

Imi Maufe

Artist in Residence in the Community

Highgreen, Tarsset, Northumberland, 2007 - 2008



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In September 2000 Visual Arts in Rural Communities (VARC) began to fund an annual twelve-month artist's residency at Highgreen, Tarsset, Northumberland. VARC was set up to promote the understanding and enjoyment of visual arts in rural communities through contact with an artist, through creative workshops and through mounting exhibitions.

At the same time VARC intends that the residency provides an artist with a unique opportunity to develop his or her practice in a community in a deeply rural location and away from the constraints of city life.

Imi Maufe came to Highgreen after a year in Norway. She initially trained and worked as a landscape architect and then completed a Masters in Multidisciplinary Printmaking at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

“My work this year has been about how creative practices can sneak into the most ordinary and extraordinary events; my work is not about high art, but about art that is accessible, art works that can be part of people's everyday lives in many different, quirky and unusual ways. It is the local people that make things happen here and although you will find no people represented in the work, that is fundamentally what it is about.”

Imi Maufe, 2008

During her year at Highgreen Imi has fully embraced the life of the Tarsset community as well as the Tarsset landscape completely. Each piece of work in this exhibition captures and reflects an element of the artist's year in Tarsset, not in a representational way but from the inside.

Both landscape details and community events have inspired Imi and over the year she has made many quirky arts interventions and willing contributions to the local social calendar. A number of these interventions have invited responses, and all these experiences and reciprocal contributions have helped shape the body of work in this exhibition, along with Imi's attempts to grasp and interpret the geography of the place.

Projects in the community are central to the residency and, as well as informal involvement in community events of all sorts, Imi has hosted open studio afternoons and given talks, planned and led workshops for local residents, in schools and for visiting groups.



Open Studio, April 2008



Book-making and printmaking workshop, Tarsset Village Hall April 2008



Illustrations made during printmaking workshop at Greenhaugh First School

Imi Maufe also initiated and organised, along with Tarsset 2050, the very successful Norway Day held in May. The day included story telling, willow pipe workshops, exhibits and a waffle café and in the evening a three course Norwegian dinner, followed by music from Tørvikbygd (Bergen, Norway) and Sophy Ball and Hanny Pawsey (Newcastle) entertained 80 guests.



Dancing, Norway Day

Imi was asked if she might make a piece of work to enhance a large fence in the playgroup's playground. After consultation with staff and drawing workshops with older children Maufe has created a series of colourful panels that children can take rubbings from and can be moved around to form an ever-changing game of pairs.



North Tynies Perspex Panels

Imi has been experimenting and developing ideas using Unison Colour's handmade artist's pastels. Unison Colour is based in the Tarsset Valley and makes a range of over 400 colours. Imi used these pastels in an untraditional way to create an interactive performance for Falstone Border Shepherd's Show, looking at people's associations with colour.



Falstone Border Shepherd's Show Colour Performance

The work displayed in this exhibition can be seen again as the artist has devised ways of touring it. Imi is towing, by bicycle, the exhibition in a specially adapted suitcase and trailer, taking it to Bellingham, Hexham and Newcastle before she leaves Tarsset in early October. And a smaller collection of books made over the year has been housed in a specially designed bookshelf that is to travel for a year on the bright yellow mobile library that drives through the valley, from Troughend to Redesmouth available on loan to all those that use this service.

VARC is eager to develop further links with groups in local villages and towns and in the city of Newcastle. If you have any ideas or would like to discuss VARC's work, please contact Janet Ross, Liaison Manager: t 0191 266 6857 e janet.ross8@btinternet.com

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