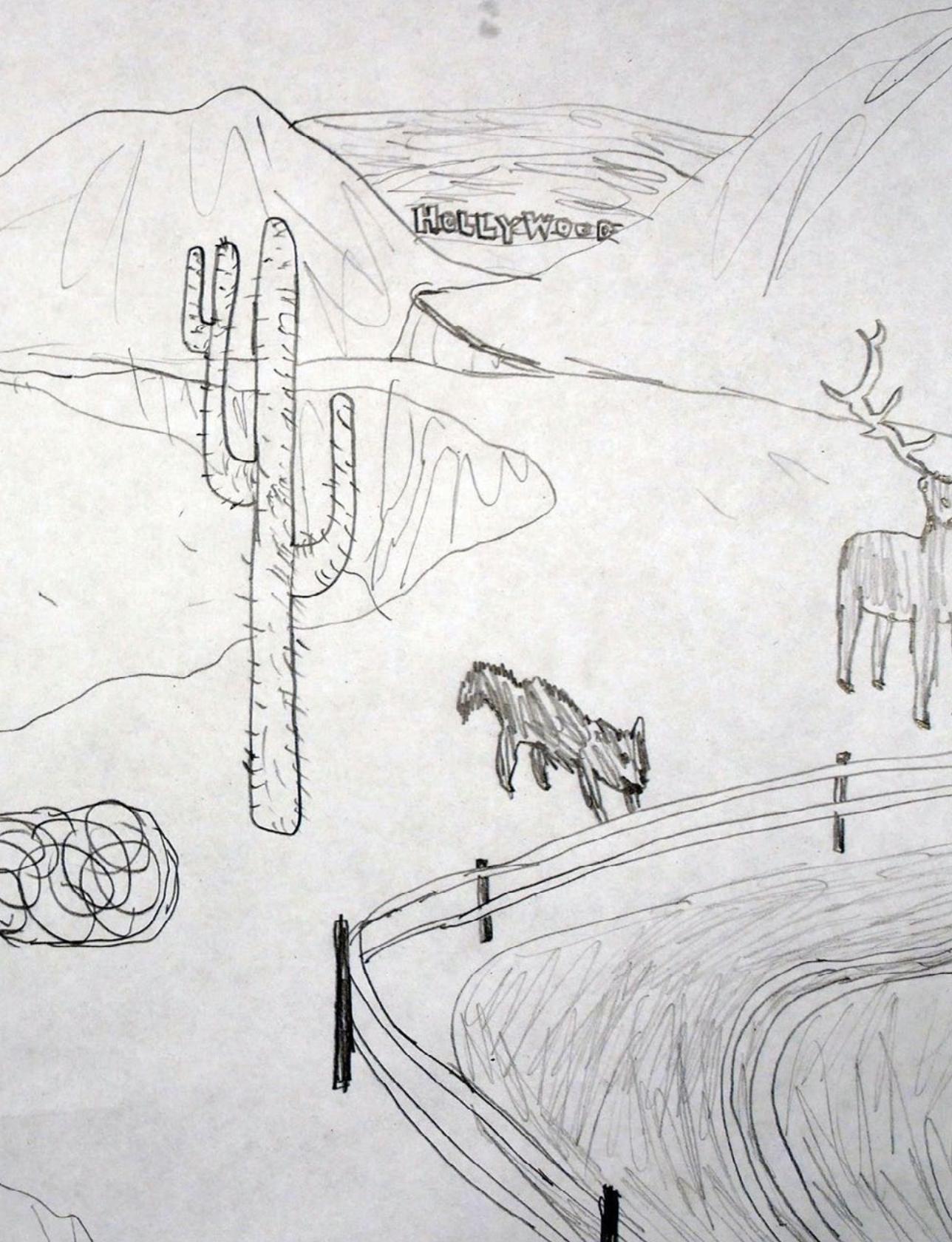
One of the biggest challenges faced by the group is the arts establishment that requires a degree from a university level art school as a prerequisite before describing someone as a "Professional Artist". This prerequisite unfortunately excludes people with learning disabilities from the professional arts community. However the quality and variety of the work produced by the Shadowlight Artists is helping to re-educate other artists and the public that professional artists can

come from many different backgrounds, and that diversity enhances the whole of the arts in the UK and beyond. A good example of this has been the Shadowlight Artists ability to attract some serious interest from galleries and other arts organisations. Modern Art Oxford's commitment to the group and to diversity in the arts in general, particularly stands out. The gallery has now hosted three successful "sold-out" artists screening events for the group, and will also be exhibiting their new work in October 2016.

The group's current project "Creative Bridges", further embeds the Shadowlight Artists into Oxfordshire's artistic community, and shows further creative and artistic development. The work produced has greatly exceeded the scope of the original proposal, and this is down to the very ambitious individuals within the Shadowlight Artists. In a very positive development, the group are also discovering and bringing in new talented members, helping to ensure a robust future for the Shadowlights.

I very much look forward to supporting the Shadowlight Artists as they push ahead into the future, changing lives for artists with learning disabilities and changing perceptions for the public as a whole.

Richard Duriez, Manager at Film Oxford



HOLLYWOOD



**Working with the
Shadowlights**
Chris Oakley



The Shadowlight Artists are a group of five artists with learning disabilities based in Oxfordshire, working in a variety of media but with a shared interest in digital forms. Their work is personal, moving, and at times challenging. The group formed in 2009 as a result of Film Oxford's Flash Frame project. The aim of that project had been to identify individuals with leaning disabilities who showed artistic potential and ambition to take their work to a broader audience. Since then, the group have gone on to produce work that has reached audiences within the UK and beyond, spanning media from painting and sculptural installation to film and theatrical production.

The original Flash Frame project was followed by the Digital Lives project and the current Creative Bridges project, both of which were designed around the group by Film Oxford. Through these projects, the group has grown in confidence both professionally and creatively, and has begun to penetrate the barriers to entry that exist for people with learning disabilities in relation to 'mainstream' arts activities. The group themselves all have almost no formal art education, due to the access barriers that exist for people with learning disabilities in relation to art education, and subsequent barriers in terms of accessing audiences.

Creative Bridges has been in a large part designed to tackle some of these barriers. Each of the Shadowlights has been involved in the recruitment and engagement of an established professional artist working in a relevant artform with whom they have collaborated. The group wanted to establish these relationships on the basis of parity in creative terms, with the established professional acting as an enabler rather than a mentor figure. The relationship between the Shadowlights and the established artists is seen as one of collaboration rather than as an instructor-learner relationship, with the goal of helping the group to self- identify as professionals. As a result, the Shadowlights have gained an insight into professional practice that will inform their ongoing artistic careers.

The Shadowlights have also undertaken a large measure of self-determination. They have a formal constitution, and through monthly meetings decide the future direction of the group and define their own goals. The increasing control exercised by the group is inevitably reflected in the ambition of their work.

I have worked with the Shadowlights as artistic advisor and hands-on collaborator since the formation of the group. Throughout the development of the group, my aim has remained to level the playing field by addressing some of the barriers faced by artists with learning disabilities. At the early stages, this inevitably involved elements of the instructor role, which I was keen to avoid. The group had limited exposure to contemporary art, and introducing the group to quite challenging examples of modern and contemporary practice has been refreshing. Duchamp's Fountain and Richard Long's walking pieces were accepted by the group as readily as a Turner watercolour.

Over time, my own role with the group has evolved to meeting increasing artistic confidence. The group has become more resolute in its creative decisions, and my role has been largely redefined to that of a technician. Where previously I saw my role as exposing the group to the new and offering potential approaches to making a work, I now spend much of my time with the group finding ways to realise the group's ideas, which are well formed and highly specific.

The scope of the project has grown with the Shadowlights' ambition. Where the early projects were largely confined to the visual arts with an emphasis on film and new media, this has now grown to include studio painting, theatre, and installation. A film has been produced which had a 10-month production period. Choreographed film shoots have taken place in cave systems. Before the group was formed, myself and Richard Duriez identified digital media as an accessible and rapidly rewarding form for people with learning disabilities, lacking many of the barriers to production of many other forms of artistic practice. These barriers seem no longer to apply.

The instructor-learner relationship is also shifting for the group members. The evolution of the "Shadowlight Associates" offers artistic opportunities to a broader group. They work with the Shadowlight Artists on group productions, which benefits the Associates wishing to explore and extend their skills whilst benefiting the core group who work in a mentoring role. Some of this group are experienced in a specific artform and wish to broaden their skills or experiment with a new medium, others are less experienced but show artistic promise. The associates are a feeder pool for the core group, and it is hoped that some of them will go on to become full members. Group members also lead workshops for a number of learning disability groups, and are increasingly seen as champions for the community.

As the group have developed, the themes in their work have increased in depth. Lucy Skuce's work has always contained themes of control, often expressed through the use of fans, lights and other electrical devices. This theme has developed into a form of role play where Lucy explores the power inherent in work and job roles, alongside the creation of a light installation which pays homage to the now demolished Didcot power station, which was both a major landmark and an icon of personal importance to Lucy.

Richard Hunt's paintings have increased in size and technical complexity. At the same time, he increasingly identifies the activity of painting as a devotional practice which explores the spiritual, whilst retaining elements drawn from popular culture.

Russell Highsmith was initially interested in filmmaking with the group based on his writing activity. He is now exclusively writing for the stage and screen, and has made a conscious decision to take a step back from the production process in order to concentrate on his writing. His interest in comedy remains undiminished.

Mark Hemsworth's interests in walking and outdoor events alongside his obsessive recordings of his experiences have now combined with a more personal element; Mark behind the camera has become a protagonist. His latest film explores how his experience of life is affected by the seasons as a sufferer of Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Danny Smith has at various times explored his talents as a photographer, painter and performer. Over recent years, he has developed an increasing interest in neolithic life and art. His latest work draws on this interest with a focus on the lost ritual element of neolithic life, which he has explored drawing on the traditions of dance for camera.



The Creative Case for Mainstreaming

Jon Pratty

Across the arts we're mostly now getting used to the Creative Case for Diversity. This Arts Council England 2011 strategy attempted to open out a more inclusive approach to funding, creating, developing and delivering creative work that better reflected the real lives of real people. Great Art for Everyone, by Everyone, if you like.

It's taken a while for more established art spaces to understand and get behind the Creative Case and there's been at least one relaunch. From my erstwhile position inside the Arts Council bubble, I've seen sincere efforts to understand how to consolidate and support disabled artists; but targets are still missed and funding programmes launched that are too complex, not aimed at the right people. And all the time, benefit and support cuts have sapped morale and made the uphill climb for survival even steeper for creative people with impairments.

Many on the inside of disability arts will have seen a different side of the Creative Case, however. In Grants for the Arts territory, the picture is much more exciting and positive, with a lot of the most exploratory work now being done by groups funded via GFTA rather than by NPOs.

Beyond the general disability arts scene, still filled with vibrant, political, oppositional, and immensely exciting work, digital work and creative media activity seem particularly well-suited to people with impairments. Working with digital artists myself, I've seen how tools like social media have allowed new voices to be heard, and touch screens and mobile devices have put creative tools in the hands of many who didn't have access before.

I think this brings two big opportunities for artists with impairments. Firstly, we can work in our own way at our own speed in ways we can control without having others do the work for us as proxies. Secondly, it means we can share ideas, collaborate, co-create, and mix it up with anyone we choose, disabled or not. And that's where we have a great connection with the Creative Case: digital and creative media at last gives us the chance to take or share control of the creative act. That for me is the core value of Creative Case and as a digital practitioner myself, I'm excited by the opportunity we now have to work with tools that can transform the stale power relationships we know still exist in dark corners of the arts.

Working at Disability Arts Online in 2010, we were just beginning to talk about disabled artists 'mainstreaming,' beginning to dismiss the idea that deaf and disabled arts should live in its own territory. There was lots of talk about this during Decibel showcase in 2009, for example. You might say mainstreaming deaf and disabled art reached a high point during Olympic year, 2012, and the Paralympic opening ceremony was an exceptional expression of the Creative Case, for me.

Thinking of digital tools and practices, some subtle changes in the nature of how we create artwork may now be taking place. As I suggest, digital art works

resulting from co-creation, rather than mainstreaming, could be an increasingly fertile disabled arts theme, and Creative Bridges is a great example of this.

Other south east projects also bear out this subtle change, including the impressive Curing Perfect interactive (2015) from Carousel Arts in Brighton (<http://curingperfect.com/>). This playful and graphically-rich online story about the possibility of using stem cell research to 'cure' disability was produced by a wonderfully diverse mixture of designers, developers, artists and writers, some with impairments, some without.

SprungDigi Festival in Horsham, west Sussex in 2014/15 was another example of the excitement of co-creation rather than mainstreaming. SprungDigi was a riot of carnival, live art and live streamed digital mayhem. SprungDigi was led by a core group of experienced learning disabled digital artists with important collaborations with Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee School, and artist links with Exploring Senses and other digital artists from the south east.

Working with the SprungDigi team on live streaming the action around the town into the hub at the festival centre, to me it was clear that a new kind of participation was taking place. SprungDigi asked the town to take part in the learning disability experience, to enjoy the spectacle, to participate in public art works themselves. Horsham, like Oxford, appears to have the kind of diverse community heritage that allows people in the street to at least glimpse the joy that is often at the core of good quality learning disabled arts.

So, back to this project: I was lucky to have been working at Arts Council England when Chris Oakley and Richard Duriez began Creative Bridges. I was really impressed with the Creative Bridges funding application. What shone through was the group's creative strength in depth, an excellent level of support from Film Oxford, and the character and skills of the voices being surfaced through the work.

Speaking to Richard, interesting points emerge about why the group has developed in the way that it has, and he gives hints about the reasons for its success. Going back to the first lines of this piece, these beginnings clearly embody the Creative Case.

"The group sprang from 'Hidden Faces,' a county-wide participatory arts project run by Film Oxford for people with learning disabilities, which was part of a much larger multi-organisational project called 'Faces of Oxford'. I put in a bid to that, with the idea to make some one minute films. We found a lot of really talented people and we thought wow! Can we do more participatory work? But we then thought about a project based on talent, rather than participation, and that was how Shadowlights came about."

Even at that early stage, the emphasis was on artistic talent, not just on participation. Also, the right kind of democratic management was key to people feeling involved: "We got together a panel of learning disabled artists, we worked with a partnership board, lot of artists involved. There wasn't one person involved with choosing the artists."

As well as being founded on equitable principles, across Oxford, it might be said the time was right for Shadowlights, said Richard: "When the group set up, there wasn't a particular history (in the third or social sector) of working with disabled artists across Oxford. There were some well-established independent organisations such as the self-advocacy group, My Life My Choice, as well as some progressive day services, such as Albion Day Services, but they did not have an arts focus."

Shift to now: it's a quite different arts scene in Oxford, still quite hard to find public outlets for the group's work. Luckily, Cornerstone Arts in Didcot have offered a valuable opportunity, according to Richard: "The Cornerstone partnership is fantastic. They are very welcoming; Oxford is so culturally busy it's quite hard to get space in the city, but Cornerstone were very keen to get the artists in there. There's a programming strand called Access All Areas, which Cornerstone do anyway, inviting people with Learning Disabilities from the area. Shadowlight are going to run a drop-in art class, so Richard Hunt and the others will be running the art class with Chris Oakley."

Along with Richard, I asked the core Shadowlight artists about the work they produced for the show at Cornerstone. Anyone who knows the Thames Valley will know the giant cooling towers at Didcot Power Station; even if you don't live nearby, you'll have glimpsed the towers as you speed by on the Oxford to London train. Shadowlight artist Lucy Skuce has long been fascinated by the towers and her film *Construction and Destruction in Didcot* documents her work to transform one of her drawings of the immense cooling towers into a sculptural, digital impression of the structures.

The film progresses from exploring drawing to cutting wood, painting and weaving light cables and Lucy cuts in her own footage of building sites and demolition, counterpointing that with a hypnotic percussive soundtrack that climaxes as the towers are brought shuddering, explosively, to the ground. Her art piece, a large scale relief of the towers, comes to life as electricity pulses through it, an ironic echo of the now silent power station. Lucy told me about the work that came out of the film: "It's a big black board with blue light wire, called *Cooling Towers with Power Station*. It was a fantastic project to work on."

One of first things I learnt at art college, back in 1979, was that if you have an idea you've got to push it as far as it goes to see where it takes you. Just playing out an idea, without exploring the real scope and risk, is missing the point of what artists actually do. Shadowlight artist Danny Smith had a big idea and he's taken it about as far as you can go; he went hundreds of feet underground and filmed his dance

for camera piece, *Light From My Crystal*, in Clearwell Caves in the Forest of Dean.

The piece opens with Danny making sleepy moves in his darkened bedroom, rotating, gesturing, bound by his dreams, which guide him to caress a beautiful crystal on his bedside shelf. The crystal explodes into a thousand pieces, taking Danny with it into a new scene, deep underground, a pre-historic neolithic underworld. Danny is now a hunter, a gatherer, wielding his bow to catch his quarry, flying like a bird, chalking his legend on the wall of the cave, until the crystal calls him back in another explosion of light.

"It was difficult filming in the cave," said Danny. "Some of it was too wet, with water on the floor. In my costume, one of my feet got wet, and it was not easy to film in the cave, but we did it. You can't find anywhere to plug your cables into the cave," laughed Danny. "This cave did have sockets," said Richard Duriez. "We did a recce a few weeks before and found one that did!"

Shadowlight Richard Hunt did a residency with Oxford artists Sonia Boué and Ellen Hausner at Magdalen Road Studios. "All the pictures have a story behind them," said Richard. "The residency was to learn some new techniques. It was to try and work in a new way with darker colours; the idea was to paint some of the backgrounds, then fill in on top, painting on top."

Richard Duriez from Film Oxford added, "before, Richard had been mainly drawing them out, then filling them in afterwards. This was about learning some new techniques. There's several different ones he tried out. Some didn't work, then he tried other ways, then he'd come back to them."

These works are intricate, complex and many-layered. There's a strong kinship with Australian indigenous art. "People always say that, or Aztec art," agrees Richard Duriez. "Those artists also have a strong tradition of working from dreams and Richard is a night owl; he works all night. He like to sell his work, too. Richard had a painting shown at Compton Verney gallery in Warwickshire, which was sold."

And now a first. Shadowlight Russell Highsmith has written a play for the project which was produced and performed at Cornerstone Arts in February 2016. "As far as we know," said Richard Duriez, "this was the first learning disabled writer to write a play and have it performed. It's online now on YouTube."

Russell is ambitious: "I want to eventually have it on TV. This is my first play; I adapted it from the television script which I'd spent nearly three years writing. I had help from somebody they got in to help me adapt it. In film sometimes you only have one take to do the whole thing, but you can't go back and repeat a scene on stage, like they do in films."

"Originally he was just going to do a few scenes, but then Russell decided to do

a full length play," said Richard from Film Oxford. "The cast didn't have learning difficulties, which was also interesting. He originally wanted to put it on at the Oxford Playhouse, which wasn't possible. His second choice was Cornerstone, and they were much more up for it. Russell had to rewrite it as it had about 30 scenes as a film, but it worked out really well; he had about 150 people in the audience, so that's not bad."

Mark Hemsworth is a film maker whose work for the show is rooted in the landscape and inspired by walks he takes throughout the year. "I've made a video about how I feel during the seasons, starting during the summer, and about the winter, and how I feel more upbeat during the spring, and when summer is coming back. I've got the basic idea, and the footage is done, I'm waiting to get it finished, and put together. But it's very difficult to get many hours of footage down into 15 minutes."

As our climate might be changing, I ask if the seasons appear to be going faster these days. "The nights are lighter, longer, warmer and hopefully sunnier in summer, but in winter the days are a lot shorter. They can be half the length. We're putting in copyright-free music, instrumental music, downbeat music for the winter, more upbeat for the summer. We found some good music for autumn leaves, but it was too much money for the copyright. I put some of my paintings in the film, drawings of landscapes, which we also used for the landscape project the group did."

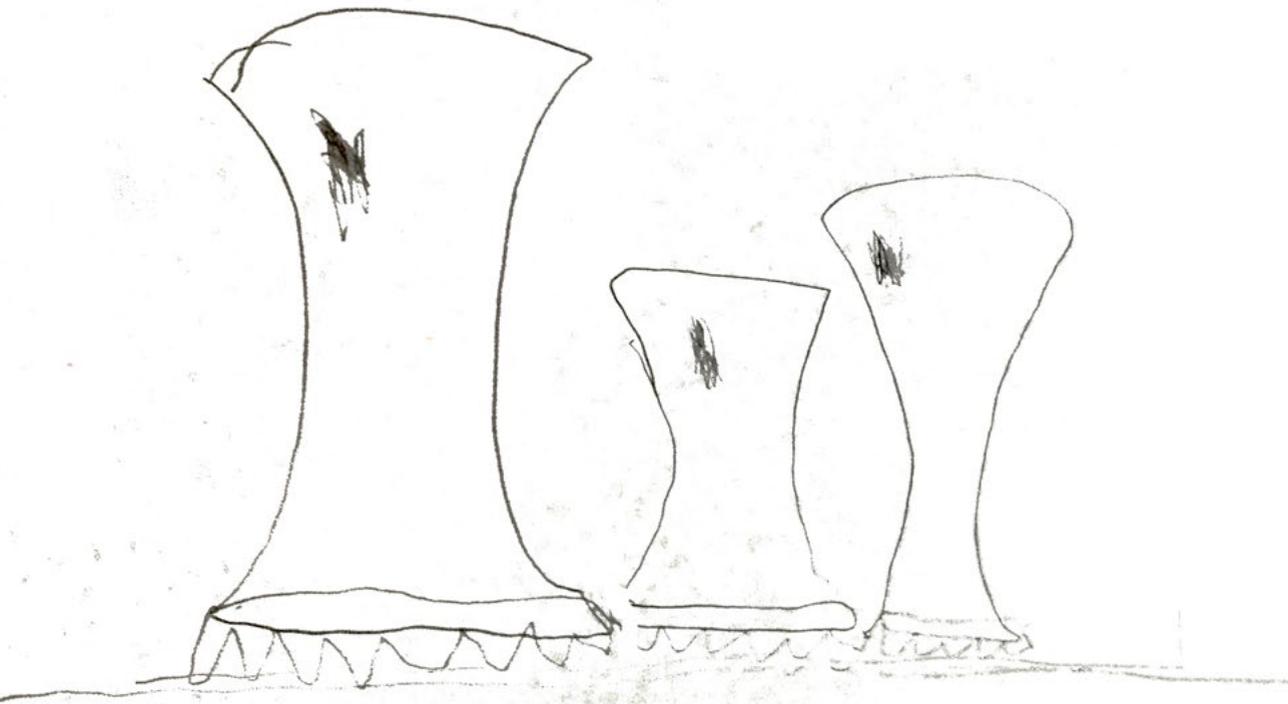
Where does the inspiration for your films come from? "It comes from my walks, how I feel about the seasons. Walking outside makes me feel better. I've walked four hours or so, twelve miles or so."

Is ancient Britain just under the surface, on your walks? "Yes. Like up Wittenham Clumps, up past Cholsey. I want to walk to the White Horse, but it's too far to go in one day, I'd have to get on the bus."

Tom Breach is one of the younger members of Shadowlight Artists, and though he's not individually featured in the show, he was involved in the two group works. His drawings often feature intricately detailed utopian city landscapes; he has strong beliefs about who should benefit from urban development, which come out as he talks me through the work. "That one, maybe I'd call The Future City of 2051 or later than that. There's a man on a bench reading a newspaper. A cactus; there's a dog-like creature. A couple walking up the path in the city."

"That one's out of an airplane window. There's part of the wing, the roads through large fields, the river, seats. And this drawing has horses. Southmere Park with the wind turbines. It's near where I used to live, an industrial area over that way, and a sewage works system over that sort of direction. River Thames leading towards Thamesmead, near Dartford, where I used to live"

The last picture for now. It's a drawing of a pastoral landscape with a barrier of skyscrapers across the horizon. It looks like the psychological fantasy film, *Inception*, I say. Tom: "No, it's like *Clockwork Orange*, that was filmed near where I lived in London. *Misfits* was filmed near there, too. That's the balcony of a pub I went to near there; and that's my hand holding a pint of lager"



| About the Artists



Totempole

Mixed media on canvas

Richard Hunt 2016

Richard Hunt

Richard Hunt was born in 1972 in Plymouth, and grew up in Gibraltar. He now lives in Rose Hill in Oxford. Richard works prolifically, and has produced around 150 new paintings and drawings over the last 3 years. In 2013 Richard exhibited works at the Compton Verney Gallery in Warwickshire.

Richard's work is based in the desire to communicate his feelings through painting. A major ambition for Richard is to be respected as an artist by the wider community, and not to be defined as an artist with Downs Syndrome. He is also interested in video, with his work having progressed from films documenting painting as a performance to works better defined as 'film painting'.

I went recently to look at the Howard Hodgkin Exhibition just across town at Modern Art Oxford and I loved his colours. I feel strongly about colours as well, I love colours. I like to pour my imagination out into a picture. When I'm painting and drawing I feel like I'm in a different world. I start with an idea which I sketch out onto paper or canvas, a frame to put the picture on, like a circle or a diamond, then over the next few weeks I build the picture up adding colours and details. I don't plan the pictures, I just know exactly what I want to do, when I do it, I go with the flow.

Working with artists Sonia Boué and Ellen Hausner at Magdalen Road Studios in Oxford, Richard has produced a series of paintings reflecting his interests in popular culture, and has imbued these with a devotional element. Richard identifies his creativity as an extension of his Catholic faith, and sees painting as a direct expression of his belief. Working in a professional studio environment has enabled Richard to paint at a much larger scale than in his previous work, and develop techniques that incorporate his own self-taught style with more traditional ways of working. He has also produced a film which explores the thinking process behind his work as a painter.

Sonia Boué

"I am a refugee's daughter."

The premise for my work is that objects come to contain life, living so closely with us, accruing our imprints, our stains and our memories. I like to believe they are observers, hoarders, documenters and participants. For this reason they have become my focus and inspire all the branches of my multi-form practice.

Story telling around the objects I find, allows me to be both autobiographical and to comment on the wider picture as I see it. Disparate fragments of experience, memory and observation become 'fixed' on a surface in a work providing layers or snatches of meaning. I am especially aware that at any moment compositions could change, be blown by the wind and scattered again. My work makes a show of permanence, a semblance of coherence from what is essentially temporal and chaotic.

I believe that excitement, beauty and hope can coexist on the surface of any object.

Ellen Hausner

I grew up in Nepal and Bhutan, cultures where both worship and meditation were (and are) an integral part of everyday life. This constant sense of the sacred permeates my work. A meditative state of mind is the starting point of creation for me, and I let it through by allowing the colours to present themselves, the images and figures to emerge, the forms to find their way into existence.

Working with Richard allowed me to engage deeply with that artistic process. He is spontaneous and completely present in the moment when he paints; I guided him and assisted him with composition and with suggestions, but he showed me how to simply be with the paint and the pens; and how not to consider too much, but to allow the art to flow through. Working with him was a pleasure and a privilege.



Richard Hunt and Sonia Boué
Magdalen Road Studios, 2015



Superstar Superchrist
Mixed media on canvas
Richard Hunt 2016



Detail from *The Dream*
Mixed media on canvas
Richard Hunt 2016



Construction and Destruction in Didcot

Video Still

Lucy Skuce 2016

Lucy Skuce

Lucy Skuce was born in 1981 in Banbury, Oxfordshire, and grew up in Worcestershire. She lives in Didcot, Oxfordshire.

Lucy Skuce is a filmmaker who was born with profound and multiple disabilities. She bought her first VHS camcorder as a young woman and started to film her life, including the objects and places she identifies as important. Since working as part of the Shadowlight group, her focus has increasingly shifted from inanimate objects to people, particularly her desire to assert the importance of her personal power and independence. This independence includes the importance to her of ownership and control of the production process; scripting, shooting and editing her films herself. Her work has been screened both within the UK and internationally, including Liberty Festival (National Film Theatre BFI Southbank), and Abilities Festival (Toronto).

Lucy has made a light installation and a film exploring her obsession with light and power sources, and long standing relationship with the now demolished Didcot A power station, which has been a major icon in her life. Working with artist Chris Oakley, Lucy designed and fabricated an illuminated light piece using electroluminescent wire, based on her drawings of the Didcot cooling towers. This piece is accompanied by a film documenting the design and fabrication of the work, and reflecting Lucy's interest in the processes of demolition and construction. Lucy identifies with the hierarchical nature of the construction industry, and sees it as a parallel to the control Lucy sees as of primary importance in her own life.

Chris Oakley

Chris Oakley works with video, digital and installation, and exhibits internationally. He has worked with the Shadowlights since their formation in 2009, and collaborated with Lucy on her project centred on Didcot A power station, alongside the construction and redevelopment taking place within Didcot itself.

Working with Lucy on this project was very rewarding. Lucy wanted to make a piece of work which was not primarily about film, but more in the area of sculptural installation. As with most of Lucy's work, it is centred around a personal iconography and her interest in role play to explore power and control. Lucy's drawings are mostly created from memory, and contain a great deal of contextually significant detail, so it was great to help her interpret her drawing in a new form.



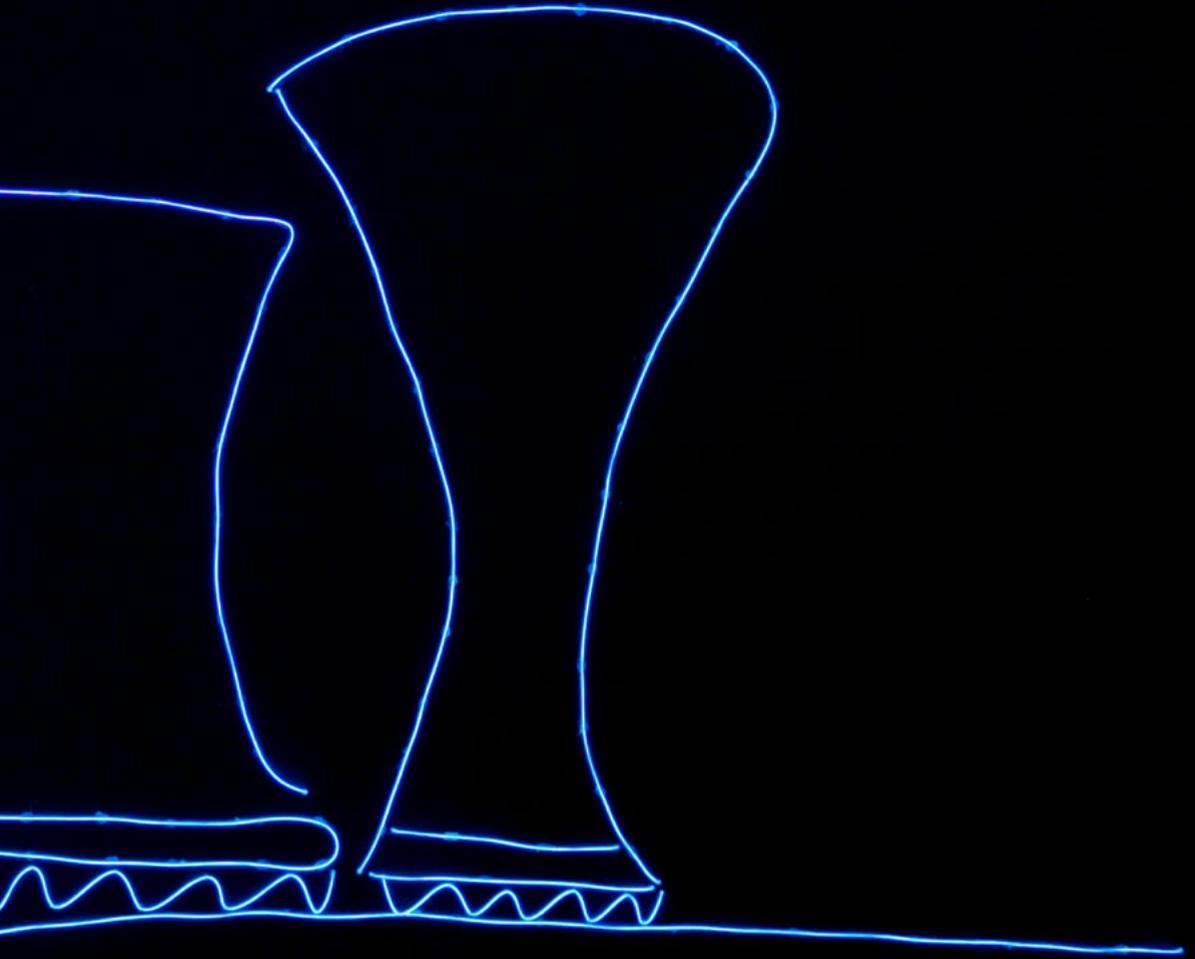
Chris Oakley and Lucy Skuce
Film Oxford, 2015



Cooling Towers with Power Station

Electroluminescent wire on board

Lucy Skuce 2016





Mark Hemsworth

Mark Hemsworth was born in 1968 in Reading and grew up in Cholsey, Oxfordshire with his family.

My favourite artists are Van Gogh, Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci and I like painting and colour- for example, how colour makes the picture come alive. I am also interested in perspective, shadow and shading. The shapes and the detail are also something I am interested in. With video I plan out what the video is going to be about and then plan and draw a storyboard. Then I record what I need and then come back and edit on the computer.

I like going out and filming and doing the editing, I like the effects that are possible. My first film was shown at a film festival in 2008 which was called the Three Billy Goat's Gruff. My ideas come from a feeling I've had in the past and have enjoyed. Film is a good way to express them and I get pleasure from painting.

Mark is a skilled draughtsman, but is equally interested in photography, film, and other recording media. In part due to his passion for walking and the landscape, Mark is also interested in work which uses the landscape and experience of the natural environment directly, such as the work of Richard Long.

Working with filmmaker Naomi Morris Mark has created a documentary about his life and the influence of seasonal affective disorder on its tempo. Over an annual cycle, the film follows Mark on his walks with a camcorder, with which he documents his responses to the environment across the seasons. The audience shares a sense of a world that expands through spring into a frenetic summer, slowing and contracting back into a contained domestic world as winter closes.

Naomi Morris

Mark and I have discovered a shared interest in the great outdoors and have walked our way through the seasons to explore the wonderful British weather and its effects on the way we feel. Mark has walked through south Oxfordshire's countryside all his life and as well as studying changes in the landscape over time, he has noticed that the way he feels alters as the seasons pass by.

Creativity and self expression are important to me. I am a multi media artist experimenting in film, photography, interactivity and movement. I support people to express themselves and have worked with Pegasus Theatre, Anjali, Oxford Youth Dance, Ciao!, OYAP and OVADA.

<http://naomiemorris.wix.com/portfolio>



| Mark Hemsworth shooting
| Moods & Seasons



Moods & Seasons

Video stills

Mark Hemsworth 2016





The Big Shock

Performance photograph

Russell Highsmith 2016

Russell Highsmith

Russell Highsmith was born in Oxford in 1985, and lives in Abingdon. He has been writing for the screen for the past 10 years, and is captivated by TV sitcoms from the 1970s and '80s.

I was 16 weeks premature and that was the cause of my disability, I have right-sided hemiplegia. I have spent my whole life in Abingdon apart from three years when I was a student at Treloar College in Alton, Hampshire.

I have always been interested in comedies and making people laugh. I like the 'old' comedies that were on TV like The Vicar of Dibley and Only Fools and Horses. I like the fact that they have audience laughter in them because it almost gives you permission to laugh at them or with them.

My very first idea of a film came on a holiday in Wales. My Grandad was on camcorder and I directed my Dad into a very cold sea, He had to pretend to be in difficulties and I 'rescued' him in a dinghy. I think this idea came from a visit to a local R.N.L.I. station where I was donating some money from a sponsored walk I did.

Building on his previous writing and direction projects, Russell has expanded his writing from short film scripts into long-form work. He has developed a script for a play which culminated in a theatrical performance of the work *The Big Shock* in February 2016. The play draws on the genres of romantic comedy and drama, and at times offers an unsettling view of young relationships. Russell developed the piece in collaboration with playwright and producer Mark Ralph-Bowman.

Mark Ralph-Bowman

I've worked in and with theatre in the UK, Europe and Africa as teacher, director and writer. Much of that work has been attempting to support and promote young theatre practitioners. Working with Russell presented both of us with significant challenges. For him, re-imagining his TV screenplay in a medium that was novel to him. For me, retaining his vision in the different medium. Overall, I was proud of what we achieved.



Russell Highsmith and Mark Ralph
Bowman
Script editing session



Russell Highsmith at the performance of The Big Shock Cornerstone, Didcot



The Big Shock

Performance photograph

Russell Highsmith 2016



| Danny Smith conducts recce at
Clearwell Caves

Danny Smith

Danny Smith was born 1975 in Wallingford where he grew up, and now lives in Oxford.

Danny has clear artistic intentions: to show independence, demonstrate emotions associated with change and “show people I’m not lonely, which people think I am”. Danny identifies pride in being a role model for other disabled people seeking an independent life. He has broad artistic interests and has worked in a wide range of media from painting and photography to performance, animation and documentary. His work across these media shows a common theme; Danny’s desire to demonstrate self- determination, and explore the emotions triggered by change in his own life. In recent years, Danny has moved from New Cross in London where he lived for 15 years to Oxford, where he continues to live independently. His work in painting, photography and video has been exhibited within the UK and internationally, with his film *Time for a Change* been screened at New York’s Sprout festival.

Matthew Barney is good, and I like lots of abstract artists’ work. I love making shapes and seeing what they are like with different colours. When I do my photography, I like to photograph nature and strange things. I have been interested in art for a long time. I love to use different types of paint. I also enjoy using just a pencil or charcoal, and some sculpture is nice.

Working with choreographer and dramatist Emma Webb and photographer Roger Gilboy, Danny has made a film exploring his dreams. Danny is interested in the cave as a dream space, and the imagery of ancient cave dwellers. In his dream, Danny awakes in the Stone Age, and finds a crystal that has the power to bring life to the distant past. Danny has visualised this dream, performing in the Clearwell Caves with himself cast in a gothic imagining of ancestral life.

Emma Webb

Emma Webb is a movement director. She trained at Central School of Speech and drama and works in both theatre and dance. As a movement director she has worked with UnderConstruction Theatre Company, The Oxford Playhouse, Sat mat Co. and Leaning House. She was a supported artist at the Pegasus Theatre Oxford and is currently involved in a range of diverse projects. Emma has a strong interest in working with people with disabilities and has a wealth of experience. She is in the process of developing a Christmas show for 3-7 year olds with SEN.

Working with Danny has been a complete joy. I followed his lead all the time, simply shaping his ideas so as not to intrude upon his original vision, which he had developed before I was involved. He was incredibly expressive and clear. This was an beautiful adventure.

Roger Gilboy

Roger Gilboy is an independent filmmaker and photographer based in Oxford, and has previously worked with other members of the Shadowlights.

Realising Danny's vision for his film threw up many problem solving opportunities - from filming in a dark underground cave, manoeuvring around his bedroom, to ensuring his make-up stayed in place, amongst many. But it was great fun working with Danny, and his film shows him to be a very creative and imaginative person.



Filming of Light from my Crystal
Danny Smith 2016



Danny Smith rehearsing with
Emma Webb



Light from my Crystal

Production still

Danny Smith 2016

Shadowlight Associates

The Shadowlight Associates were formed to offer artistic opportunities to a broader group. They work with the Shadowlight Artists on group productions, which benefits the Associates wishing to explore or extend their skills whilst benefiting the core group who work in a mentoring role.

The Associates are individuals who have been identified as having artistic potential by the core group, or who are already accomplished in a specific artform and wish to experiment with a new medium. The Associates are also seen as a recruitment pool for the core group, and it is hoped that Associates will go on to become full members of the group. The Associates have worked with the core group on the video pieces *Dreamsville* and *Landscapes*.

Otto Baxter

Otto is an actor and performer who has appeared in independent films, including the BAFTA nominated *Samuel-613* and a number of television documentaries.

Wendy Belcher

Wendy has been involved with Film Oxford for a number of years, and enjoys the performance aspects of her work with the Shadowlight group.

The Shadowlight Artists is a really nice group, I like talking to people and making friends. My favourite things are doing the camera work and acting. I am really looking forward to doing more fun activities with the group.

Tom Breach

Tom Breach is 20, lives in Oxford and has Asperger's. He enjoys drawing but feels in some ways let down by the education system and lacks confidence in his own abilities and creativity.

Through taking part in The Shadowlights projects he has made new friends and is beginning to realise that others rate his drawing skills highly.

I have enjoyed being able to show my drawing skills and learn more about film making, acting to 'Green screen' and some animation and editing techniques on the workshops. They are a great bunch to work with and made me feel welcome.

Tom is now the most recent addition to the Shadowlight Artists, having joined the core group during the course of the Creative Bridges project. He looks forward to developing his own projects alongside the core group in the near future.

Abul Kasem

Abul's interests lie in filmmaking, and he is particularly keen to develop his skills as a camera operator.



Otto Baxter in Landscapes

Video still

The Shadowlight Artists 2016



*Wendy Belcher and Russell Highsmith in
Landscapes*

Video still

The Shadowlight Artists 2016



Abul Kasem in Landscapes

Video still

The Shadowlight Artists 2016



*Richard Hunt and Tom Breach in
Landscapes*

Video still

The Shadowlight Artists 2016



A pint beside the lake

Pencil on paper

Tom Breach 2016

Shadowlight Associates Collaborators

Following the model of the individual projects, the Shadowlights and the Associates have collaborated with professionals in creative and technical support roles on their group projects. These projects have been led by Chris Oakley with support from Daniel Breach and Grace O'Donnell.

Daniel Breach

Danny has provided creative and technical support on the Shadowlight group projects, in addition to supporting the production of some of the individual artist's work.

As an artist and filmmaker I enjoy any opportunity to help others to learn and explore creative processes using the mediums of art and film. Having health issues that restrict my ability to work full-time, it is rewarding to volunteer utilising skills and knowledge I have gained over time.

When people like the Shadowlights Artists get the chance to show their combined and individual talents, it is especially rewarding to be a part of the team that is helping the artists to make and showcase their varied works.

Grace O'Donnell

I'm a communications officer and freelance filmmaker. I first met the Shadowlight Artists over three years ago and was very impressed with their talent. My most recent venture with them was supporting the Landscapes project. They are such skilled artists that I learnt tons; their enthusiasm and commitment made it an incredibly enjoyable process; overall a wonderful experience that I'd love to do again.

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