



The Rosaline Wong Gallery in the Buchanan Tower Room.
Photo: Rosaline Ogilvy

Artists in Residence

Short-Term Visiting Fellows, Peter McDonald & Marcus Coates

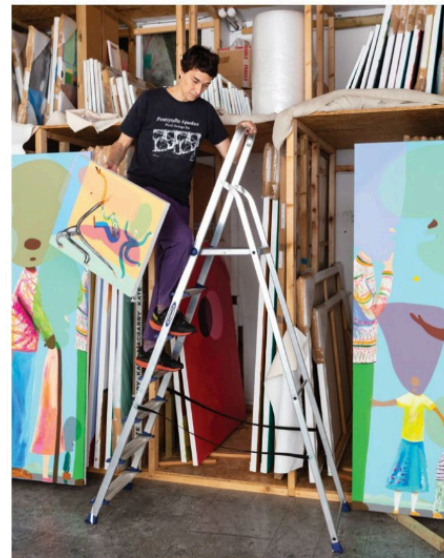
Peter McDonald and Marcus Coates joined Jesus College in February 2023 as Short-Term Visiting Fellows, thanks to the patronage and support of art collector and philanthropist Rosaline Wong. Their work has been featured in the College's Rosaline Wong Gallery, which is located in the new Buchanan Tower Room and exhibits a wide-ranging art collection.

Over the coming months, both artists have access to College buildings, libraries, and archives, and are spending time with members of the Jesus community in order to inspire a new body of creative work from each. Jesus News caught up them recently to explore their work, this new College connection, and their ambitions for their year-long association with Jesus.

Peter McDonald

Born in Japan in 1973, Peter studied at Central St Martins School of Art, at Kobatake Kobo Studio School, Japan, and then the Royal Academy Schools. He currently divides his time between London and Tokyo and, in 2008, was the recipient of The John Moores Contemporary Painting Prize.

My mother is Japanese and my father was British. I was born in Tokyo and lived there until I was eight when I came to school in the UK. My family are still in Japan so I visit for a few months every year. Being from two cultures has given me a particular perspective on identity. I never feel I am either British or Japanese. There's always an element of being on the outside looking in, which influences the way my paintings depict social situations.



Peter McDonald. Photo by Argo Webb.

Drawing pictures, colours, and storytelling have always fascinated me from a very young age, so going to art school seemed like a natural progression. Finding a way to embody these interests in a visual language relevant to the contemporary world was something which took me some time after graduating from art education. Once I had found this language though, I felt I had a voice through which to express my fascination with colour, form, and narrative.

My studio is in Bromley by Bow in East London. I have been based in this part of London for the last 23 years and my gallery, Kate MacGarry, is also in nearby Shoreditch. I live a 20-minute cycle ride from my studio, so a typical work day begins after dropping off my daughter at nursery and



Study for Mobile by Peter MacDonald.

cycling along the Whitechapel Road. I begin work straight away, sometimes making smaller works on paper which might be studies for larger paintings. The studies usually never look exactly the same as a larger work on canvas as I find improvisation adds energy and life to the image. I mainly use acrylic gouache paints which I source in Japan; I like the matt flatness of the colour. I do, however, also use acrylic paints, glitter paints, and collage metallic foil or any other materials I think the painting needs.

Ideas come to me from everyday life, so I carry a small pocket sketchbook with me in which

I draw ideas and note passing thoughts. Some of these can lead to a series of paintings. I've learnt not to discount any idea, no matter how irrelevant or silly it might seem at the time. I want to create a parallel universe in my painting; one which the viewer can enter into and explore through their own imagination. This space doesn't need to adhere to realistic or photographic parameters: as long as there is enough information so the viewer can inhabit the space, it doesn't matter if the horizon line is wonky or if a figure seems to have only three fingers and no face.

My paintings depict figures with amorphous see-through coloured

heads. Where two or more heads meet, the heads overlap. The background is also visible through this transparency, and the colours are mixed individually to create this illusion. The merging of the head in the foreground with everything behind it suggests a dissolution of boundaries between people and their environments. The individual becomes intrinsic to everything around it and vice versa. The figure is literally and physically part of its environment.

Humour is a really important aspect of my practice. I use it to disarm the viewer so they approach my painting relaxed, at ease, and with an open mind.

To be part of the community at Jesus College has given me the opportunity to start a series of work based on the life of the College. I'm interested in finding subjects to paint, both in the grander scheme of life at Jesus, and also in the more mundane aspects of daily College life. On my last couple of visits, I've felt slightly overwhelmed by the history of Oxford, so I envisage visiting regularly and acclimatising myself to the University and city.

In 2011-12 I had an exhibition at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, called *Visitor*. The premise of the exhibition was that I reacted

to the local community through my work, communicating with the residents through my art. This experience gave me the confidence that my visual language has the capacity to depict all types of situations and, through this, create an opportunity for people to meet and exchange ideas. The Fellowship allows me to immerse myself in a completely new and unfamiliar environment over the course of the year. I am looking forward to seeing what kind of images I will find and develop.

I first met Rosaline Wong in 2012 through my gallerist, Kate MacGarry. She has become a good friend and has really supported

my practice ever since. She has an excellent eye and I really appreciate her independence of thought and judgement. As an artist, I am so grateful for her interest and input. Kate and I have visited Rosaline in Hong Kong and we've made trips together to see exhibitions in Paris and Tokyo.

Later this year, I will be travelling to California for a residency at the JB Blunk House - he was a sculptor who worked primarily in wood and clay. He also had deep ties to Japan, where he was apprenticed to the potters Kitaaji Rosanjin and Kaneshige Toyo. While there, I plan to create paintings for a show in 2024 at the Blunk Space.



(l-r) Peter MacDonald, Kate MacGarry, Rosaline Wong, and Marcus Coates at the opening of the Rosaline Wong Gallery. Photo by Andrew Ogilvy.