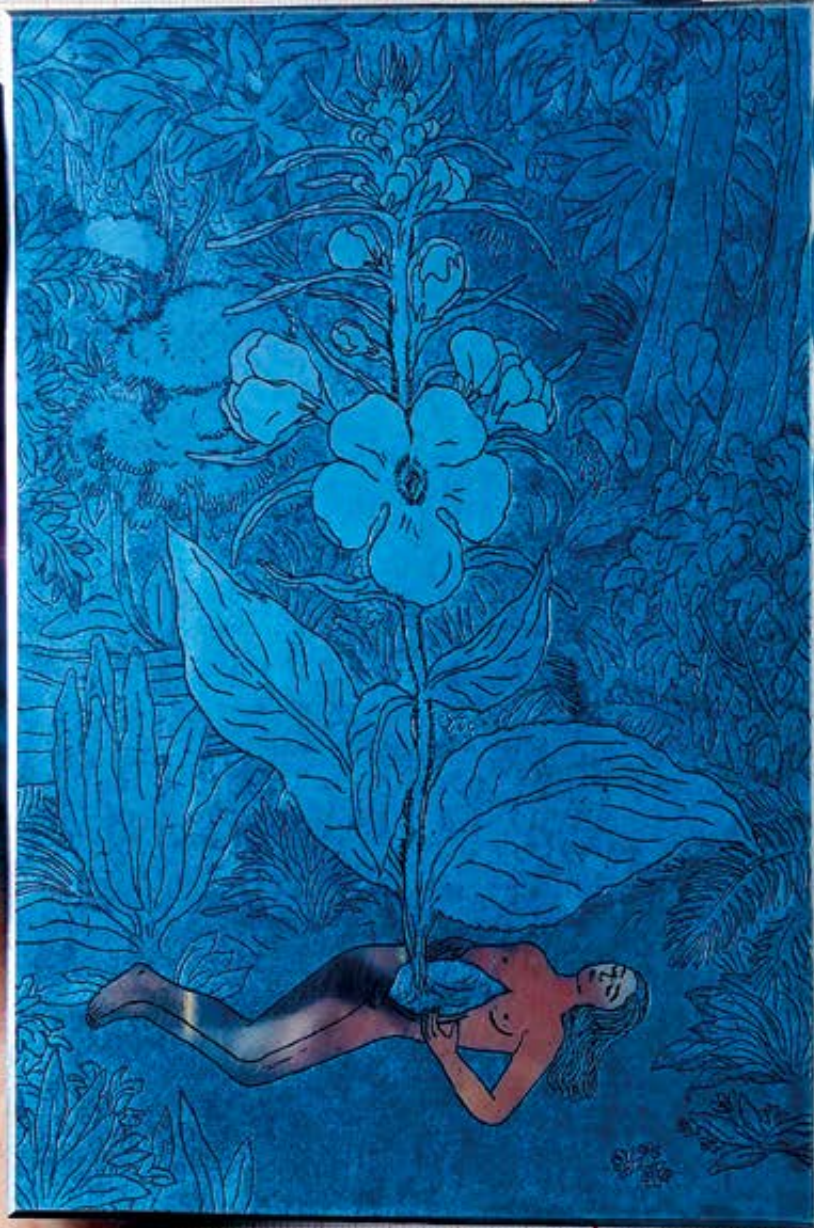


pressing matters

CELEBRATING MODERN PRINTMAKING



MakingTa ContactKontakt



Friends from two vibrant print societies in Sweden and the UK have come together as part of an exciting, collaborative exchange

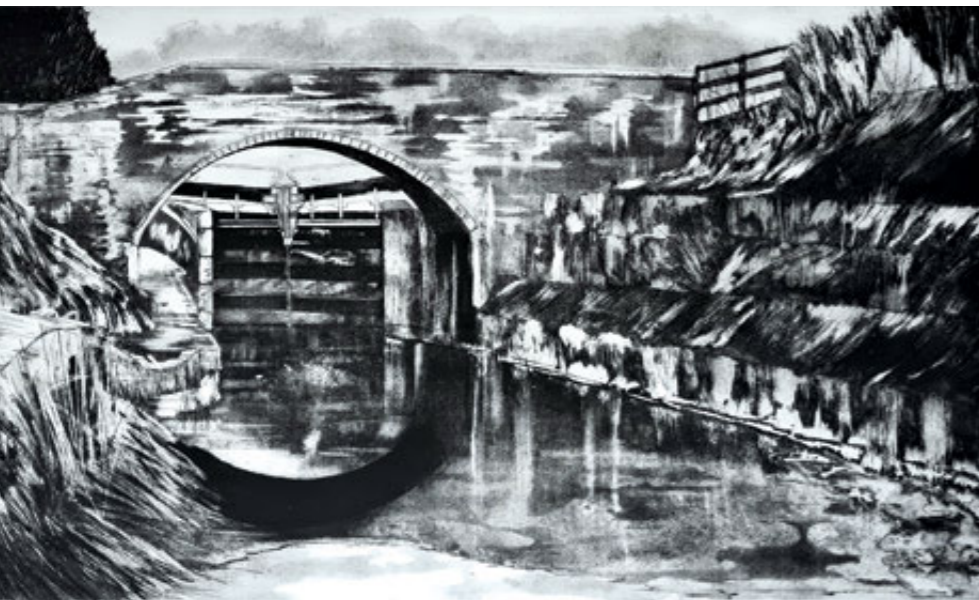
Words by JENNY PALMER Edited by JESS PRATTEN



Photos courtesy of GRAFISKA SÄLLSKAPET + GLOUCESTERSHIRE PRINTMAKING COOPERATIVE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: (this page) Jeannie Brown; Beth Jenkins; Eva Spikbacka & Frances Day; Siobain Drury; Kristina Thun & Jane Sasanow; Wendy Rhodes & Ulla-Carin Winter; (opposite) Ellen Marie Blakstad Paus & Jeannie Brown; Jenny Strid & Tonia Maddison; Andy Lovell & Maria Lagerborg



Following a chance reunion on the walls of the RWA gallery, Jenny Palmer (Grafiska Sällskapet, Sweden) and Wendy Rhodes (Gloucestershire Printmaking Cooperative, UK) invited members from their printmaking societies to join a conversation about reconnecting with art and print following the pandemic.

At the heart of the *Making Contact / Ta Kontakt* project is the idea that conversation, friendship and reconnection are the sounding board for inspiration. With that in mind, Jenny and Wendy asked the group to submit a picture of their most recent print and three words that described it. Using this, they paired each GPC printmaker with one from GS who would work together to produce a collaborative print-based piece. This was a brand-new way of working for some of the group, especially considering the recent constraints of the pandemic. "I enjoyed the email conversation we had and how we found a common theme even though we worked quite independently on our projects," explains Sweden-based printmaker, Ellen Marie Blakstad Paus.

The three words were a useful starting point for many of the partnerships, and some used their words as inspiration for their initial print ideas. Printmaking pair Anne-Lie Larsson Ljung and Fiona McIntyre had "many long conversations

"Through our conversations, we developed a total focus on wild, exciting, raw nature and portrayed this in copper-plate prints."

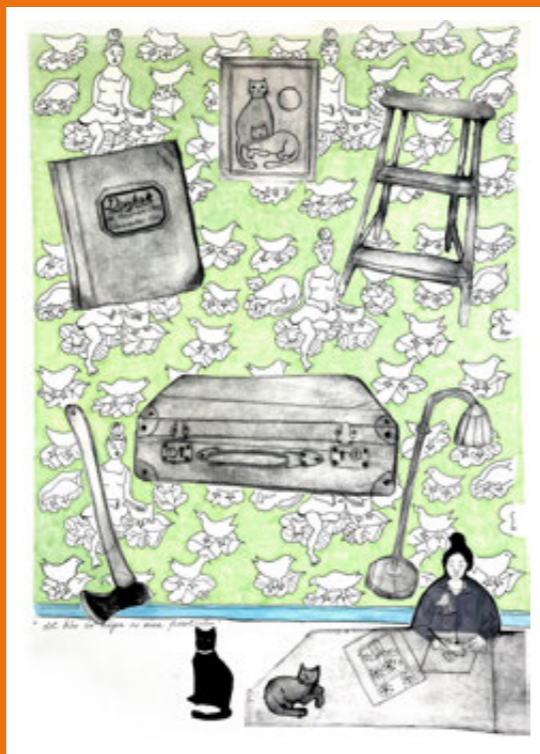
ANNIE-LIE LARSSON LJUNG



about the way we make our art and how we go about it." Annie-Lie adds, "We are both interested in nature, how it appears, its history and the mythology of wilderness. Through our conversations, we developed a total focus on wild, exciting, raw nature and portrayed this in copper-plate prints." Having no prescriptive theme seems to have worked well for the project, leading each pair to organically find common ground, producing rich and varied results.

A love of the outdoors inspired many of the duos and allowed for exploration of similarities and differences between English and Swedish landscapes. Others dug into themes of decaying industrial vistas and ruins, belongings, found objects and childhood games. Yasmina Karli Malmsten and Ollie Goodson chose to work from a mural painting created by Yasmina titled *Twister* which was originally black and white, but turned into a colourful piece through the collaboration. When asked what she enjoyed most about the project, Yasmina singles out the moments of surprise: "Ollie came up with solutions and ideas that I never would have thought of myself. He has a way of seeing patterns that is very interesting to me, meanwhile my focus is usually on bodies in relationship to each other. Ollie is also very brave with colours, which inspires me a lot."





PARTNERS IN PRINT

To get to know each other and inspire their collaborative work for *Making Contact / Ta Kontakt*, paired printmakers Isabelle Nilsson and Judy Pascoe exchanged photos of their most beloved belongings. "I am fascinated by how we humans seem to love similar things even if we find ourselves in different parts of the world. It is something about the feeling, the feeling of having something in common," says Isabelle. Judy was intrigued by the photos Isabelle sent, focusing on the wallpaper and her love of cats for her print. "The wallpaper is screenprinted and hand-coloured and the floating objects are Tetra Pak collagraph. There is also a hand drawn element to the work," explains Judy. "In my print, I have created encounters and relationships between our favourite things," adds Isabelle.

A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS *Isabelle Nilsson & Judy Pascoe*



"No matter the challenges, the outcome would always be a success because printmaking was the unifying passion."

JENNY PALMER

The final print pieces are all manner of shapes and sizes with many crossing different print disciplines. The Grafiska Sällskapet exhibition housed screenprint, drypoint, copper plate etchings and Tetra Pak collagraph, to name a few. Sweden based Jenny Strid worked with the cyanotype technique, reusing graphic sheets thinned out over the years to create collages. Other prints have been turned into animations, artist's books and even poetry written in both Swedish and English.

"The 18-month time span of the project has allowed lives to go on and for printmakers to take a break from their daily routines," notes Wendy. "It also allowed projects to develop and change direction, and for printmaking partnerships to find their feet. It was a huge bonus that so many GPC members travelled to Stockholm for the first exhibition, this enabled friendships to flourish with the intention to revise projects for the Cheltenham exhibition."

The success of *Making Contact / Ta Kontakt* comes from the members and their enthusiasm and commitment to it. Jenny sums up the motivations behind the project perfectly: "No matter the challenges, the outcome would always be a success because printmaking was the unifying passion." Jenny and Wendy helped the group by finding ways to practically collaborate despite the distance between pairs. They layered up small but essential ways of working that came together to build a group ethos of printmaking with a purpose – reminders, newsletters and Zoom meetings. They have designed a logo for the group and set up an Instagram page (@making_contact_ta.kontakt) for work in progress, images and videos, which includes contributions from all 18 partnerships.

These ways of communicating with one another were key to keeping a diverse and creative group focused on the project aims without constraining their creativity. Everyone involved has learned so much from their collaborations, embracing linguistic and cultural crossovers, making new and lasting friendships and celebrating Swedish and British printmakers and their prints. "I'm very happy with my new printmaking network and hopefully I will be able to visit Stroud for our joint exhibition, to meet everyone and see their work live," says Yasmina. **T**

Following a successful four-week exhibition in Stockholm earlier this year, the Making Contact / Ta Kontakt show will be appearing at Sixteen Gallery in Cheltenham, UK from 23rd November to 6th December.

www.grafiskasallskapet.se • www.gpchq.co.uk



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *(opposite page) Lisa Andrén & Tony Lloyd; Judy Pascoe and Isabelle Nilsson; Siobain Drury; Kristina Thun & Jane Sasanow; Ellen Cronholm & Emily Lucas; (this page) Jenny Palmer, Beth Jenkins & Fran Christen; Kristina Stark & Eileen Dunlop*



Words by **JENNY PALMER**

