

Christy Burdock

House of Illustration Illustrator in Residence 2017/2018

Report for the Barbara and Philip Denny Trust August 2018

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As a direct result of the residency at HOI Christy's work is being shown in an exhibition at OBS Gallery in Kent on 29 September – 10 November called **4B: Contemporary Approaches to Drawing**, alongside work by Jeanette Barnes, Meghana Bisneer and Louise Bourgeois. www.oldbigschoolgallery.co.uk.



Christy Burdock was the winner of the House of Illustration Residency in 2017 – our fourth resident since the programme began in 2014.

Christy, a recent graduate of the Royal College of Art, describes her drawings as reflecting ‘the narrative of the everyday’. She works by immersing herself in microsocieties, observing individuals and the relationships between

them, and then layering this observation with metaphor and imagination to create new worlds. Her work incorporates motifs and archetypes from art history that emphasise her observations.

Christy used the residency to focus on the micro-society that is House of Illustration – its visitors, artists and staff – observing interactions and events and using these to inform her drawings. In this way the intensity of her engagement with HOI was on a similar level to that of our first resident, Rachel Lillie, in 2014. Christy's previous work had focused on an Amish group travelling between Southampton and New York on the QM2, and a private members club in St James's Square. The end result of her residency was a three-month exhibition of large-scale drawings in House of Illustration's South Gallery entitled **Christy Burdock: The People in the Gallery** 28 March – 8 July 2018.

Christy's residency included the following activity:

- One month spent at House of Illustration, sitting in the office with staff, sitting in the galleries and observing front of house staff and volunteers in the shop. She then used her observations to draw the large scale illustrations for her exhibition.
- Live drawing at House of Illustration's '**First Editions: Re-covered**' auction at Sotheby's in December 2017
- Live drawing at a Winsor & Newton drawing evening at House of Illustration for illustrators and students
- An 'In Conversation' talk for 70 people about her creative practice, chaired by Turner Prize curator Sacha Craddock
- 28 March - 8 July 2018 - an exhibition of work produced during the residency in House of Illustration's South Gallery, seen by over 12,000 visitors.

Illustrator in Residence Programme 2017/18

Christy Burdock - Evaluation Questionnaire

1. How did you find the application and selection process for the Residency? Is there any way that it could have been improved?

My chief concern with House of Illustration, during the interview stage, before I started the residency, and during, was that I would be overly positive and uncritical. This is not my natural state. But I had been aware of the gallery at its inception and followed its, and the residency holders, progress. Having now worked with the organisation for 10 months I am still 100% positive with no ideas re improvements, and no criticisms. It is hard to criticise staff that are never anything short of professional and who work at full capacity with a dedication that I seldom see elsewhere. This culture comes from the fact they have broad interesting roles within a small organisation and, due to a shortage of resources, no time for anything other than efficiency, creativity and professionalism.

2. Do you think the time scale and bursary were adequate for the realisation of your project?

I wish I had longer to draw. Nine months? The bursary is not enough for artists that have high overheads, it wouldn't enable them to work full time as I did, but is in line with comparable residencies.

3. How did you feel about the support you received whilst on the Residency from House of Illustration? Could anything have been changed to improve it?

The curator's skills were exceptional. She is bright but also understands the creative process. Having left the RCA where my chief criticism was that they kept interfering with my working day (I am a little obsessive when drawing and they needed me to talk more) the curator at House of Illustration was able to show sensitivity, diplomacy and had the ability to make me feel completely supported. Therefore I worked very well. The staff were utterly charming, friendly and welcoming. The director was helpful and thoughtful about future opportunities, the rest of the staff were all excellent, whether it was social media, or design, or merchandise.

4. What are the main benefits that the residency has brought you?

this might include development of illustration practice, time to explore, confidence, raised profile, etc.

The residency gave me so much at a critical time in my career. It gave me access to research material: the gallery community itself. It gave me a solo show in a respected gallery. It gave me an excellent platform to make, test and launch a new body of work. It enabled a new audience to see my work that wouldn't have otherwise seen it. It has given me a space where I could marry the worlds of visual communication with fine art. I have been offered solo shows and opportunities as a result.

5. How do you feel about the body of work you have produced during your Residency?

The work I made was good I feel and has developed from the time I left the RCA. My proposal was that I would make large scale works that I couldn't show elsewhere and that was achieved. My output was respected and the curator made sure the work was transported, framed and curated beautifully.

6. Do you think the residency will have a long-term impact on your work? Might you extend the project, or approach future projects in new ways for example?

The impact of this residency on my practice is immeasurable. This is the only gallery in the UK that shows this kind of work. I have been offered an opportunity that few are given. I was enabled to develop in a fast track kind of way. After an intensive masters degree at the RCA the risk of slumping for a while, creatively, was high, the residency enabled me to hit the ground running. It has meant that I have a very high chance of achieving my aim, which is to show work at excellent institutions and with diverse audiences for the next decade or two.

7. Have you made any helpful new contacts as part of the residency? Perhaps people who might commission you, or that you might collaborate with in future, etc.

Many new contacts. All industry related. Curators, galleryists, publishers. The staff worked hard at doing that for me.

8. Have you developed any new skills that aren't related to your illustration practice? If so, what are they?

Yes, a new admiration and understanding for people that work in teams, I had never entered an office for months before. I now understand the inner workings of a gallery, which is experience artists don't normally gain. This will be very helpful in my career.

9. Would you recommend the Residency to other illustrators? If so, what would you say about it?

Are you serious? Everyone at the RCA has made a voodoo doll of me and stuck pins in it since I got it! Everyone in the country wants it. Of course I would recommend it.

10. What will you do next?

Lots and lots and lots. A few shows. But I need to draw. A new community that is less civilised, less busy and more 'on the edge'. The House of Illustration is like a well-oiled, beautiful machine, that works wonderfully on peanuts, looking after art and artists.

Other comments?

TOTALLY BRILLIANT. CAN'T FAULT IT. I LOVE THEM.

Christy Burdock 2018

