

MARK SHEEKY

NEORENAISSANCE

I have an eclectic output as an artist, spanning painting, sculpture, video, music, writing, performance, and I've always liked exploring the links between different media and art forms.

My recent art exhibitions have involved other artists and poets to create cross-collaborations and events, and this is a key element for NEORENAISSANCE.

This online exhibition explores some of these collaborations, and it includes some of my oil paintings which have links with other art forms.

Eventide 3800

Oil on canvas, 2005



One of my earliest paintings, inspired by a prediction by Nostradamus about the end of the world in the year 3800. I used to write poems to accompany the paintings and write them on the back. This poem was written for this painting:

Cone

I'm your ultimate damnation.
In the poison of fate,
in the grains of the future I hide.
Listen, you explorers
and stare in your inside.
I turn wave against wave
and tide against tide.

I no longer have this painting so I thought I would include it in this digital exhibition.

Abandoning Someone Who Was A Friend To Me When I Had None

Oil on canvas, 2010



In 2018 I exhibited in Stockport Museum and Art Gallery and invited poets from Nantwich and the Stockport Write Out Loud group to write poems to accompany the paintings. Nantwich poet Helen Kay wrote a poem, *Riding Ariel*, for this painting:

The hoof-beaten brain
a recipe of tears and sweat
and this utterly speed of rhythm
kneads her thighs to the saddle
stirs her into the summer blues
away and away with.

She knows his sandshape grip
his brutal bit that pulls a grin,
that gags a want to crawl
towards the ever there darkscape,

A match striking the moors
she sparks her blood to sand
that moulds its gritty mirage
through vein and artery
leaving scorched earth
and a blister of sun..

An Octopus Finally Killing A Lighthouse Which Is Assumed Into An Angel

Oil on M.D.F. panel in frame of wood, plaster, papier maché, 2012



I often frame my own work and I like to enhance the idea of a painting by making a sculpted frame that is part of the artwork itself. Over time, I've made several works where the frame and painting both become part of the artwork.

This elaborate frame of plaster and papier maché also includes optional red velvet curtains which must be opened to peer at the work.

The Death Of Man

Oil on M.D.F. panel, 2010



Another painting which has an associated poem.

The Death Of Man

Hulk, broken.
Sword of horn pierces the heart.
Makes flesh the art.
Stench of blood, and rust.
Dead things rot as they must,
in acid moonlight beams
of silver turquoise.

She looks on, with voluptuous stare,
the goddess up there.
Killer, or judge.

A red rose sighs,
wet, in tiny sympathy as he dies.
Gentle leaves flex and crisp,
curled in lush tenderness,
yet cut from the branch.

The Paranoid Schizophrenia Of Richard Dadd

Oil on M.D.F. panel in cabinet of wood, brass, 2012



In 2012 I had the idea of making a cabinet with doors to house a painting, it adds an element of mystery and interaction. The painting is about Victorian artist Richard Dadd who painted while in the then reforming environment of Bethlem and Broadmore Hospitals. I wanted the doors to be like both prison doors, and the trees of a forest. I aim to make a new cabinet for this work when it is practical to do so.



God Being Killed By Theists And Atheists

Oil on M.D.F. panel in frame of wood, resin clay, aluminium leaf, painting 2012, frame 2018



Another example of a work with an accompanying elaborate frame, this painting was painted for a competition called Religionis Violenta. I wanted to show the conflict between theism and atheism.

On the left is religion, with Catholic references including the portrait of Pope Innocent X. On the right are monkeys, representing atheism, struggling in convoluted thought. Monoliths of a monkey and a bishop face each other across the chessboard. Both in unresolvable conflict.

God dies in the sky, dripping blood down and across the scene. His heart pierced by the flying, whirling crucifixes, up, down, and all directions.

In the centre is a separate crucifix, in peace, on the horizon. A distant symbol of Jesus, oblivious to the worries of the chess players, yet ever present. Yet, this religious symbol can also be a gravestone. Not devout peace, but an atheist death. Thus the painting shows both devout religious peace and atheist contentment at the same time, depending on viewpoint.

Ekphrastic Sonata: Silver

Oil on canvas panel, 2019



This painting was inspired by the poem *Silver* by Martin Elder.

It was created for 'Ekphrastic Towers', an exhibition curated by John Keane which involved Stockport Art Guild and the Write Out Loud poetry group. Ekphrastic Towers explored the links between visual art, music and poetry and invited creatives to make something based on an object or poem.

This shingle silver slick gripped
Push button one stop flame
An adjustable gas fuelled spark
Smooth and sharp to the touch
Wavered patterned sides front and back
A blue and green torch
With the vaguest hint of gas
Slipped into a pocket
amongst keys and change
yet no wear or scratch

I was the sophisticated man about town
Armed with Ronson and smokes
With my single action lighter than air
Can I give you light?
Flick of a switch
Slips nicely into waistcoat chest high pocket
I feel gently press against my ribs when buttoned up

Even now I am reminded of the Jacques Lousier trio
Playing Bach's air on a G
As I slide out my trusted friend
Pushing the button
And hearing a click
One more smoke for the road
And off I go into the night

But now no flint, no gas
No action to fire against
No more smoking gun haze
Just the timeless reminder
Of what once was
But will never be again
Just another
twenty something phase

The Bully

Oil on M.D.F. panel in frame of wood, plaster, resin, 2012



This was one of my first paintings where the frame/surround was designed to fit the painting. Here the anger of the bully explodes from a wall of rock.

The exploding volcano seemed the perfect metaphor for anger but underneath I wanted to show fears and weaknesses that grow, each overlapping with layers of psychological rock, preventing their escape through communication, and building up a pressure that is released in violent bursts of communication.

The volcano is holding a stick, a weapon to hit people with but also a phallic reference, for comfort. He's pointing to redirect his negativity on others, and holding a red flag, a reference to Manchester United rather than socialism. Below the face collapses into fear and isolation, impotence, which here means a lack of love. A road, which represents the passage of time, the long road of life turns into a hand reaching upwards on the right, grasping for a thread, the cord of a balloon which represents childhood, and the balloon is love, tiny and ever out of reach.

Being The Elephant Man

Oil on canvas, 2014



A painting about feelings of ugliness inspired by the David Lynch film *The Elephant Man*. I wanted the frame to look like sack-cloth, as though we are peering out through the small hole cut in John Merrick's hood.

Dawn Of The Age Of The Superhuman

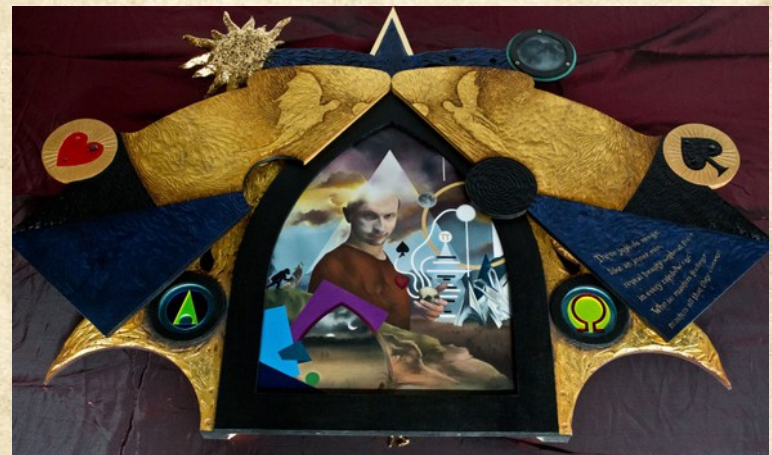
Oil on M.D.F. in wooden cabinet, 2014



Created for an unrealised exhibition about technology, this painting is an ironic comment on man's dominance of the world due to maths, science, physics.

The painting is housed inside a complex wooden cabinet with carved doors which swing open when the heavy pendula are pulled. When fully opened, the symbols for love and death become Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; a biblical reference to compare mankind with god.

The cabinet has rarely been exhibited but will be part of the NEORENAISSANCE exhibition in the museum.



The High Flying Swift

Oil on canvas, 2016



In 2015 I was part of an art performance in London with artists Sabine Kussmaul and Escargot. This was the first time I had played piano live, and it led to a new interest in live music and the links between music and visual art.

I began to paint works in groups, comparing these to movements in classical works, and *The High Flying Swift* is one of these paintings.

Soon after, I wrote some music for each of the three paintings in this Swift series, and as with earlier poems, like to explore the links between visual art and music. This allows me to work as a musician, poet or visual artist to collaborate with other visual artists, poets and musicians.

You hear The High Flying Swift music using Soundcloud:
<https://soundcloud.com/marksheeky/the-swift-triptych-ii-the-high-flying-swift>

The Resurrection Of Napoleon Bonaparte

Oil on canvas, 2016



Begun at the dawn of 2016 and a momentous political year for Britain as the country voted to leave the European Union, and as France, assaulted by attacks by Middle-Eastern extremists, decided to increase its overseas engagements. It was as though some Napoleon had been resurrected.

Yet, those movements must have been magically predicted. I had been asked to paint *The White Nancy*, and while doing so felt the compulsion to put Napoleon in the sky in a joyous mood rather than a tempestuous one. Fate, then, must have lent a welcome hand.

The storm on the horizon could be a distant battle, but for me, something coming, some dawn, a spark of change, a rush of a new fate, that must be charged into with joy, to the sounds of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony.

Self Portrait With Black Hole

Oil on M.D.F. panel, 2013



I thought I would include this painting because of its Albrecht Dürer-ness, and as another example of one of my paintings with elaborate frame.

It was painted for the Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year (I didn't enter in the end). I had 24-hours to think of something and brainstormed lots of ideas and took lots of photographs from unusual angles... but I wasn't quite happy with any of them. At the end of a tired day, I snapped this. The mood is of resignation at the end of the day, and it seemed to capture this exact feeling. The black hole in the sky above is an empty thought... no portrait ideas.

The frame is made of lots of materials, hardwood, perspex, gold leaf.

Triumph Of The Mechanauts:

Two Victorian Time Travellers Discovering Lovelessness In The Year 2791

Oil on canvas, 2012



Another painting from the 21st Century Surrealism exhibition. Two poets from the Write Out Loud poetry group, John F. Keane and Nicola Hulme wrote a poem for this painting, so I thought I would include both poems (see next pages).

When The Future Came

(a response to Triumph Of The Mechanauts)

In pixel lights the future came
Displacing all we knew and when
Its secret ambush seized the world
In truth, the future happened then

On silent wings the future came
The lightning-stroke before a storm
Of texts and tweets and online apps
That gave our world another form

The television held its ground
With dated soaps and stilted news
A rash of habits now outgrown
By sharper thoughts and blunter views

The yellow press refused to change
But sang as one their old refrain –
‘Reality must be denied!’
And withered when the future came

The tap room and the concert hall
And other scenes of common cause
Began to vanish, one by one
Extinguished by a greater force

The boutiques, books and record stores
That once defined our modes of life
Were cut to shadows, then were gone –
All victims of the future’s knife

On silver screens a shadow fell
And popcorn turned to ashes cold
When the future stole away
Our Technicolor™ dreams of old

They never heard the future come
On pinions too swift to see
A sudden storm of frozen lights
Replacing their hegemony

Though all that was and now is gone
Will stand remembered in its day
These vanished things will not return –
The future only moves one way

Now strange elections every week
The masses lurch from blame to blame
The centre yawns, a broken void
And all because the future came.

John F Keane

City of Promise

(a response to Triumph Of The Mechanauts)

Gleaming city of sleek dreams;
sky-scraping arks, housing bright sparks
in power suits who contribute,
custodians for generations to come.

Grime and greed crept up the towers
polluted minds, killed Hope's flowers.
A scarcity mentality ordered more,
politicians decreed more, nations demanded more.

Green mould envy infiltrated, penetrated
poisoned the air, rotted all Lust touched.
populations flocked to the City Of Promise, only to find
the gates locked, leaving barbed-wire-strangled aspirations.

Children homeless, helpless, starving for acceptance
eyed classrooms where obese pupils consumed
knowledge and technology whilst spitting venom at teachers,
blind to opportunities squandered by their sense of entitlement.

Those who had, threw their arms around it.
Those without, schemed how they might take it.
Depressed buildings crumbled, anxious highways collapsed.
Fires burned, acid rain fell, darkness descended and all was
ash.

Yet, amongst ruins the red rose bloomed.
Beating hearts, replaced by flashing cursors
in single occupancy cubicles, tapped keys, professed love
to pouting profiles; edited, filtered, cropped.

Planned futures together, anticipated red-blooded
pulsating embraces from days of old.
Romeo found Juliet in Cyberspace.
He offered a virtual rose.

Without nourishment of tender loving hands
the rose faded and drooped,
hanging its sterile head
in a cold world of desolation.

Juliet was infected by a virus.
Romeo watched from behind his firewall.
Her account flickered and died.
Their connection forever lost.

Nicola Hulme