

BIG LANDSCAPES

Boyd & Evans



Anecdotes 2004-07

Fionnuala Boyd and Leslie Evans are artists who have worked collaboratively since 1968, meeting when they were students – Boyd at Leeds University and Evans at Leeds College of Art. As painters they used photography as a research tool, building banks of images for reference, which they combined in ambiguous compositions that were both surreal and immaculately executed.

While still continuing to paint, with the advent of digital imaging they embraced the possibility of creating photographic compositions in their own right in a range of scale, from small to monumental. As in their painting, their pleasure in detail remains undiminished as is evident in their compositions configured to fit the walls in the Lobby of One Canada Square.

This exhibition of photographs, panoramic in reach and of narrative content, marks their first installation of a collection of monumental compositions relating to their excursions to the deserts of South Western America; a temperate rainforest in Washington State and a huge English beech tree.

Conveying wide open spaces – in effect, big landscapes – became a subject for Boyd & Evans' paintings from their first visit to the United States in 1977-78, which was made possible through being awarded the Bicentennial Fellowship, British Council and National Endowment for the Arts (USA). They were stunned by

the magnitude of the landscapes they saw, but around twenty years passed before their second visit, when they were reassured to find their love for the landscape and the inspiration it gave them in their work had not diminished. When funds allow, they have visited America regularly ever since, including in 2015 when they gathered material for their current work.

While their need to paint seems less evident in their work since 2005, they have not given it up entirely although when they had a solo exhibition, Landmarks, at the Milton Keynes Gallery in that year they chose to show just photographic works. Here too we focus on photographs, which have been made with technology offered through digital imaging.

Anecdotes 2004-07, an early example of their photographic narratives, tells of a number of journeys they made across the western states of America through encounters with places, people, objects, animals, debris, strange plants and weather, set against a common horizon. Like paintings in which they brought together diverse components in singular compositions, this photograph, made from many, in effect does the same. The panoramic length of *Anecdotes* has given Boyd & Evans the opportunity to wrap it round a corner, thereby giving the installation a continuous composition running along south- and east-facing walls of the Lobby.

A slightly different approach may be seen in *Beech Tree* 2014. This massive tree on Cannock Chase was the subject of Boyd & Evans' first monumental photographic installation, a version of which was shown in a two-storey atrium at the Milton Keynes College Gallery in 2014. When collecting mushrooms, Boyd & Evans had come across the tree and thought it would work in the gallery, as it gave both them and the viewers the opportunity to look up and to look down on the composition. Here, the positioning of the photograph on the stairway from the Lobby of One Canada Square to the lower level provides similar viewpoints. Not only does the composition give the feeling of the tree's massive height and spread but it also evokes qualities of light, contrasting textures and age. The gnarled root system and trunk, engraved with initials and messages made over many years, tell of human presence.

Beech Tree 2014



In *Box Canyon* 2015-16 a desert-loving plant stands against the arid landscape. The Paloverde or Parkinsonia Microphylla, a bristling upright tree, grows to around five metres in height. Growing in the Sonoran Desert, the Paloverde was photographed with a hand-held camera, each frame being composed horizontally with the camera in an upright position.

Box Canyon 2015-16



Ocotillo 2015-16, seen here growing in Joshua National Park, south-eastern California, appears to be the least altered of images, included for its scale and curious growth patterns. This plant is about five metres high and when not in flower looks dead in the landscape. Flowering is triggered by rainfall, and the coral-like blossoms grow only at the tip of stems, to which small leaves cling along their length. This image marks the first time that Boyd & Evans took multiple photographs of a single item using a panoramic tripod head that gives constant overlaps. Using Photoshop to join the individual frames together compensates for the overlaps, in order to make the picture systematically and with a common focal point. For the artists it was critical to find where the focus should be, so they took multiple photographs of a number of these plants and considered that this was the most successful. This system proved to be more accurate than using the hand-held camera for *Box Canyon*.

Ocotillo 2015-16



LIST OF WORK

Anecdotes 2004-07
Digital print on vinyl
1000 mm x 12000 mm
(1000 mm x 3550 mm and
1000 mm x 8450 mm)

Beech Tree 2014
Digital print on vinyl
8470 mm x 5440 mm

Box Canyon 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
1450 mm x 3810 mm

Ocotillo 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
2390 mm x 1992 mm

Grand Staircase Escalanté 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
1450 x 8990

Salt Pans 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
5000 x 11985

Double Arch, Utah 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
5000 mm x 11985 mm

Hoh Rainforest 2015-16
Digital print on vinyl
5000 mm x 11985 mm

While it is not possible to sell parts of this installation, individual prints on a smaller scale are available from the artists. For further enquiries contact Boyd & Evans at info@boydandevans.com

EVENTS

Tuesday 23 August at 6.30 – 7.15pm
Curator Ann Elliott tours the exhibition with Fionnuala Boyd and Leslie Evans. The tour is free but please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office at visualart@canarywharf.com to reserve a place

Canary Wharf and the artists are most grateful to Kamset Digital for their collaboration to realise the works for this exhibition.

canarywharf.com/arts-events/exhibitions



Grand Staircase Escalanté 2015-16

Grand Staircase Escalanté 2015-16 is the name of an area of land – some seven million acres – in which tectonic plates met and layers of sedimentary rock were brought to the surface, at some points tipping over. The surface became eroded and rocks fell out. In a 420° panoramic sweep of the camera, clouds are shown to have moved, yet retain a virtually common formation.

they took photographs that they used as components for painted compositions. In Hoh, almost twenty-five years on, the photographs they made became the structural elements for their composition *Hoh Rainforest* 2015-16. They used a panoramic camera to take views that they brought together in this piece. Secondary growth on trees was like rocks – seemingly indestructible, they said – and was growing at up to 766 metres above sea level, an environment as surreal as the moods they have sought in their work from their earliest paintings.

BOYD & EVANS

Fionnuala Boyd was born in 1944 in Welwyn Garden City, and Les Evans in 1945, in St. Albans. They began working together in 1968 as painters, using photography as their source material. At a time when photo-realist painting was to the fore, they resisted that label, preferring their work to be considered as surrealist in intent and feeling. Their compositions were often ambiguous, obscuring strange narratives that needed to be unravelled. They posed questions, ‘What?’ ‘Where?’ ‘Why?’ and also ‘How?’ as their paintings were immaculately executed revealing no clue as to whose hand had painted which part. The anonymity of the photographic print suits their methodology very well indeed, yet the surreal seams of mystery and their need to provoke questioning remain strong aspects of their work.

They have exhibited internationally since 1970 in group and solo exhibitions and their work is in some forty public and corporate collections in Britain and abroad.

For more information visit www.boydandevans.co.uk

Boyd & Evans are represented by Flowers Gallery, www.flowersgallery.com

Being able to see their compositions on a truly large scale has been both challenging and exciting for Boyd & Evans. Even these works in the lofty reaches of the Lobby of One Canada Square cannot replicate their direct experience of the landscape, but it does go some way to assist viewers to get lost in detail that remains largely invisible on the printed page.

Ann Elliott
July 2016



Double Arch, Utah 2015-16

Double Arch, Utah 2015-16 shows weathered sandstone in an area of Utah’s National Park where there are many naturally eroded arches. Boyd & Evans have visited them time and again. For their composition, they pulled back from the arches to include contrasting greenery against the intense red of the eroded sandstone formations, in what could be construed as being a painterly observation.

Hoh Rainforest, located away from the south-eastern deserts of California on the western foothills of the Olympic Peninsula mountains in western Washington State, is one of the largest temperate rainforests in the United States. In 1991, Boyd & Evans were artists in residence for a Rainforest Project run by the Royal Geographic Society in Brunei. There

Hoh Rainforest 2015-16



Mood differs in each of Boyd & Evans’ monumental images. Evidence of long-gone or recent human presence may be found - in a footprint in the sand if one looks carefully enough, or obviously with engineering, which is evident in the virtually abstract composition of *Salt Pans* 2015-16. The salt pans echo the horizontal strata of the hillside through continued layering of the stretches of saline water evaporating in scorching sun. The area where this photograph was taken is some 1900 metres above sea level, and the salt pans covered over 23 square kilometres of rubber-lined pools into which water is pumped and salt is scraped off once the water has evaporated. Used in fertilisers and as road salt, the salt harvest is the result of engineering and harnessing natural resources.

For the photograph, Boyd & Evans used two layers of panoramic images. They say the result looks exactly how they saw the landscape and the sky. The clouds were photographed within one minute during which there were some changes, ‘But,’ they said, ‘Photoshop fixed that.’ On some occasions they wait for clouds to change before taking their photographs. Clouds add to the drama of this piece, and although visible in the salt pans, the salinity of the water does not reflect them in equal measure.

Salt Pans 2015-16



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Curated by Ann Elliott
for Canary Wharf Group

18 July – 2 September 2016
Daily 7am - midnight
Lobby, One Canada Square
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